

Glass Ceiling and Career Advancement of Women Executives in Readymade Garment Industry of Bangladesh



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degree for Doctor of Business Administration under the Department of
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March'2025

DECLARATION

I now certify that the material in my dissertation, titled ‘Glass Ceiling and Career Advancement of Women Executives in Readymade Garment Industry of Bangladesh’, is original research that I conducted. I further declare that I have not submitted this research work to other universities or institutions pursuing a higher degree.

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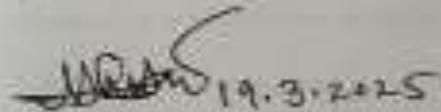


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ABSTRACT

This dissertation delves into the pervasive phenomenon of glass ceiling within Bangladesh's Ready-Made Garments (RMG) industry, analysing complex amalgamation of societal, organizational, and personal factors that hinder women's ascent to senior managerial and decision-making roles. The research examines existence of glass ceiling and factors contributing to the same. This research primarily adopted the "Gendered Organization Theory" to classify different factors that may affect women's career advancement in an organization hierarchy. This study selected post-positivism research philosophy due to its ability to combine the empirical rigor of positivism with an understanding of the complexities inherent in social sciences, employing a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative technique. By this design data were collected from in-depth interviews of 13 female executives and survey of 108 female respondents from the RMG industry. For the qualitative aspect of the study, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants for the interviews. For quantitative analysis, convenience sampling techniques has been used. To ensure diversity and depth in the sample, efforts were made to include participants from various levels of seniority, job roles, and years of experience. Thematic analysis was conducted with data extracted through interviews using NVivo 14. Survey data was analysed through structural equation modelling (SEM) using SmartPLS (Partial Least Squares) version 4 to test 17 hypotheses consisting independent variables and two mediating variables. This dual-perspective methodology enriches the findings and presents a comprehensive picture of glass ceiling's impact on women's professional advancement in RMG industry. The qualitative exploration exposes clear evidence of existence of glass ceiling. The quantitative analysis further validates the findings and confirms profound influence of organizational and social factors hindering upward mobility of women in corporate ladder and creating glass ceiling. One hand, societal norms and traditional gender roles often place constraints on women's participation in workforce. Other hand, organization's hiring and promotion policies, work culture and gender-based work segregation obstructs progress of female executives in career growth. The key contribution of this research is the identification of two previously unexplored factors—risk aptitude and work engagement—having mediating effect to the dynamics of glass ceiling. This research calls for a comprehensive approach, challenging social stereotypes, promoting inclusive work cultures and policy interventions to create equitable pathways for women's career advancement.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
BCS	Bangladesh Civil Service
BGMEA	Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers And Exporters Association
CMB	Common Method Bias
CR	Composite Reliability
EPZ	Export Processing Zone
GLC	Glass Ceiling
GOT	Gendered Organization Theory
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait
KII	Key Informant Interview
NBCDR	Nonlinear Bivariate Causality Direction Ratio
ORG	Organizational Factors
PER	Personal Factors
RIS	Risk Aptitude Of The Organizations
RMG	Ready-Made Garments
RQ	Research Questions
SOC	Social Factors
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
WOR	Work Engagement

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the contemporary landscape of business organizations, the pervasive issue of the glass ceiling has emerged as a globally significant concern. Boubaker and Nguyen (2012) elucidated the concept, defining the glass ceiling as an imperceptible barrier impeding the ascent of women within the organizational hierarchy. Notably, within the Bangladeshi Readymade garments industry, a conspicuous dearth of female leaders is evident across various organizations (Islam & Jantan, 2017). This research endeavours to scrutinize the repercussions of the glass ceiling on the underrepresentation of women in executive and leadership roles within this industry. This chapter elucidates the research background, rationale, objectives, questions, timeline, and outlines the subsequent chapters.

According to Azeez and Priyadarshini (2018); Barreto et al. (2009), the glass ceiling refers to an intangible barrier that prevents women from advancing to top positions in organizations. In other words, it is a form of gender discrimination that hinders the career growth of women. The glass ceiling is considered one of the dark sides of contemporary organizational behaviour and has significant negative consequences as argued by Forum for Women in Democracy (2020); Franks (2013). As suggested by these authors, it is primarily due to gender or racism and is supported by various constructs such as social, cultural, and individual constraints. The glass ceiling syndrome is the perception of these barriers and the development of negative thoughts about the working environment that mostly affects women and other minorities [(Copyright Collection (Library of Congress), 1993; Elacqua et al., 2009)]. In the context of the present research, the existence of the glass ceiling limits women's professional opportunities and advancement, and positive factors such as economic power, skills improvement, and mentorship can help break through the glass ceiling (American Society for Public Administration. National Capital Area Chapter., 1992). In simpler terms, the glass ceiling is an invisible barrier that prevents women from occupying higher positions in organizations.

As the definition of glass ceiling suggests, the phenomena are fundamentally connected with career advancement. According to Valentine Calinaud (2020), career advancement refers to the

process of progressing and achieving success in one's professional career. It involves the growth and development of an individual's skills, knowledge, and experience, as well as the attainment of higher positions and responsibilities within an organization. Islam and Rahman (2021) suggested that Career advancement can be pursued through various pathways, such as academic contributions, research, teaching, and leadership roles. It requires self-management and awareness of opportunities for growth and progress. Advancing in one's career may involve long working hours, extensive reading, writing scholarly articles, applying for grants, and active involvement in professional societies (Ezzedeen et al., 2015). It may also require serving as a mentor and gaining recognition for the successes and accomplishments of others in the field. Career advancement programs and systems have been implemented to provide promotion opportunities and evaluate the efficacy of such programs (Islam & Rahman, 2021).

The term 'Glass Ceiling' has emerged as a focal point in contemporary literature on female leadership development, with its origin traced back to a 1986 Wall Street Journal article. Over the past three decades, scholars such as Cotter (2001), Bell, McLaughlin and Sequeira (2002), Hoobler and Lemmon (2009) have directed their attention to this phenomenon within the realm of Gender and Women's Studies. The glass ceiling, rooted in gender disparities, serves as a manifestation of discrimination, persisting from developed nations (Amin et al., 2017) to the least developed ones (Tran, 2014). The scarcity of female leaders in boardrooms is indicative of a global glass Ceiling, intricately linked to Human Resource Management (Hartel & Fujimoto, 2010), a pivotal success factor transcending geographical and industrial boundaries. Various theories surround the glass Ceiling phenomenon. Smith and Crimes (2007) posit attitudinal, behavioural, and structural barriers as impediments to women's upward career mobility, while earlier perspectives, such as Schein (2007), underscore the historical perception of leadership as a predominantly male trait. Social stereotypes, organizational barriers, and cultural attitudes contribute to obstructing women's progress, reinforcing traditional power dynamics.

Despite Bangladesh's political landscape being led by female leaders for the past three decades, the representation of women in parliamentary and ministerial positions remains modest. This study highlights the educational and career challenges faced by women, emphasizing the impact of cultural norms and taboos on restricting women's roles in leadership positions. In the context of the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry, a crucial contributor to Bangladesh's economic transformation, the study delves into the glass Ceiling's influence on women's leadership development. The RMG sector has been instrumental in providing employment

opportunities for women, particularly those from rural areas. While the sector has significantly contributed to economic and social development, the representation of women in supervisory and leadership roles remains disproportionately low. This study aims to investigate the presence and impact of the glass Ceiling within the RMG industry, shedding light on the factors influencing women's limited participation in leadership positions and executive-level managerial roles. By analysing qualitative data from in-depth interviews, this study revealed critical insights into the existence and perpetuation of glass ceiling. Besides, hypothesis testing of survey data identifies organizational factors and social factors are primary reasons influencing glass ceiling, aligning with findings from qualitative analysis. The implications of these findings are vast and call for a multi-pronged approach to dismantle the barriers identified. Policy interventions include preventing discrimination in hiring and promotion practices. Organizations should be encouraged, possibly through incentives, to develop transparent criteria for advancement that are strictly monitored for gender bias. Additionally, there is a pressing need for changing social viewpoint and breaking stereotypes towards female roles in leadership positions, that account for gender dynamics. Policy makers are recommended to initiate mentorship programs that connect women with senior leaders to bridge the confidence gap and prepare them for senior executive roles.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The identification of a research problem usually comes from lots of phenomena that the researchers don't have the answer to. There is a lot of "Guesswork" of the probable answer, often they are not authentic or not based on a scientific foundation. Despite global research on glass Ceiling and its dynamics addressed by different scholars, it remains an 'ever green' issue throughout the world even though the extent varied from culture to culture.

Female Garment Workers are the driving force of the RMG industry in Bangladesh; however, the number of female Supervisor or Managers is severely less in number that indicating the existence of a glass Ceiling (Rahman & Siddique, 2015; Islam & Jantan, 2017; Kabir, 2020, Sharmila, 2020).

These unfair work practices are not desirable for any industry or country, the RMG sector is not an exception. In this 21st century when women tend to participate equally in almost every sphere of work, equal rights and opportunity in employment become a global issue. In that context, we need to understand the severity of "Glass Ceiling" in Bangladesh's perspective in

general, in RMG sectors standpoint in particular. Same time we need to identify the factors that cause such disparity and find out solutions to create a favourable attitude toward women that would enable them to be fairly judged in getting promotion opportunities.

1.3 Research Questions

As per my thorough review on previous studies, I couldn't find any other existing study addressed this exact issue in relevant area, specially following the methodological structure that should be appropriate for this subject matter. There is gap in methodological perfection from earlier studies that can be suitable with the subject area. But in my study, I have tried to cover this methodological gap. In my 'Empirical' research, I would like to find answer two research questions as stated below:

RQ 1: Does the glass ceiling exist and affect the career progress of female executives in the leadership position of Ready-Made Garment sector of Bangladesh?

RQ 2: What are the factors that are creating career barrier for women employee's leadership position in the Ready-Made Garment Sector of Bangladesh?

1.4 Aim of the study

It is hypothesized that the dated back historical approach towards women, regardless of national culture and level of economic development of countries, limit opportunities for women, hinder their progress graduating to leadership positions, the current phenomenon glass Ceiling is a derivative of that.

In this study, the researcher's aim is to utilize her personal experience with RMG industry and apply scientific method to find out answers that is creating "glass Ceiling" or barrier for women. The objective is to examine the phenomenon from social, organizational and individual standpoint, and also to study from a 'national-cultural' context, which is a new dimension to observe glass Ceiling.

To observe glass Ceiling Phenomenon and underlying factors in RMG industry that stops female executives to graduate in top leadership positions.

This general objective can be delineated into two discrete and scientifically investigable objectives. Hence, the objectives of the present study are as follows:

Objective 1: To examine existence of glass Ceiling in RMG sector of Bangladesh.

Objective 2: To identify the factors creating glass Ceiling for women to graduate in leadership positions.

The researcher hopes successful completion of the thesis will be beneficial for the industry to adopt policy reformation that would eventually make this sector a best place for long term career planning for a qualified female.

1.5 Rationale of the study

The main objective of the research is to enhance associated knowledge that will help to remove career blockade for Women in Ready Made Garment Industry in particular and for female executives working in other sectors in Bangladesh, in general, facing similar obstacles in work-life despite their equal qualification, skill and experience as male peers.

‘Working Women’ itself a new metaphor in the social context of Bangladesh. From that ground accepting women in leadership roles still is not admirable from a societal perspective. On other hand, each year a significant number of women complete their education and enter the labour market. Their talent and career aspiration, challenge the historical discriminatory approach toward women. From that point, conducting a comprehensive study is very much significant.

A study on women working in Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) administration Cadre was conducted by UNDP in 1993 where the researchers outlined six perception traits behind the unequal treatment of women, however, didn’t address the glass Ceiling metaphor. A complete comprehensive literature on Bangladeshi Women relevant to glass Ceiling is very limited in number. Few researchers have addressed the issues through scholarly articles in the context of Bangladesh’s Civil services (Zafarullah,2018) Tele Communications Industry (Habib, 2015) Banking Sector (Ruhul and Aftab, 2018) Hospitality industry (Khaled, 2019). There was a qualitative study done by Islam, Jantan and Hashim in 2018 identifying factors influencing female leadership in the RMG sector, however, the study was based on interviewing only 8 employees from a single organization, thus the scope of the observation was too narrow compared to the size of the industry.

On the other hand, earlier literature on Bangladeshi Working Women addressed glass Ceiling as a derivate of Society's perception towards women, unfavourable Organizational Culture, lack of mentors, work-life conflict and sexual harassment. However, glass Ceiling Metaphor in the Bangladesh context, have some critical features that needed to be taken into consideration for several reasons.

Bangladesh, being a Muslim majority nation, women are supposed to stay at home and their economic activities are limited to completing domestic chores. There are sensitive religious aspects like "Pardah" that restricts women to engage out-of-home activities. Despite of that, the society of Bangladesh built in a distinguished 'National culture' that allows some sort of flexibility from strict restriction on women's movement, though the extent varies regional dispersion, social class and educational level of individual families. Even though, this 'National Culture' plays a vital role to portray the image of women as well as educated women's own aspiration towards achieving goals in life, which was never addressed by any researcher.

There has been a holistic approach to study the subject matter in detail. Firstly, the study will fill the knowledge gap in the dearth of literature, regarding women career progression in RMG industry taking into consideration the size of population. All previous studies were conducted in a smaller scale. Secondly, from existing literature, the discriminatory attitude towards women in RMG industry is known (Haque, Sarker & Rakibuddin, 2020) however, little is recognized as how they are discriminated. This study will encompass the significance of variables identified by existing literature.

The Goal of the study is to establish a framework of recommendations that will eliminate career barrier and help qualified women executives to step up in corporate hierarchy of RMG sector. As a theoretical contribution, also attempts for better understanding of variable explained by earlier researchers and search for new 'Factors' creating glass Ceiling. Furthermore, the current research will provide insights into the management, to adopt policies and support practices for betterment of female leadership development.

1.6 Definition of key terms

There are a few key terms frequently used in this research paper. The terms have been defined and the meaning that has been adopted by the researchers are as follows:

Table 1: Key Terms

Key Terms	Definition
Glass Ceiling	A limit that is unofficial but understood prevents someone, esp. a woman, from advancing to a top position in a company or organization (Browne; Morrison et al., 1987).
RMG Industry	An industry that manufacturers Ready Made Garment or finished clothing products accounted for 84.5% of Bangladesh's total export and made this country the second-largest apparel exporter after China (BGMEA).
Corporate Ladder	The corporate ladder is the proverbial climb up a company's employment hierarchy, where career advancement is likened to climbing rungs on a ladder (Belasen, 2012).
Upward Mobility	Upward mobility is the ability of corporate employees to be promoted to an upper position in the organization. The extent of upward mobility highly depends on the span of discrimination in the organization (Murch, 2008).
Discrimination	Discrimination is the biased treatment of a specific group of people based on demographic characteristics (Duffy et al., 2014).
Social Stereotypes	The features or behaviors that are thought to be typical of various social groupings are what are known as social stereotypes. As subjective estimates of attribute frequencies within social groups, stereotypical beliefs should "behave like" base-rate information in individual judgments: individuating target case information should push people to disregard their own stereotypical beliefs (Curran, 1999).
Occupational Segregation	The grouping of women into specific lower-paying jobs, often characterized by traditional gender roles and expectations. Occupational segregation limits women's access to higher-paying and leadership positions, reinforcing gender-based wage disparities (Arrighi, 2007a)
Work-Life Balance	The management of work and personal responsibilities to achieve a harmonious and fulfilling life. For women, achieving work-life balance can be particularly challenging due to societal expectations, gender norms, and the disproportionate burden of domestic and caregiving responsibilities (Duffy et al., 2014; Strong et al., 2011).
Microaggressions	Subtle, unintentional but harmful comments or behaviors based on gender. Microaggressions can be expressions of bias or prejudice that, although seemingly harmless, contribute to a hostile environment, perpetuate stereotypes, and negatively impact the confidence and well-being of individuals based on their gender (Epler, 2021).

Pay Gap	The difference in average earnings between men and women within the workforce. The pay gap is a result of various factors, including occupational segregation, biases in salary negotiations, and a lack of transparency in pay structures, contributing to persistent gender-based wage inequality (Blau & Kahn, 2007).
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1.7 Thesis Outline

There is total seven chapters in this thesis.

1.7.1 Chapter One

Introduction - Chapter One contains background of the study, explains practical context of carrying out the research, Research Overview, Research Objective and Research Questions. This Chapter also provides insights how rest of the chapters are organized.

1.7.2 Chapter Two

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development - Chapter Two initially provides idea about Ready Made Garment Industry of Bangladesh. This Chapter starts explaining how the industry emerged and positioned in global context, become favourite ‘hotspot’ for Global Buyers in spite of countless challenges and evolved over time, describes how this sector injected dimensions in economic scenario and brought a revolution in social scenario, especially on women empowerment. This chapter includes thorough literature review on subject matter ‘Glass Ceiling’, this part of the thesis explored previous literature and scholarly works on the topic and sub topic of the study. It identifies the research gap from previous observations, helps to establish a conceptual framework and developed hypothesis to proceed the current study.

1.7.3 Chapter Three

Research Methodology – Chapter three contains Research Methodology, Research paradigm, Criterion of methodology selection, method of data collection and analysis. Ethical Consideration, Validity and reliability of the Study.

1.7.4 Chapter Four

Findings and Analysis – This Chapter highlights data analysis and the outcome of the study. It presents results of survey and interviews conducted on female executives working in RMG industry.

1.7.5 Chapter Five

Discussion – This Chapter elaborates the results and findings based on research outcomes from chapter four.

1.7.6 Chapter Six

Recommendations – Chapter Six prescribes Recommendations of enhance upward mobility of women in work life. It also, describes practical implication, contribution and limitation of the study, opportunities for future research.

1.7.7 Chapter Seven

Conclusion – Chapter Seven describes conclusion of the study, recapping objectives and findings of research with a closing statement.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Theoretical Perspective

2.1.1 Glass Ceiling

When a competent individual pursuing promotion within his or her company is held back at a lower level because of the discrimination, it is referred to as the "glass ceiling" [(Shaheen & Women Media Center (Pakistan), 2008)]. This term can also be linked with vertical discrimination against women in the workplace, which is popularly acknowledged as the "glass ceiling" in cultural references (Harris & Radley, 2018). The majority of academics of the 21st century have identified sexism and racism as the main two reasons behind the glass ceiling (Tutchell & Edmonds, 2015).

The relationship between power and gender-orientation leads to a situation in which individuals in positions of authority are more likely to get rewards, while those in positions of weakness are more likely to experience prejudice (Harris & Radley, 2018). Also connected with stereotyping, occurs because of discriminatory acts or attitudes are usually based on inaccurate gender assumptions or generalizations and

because people regularly believe that gender is significant in situations where it cannot be proven scientifically. In terms of attitudes of the essential character of women and men, as well as the roles that they should play in society, sexism can be related to both. The assumption of gender-based superiority by one gender over the other manifests itself in the form of gender stereotypes, which can lead to one gender being considered superior to the other (Tutchell & Edmonds, 2015). If such hostile and aware thinking does occur, it is also plausible that it is unconscious and manifested itself in the form of unconscious bias. While gender discrimination

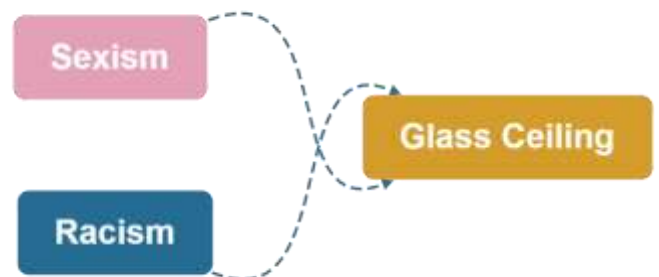


Figure 1: Primary reasons behind glass ceiling

Source: Tutchell and Edmonds (2015)

can cause harm to anybody, it has had a disproportionate impact on women in recent times (Stith, 1996).

Another main reason, racism, which is also known as racialism. Racism is the belief that humans can be classified into different and separable entities known as "races" based on their biological characteristics. Racism also includes the belief that there is a general connection among physical, psychological, and spiritual characteristics (Roberts et al., 2019). Racism based on intellectual superiority and religion of the population is also prevailing. In recent history, the Aryan Race had called and identified itself as a master race, superior to all other races. The domination of the black people is also evidence of historical racism. The parties affected by racism are often neglected from their civil rights including economic freedom, education, and healthcare (Chin, 2009). The term was mainly coined in the American continent in the early 1980s, however, the exercise of the belief that the term "racism" carries is prevailing in our modern societies almost everywhere. However, in the early 21st century, all the nations have identified race superiority as a baseless argument with no scientific validation and thus has been disallowed in almost all national infrastructure and systems. Countries like North Korea have yet to acknowledge the illogicality of racism. Despite the national acknowledgements and practices to prevent racism, the sign of racism is still prevailing in modern business organizations. In national systems and business organizations, the minorities of these regions often get victimized by implicit racism (Stith, 1996).

When it comes to tackling the glass ceiling, there is a stumbling block since it has so many different meanings and uses. Furthermore, there are no objective and immediately visible criteria that can be used to determine with confidence whether a glass ceiling exists in a specific organization (Epler, 2021). Numerous studies show that there is a prevailing attitude towards discrimination based on both sexism and racism in both the conscious and subconscious minds of the studied subjects. The factors causing the root for the glass ceiling is subtle yet persistent among different industries and systems (Fitzpatrick, 2016). In modern societies, the rate of discrimination is much higher than in developing and underdeveloped nations (Wise, 2019). Regardless of the economic situation and social structure, discrimination against women can be identified in almost every nation worldwide. Women are prevented from ascending to positions of power or responsibility, as well as from climbing the corporate ladder, because of discriminatory hurdles based purely on their sexual orientation, as suggested by different studies (Rincy & Panchantham, 2018). It is possible that the glass ceiling occurs because of a huge number of assumptions (Tutchell & Edmonds, 2015). The glass ceiling stands out as a

separate kind of inequality when compared to other types of discrimination and inequality because it has been differentiated by several characteristics that distinguish it from the others. To begin, the term "glass ceiling" refers to discrimination against women in leadership positions and other positions of power in the workplace (Barreto et al., 2009). Therefore, regardless of their educational level, professional experience, or talents, women would be negatively impacted by the glass ceiling. To be effective, rather than concentrating on the proportion of women in managerial roles at any one moment in time, it is critical to study women's progress within the framework of the historical development of the glass ceiling, which, however, includes promotions to managerial positions. Known colloquially as the "glass ceiling," this idea refers to the rising disparities that exist between men and women as their professional careers progress inside an organization (Haugen et al., 2010). Furthermore, while current equal opportunity law prohibits overt discrimination against certain categories of persons, this form of bias might be difficult to detect. A person's character may also be represented by non-observable actions, activities, facts, processes, or attitudes that reflect established or conventional conceptions about a person's personality. The existence of concealed barriers to progress inside a hierarchical structure, on the other hand, makes climbing the ladder of success that much more difficult to achieve. While this is correct, it is intended towards senior management, with the idea that the glass ceiling happens more often at this level than at the middle and lower levels of the management hierarchy. As one progresses up the corporate ladder, the significance of these roadblocks to promotion becomes more evident. In the opinion of most academics, the phenomenon is remarkable in that it happens at the very top of corporate management structures (Wise, 2019).

From the discussion made above, the factors causing the glass ceiling can be identified. As the glass ceiling based on sexism is widely prevailing, identifying gender as the primary factor is the most logical option. Then the racism-related factors can be identified. Modern social scientists have identified racism as a social issue, breaking racism into different pieces would be a viable technique to acknowledge the actual causes. The social practice, trend, and dogma along with religion and language can act as causes of the glass ceiling, as discussed in the earlier section of this subchapter. All these social factors and the existence of the identification of sexual differences in Bangladesh has been used to form the fundamental background for conducting this research.

The glass ceiling, in modern business organizations, has become one of the most alarming factors that directly affect employee satisfaction and organizational justice (Wise, 2019). Since

the term “Glass Ceiling” has been coined, psychological, social, and business researchers, all over the world, are trying to understand the reasons behind the glass ceiling. The researchers from a psychology background had merged the concept of “Glass Ceiling” with “Cognitive Discrimination” and since the late 1980s, these researchers are trying to analyse and understand the psychological factors that are leading corporate organizations to discriminate among their employees and workers (Stockdale & Crosby, 2004, p. 12). Social scientists are following a different approach. Despite finding the psychological causes they are trying to find the social issues and dogmas that are indeed acting as influencing factors behind the glass ceiling (Gørrill, 2019). The business scholars, however, are trying to understand the contexts where the glass ceiling exists from a point of view of a corporate manager. The management point of view only allows the right person at the right place. Business scholars are advocating for capabilities and experience that is logically and practically causing the inception of the glass ceiling in any organization (Lüsted, 2019). To understand the glass ceiling in the context of the Bangladeshi RMG Sector, the researcher of this report had to consider all the different points of view available in existing literature (Roberts et al., 2019). To form an objective and rational structure for this research project the researcher used the existing literature at the fundamental level. Different journals, research papers, articles and other academic materials have been used to gather the insights, theories and models required to conduct this research effectively. The literature review for this research project has been divided into seven subchapters. Each subchapter focuses on different areas of the glass ceiling. The first subchapter begins with the definition and discussion on the glass ceiling in general. The second subchapter focuses on the existing theories and models of the glass ceiling. The third subchapter discusses the glass ceiling from a global perspective. The fourth subchapter acknowledges the glass ceiling in the global RMG industry. The fifth subchapter identifies the availability of glass ceilings in south Asia to identify if any regional factors led to the glass ceiling in the south Asian countries. The sixth chapter discusses the prevailing glass ceiling in Bangladesh. In the last subchapter, the glass ceiling in the RMG sector of Bangladesh will be discussed specifically using different published statistics and research papers. The purposes of this literature review are to find the factors causing the glass ceiling in the RMG Sector of Bangladesh and to find the research gaps where this research project would be able to provide value to the stakeholders.

2.1.2 Glass Ceiling Theories and Models

2.1.2.1 Discrimination theory

Discrimination theory encompasses a broad array of concepts and perspectives within the social sciences, particularly sociology and psychology (Bieluszko & Marciszewska, 2018). At its core, discrimination theory seeks to understand the mechanisms, causes, and consequences of discrimination, which involves treating individuals or groups unfairly based on certain characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, or disability (Reed, 2017). One prominent framework within discrimination theory is the social identity theory, proposed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979. This theory posits that individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups, and their sense of identity and self-esteem is derived from these group memberships. Discrimination often occurs when individuals perceive differences between their own group and other groups. This perception leads to in-group favouritism and out-group derogation. Another influential perspective is the institutional discrimination theory (Bohren et al., 2022; Sharma, 2021). This theory emphasizes the role of societal structures and institutions in perpetuating unequal treatment and opportunities for certain groups. Institutional discrimination can be subtle and embedded within laws, policies, and practices, resulting in systematic disadvantage for marginalized groups. Moreover, the contact hypothesis, first introduced by Allport in 1954, suggests that increased contact between members of different groups can reduce prejudice and discrimination, particularly when the contact is cooperative, equal-status, and supported by institutional norms (Combes et al., 2018; Reed, 2017).

From more practical perspective, discrimination theory refers to a set of theories that aim to explain the causes and mechanisms of discrimination. These theories can be categorized into different levels of analysis, including individual, organizational, and structural factors. At the individual level, theories focus on understanding the prejudices and biases that lead to discriminatory behaviour (Bohren et al., 2022; Ulath & Zulkifli, 2024; Yingying, 2023). Organizational mechanisms theories, for example, examine how discrimination is perpetuated within institutions and systems. Structural determinants theories explore the broader societal factors that contribute to discrimination and the maintenance of privileges for certain groups. Discrimination theory also encompasses theories of two-choice discrimination learning, which explore how individuals learn to make correct responses based on relevant cues and become independent of irrelevant cues (Bohren et al., 2022; Sharma, 2021; Zarsky, 2017). Additionally,

discrimination theory includes legal and economic perspectives, which examine the measurement and measurement techniques of discrimination, as well as the impact of discrimination on Labor markets and workplace efficiency. Recent contributions to discrimination theory have expanded on traditional frameworks by considering learning and signalling environments, behavioural biases, and mis-specified beliefs (Bieluszko & Marciszewska, 2018; Combes et al., 2018; Reed, 2017).

2.1.2.2 Structural Barriers Theory

Structural barriers theory offers a profound insight into the systemic factors that obstruct the career advancement and equal opportunities for marginalized groups within organizations and society. Rooted in sociological and organizational theories, this perspective posits that institutional practices, policies, and norms create entrenched obstacles for women, racial minorities, and individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to access opportunities and progress in their careers (Parker, 1996). Empirical research has illuminated various systemic factors contributing to inequality, including discriminatory hiring and promotion practices, unequal access to resources and mentorship opportunities, gender pay gaps, and rigid organizational hierarchies. Furthermore, intersectionality theory emphasizes how multiple dimensions of identity intersect to compound disadvantage, highlighting the complex interplay of race, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status in shaping experiences of discrimination and inequality (Manuel & Shooshtari, 2021).

In essence, this theory refers to the concept that certain social structures and institutions create barriers that prevent marginalized groups from accessing resources and opportunities. These barriers can be both institutional and structural in nature. Institutional stigma, as seen in the context of HIV testing and transgender women's health seeking, refers to the negative attitudes and behaviours exhibited by organizations and their staff towards certain groups, which can deter individuals from seeking help or support (Parker, 1996). Structural barriers, as highlighted in the contexts of science collaboration, employment and poverty, and transgender women's health, are the societal and systemic factors that limit individuals' access to employment, education, healthcare, and other essential resources. These barriers can perpetuate inequalities and contribute to the marginalization of certain groups. The theory suggests that addressing these structural barriers is crucial for promoting social inclusion and equality (Manuel & Shooshtari, 2021).

2.1.2.3 Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory is a fundamental concept in economics that emphasizes the role of investments in education, training, and skills development as drivers of economic growth and individual success. Coined by economist Schultz (1960), human capital theory posits that individuals can enhance their productivity and earning potential through investments in human capital, which includes knowledge, skills, abilities, and other attributes acquired through education and experience (Cañibano & Potts, 2019; Choudhury & Choudhury, 2022). According to this theory, individuals are viewed as economic agents who make rational decisions about investing in their own human capital to maximize their future earning potential. These investments can take various forms, such as obtaining higher education degrees, participating in vocational training programs, acquiring specialized skills, or gaining work experience (Kang & Mok, 2022; McClanahan, 2017). According to Choudhury and Choudhury (2022); Galiakberova (2019); Kuzminov et al. (2019), by increasing their human capital, individuals become more productive workers, leading to higher wages and better job opportunities. From a macroeconomic perspective, human capital theory highlights the importance of workforce development and education policies in driving economic growth and competitiveness. Nations with well-educated and skilled populations are better positioned to innovate, adapt to technological changes, and achieve sustainable economic development. As such, investments in education and human capital are considered crucial for fostering long-term prosperity and improving societal well-being (Cañibano & Potts, 2019; Fix, 2018; Wright & Constantin, 2021).

In essence, human capital theory refers to the concept that individuals can enhance their employment outcomes by investing in education and acquiring knowledge, skills, and experience (Choudhury & Choudhury, 2022). It is considered a crucial factor in the socio-economic development of modern society. The theory originated from a rethinking of the role of individuals in the post-industrial economy, where human capital became the most important factor for economic growth and development. The theory suggests that education is an investment in human capital, providing individuals with the necessary resources to increase productivity and performance (Korpi & Clark, 2017; Nemeth, 2017). It is also recognized that the creation of human capital resources is facilitated through social interactions and shared states, influenced by environmental conditions (Kuzminov et al., 2019; Nadezhina & Avduevskaia, 2021).

Human capital theory is closely related to the concept of the glass ceiling, particularly in the context of understanding the barriers to career advancement and the underrepresentation of certain demographic groups, such as women, in leadership positions within organizations (Holden & Biddle, 2017; Jin & Waldman, 2020). However, despite possessing comparable levels of human capital to their male counterparts, women often encounter barriers to advancement that hinder their ability to reach leadership positions, resulting in the phenomenon known as the glass ceiling (Galiakberova, 2019; Hooley, 2021). In other words, human capital theory offers insights into understanding the persistence of the glass ceiling by highlighting the disconnect between individual qualifications and organizational advancement opportunities. While women may possess comparable levels of education, skills, and experience, their advancement is often constrained by systemic factors that undervalue their contributions and limit their access to career-enhancing opportunities (Cañibano & Potts, 2019; Galiakberova, 2019; McClanahan, 2017).

2.1.2.4 Tokenism

Tokenism refers to the practice of making symbolic gestures towards diversity and inclusion without genuine commitment to meaningful change or representation. In organizational contexts all over the world, tokenism often manifests when individuals from underrepresented groups are given superficial opportunities or positions to create the appearance of diversity, while systemic barriers to their full participation and advancement remain largely unchanged (Holgersson & Romani, 2020; Srivastava et al., 2018). The concept of tokenism is closely related to the glass ceiling, as both phenomena highlight the persistence of barriers to full inclusion and equitable representation within organizations. While tokenism may create the illusion of progress, it often fails to address the root causes of inequality and can perpetuate feelings of marginalization and exclusion among underrepresented groups (Lundy, 2018; Perez & Strizhko, 2018). Tokenism can have detrimental effects on organizational culture and morale, as individuals who are tokenized may feel undervalued and disempowered, while broader efforts towards diversity and inclusion may be undermined by superficial gestures that lack substantive impact (Guldiken et al., 2019).

2.1.2.5 Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality theory, developed by Crenshaw (1980), suggests that individuals' experiences of discrimination and oppression are shaped by the intersection of multiple social identities, such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability (Green et al., 2017; Heard et al., 2020). Unlike traditional approaches that examine these identities in isolation, intersectionality theory emphasizes the interconnectedness and complexity of social categories, recognizing that individuals may experience privilege and disadvantage simultaneously due to their unique positioning within intersecting systems of power and privilege (Chan et al., 2019; Kaushik & Walsh, 2018). At its core, intersectionality theory highlights the importance of recognizing the interconnected nature of social identities and systems of oppression. For example, a woman of colour may face distinct forms of discrimination that are not adequately captured by theories focusing solely on gender or race. By considering the intersections of race and gender, intersectionality theory provides a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which individuals experience privilege and oppression, as well as the complex interplay of social structures and power dynamics that shape their lived experiences. Again, intersectionality theory has profound implications for various domains, including law, social policy, and activism (Angelucci, 2017; Chan et al., 2019; Kaushik & Walsh, 2018). In legal contexts, intersectionality informs efforts to address systemic discrimination and ensure equal protection under the law for individuals with intersecting identities (Fisk et al., 2021; Oexle & Corrigan, 2018). In social policy, intersectionality calls for approaches that recognize and address the unique needs and experiences of marginalized communities, rather than adopting one-size-fits-all solutions that may overlook or exacerbate existing inequalities. Moreover, intersectionality theory has been instrumental in shaping social movements and activism aimed at promoting social justice and equity. By centering the experiences of marginalized individuals and highlighting the interconnected nature of oppression, intersectionality theory challenges dominant narratives and fosters solidarity among diverse groups fighting for collective liberation (Atewologun, 2018; Oexle & Corrigan, 2018).

2.1.3 Gendered Organization Theory

Gendered Organization Theory (GOT) was established by Acker (2009) in response to the inadequacy of modern gender-based theories in assessing and explaining the influence of gender on organizational behaviour. According to the GOT, normative gendered ideas favour men and place women in the backs of the bus. To properly analyse organizational culture and

processes, Acker believes that gender must be included as an analytical category. GOT investigates a variety of gender-based characteristics and behaviours that contribute to this disparity (Acker, 2009). When applied to the workplace, a gendered lens can show prejudices, segregations, oppression, discrimination, and inequality that are the result of patriarchy and male supremacy.

As a reflection of society, GOT sees the organization as possessing intrinsic political aspects that reflect patriarchal regimes in a variety of manifestations. As a result, to comprehend this theory, one must consider the organization as a tool of power that serves to perpetuate patriarchy while providing privilege to men. To better understand gender imbalance, it is possible to examine and comprehend the procedures and activities of a company. The job market tends to favour secondary labour sectors with lower earnings, less stability, and fewer benefits when it comes to female employment. Men, on the other hand, fare better in primary labour markets, earning greater wages and having more career opportunities. Women's roles and autonomy are investigated by the Global Opportunity Track, which also investigates occupational and employment differences, income, influence, and authority inequities, and gender pay gaps. The application of a gendered analytical framework assists companies in recognizing their role in maintaining or minimizing gender inequality and developing policies to address this issue in the future.

It was originally separated into five components: gender divisions, symbols, signs, and images; interactions between different bodies within the organization; gender constructions within the organization; and gendered organizational perception (or perception of gender). In 2012, Acker reviewed her previous work (published in 2009) and acknowledged four key gendered organization characteristics. These four characteristics are Organization Processes, Culture, Gendered Identities, and Interactions (Acker, 2012).



Figure 2: Gendered Organization Theory

Source: Joan Acker (2009)

2.1.3.1 Organization Processes

Gendered practices in the workplace, inequities in distribution, compensation determination, job design, workplace behaviour, and other aspects of organizational life are addressed through organizational processes. Gender and wage segregation were addressed through the introduction of job categorisation. It has been found through the study that men's occupations were described in greater detail than women's occupations. The inclusion of women in the system boosted the directness of the system's employment value (Acker, 2009).

2.1.3.2 Organization Culture

Gender inequalities and unfairness tend to be discussed in the company's corporate culture. Ideas, attitudes, visual representations, and values are all common components of cultures. Workers from a variety of groups believe in the principles of equal pay and segregation (Acker, 2009). For example, men and women are paid equally in Saudi Arabia, female paramedics are employed at a lower rate than male paramedics in health institutions, including ambulances and emergency rooms. Organizational culture contributes to the perpetuation of gender imbalances through interactions with race, gender, and social class (Wise, 2019).

2.1.3.3 Gender Identities

Gendered identities for women and men can shift based on employee engagement. Those who act more feminine and collaboratively may be viewed as weak and ineffective, whilst those who act more forcefully may be perceived as harsh. A competent manager is helpful and able to discern variables and changes over time and space. Nurse managers' supportive role function and conduct assist identify them. Consider these points while tackling gendered organizations. Men and women working together can advocate for their rights and success in businesses (Acker, 2009).

2.1.3.4 Interactions within Workplace

Women and men's gendered identities can be shaped and transformed through their interactions at work. When it comes to job management, assertive women may be regarded as inflexible, whereas women who are more feminine and cooperative may be perceived as weak and

ineffective. In addition to being helpful supervisors, women are also adept at recognizing and adapting to changes through time and between locations (Acker, 2009)

2.1.4 Theoretical Application of Gendered Organization Theory

GOT has been adopted in this research for its comprehensive approach to understanding the systemic factors perpetuating gender inequality within organizations, particularly in the context of the glass ceiling phenomenon. GOT provides a holistic framework that encompasses various dimensions of organizational structures, practices, and cultures, allowing for a nuanced analysis of the barriers faced by women in the Bangladeshi RMG Sector. By examining gender divisions, symbols, interactions, and perceptions within the workplace, GOT offers a comprehensive lens through which to explore how gender inequalities manifest and are sustained. Moreover, theory's emphasis on gendered identities and interactions complements other theories, such as discrimination theory and human capital theory, incorporated in the research. By integrating these perspectives, the research gains a multifaceted understanding of the glass ceiling, acknowledging the interplay between individual experiences, organizational dynamics, and broader societal factors. For example, discrimination theory provides insights into the mechanisms, causes, and consequences of discrimination based on gender, while human capital theory highlights the role of investments in education and skills development in shaping employment outcomes.

Additionally, its focus on organizational processes and culture aligns with intersectionality theory, which emphasizes how multiple social identities intersect to shape experiences of discrimination and privilege. By considering the interconnectedness of gender with other dimensions of identity, such as race, class, and sexuality, the research acknowledges the complex interplay of power dynamics and structural inequalities that contribute to the glass ceiling.

2.1.5 Factors Behind Glass Ceiling According to the Theories Described

As this research project is focused on Bangladeshi women getting victimized through the glass ceiling, the identification of theories and models that acknowledge the role of gender behind the glass ceiling is a necessity. The topic "Glass Ceiling" has been a topic of interest among many psychological and social researchers. The inductive philosophy of the previous researcher on this topic allowed them to identify different factors that act as reasons behind the glass ceiling. Many researchers tried to form a framework or model to identify the glass ceiling in any organization. Among other models, the model developed by Elacqua et al. (2009) is the

most famous and widely applied in business organizations to identify managerial defects. This model has been developed by the researchers through a series of studies conducted through the early 2000s. It piqued the interest of the researchers as to why female executives are rarely promoted to the highest levels of their companies' management systems. Research conducted with 685 managers from a major Midwest insurance company was published in 2009. The study suggests that there is a link between perceived differences in treatment between men and women and the fact that there is a glass ceiling (Elacqua et al., 2009). The authors believe that attitudes toward unequal treatment operate as a moderating element in the association between organizational qualities and conceptions of a glass ceiling that is supported by their findings. According to the developed theory derived from that research results, there are two groups of factors influencing the extent and intensity of discrimination or glass ceiling in an organizational setting. These groups are interpersonal factors and situational factors (Elacqua et al., 2009).

2.1.5.1 Interpersonal factors

It has been suggested by these authors that, unique interpersonal interactions can have an impact on the way women and men are treated in the workplace (Elacqua et al., 2009). Researchers Elacqua (2009) focused their investigation on career progression ideas such as mentorship, informal senior management networks, and pleasant meetings with company decision-makers. Indeed, a scarcity of senior organizational mentors is detrimental to women's professional progress, and this is especially true given the fact that mentoring acts as an important source of knowledge for women (Belasen, 2017). Additionally, individuals who were encouraged by a mentor saw greater promotion opportunities and were more likely to be promoted. This population would likewise be more content in their current positions. Mentoring can make a huge difference in the careers of women and possibly the growth of their businesses. Individuals who believe they are included in important information and opportunities, according to Elacqua et al. (2009), are more inclined to believe that others feel the same way. As a consequence, they have observed reduced discrimination among employees.

The second component of interpersonal dynamics studied by the authors was the existence of an informal network of senior people in the workplace. The practice of exchanging strategic information, contacts, and referrals is known as building and exploiting career contacts. Several studies have shown that women are given lower-profile positions, which reduces their chances

of meeting high-ranking people and forming social connections. As a result of their lack of exposure in the company's formal social network, female managers may not be given the same level of respect as their male counterparts (Elacqua et al., 2009). The perception of a glass ceiling would be created if there was insufficient access to such a network.

Relationships with important decision-makers inside the organization are the third component of interpersonal factors to be considered. Individuals frequently seek connections with others of their sex who have had similar circumstances to their own (Lublin, 2016). "The queen bee phenomenon" is a term used to describe an additional hurdle that women in positions of leadership may encounter. Specifically, this syndrome relates to the conviction held by some female executives at the top of their organizations that they obtained their position via years of hard work and dedication. They believe that other women should put out the same level of effort that they do to achieve their goals (Harris & Radley, 2018). Indeed, according to Cech and Blair-Loy (2010), women who succeed in breaking through the glass ceiling usually attribute their achievements to their innate talents rather than to overcoming institutional impediments that senior women can affect.

According to Cohen et al. (2020), the glass ceiling is a result of several interpersonal variables. The authors argued that female accountants' impressions of the glass ceiling have been exacerbated by a lack of mentoring, networking, and social support from male corporate executives, as well as high-profile job assignments.

2.1.5.2 Situational Factors

The other group of factors that Elacqua et al. (2009) had identified is associated with the internal situations of an organization. The internal system and level of prevailing justice within organizations can effectively determine the level of discrimination. Different treatments of different groups of people based on gender can be set by the procedures followed by the organizations. The organizations that follow objective criteria extensively for conducting their activities are believed to have a less effective glass ceiling in place. Studies show that women prefer to get promotions based on their performance and contribution. However, in the organizational context, the women population is more associated with their performance than their men counterparts in terms of promotion and other benefits. Another study shows that women in the service industry are more vulnerable to the glass ceiling. In the service industry,

women are less likely to be judged as compatible and competitive than their men counterparts (Wise, 2019).

The second important situational factor is organizational history (Elacqua et al., 2009). The organizations that have women in their managerial position for a long time tend to adapt with the women leadership and the parties associated with these organizations start perceiving women as equal to men gradually. The study conducted by Elacqua et al. in 2009 suggests that the women who are already in a managerial position perceive women as capable candidates for any given position within the organization. However, the organizations that prioritize more on women rather than gender equity do not solve the glass ceiling issues rather increase employee dissatisfaction and internal disputes. In organizations where women are holding a less powerful position, the glass ceiling often results in sexual harassment. Objectifying women and getting sexual service in exchange for giving organizational benefits like higher ranking in the hierarchy is a common practice in male-dominant organizations. According to Farrish et al. (2020), the situational factors may not cause the inception of the glass ceiling within an organization directly, but they can make the existence of the glass ceiling intensive and worsen.

2.1.5.3 Other Factors

A study conducted by Syeda Qudisia Batool (2013) suggested that women are less interested in managerial positions due to the added burden and liabilities that come with the higher ranking.

Holding a managerial position, especially in organizations often requires extensive experience and capabilities that women in managerial position often lacks. The lack of experience can easily be associated with

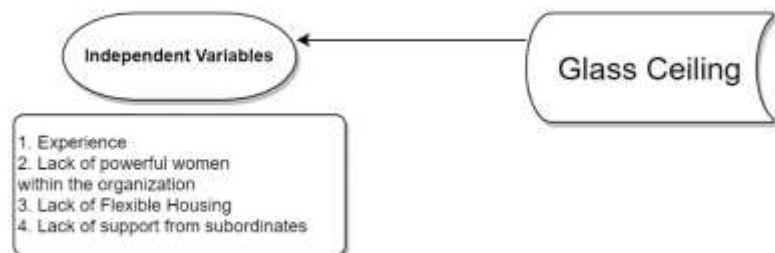


Figure 3: Other Factors Behind Glass Ceiling

Source: (Batool, 2013)

the household duties put upon women at a higher rate than a man. The researcher researched 1000 Fortune member companies and found that the glass ceiling exists in all these organizations at least to some extent. Upon interviewing the CEO's and other executives of these companies, she found that the number one reason for women not being promoted to a higher ranking is the perceived lack of managerial experience. The second most prevailing reason that the executives of those companies acknowledged is the lack shortage of successful

women in managerial positions (Batool, 2013). The shortage subconsciously forces other members of the organizations to think of women as less capable bodies. The third most mentioned cause behind the glass ceiling the executives mentioned was the lack of housing and allowance programmes for women. For example, pregnancy leaves often seem like a sign of weakness for women. The fourth most mentioned reason was the refusal of women leadership among the men and women to some extent. Mostly in male dominant societies, the leadership of women often gets neglected and rejected by their men counterparts (Tutchell & Edmonds, 2015). When asked about the reason why women have less experience than men, most of the executives responded that the inability of women to do the job that requires them to spend noticeable time away from home and family (Batool, 2013). By nature, and sometimes, due to family responsibilities, women cannot dedicate as much time out of their home as men (Bzdek, 2009).

2.1.6 Drawing the Relation between Gendered Organization Theory and Glass Ceiling

Gender inequality in the workplace hurts promotion opportunities. Women participation in supportive jobs such as laboratory technician, radiology technician, secretary, and administrative assistant is noticeably high in Saudi Arabia, where men dominate the most influential and well-compensated professions. Because of the low presence of women in administrative and managerial positions in Middle Eastern healthcare institutions, the glass ceiling has a notable impact on these organisations (Wise, 2019). Even though the profession employs a high number of women, Hanson (2019), reveals that the glass ceiling is a key factor in limiting the number of women in healthcare management. Female advancement to high-level positions in almost all industries is hindered, according to Wise (2019), by the existence of a "glass ceiling." Gendered organisations have the effect of discriminating against certain persons when it comes to promotions and recruiting for high-level roles (Acker, 2009).

A male-dominated hierarchy fosters the recruitment of men into top positions as a sign of power and authority, as well as the perpetuation of a male-dominated network through patriarchal culture (Lüsted, 2019). It has been claimed by the researchers that, gender inequality is a product of the prolonged dominance of men and the exclusion of the women population in the position of power and responsibilities (Hodes, 2016). The connection between the glass ceiling

and gendered organization theory has been depicted in **Error! Reference source not found. 4**

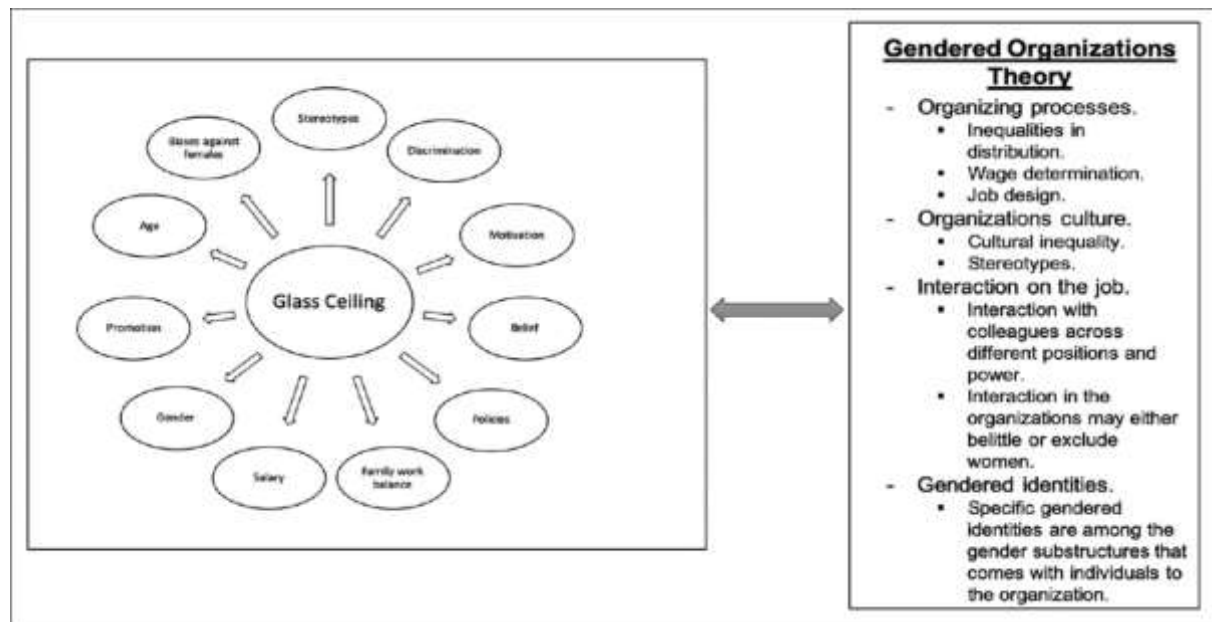


Figure 4: Connection between Gendered Organization Theory and Glass Ceiling

Source: Joan Acker (2009)

For this research project, the connection between the glass ceiling and gendered organization can be used as determinant factors of gender discrimination in the RMG sector in Bangladesh.

2.2 Empirical Perspectives

Female leaders of the state have been ruling over Bangladesh, an Asian ‘Emerging Tiger,’ for more than 30 years. 10 per cent of legislative seats are held by women, while 8 per cent of cabinet posts are held by them. While male and female enrolment percentages are equal at the elementary and secondary levels, the numbers begin to decline drastically beyond that (Shetu & Ferdous, 2017). Many female mega-citizens do not have the opportunity to work outside the home or exercise their right to freedom of choice, even though urban women have an advantage over rural women in terms of education and job development. A woman’s ability to work is determined by the male spouse or guardian who lives with them. Female social standing is quite consistent throughout the country, whether in urban or rural locations (Islam & Rahman, 2021). Religious and cultural taboos that have existed for centuries have served to restrict women’s rights and privileges, which have contributed to the perpetuation of traditional social

and familial structures. Women's domination in leadership positions is not often regarded as a positive trend in a male-dominated social and organisational milieu (Khair, 2019). Apart from gender discrimination, no study has been conducted on the presence of a 'Glass Ceiling' in Bangladesh, its linkages with other social and organisational components and no proposals for remedy have been made. Also making it harder to prove the glass Ceiling is a scarcity of data on women's job and career patterns.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (1993, p. 91), six perceptual characteristics contribute to the uneven treatment of women in the BCS administrative cadre (Bangladesh Civil service). a) Unfavourable attitudes about women held by male colleagues; b) perception held by higher-ranking officers regarding the job abilities of female officers. c) The male superiority in the workplace (d) male colleagues' unwillingness to participate in tasks with women and (e) considering the male portion as more efficient than the female portion.

In an organisation, the existence of a glass Ceiling became increasingly obvious as more educated women entered the labour force. However, there has never been a complete investigation on Bangladesh's "Glass Ceiling". Habib Zafarullah, of the University of New England Armidale, who authored the "Through the Brick Wall and the Glass Ceiling: Women in the Bangladeshi Civil Service" in 2019 (Zafarullah, 2019). Similarly, to other countries, working women in Bangladesh have a dual duty to play, according to him. Managing their homes, kids, families and balancing the work is a full-time job in and of itself. In their attempt to perform both roles successfully, they frequently make concessions that benefit neither. In turn, individuals may lose interest in their jobs and be forced to remain in their positions for years, even though they are unworthy of advancement. Individuals are compelled to value their options because of their social and familial circumstances," says the author.

Several well-known Bangladeshi studies have looked at the salary disparity between men and women. Zafarullah (2000) used primary data to investigate the phenomenon of the glass ceiling in public administration. It has been determined that the average female worker makes 23.1 per cent less than the average male worker, according to Kapsos research (2008). Ahmed and Maitra (2010) conducted a study in which they used the LFS to investigate the issue of selective bias. It was discovered by the researchers that discrimination is a significant contributor to the wage disparity between urban and rural workers. Pay inequities are more severe at the bottom of the pay distribution, according to Ahmed and McGillivray (2015), who employed three decomposition approaches to demonstrate this. Because men and women have different

educational backgrounds, women have a more difficult time obtaining well-paying positions. In unconditional quantile regressions for the years 2005–2009, Ahmed and Maitra (2015) discovered a sticky floor effect as well as gender discrimination. In all investigations, sample selection was applied, which resulted in an underestimating of the discrepancy when the method was not utilised. By examining data from the LFS 2005-06, Anjum (2016) discovered that the gender wage gap in the public sector was smaller than in the private sector. According to Siddiquee and Hossain (2018), the bottom tail of the LFS 2010 dataset exhibits greater wage variability than the top tail. According to Rahman and Al-Hasan (2018), informal labour contributes considerably too significant income gaps in the lower quantiles of the income distribution.

2.2.1 Glass Ceiling in Bangladesh among Senior Management Position

According to an International Labor Organization (2015) survey, men hold the majority of senior management positions in Bangladesh, with women accounting for only 5.4 per cent of these positions. Negative sociocultural perspectives, a lack of managerial support, performance evaluation bias, male dominance in the senior management team, and a lack of flexibility are all factors that contribute to a lack of female leadership in Bangladeshi organisations (Hafiz et al., 2020; Kabir, 2020; Karmaker & Fatema, 2020). Females are also less ambitious and self-assured than males, and they lack some leadership traits such as aggression and influence. Female employees in India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh from a variety of industries regularly report these as barriers to female leadership in their workplaces (Karmaker & Fatema, 2020). Women have significant barriers to obtaining leadership posts in almost every country, owing to a lack of self-confidence, professional motivation, and persuasive leadership ability. The most major hurdles for female leaders in Bangladeshi commercial and public organisations, according to Afza and Newaz (2008), are a lack of confidence, a lack of organisational and social culture, and a lack of encouragers in the workplace. Even though Bangladesh's RMG industry employs over 4.2 million people (85% of whom are women), just a few women hold senior positions in the country's RMG industry (Akterujjaman et al., 2019).

2.2.2 Glass Ceiling in RMG Sector of Bangladesh

Islam and Jantan (2017) discovered a glass ceiling in the ready-made garments industry in Bangladesh. According to the results of the poll, there are three primary categories of roadblocks that prohibit female employees from growing in RMG businesses. The article summarises the respondents' opinions on the obstacles they face in achieving leadership roles

in their respective organisations. The lack of confidence of females in the RMG industry in Bangladesh, as well as stress associated with leadership roles, are significant impediments to their advancement. This is because: 1. organisational culture does not allow for female advancement into leadership positions; 2. social culture favours male advancement into leadership roles more than female advancement into leadership roles; and/or 3. there are few people in society, including those in one's own family, who support female progression into leadership positions (Islam & Jantan, 2017).

First and foremost, "negative/poor organisational culture" was identified as the most common and significant barrier for women seeking to advance to positions of leadership in businesses. This is the result of the process (Kabir, 2020; Sharmila Sayeed, 2020). Promoting and recruiting women into top roles in Bangladesh's RMG industry should be done in a female-friendly manner, according to Kabir (2020). In this regard, organisations should implement equal recruitment and promotion strategies for women across all levels and functional areas. Additionally, societal difficulties such as negative opinions of women leaders, gender stereotypes, and male executives' attitudes about women have been identified as significant roadblocks to female advancement into leadership positions (Becker-Leifhold & Heuer, 2018). To this end, it is advocated that the significance of female leaders be highlighted to change people's image of them (Akbar et al., 2021).

Third, the survey indicates that there is a scarcity of people who foster professional development in both the workplace and personal life (Becker-Leifhold & Heuer, 2018; Islam & Rahman, 2021). For example, according to a survey, the majority of husbands/partners do not allow their wives to take the initiative in the Bangladeshi business under investigation. Wives and partners of female professionals, for personal, organisational, and social reasons, should be persuaded of the need for female career advancement (Hafiz et al., 2020).

The participation of female employees in huge numbers in the RMG sector of Bangladesh is a relatively new phenomenon in Bangladesh. The number of female employees and the percentage of male and female employees in the sector varies in different studies. The tendency of not providing sufficient data to the authority is common among small RMG firms in Bangladesh (Islam & Jantan, 2017). However, the garments owner association of Bangladesh, BGMEA frequently update their position related to employment and transactions. According to International Labour Organization, though the number of female employees in the RMG sector is high in the 2000s and 2010s, the percentage of female employees were higher during

the 1980s and 1990s (International Labour Office. Sectoral Activities Programme., 2018). According to this report, the percentage of women in the workforce of the RMG sector of Bangladesh was 90% in 1990. The rate declined to 63.4 per cent in 2010. In 2018, the rate declined to 61.17 per cent according to the report. However, according to the survey conducted by Asian Centre for Development in 2015, 65 per cent female participation rate was there in the RMG sector of Bangladesh though the garments owners reported more than 80% participation rate. This deviation or differences between rates can question the credibility of the per centage known through the existing literature. However, the report published by Asian Centre of Development is more accurate due to the rigid procedures and methods followed to conduct the study (Islam & Jantan, 2017; Karmaker & Fatema, 2020). In 2018 the rate has been studied again by the Centre for Policy Dialogue and found to be stood at 60.80 per cent. In 2019, an initiative taken by BRAC University named, mapped in Bangladesh, studied the current situation regarding the participation of female employees in the RMG sector of Bangladesh. According to the report published by BRAC University, the female participation rate further declined to 58.30 per cent in 2019. During the Covid-19 pandemic, most of the garment's factories laid off their employees both females and males. After the factories gradually opened in early 2021, the rate of the current female portion in the RMG sectors workforce in Bangladesh is unknown at the point of time this research has been conducted.

Table 2: Women Participation Rate in the RMG Sector of Bangladesh in Different Years

Year	Women Participation Rate
1980s & 1990s	90%
2010	63.40%
2015	65.00%
2018	60.80%
2019	58.30%

Source : The International Labor Organization (ILO)

2.2.3 Glass Ceiling in Global Context

According to a study conducted by Statista during 2020 and the report published in 2021, the glass ceiling exists in almost all the countries globally. Developed countries like Sweden, Iceland and Finland has the highest score for work environment friendliness for women. Along with these countries, other 97 countries have been listed in the index of environment for working women worldwide in 2020. However, Bangladesh and other neighbouring countries of Bangladesh are not part of this index. Though the glass ceiling in the highly ranked countries is not visible, the existence of the glass ceiling, even for these countries, cannot be denied.

To be sure, substantial progress has been accomplished in recent decades in the developed world's wealthy countries, including strong anti-discrimination legislation and increased female employment and participation in political and organisational leadership. The globe is still a long way from achieving 50% in many spheres of social life (Davidson & Cooper, 1992; Morrison et al., 1987). The political and civil campaigns and movements happening in different parts of the world at different times has brought to light the fact that many women are unable to get even the most basic level of acceptable treatment at work. Additionally, media coverage has recently focused on the 3.1 billion girls and women living in developing countries, which account for four out of every five women and girls on the planet. 104 countries lack legislation to protect female employees from sexual harassment at work, according to a new World Bank study, while 18 countries allow husbands to legally prohibit their wives from working. The presence of significant cultural barriers persists even after legal barriers have been abolished, particularly in poor nations. In 2019, the World Bank acknowledged the existing ethical and cultural barrier for the development of women careers in different regions including the region of South Asia.

McDowell et al. (1999) investigated whether or not there were inequalities in the chances of progression between men and women in the workplace using a unique panel of data from members of the American Economic Association. To see if there was a difference in promotions between men and women, a random-effects probit model of promotion from assistant professor to associate professor and from associate professor to full professor was used. According to the research, female employees' chances of promotion were less favourable than those of their male counterparts in the same position. The good news, according to the researchers, is that opportunities for advancement for female economists have improved over time, particularly from associate to full professor positions.

The impact of the "glass ceiling" is not limited to the United States alone. It can be found on every continent on the earth. It can be found all over the world, including the United States. Therefore, academics in countries including Germany, Austria, the United Kingdom, Bangladesh, and Taiwan have researched this phenomenon to raise awareness of the phenomenon and dispel the myth that women are unqualified for positions of leadership at the top of an organization's hierarchical structure, among other goals. Researchers have determined that the glass ceiling effect can exist at the top levels of organisations in every country, regardless of the size of the organisation in question, according to their findings. Female top management positions in the world's major firms account for only 3 per cent of all top management positions, highlighting the importance of this issue, according to Wirth. During the eighteenth century, under German civil law, domestic matters such as location (buying and selling a property), asset use, and other obstacles were placed totally in the hands of men. Women did not receive equal legal protection until the late 1970s, even though the Code of Civil Procedure was enacted in 1958. Although views toward women have improved in recent years, women in Germany continue to be concerned about the preservation of a "glass ceiling" when it comes to obtaining executive positions. Corporate Women Directors International Report (2004) said that women held only 10.3 per cent of the seats on German company boards in 2004, a figure that has since been revised. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, women held 17.5 per cent of board positions in the United States, 12.5 per cent of board positions in the United Kingdom, 8.6 per cent of board positions in the Netherlands, 7.7 per cent of board positions in Switzerland, 7.2 per cent of board seats in France, 1.8 per cent of board seats in Italy, and 0.7 per cent of board positions in Japan. Specific findings included the finding that 15 out of 22 Fortune Global 200 companies having at least 25 per cent female board involvement were situated in the United States, with only three being headquartered in Germany, according to the study. Senior management positions in Germany were dominated by women: 6.9 per cent held top management positions in major corporations, 9.0 per cent held top management positions in small and medium-sized businesses, and 33.2 per cent held senior management positions in associations and government organisations. Female executives in small enterprises and public-sector organisations may have a greater probability of advancing to the top than male executives, according to historical data. As a result of their analysis, Albrecht et al. (2003) discovered that there is a glass ceiling in Swedish enterprises. Although Sweden has a feminine culture, according to Hofstede's cultural dimension, women in Sweden nevertheless suffer the "glass ceiling" effect, which restricts their career options. From the late 1960s to the 1990s, the impact of the average pay gap at the top of the income distribution

expanded in a linear pattern, as the wage distribution got increasingly unequal, according to the research of Albrecht et al. (2003). Even though it did not exist in the late 1960s, the glass ceiling effect became noticeable in the 1980s and became significantly more frequent in the 1990s, according to a recent study. What matters is that, regardless of how many nations have suffered the glass ceiling effect, it is crucial to remember that many top-level occupations are unequally distributed between men and women for reasons other than prejudice or negative attitudes toward women. One study conducted in Austria found that a lack of female managers with the necessary talent for international assignments, as well as a lack of interest shown by women in such assignments, were factors contributing to the imbalance in the gender distribution of managers assigned to international assignments (Collins & Ward, 2021).

According to Forster (1999), women are interested in working abroad but are discouraged by traditional attitudes maintained by senior management in their home countries, which prevent them from doing so. Male and female top managers earn significantly different salaries because of differences in gender identification and outdated leadership attitudes. Females with a masculine gender identification desired greater upward mobility than females with a feminine gender identity, who preferred a better work-life balance, according to the study. Her research discovered a relationship between gender identification as either feminine or masculine and professional success in terms of compensation and status. The appearance of a glass ceiling can also be affected by the passage of time. Simpson and Altman (2000) discovered in a study conducted in the United Kingdom that women under the age of 35 had less influence on the glass ceiling than women above the age of 35. When it comes to female public sector managers in the United Kingdom, for example, 86.3 per cent were above the age of 35, compared to only 40 per cent of female private sector managers. According to the findings of this study, women advance more quickly in the public sector than in the private sector. In Asia, the term "glass ceiling" is utilised in a different way than it is in the West. Many Asian studies employed a lack of female top managers as a proxy for the existence of a glass ceiling, rather than a scarcity of female top managers. As a result of these countries' rapid economic development, an increasing number of women are entering the workforce. A large number of Asian women were employed. Women were employed in Bangladesh at a rate of 62 per cent. According to statistics, the majority of Asian women are employed, but they appear to be restricted to part-time and low-paying positions (Opara et al., 2020). Due to cultural and religious traditions, the "glass ceiling" is a prevalent occurrence in Asia, particularly in the South. A recent World Bank report found that female employees account for only 5 per cent of administrative or managerial jobs and 6

per cent of government roles. Other countries, such as South Korea, are experiencing a scarcity of labour. According to Kang and Rowley (2005), females had a harder time finding full-time employment than their male counterparts. Although they were partially correct, 46 per cent of South Korean women work as temporary employees, with only 15 per cent employed in administrative or professional positions. Compared to Hong Kong and China, where women held 21 per cent and 19 per cent of management positions, South Korea had only 7 per cent of management positions occupied by women. Many Asian women have been discouraged from furthering their education or finding work because of outdated gender norms and stereotypes (Kaur & Neubauer, 2019). Even though many Asian countries have a glass ceiling, female managers in Taiwan believe their chances of promotion are far stronger than those of their predecessors. Taiwan has a female-dominated managerial structure, but a male-dominated workforce (41 per cent female). When it came to working, Taiwanese women in their twenties and thirties did not suffer a severe glass ceiling, unlike British women in the same age range. Female CEOs in the Middle East face the glass ceiling at a higher rate and with greater severity than in other parts of the world. Female managers at a five-star Egyptian hotel were interviewed, and the results proved the existence of a "glass ceiling" The majority of female managers are unable to advance in their positions. According to research, the glass ceiling effect is associated with employment discrimination against women, partnership formation, mentoring, and network access (Devasahayam, 2018; Lathabhavan & Balasubramanian, 2017; Muhtadi, 2019).

According to Fagenson (1990), women's professional progress in organisations may be influenced by a variety of factors, including individual, institutional, and social traits. The degree to which women face barriers in the workplace varies by career and area. Women's engagement in the workforce is crucial to the corporation's future success and ability to preserve its diversity. Women have made limited advancements into leadership rankings for a variety of reasons, including organisational culture, which includes wage and promotion discrimination and other forms of harassment. According to Ahmed and Naseer (2015), female employees are not only underpaid and underrepresented in leadership positions, but they are also discouraged from taking on more difficult jobs with increased workloads. Numerous research, like those by Ponnuswamy and Mannochar (2014) and Vincent-Lancrin (2008), have revealed that pay differences combined with structural constraints (organisational culture) contribute to the exclusion of potential female leaders from organisations. (Eyring & Stead, 1998; Sahoo & Lenka, 2016) When a corporate culture views women as best suited for

specialised tasks such as caregiver and homemaker, it can be damaging to female leaders. Many countries and organisations prohibit women from holding leadership positions, with many believing that women should be responsible for childcare and other household responsibilities.

According to a report published by MSCI in 2014, women hold around 12% of board positions at the world's largest enterprises, with 64% of companies having one female director and 13% having three female directors. While women make up 13.4% of directors in established markets, they make up just 8.8% in emerging nations (MSCI, 2014). While the number of professional and educated females has increased over the prior decade, female leaders in developing and developing countries have been relatively few (World Bank, 2016). Women accounted for 41% of global employment, according United Nations (2015). However, at the executive level, where women continue to be underrepresented, this percentage drops precipitously. According to publications in the Economist and Emerald, female CEOs were underrepresented among the top 25 highest-paid executives. According to Bagüés and Volart (2007), a lower proportion of females in management and supervisory positions has been identified in both private and public organisations. Numerous surveys, including Grant Thornton's 2015 International Business Report, indicate that the percentage of women in senior positions has been constant over the last decade. According to a survey produced by Grant Thornton, a pioneering research organisation committed to women's leadership development, the percentage of women in top corporate positions has remained stable, climbing from 19% in 2004 to 22% in 2015 and never topping 24 per cent until 2015. Grant Thornton, a pioneering research organisation dedicated to the development of women leaders, indicated that the percentage of women in top corporate positions has remained stable, climbing from 19 per cent in 2004 to 22 per cent in 2015 and never exceeding 24 per cent until 2015 (Thornton, 2015) Argentina (16%), Botswana (16%), Brazil (15%), and Germany all have similar trends (15 per cent). Poland (14%) leads the way with 37%, followed by Latvia (36%), Estonia (36%), Lithuania (33%), France (33%), and Armenia (33%). According to Grant Thornton (2015), there has been some retreat in the Asia Pacific, with the percentage of women in leadership positions declining from 25% in 2009 to 20% in 2015. In India, women hold only 15% of top executive positions, compared to 8% in Japan. According to Grant Thornton (2017), the percentage of women in leadership roles increased by 1% to 25% globally.

2.2.4 Glass Ceiling in Asia

As suggested by True et al. (2012), the cultural and social prejudice of south Asian countries provide a male with a dominant power both in personal and professional settings. Rapport et al. (2002), through their series of qualitative research, they had identified that men in Asian culture, especially in south Asian culture, are considered as a born leader and thus men are more active in politics and other leading positions within an organization. Asian women, on the other hand, are more active in the work market than women from any other section of the world (Chung, 1997). Higher education prepares them for future leadership positions, and industry analysts predict that the number of Asian female managers and executives will rise over the next decade. The role of women in business is particularly important in rural Asia and Africa, where economic participation helps to reduce poverty. Asia's women are still 70 per cent less likely than their male counterparts to enter the labour, despite the economic improvement, lower birth rates, and improved educational attainment (Sharan, 2010). Female representation in the workforce and on business boards of directors continues to expand even though women continue to encounter obstacles in reaching positions such as CEOs and board members. Female development in the workplace is now hampered, according to the findings of several university and government research studies conducted in recent years (Kaur & Neubauer, 2019; Opara et al., 2020; Shoaib et al., 2019). Despite a glimmer of hope in the current corporate global climate, the proportion of women in senior management in Asia is significantly lower than in other regions. Many Asian governments are taking initiatives to expand the participation of women in senior management, which is encouraging considering the higher proportion of women in senior management in Western countries. Even though Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom have more women in senior management than the rest of the world, none of these countries has more than one-fifth of its executives who are women.

Women began to enter the workforce in larger numbers in Israel during the 1980s and 1990s (Kaur & Neubauer, 2019). Within the organisation, a glass ceiling existed, with women who possessed equivalent human capital traits as males being granted fewer opportunities for advancement than their male colleagues. Amid a tug-of-war between barriers and ambitions, Israel ranks first among Asian countries in terms of the proportion of women on corporate boards of directors (Malhotra, 2012). Iran's glass barrier for women has become less porous as a result of affirmative action and gender equality legislation, compared to other countries with high Gender Development Indexes. An apparent blend of universal and Iranian social,

institutional, and cultural elements appears to have resulted in the construction of the glass barrier. To account for the new information, existing glass ceiling models will be revised to reflect the latest findings, allowing more women to rise in the workplace. Iraqi women have traditionally been barred from working in various fields due to a lack of security and stability, Iraqi traditions and customs, and a lack of professional opportunities. This has shifted significantly in recent years. As a result, women were underrepresented in high-paying positions, demonstrating the existence of a glass ceiling in the workplace. Although female labour force participation has increased in Jordan, sociological and cultural barriers to women's advancement continue to exist in the country (Gakunga & Khasiani, 2011). As a result of their capacity to balance work and family obligations, Jordanian female managers do not suffer the same challenges as their male counterparts. In contrast, male decision-makers will exert influence on organisational practises because they feel they perform better than women in senior positions. Women in Lebanon face many of the same difficulties that women throughout the world do. In contrast, the historical context in which highly valued cultural and religious conceptions and practices are established has a significant impact on present attitudes and behaviour. In particular, Exclusion from professional networks and a lack of corporate support systems are among the barriers to female career advancement. These hurdles include a male-dominated corporate culture as well as a perceived lack of commitment. Women are encouraged to work alongside men in Oman, which is a patriarchal society (Kabir, 2020; Karmaker & Fatema, 2020; Muhtadi, 2019; Shoaib et al., 2019). Female advancement is hampered by several factors including Arabmen's conventional thinking, women's lower self-image, a lack of clearly defined human resource policies and initiatives that are specifically targeted at women employees, and work-family issues. Despite tribal ties and patriarchal traditions, the UAE's progressive policies have expanded female involvement in the labour sector while also increasing female domination in higher education and scientific research institutions. Female professionals can choose between four main career trajectories, according to a study performed in the United Arab Emirates: progressive; moderate; idealistic and aided. In the first and second groups, middle-class households are categorised (Shoaib et al., 2019). They picked professions that were both aided and idealistic. A woman's ability to succeed in her career in the UAE is dependent on her social network, or "wasta," Some women succeed in their careers as a result of strong family ties, whilst others are hindered by a lack of family ties. Women in the workplace and the wider UAE society were aware of the difficulties they were experiencing. Female advancement is hampered, according to the results of the poll, by gender-based roadblocks. Female workers in Bahrain face several difficulties, including a lack

of education and skills, low workplace standards, and the difficulty of balancing work and family life. The obstacles faced by women in America are similar. As a result of their quick rise, the economies of East Asia attracted international attention. Men continue to outnumber women at the top of China's corporate ladder, and women continue to suffer the same barriers to advancement that men experience in the United States (Lathabhavan & Balasubramanian, 2017). Despite advances in technology, women continue to hold fewer leadership roles in businesses and exit the employment at a younger age than men, and they have lower levels of educational achievement than men. Working women can advance in their professions with the help of an organisation that enhances their working conditions and decreases stress levels. Due to the fact that Japanese society has not fully addressed the issues of working women, only a small number of women have the opportunity to grow in their careers (Klaus et al., 2017). Gender stereotypes influence South Korean culture, denying women the same possibilities for growth as men in the workplace. Women with family duties, on the other hand, have higher aspirations, but they must make certain sacrifices to maintain a positive connection with their commitments to their family and home. The value of women's labour has increased significantly after the collapse of North Korea's state socialist economy in the 1990s, thanks to their socio-legal characteristics, allowing them to pursue more lucrative economic endeavours that were previously out of reach (Gakunga & Khasiani, 2011; Kassem, 2013). All East Asian nations save China, where market restraints have restricted female labour force participation, have seen a steady increase in female labour force participation over the years. Despite this, Japanese women had the greatest rate of labour market participation, but at the expense of gender equality, whereas Korean women successfully returned to work after a 30-year absence, but at the expense of a significant salary gap. There is little doubt that the absence of advancement opportunities for female executives in Malaysian and Singaporean corporations demonstrates the existence of a glass ceiling. The study looked at company culture, environment, and practises, and it discovered data that supported the glass ceiling idea, according to the researchers. Families who provide care for children are disadvantaged members of Singaporean society, and their employment opportunities are restricted forever (Cho et al., 2020; Karmaker & Fatema, 2020; Muhtadi, 2019). It indicates that the work environment in Indonesia is largely masculine, despite the country's presumed female cultural character. Women encounter more male colleagues' opposition inside that patriarchal structure, which manifests itself as a glass ceiling. Women in Indonesia who choose not to marry or have children to pursue professional opportunities are also regarded as being less than a "whole woman" Several factors contribute to Thai women's professional difficulties, including

interpersonal concerns, organisational constraints, and cultural considerations, among others (Chin, 2009; Sharan, 2010). Several Asian countries have seen uniformly positive outcomes in terms of women's advancement at work. Individual success is determined by personality traits and parental support, whereas interpersonal success is determined by team relationships and networking abilities. For Asian women, the most significant barrier is gender stereotypes. Traditionally, Uzbek men thought that women were in control of their children and that men were in charge of the family's income. Examples include women who work outside the house and make financial contributions to the family in the United States, where many Uzbek and Tajik men despise them. Tadjik women place a high value on their families since they were nurtured in a family-oriented social environment. Communal and high-context cultures such as those seen in Afghanistan and India are characterised by women growing up at home while men labour outside, particularly in rural areas (Aravantinou, 2010). Women's jobs have undergone a paradigm shift because of globalisation and new technology. As a result, Afghan women began working outside the house to provide for their families, and men began speaking out against male domination and control in the workplace.

The number of working women in leadership roles is increasing in India because of the female education and empowering initiatives taken by the government (Kabir, 2020). Even women with advanced degrees remain underrepresented in positions of leadership, which is disappointing. To achieve better positions, greater influence, and higher compensation than their male counterparts, Indian managers must overcome enormous challenges. Among Indian men, the majority believe that women's occupations are second-class citizens (Sharan, 2010).

2.3 Industry Perspective

The RMG Sector in Bangladesh is relatively new in the country. Due to extraordinarily formulated national strategies for gaining comparative advantage, Bangladesh has become one of the leading producers of the ready-made garments' products. In the following section, the history, present condition, economic and social aspects of the RMG sector of Bangladesh have been discussed. Besides, the contributions of women in the RMG sectors along with the problems regarding gender inequalities within the organizations under the umbrella of RMG sector have been analysed using secondary research.

2.3.1 History of the RMG Industry in Bangladesh

The cornerstone of the textile industry was laid down in the 1960s. First shipped to Europe in 1965–1966, these shirts, known as Mercury shirts, were produced in Karachi and exported by the industry for the first time. In the years following, 1977-1978, access was granted to nine industries involved in exporting in Bangladesh. At that time, the industries of Riaz Garments, Jewel Garments, and Paris Garments were considered to be the top three. Then, Riaz Garments was the one of these industries that was the most well-known and the oldest.

Riaz Garments, owned and operated by Mohammad Reaz Uddin, was formerly a tailoring establishment known simply as the Riaz company. Later, in 1978, the company started exporting products by sending one million shirts to "Olanda." in South Korea. This marked the beginning of the company's transition from the Riaz shop to the Riaz Garments moniker. In the Bangladesh ready-made garment (RMG) industry, "Desh Garments" was an industry pioneer. A partnership between Desh Garments and "Daiyuu" a company based in South Korea, was established in 1979.

At the same time, Shamsur Rahman founded Stylecraft limited, AM Subid Ali founded Aristocraft limited, Engineer Mohd Fazlul Azim founded Azim Group, and Major (Retired) Abdul Mannan founded Sunman Group.

Discreet businesspeople with dogged determination established RMG companies all over the country, following in the footsteps of the industry's forefathers who were pioneers in the RMG sector. From that point forward, the RMG industry in Bangladesh steadily developed and never looked back after it had taken that first step forward. This industry was still seen to be in a vulnerable situation despite the fact that it had successfully passed a number of significant milestones along the way. The year 1994 was when we first became aware of child labour, and the year 1995 was when we finally succeeded in eliminating it from our apparel industry.

Desh Garments is currently operating with six production lines, employing 600 people, and having the potential to manufacture 5 million garments annually. Before 1980, more than half of Bangladesh's total export profits came from jute and items made from jute, which were known as the golden fibre of Bangladesh. Jute is also known as abaca. After the 1980s, however, the amount of raw materials and finished goods exported by RMG companies overtook the amount exported by jute and jute products. Since that time, the RMG Industry has maintained its preeminent position in Bangladesh's export market.

In 1980, the South Korean company Youngones Corporation and the Bangladeshi company Trexim Ltd. founded Youngones Bangladesh, a clothing factory in which Trexim Ltd. maintained a majority share (51 percent). In December, the company sent the first batch of products (both padded and unpadded jackets) to Sweden as part of an export.

During the same time period, a number of other businesspeople started their own manufacturing operations, including Akhtar Mohammad Musa's Bond Garments, Mohammad Humayun's Paris Garments, Azim Engineer Mohammad Fazlul Azim's Azim Group, retired Major Abdul Mannan's Sunman Group, M Shamsur, Rahman's Stylecraft Limited, and AM Subid Ali's Aristocrat Limited. All of these businesses are still in operation today. At the beginning of the 1980s, the government of Bangladesh passed a law that allowed duty-free imports of garment machinery for the country's export industry. As a direct result of this, the number of textile manufacturers in Bangladesh started to rapidly rise. Bangladesh had a total of 632 factories in 1984 and 1985; by 1999, that number had increased to nearly 2900.

The majority of them may be located in the cities of Dhaka and Chittagong. At that time, Bangladesh was the sixth largest supplier in the market for apparel in the United States and the fifth largest T-shirt supplier in the market for the European Union. Bangladesh was ranked as the 123rd largest exporter of clothes worldwide.

The RMG industry's exports were just \$4.8 billion in the year 2000-2001, but by the year 2010-2011, they had increased to almost \$18 billion, showing an annual growth rate of nearly 14 percent. A report from 2019 states that the government of the country established an Export Processing Zone (EPZ), which provides foreign investors with a 10-year tax holiday, duty-free importing of machinery and raw materials, bonded warehouses, and initiatives such as back-to-back LCs, which have been essential in the development of 100 percent export-oriented garment facilities. The increase in the country's exports can be attributed to these many sources. Around the country in that same year, there were over 3.5 million people working in garment factories, which totaled over 5,000. The RMG industry in Bangladesh received an annual average of 871 million dollars in foreign direct investment between the years 2005 and 2010.

In July 2009, a conflict among garment employees resulted in the deaths of two of those workers, which resulted in a loss of Rs 100 crore for Hameem Group, the largest garment maker in the country. At least 112 people were murdered and nearly 200 others were injured when a fire broke out at the Tazreen factory in 2012. In the same year, the Rana Plaza building suffered a catastrophic collapse, which resulted in the deaths of over 1,100 people and injuries to over

2,500 more. As a direct result of what took place, a significant number of international buyers stopped placing orders for garments made in Bangladesh. Additionally, the United States withdrew some of the special trade concessions it had been providing to Bangladesh.

The owners of factories spend more than a billion dollars annually on clean-up and prevention efforts in the hope of avoiding catastrophic accidents. In order to address issues with industrial structures, fire control, and other difficulties, hundreds of factories should be shut down in addition to the formation of the Accord on Fire and Building Safety, the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, and the National Initiative of the Government of Bangladesh. The remediation rate in Bangladesh was able to reach 84.1 percent as the country made significant strides toward improving workplace safety by the year 2018. As a direct outcome of these actions, the quantity of the country’s RMG sector’s exports more than doubled. The total amount of money earned from exports by the RMG industry was 19.08 billion US dollars in the fiscal year 2011-2012; however, in the fiscal year 2020-2021, those revenues increased to 31.45 billion US dollars. At the moment, Bangladesh is home to the greatest number of eco-friendly garment producers of any country in the world.

2.3.2 Present Condition of Bangladeshi RMG Industry

Since 1996, RMG Industry have become one the most significant economic contributors in Bangladesh. Besides, meanwhile it become the biggest source of foreign currency for the country. In 2022, the economy of Bangladesh is highly dependent on the RMG industry. According to report published by Asian Development Bank in 2022, the industry is now contributing 11.2% of the total gross domestic product of the country. At present, the

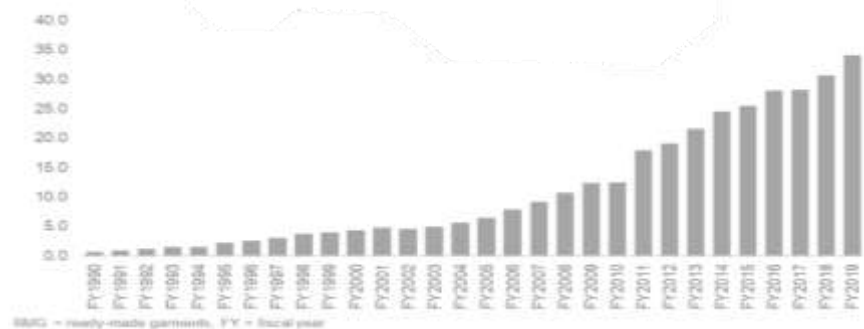


Figure 5: RMG Export from Bangladesh, in billion dollars
Source: Bangladesh Garments Manufacturer and Export Association (2020)

industry having become a primary source of income for more than 4.1 million people. The huge number of people directly associated with the industry accounts for 36% of the national employment in the manufacturing sector. The industry, at present, the industry has 61% of

female employees primarily at the production level worker stage, which is playing a crucial role for facilitating overall women empowerment concept nationally.

RMG is perilously close to a financial and humanitarian disaster on both fronts. In an effort to prevent the spread of the coronavirus outbreak and maintain public health, the government has declared the suspension of all national holidays until April 25, 2020. With the exception of the provision of emergency services, all commercial and industrial activity have been fully suspended. As a result of the closure of their retail outlets in Europe, North America, Asia, and other regions, a significant number of international buyers cancel or postpone previously agreed-upon purchases of goods. This might result in supply chain interruptions and cost increases for companies. The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) estimates that international customers have cancelled or delayed shipments totaling \$3.16 billion as of the 18th of April 2020. These postponements or cancellations affect 1,142 facilities and 2.26 million employees. 7 million people are at risk of losing their jobs as a direct result of the worldwide fall in demand for apparel. As a result of the federal shutdown, one million workers have been fired or given unpaid furloughs. According to the results of a survey conducted by BRAC University, nearly half of RMG employees have not been paid and are uncertain of their current employment situation (Rahman & Akter,2023). Thousands of RMG employees violated a government curfew to continue pursuing their demand for back pay.

According to research conducted by the NYU Stern Centre for Business and Human Rights, (academic research and advocacy organization of New York University) although Bangladesh's garment exports have expanded, the country's apparel industry has not progressed beyond the stage of cutting and sewing basic goods for a tiny profit. This was discovered despite the fact that Bangladesh's exports of garments had increased. The garment industry in Bangladesh is responsible for the creation of jobs, the empowerment of women in rural areas, and a contribution to the country's general economic development. In contrast, neither export value nor real compensation has increased as a direct result of this. Due to the fact that the sector's minimum wage is just Tk 8,000 (\$95) per month, one of the lowest in the global textiles supply chain, the sector requires \$470 million per month to pay its employees (Figure 3). The President of the BGMEA issued a call to action to international clients, pushing them to accept delivery of already-manufactured goods and pay only wages for those currently being produced. This call to action was launched after the BGMEA president issued a call to action to international clientele. In addition to the effects on individuals and businesses, there will be a reduction in the influx of foreign currency, which will make the external sector more vulnerable. This is

because of the effects on people and businesses. The workers have an immediate need for cash to sustain their current standard of living, whereas the industry has a medium-term need for cash to revitalise itself.

There is a chance that RMG may influence not only its own market, but also the markets for consumer goods and services. The value addition of RMG expanded by 63.2% as a direct result of the growth of sectors depending on backward linkage. 13 The RMG business is primarily driven by exports and is supported by a capital-intensive and \$6 billion textile sector. This sector provides yarn and fabric to the industry. The textile value chain contains a total of 1461 production units. 425 produce yarn, 796 produce fabric, and 240 complete dye prints. Small and medium-sized enterprises supply a variety of accessories, including buttons, zippers, hangers, threads, and threading (SMEs).

RMG is actively impacting in numerous industries, including banking, insurance, real estate, packaging, hotel management, recycling, consumer goods, and utility services. According to a survey conducted by the World Bank, practically all manufacturers of ready-made garments are customers of commercial banks, and the vast majority of importers (87 percent) and exporters (15 percent) insure their goods before shipping them abroad. More than forty percent of the total amount of money collected by the port authority is comprised of RMG fees. 15 Due to the 4.1 million individuals currently employed in this business, the need for inexpensive cosmetics, clothing, and other things has increased significantly. The problem with RMG will have an effect on the economy that will have a compounding chain effect and preventing it will be advantageous for other businesses.

2.3.3 Glass Ceiling in Bangladeshi RMG

The glass ceiling issues and career barriers for female employees in the RMG organizations in Bangladesh have been explored in several studies (Islam & Jantan, 2017; Shetu & Ferdous, 2017). The main barriers identified include organizational culture, social culture, lack of career encouragers, and work-life conflict according to Islam and Rahman (2021). This author argued that the mentioned barriers hinder the advancement of women into leadership positions in the RMG sector. Again, studies, conducted by, for instance, Akterujjaman et al. (2019); Becker-Leifhold and Heuer (2018), suggested that organizations can facilitate the process of female advancement by addressing these barriers and creating a more inclusive and supportive work environment. Additionally, providing career encouragers and addressing work-life conflict can

help women overcome the glass ceiling and progress in their careers in Bangladesh RMG businesses (Billah, 2017). It is important to recognize and address these barriers to promote gender equality and create opportunities for women to reach leadership positions in the RMG industry in Bangladesh as well as in other sectors and regions (American Society for Public Administration. National Capital Area Chapter., 1992; Cohen, 1998; King, 1993).

2.3.4 Research Gaps in the RMG Sector

There are multiple research gaps in the RMG sector of Bangladesh that can be found through the review of the literature presented above. The research that had been conducted in different industries and sectors of Bangladesh at different times, do not provide any meaningful conclusion to understand why the glass ceiling exists in Bangladesh. Most of the researches count the cultural and regional factors are the only two of the primary determinants of the glass ceiling in Bangladesh (Akbar et al.; Faruk & Economics, 2021; C. Karmaker & K. J. A. B. R. Fatema, 2020; Shetu & Ferdous, 2017). Other researchers have only worked on the statistics or percentage of women in organizations (Islam & Jantan, 2017; Islam & Rahman, 2021; Sharmila, 2020). However, the theory and model discussed in this report have pointed out multiple factors that can affect or influence the career opportunities of women. The primary objective of the research on the field of the glass ceiling in Bangladesh is finding the percentage and disproportionated male to female ratio within the RMG organizations. But the existing literature failed to provide sufficient evidence of glass ceiling within RMG organizations in Bangladesh. In other words, the review of the literature is not sufficient to satisfy the research objectives set earlier in this report. After formulating the research hypotheses and developing the research frameworks, this research project has been set to fill the identified research gap and to provide significant value to the stakeholders of the associated fields.

2.4 Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

Previous sections discussed different determinants or predictors of the glass ceiling in organizational settings. It allowed the researcher to conceptualize a research framework, based on which the analysis is conducted. This conceptual framework is attached in Figure 4.

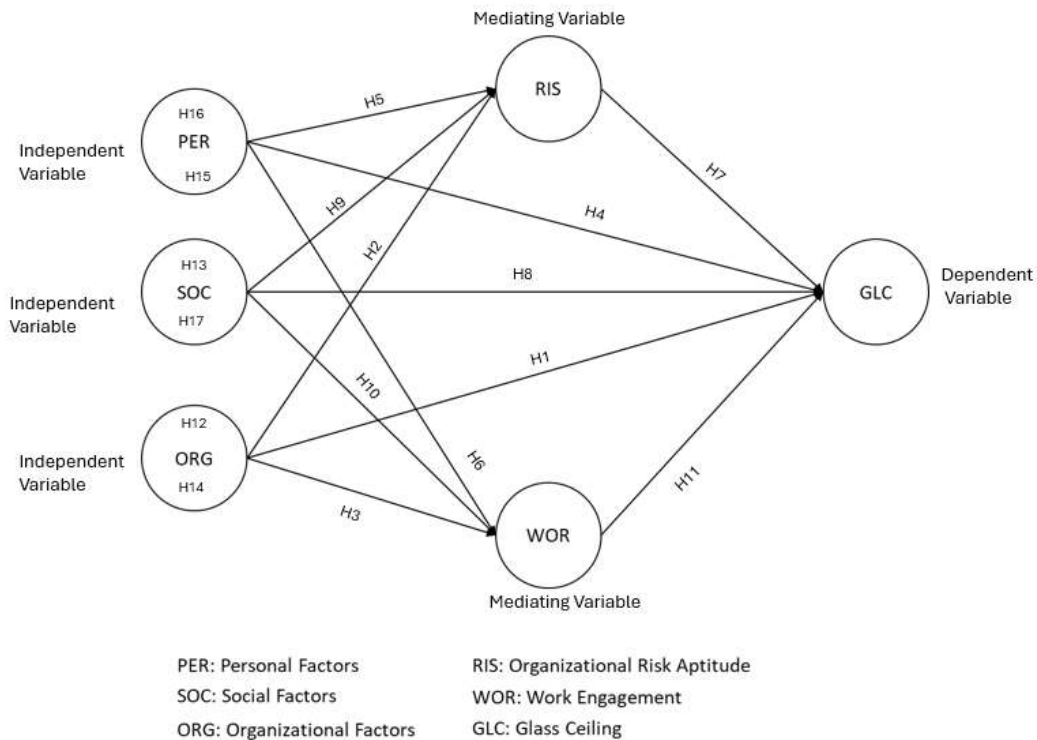


Figure 6: Conceptual Framework

The set of hypotheses presented here aims to comprehensively explore the intricate relationships within the context of the Ready-Made Garments (RMG) industry, shedding light on the glass Ceiling Phenomenon and its underlying determinants. The initial hypotheses (H1 to H11) probe into direct associations between organizational factors, personal factors, social factors, risk aptitude, work engagement, and the presence of a glass ceiling for female executives in the RMG sector. Building on these, subsequent hypotheses (H12 to H17) delve into the mediating role of work engagement in these relationships, seeking a deeper understanding of how work engagement may influence the observed dynamics. These hypotheses collectively form a structured framework for an in-depth analysis, contributing to a nuanced comprehension of gender disparities and barriers to advancement within the RMG industry.

2.4.1 Organizational Factors

2.4.1.1 Organizational Factors and Glass Ceiling

As mentioned by the Information Resources Management Association (2021) Rajasekar and Beh (2013), organizational factors, such as organizational policy structure, and can significantly affect the formation and the intensity of the glass ceiling in organizational settings. These factors are already been studied in the case of Bangladesh (Kabir, 2020; Karmaker & Fatema, 2020; Sayeed, 2020). For example, Khair (2019) stated that this type of factor can affect the promotion of women employees in the civil service sector. Therefore, the researcher of the present study hypothesized that-

H1: There is a positive and significant relationship between Organizational factors (ORG) and the Glass Ceiling (GLC).

2.4.1.2 Organizational Factors and Organizational Risk Aptitude

Furthermore, the review of the extant literature revealed that organizational factors can determine how organizations perceive and react toward risk (Elacqua et al., 2009; Wilson & Gilligan, 2005). Nevertheless, in the case of the Bangladeshi RMG industry, the role of this construct in determining organizational risk aptitude has not been scientifically observed, yet. Therefore, the researcher of the present study hypothesized that-

H2: There is a positive and significant relationship between Organizational factors (ORG) and Risk Aptitude of the organizations (RIS).

2.4.1.3 Organizational Factors and Employee Work Engagement

The presence of organizational barriers widely hinders employee engagement. For instance, Haugen et al. (2010); Thomas and Wilcox (2005); United States. Federal Glass Ceiling Commission. (1995) revealed that organizational policies and prejudices that nurture male leadership, tend to demotivate female employees. Again, this particular aspect has not been studied for the mentioned research settings of the present study. Hence, the researcher hypothesized that-

H3: There is a negative and significant relationship between Organizational factors (ORG) and Work Engagement (WOR).

2.4.2 Personal Factors

2.4.2.1 Personal Factors and Glass Ceiling

The role of personal factors, including interpersonal relationship-building capabilities, informal role fulfillment readiness, and attitude towards work and managerial positions, empirically, can affect the glass ceiling (Belasen, 2017; Mohapatra, 2017; *Words of wisdom from women to watch : career reflections from leaders in the commercial insurance industry*, 2017). Therefore, the researcher of the present study hypothesized that-

H4: There is significant relationship between Personal Factors (PER) and the Glass Ceiling (GLC).

2.4.2.2 Personal Factors and Organizational Risk Aptitude

Analysis of various organizational contexts reveals that individual characteristics such as age, gender, education level, and personality traits do not substantially influence the inclination of organizations to take risks (DiJulius, 2008). Studies across diverse industries consistently demonstrate that organizational risk-taking behavior is primarily driven by both internal and external factors such as market conditions, industry dynamics, and organizational culture, rather than individual attributes of organizational members (Elacqua et al., 2009; Roberts et al., 2019). In short, empirical research findings consistently fail to establish a strong correlation between personal factors and organizational risk propensity (Elacqua et al., 2009; Heim et al., 1995).

H5: There is no significant relationship between Personal Factors (PER) and Risk Aptitude of the organizations (RIS).

2.4.2.3 Personal Factors and Work Engagement

Distancing from a managerial role does not imply the impact of the glass ceiling (Belasen, 2012). The personal factors, as the definition of the glass ceiling delineates, logically, should not affect the glass ceiling or any other organizational components, except for employee engagement, which to its complete extent can be determined by employee personal factors (LaGuardia-Kotite, 2012; Roberts et al., 2019). Nevertheless, as the person-specific barriers (e.g., lack of communication skills, interpersonal skills, and emotional intelligence) decrease,

work engagement, as suggested by LaGuardia-Kotite (2012); Roberts et al. (2019) increases. Hence, the researcher of the present study postulated that-

H6: There is a negative and significant relationship between Personal Factors (PER) and Work Engagement (WOR).

2.4.3 Risk Aptitude

Risk aptitude, as defined by Griffiths and Kennedy (1996); Highsmith (1980); Ryan (1993), implies that favouring less capable or deserving male employees for managerial positions to capable female employees would be a high degree of risk and a lost opportunity. On the other hand, the glass ceiling does not consider the capacity of female employees while selecting candidates for the mentioned positions (Bzdek, 2008; Nanayakkara & Gunawardana, 2011; Volkov, 2012). Hence, there should not exist any relationship between risk aptitude and the glass ceiling. Therefore, the researcher of the present study hypothesized that-

H7: There is no significant relationship between the Risk Aptitude of the organizations (RIS) and the Glass Ceiling (GLC).

2.4.4 Social Factors

2.4.4.1 Social Factors and Glass Ceiling

Social factors such as the culture of the society and organization, family structure, and preconceived and accepted gender roles, as suggested by Bzdek (2009); Katsirikou and Skiadas (2012), can significantly affect the formation of the glass ceiling. These factors also determine how a person growing up in a certain environment would act or respond toward risk. Furthermore, Cooper (2014); McConnell-Ginet (2011); Ragins and Kram (2007) argued that social factors also affect employee attitude and behavior towards work and colleagues, which directly determine the work engagement level. Therefore, the researchers hypothesized that-

H8: There is a positive and significant relationship between Social Factors (SOC) and the Glass Ceiling (GLC).

2.4.4.2 Social factors and Organizational Risk Aptitude

Social factors, emanating from the broader societal milieu, encompass cultural norms, regulatory frameworks, and market dynamics (Lawless, 2012). These external influences can

either catalyse or impede organizational risk-taking behaviour. Industries operating in highly regulated environments may exhibit risk aversion, while those driven by innovation may embrace higher risk tolerance to remain competitive (Chin, 2009). Therefore, the researcher hypothesized that-

H9: There is a positive and significant relationship between Social Factors (SOC) and Risk Aptitude of the organizations (RIS).

2.4.2.3 Social Factors and Employee Work Engagement

Social factors play a pivotal role in shaping employee work engagement within organizational settings. These external influences encompass societal norms, community dynamics, and cultural values, all of which can impact individuals' perceptions of their work environment and their level of engagement (Lawless, 2012). Factors such as social support networks, community relationships, and cultural attitudes towards work can either enhance or inhibit employee engagement. For instance, a supportive social network within the workplace and positive community relationships can contribute to a sense of belonging and fulfilment, fostering higher levels of engagement (Chin, 2009; Lawless, 2012).

H10: There is a positive and significant relationship between Social Factors (SOC) and Work Engagement (WOR).

2.4.5 Work engagement and Glass Ceiling

Work engagement is directly related to employee and organizational performance (Gørrill, 2019; Yousafzai et al., 2018). Extant literature suggests that the higher the engagement level and higher the level of performance. Nevertheless, the glass ceiling does not consider this level of performance for promoting female employees to a higher position (Arrighi, 2007b; Information Resources Management Association, 2020). Therefore, logically, there should not be any relationship between employee engagement level and the glass ceiling, motivating the researcher to hypothesize that-

H11: There is no significant relationship between Work Engagement (WOR) and the Glass Ceiling (GLC).

2.4.6 Mediating Roles

The mediating roles of employee work engagement and organizational risk aptitude for determining the existence and impact of the glass ceiling have already been studied by Chozick (2018); Eggins (2017). In the previous section, the negative relationship between organizational factors and the glass ceiling has already been outlined (Bzdek, 2008; Cooper, 2011; Gørrill, 2019). Arrighi (2007a); Bzdek (2009); Gørrill (2019) argued that female employees, through their engagement in both formal and informal roles, can reduce the impact of the glass ceiling on their career development. Again, extant literature suggests that organizational attitude towards risk can shape organizational culture and structure. However, how the mediating roles of the mentioned two variables work has not been studied in previous research. Regardless, the researcher of the present study hypothesized their mediating roles in the present research dynamics.

H12: Work Engagement (WOR) mediates the positive relationship between Organizational factors (ORG) and the Glass Ceiling (GLC).

H13: Work Engagement (WOR) mediates the relationship between Social Factors (SOC) and the Glass Ceiling (GLC).

H14: Risk Aptitude of the Organizations (RIS) mediates the relationship between the Organizational factors (ORG) and the Glass Ceiling (GLC)

H15: Work Engagement (WOR) mediates the negative relationship between Personal Factors (PER) and the Glass Ceiling (GLC).

H16: Risk Aptitude (RIS) mediates the negative relationship between Personal Factors (PER) and the Glass Ceiling (GLC).

H17: Risk Aptitude of the Organizations (RIS) mediates the positive relationship between Social Factors (SOC) and the Glass Ceiling (GLC).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

According to Kothari and Garg (2020), research methodology is the fundamental principle for conducting research scientifically and appropriately. As no previous study covers all the objectives and research questions set by the researchers, the research methodology cannot be derived solely from previously published research papers. Therefore, the researcher of this study has conducted a thorough analysis of the available research methods and justified their usage in the following section.

For the selection of the most appropriate and scientific research methods, the research Onion Model developed by Saunders et al. (2007), has been used. Figure , Research Onion model depicts the core components of the framework.

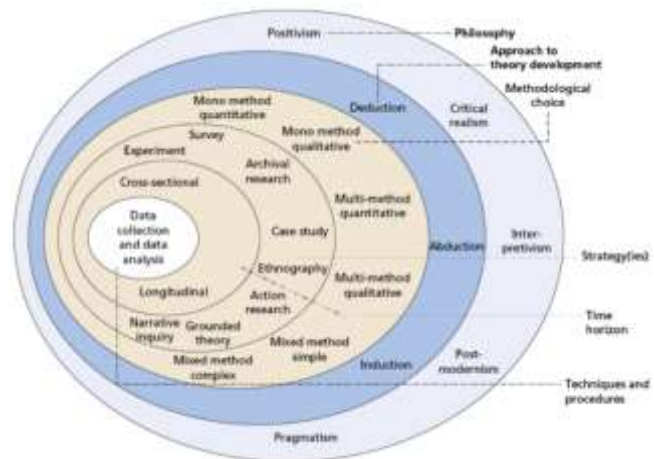


Figure 7: Research Onion Model

Source: Saunders et al. (2007)

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy serves as the foundation upon which the entire research process is built. It encompasses the fundamental beliefs and assumptions guiding the research approach and methodology. In this study, the research philosophy selected is post-positivism (Leedy, 1985; Mitchell & Jolley, 1988).

In this research, the post-positivist philosophy was chosen as the foundational framework due to its ability to combine the empirical rigor of positivism with an understanding of the complexities inherent in the social sciences (Dooley, 1990; Runkel & McGrath, 1972). The study focuses on investigating the presence and impact of the glass ceiling on female executives in the RMG industry of Bangladesh, a multifaceted and socially intricate phenomenon. Post-positivism allows for a structured, evidence-based investigation while acknowledging the

potential influence of subjective elements on the research process and outcomes. In a study of this nature, quantitative data holds significant importance for measuring and analyzing patterns related to the glass ceiling and its effects on female executives. Post-positivism is well-suited for this purpose as it facilitates hypothesis testing, statistical analysis, and the establishment of causal relationships based on empirical observations (Ketchen Jr & Bergh, 2006; Rajasekar & Verma, 2013). Moreover, integrating qualitative methods, such as interviews or surveys, is essential for exploring the experiences, perceptions, and contextual intricacies faced by female executives within the RMG industry. Post-positivism supports this integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches, enabling a comprehensive and multi-dimensional understanding of the glass ceiling phenomenon (Duraisamy & Duraisamy, 2020; Mohajan, 2018; Willmott, 2020).

The application of post-positivism is particularly apt when studying a complex societal issue like the glass ceiling, which is deeply embedded in social, cultural, and organizational contexts (Dooley, 1990). This approach allows for the systematic gathering of data while acknowledging that interpretations may be influenced by the researchers' perspectives and biases. By utilizing a post-positivist framework, this research aims to maintain objectivity to the highest degree possible within the social sciences while recognizing the need to consider multiple viewpoints and contextual factors (Dźwigoł & Dźwigoł-Barosz, 2018; Maputra, 2020; Mohajan, 2018).

Post-positivism is often chosen in research studies where a balance between objectivity and acknowledging subjectivity is crucial. It allows for a structured approach while acknowledging the role of interpretation and context. This approach suits research questions that necessitate a comprehensive investigation, considering both quantitative data for patterns and qualitative insights for deeper meanings and context. In the context of studying the glass ceiling in the RMG industry of Bangladesh, post-positivism provides the methodological flexibility necessary to delve into the multi-faceted aspects of this complex societal phenomenon while maintaining a rigorous and systematic approach to data analysis and interpretation (Davidavičienė, 2018; Maputra, 2020; Mohajan, 2018).

3.2.2 Research Approach

The research approach is a fundamental aspect of any research study, shaping its design, methodology, and eventual findings. It establishes the framework for how data has been collected, analyzed, and interpreted. The two main research approaches are deductive and inductive, each with distinct characteristics and applications.

First, the deductive approach is a top-down method that starts with a general theory or hypothesis and moves toward specific observations and data collection to confirm or refute the initial theory. Researchers employing this approach often begin with a well-defined theoretical framework or existing theories relevant to the subject under investigation. The aim is to test the applicability and validity of these theories within a specific context. Deductive reasoning in research involves making predictions based on a general theory and then testing these predictions through data analysis (Mohajan, 2018; Pandey & Pandey, 2021). On the contrary, the inductive approach is a bottom-up methodology where the research begins with specific observations or empirical data. Researchers utilizing this approach collect and analyze data and then work towards identifying patterns, themes, or trends from the data. From these emerging patterns, they develop generalizations, theories, or hypotheses. Inductive reasoning is often used in exploratory research or in fields where there is limited existing theory to guide the research (Gupta & Gupta, 2022; Willmott, 2020).

For this research, the chosen approach is the deductive approach, based on the suggestion of Kothari (2004); Zangirolami-Raimundo et al. (2018). The deductive approach is characterized by its structured and systematic nature. It typically starts with a well-defined theoretical framework derived from existing theories. The research then proceeds to collect and analyze data to confirm or reject the established theories. This approach aligns with the aim of this study, which is to understand the implications of the glass ceiling on female executives in the RMG industry of Bangladesh through the lens of established theories related to gender disparities and workplace discrimination. By utilizing the deductive approach, this research seeks to test existing theories and hypotheses, providing empirical evidence to support or challenge them. The research has been conducted in a structured manner, ensuring that the conclusions are grounded in established theoretical foundations. The deductive approach is suitable for this study as it facilitates a focused and theory-driven investigation into the specific context of the RMG industry in Bangladesh, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the glass ceiling phenomenon and its impact on female executives.

3.2.3 Methodological Choice

In this research, a mixed-method approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods, has been adopted. This combined approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the research problem by leveraging the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. By this design researcher has collected data from in-depth

interview and gathered massive quantitative data from large sample size in connection with several variable.

To begin with, qualitative research involves collecting non-numerical data, often in the form of interviews, observations, or content analysis (Mohajan, 2018). It seeks to understand the experiences, perceptions, and motivations of individuals related to the research topic (Patel & Patel, 2019). Qualitative research is exploratory and helps in developing theories or hypotheses for further investigation. In this study, qualitative research has been employed to delve into the nuanced experiences and perceptions of female executives in the RMG industry regarding the glass ceiling and gender disparities. On the other hand, quantitative research, on the other hand, involves collecting numerical data and analyzing it using statistical techniques. This method allows for the examination of relationships, patterns, and trends in a large dataset. Quantitative research is structured and provides a broader view of the research topic by offering numerical insights (Kapur, 2018; Zangirolami-Raimundo et al., 2018). In this research, quantitative research has been utilized to gather data on a larger scale, aiming to ascertain trends and patterns related to gender disparities and the glass ceiling within the RMG industry. Another option combines the two research methods. This mixed-method approach combines both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. By using this approach, one study can validate findings, also known as triangulation, from one method with the other, leading to a more robust and well-rounded interpretation of the data (Kothari & Garg, 2019; Gupta & Gupta, 2022; Patel & Patel, 2019).

In this research, the researcher adopted the mixed method, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data from the predefined and relevant sample. However, these data have been analyzed separately. The method of data collection and analysis are discussed in the later sections of this chapter. The nature of the study forced the researcher to adopt this particular research method. First, previous research indeed outlines behind-the-scenes factors for the glass ceiling. However, how these factors are applicable in the context of Bangladeshi RMG has not been thoroughly studied. Again, the perception of the existence of a glass ceiling is a psychology-laden factor, which is hard to study quantitatively due to a lack of existing scale and measurements (Dooley, 1990; Runkel & McGrath, 1972; Smith, 1981). Furthermore, the number of extraneous variables in this setting is largely unknown due to the nature of the study area (Mohajan, 2018). Hence, which variable to select in the quantitative research and what are the most influential factors need to be answered first (Al Kilani & Kobziev, 2016; Daniel & Sam, 2011). The qualitative data collection and analysis, discussed in the following sections,

increased the researcher's confidence regarding the content validity and selection of appropriate variables for the large-scale quantitative research. Moreover, Dooley (1990); Judd et al. (1991); Kapur (2018); Katsirikou and Skiadas (2012); Patel and Patel (2019); Reinharz and Davidman (1992) suggested the application of mixed method research for studying social or organizational phenomena similar to the one investigated by the present research. Besides, the findings from both methods have been compared and integrated during the interpretation phase to draw meaningful conclusions. The qualitative aspect of this study will involve in-depth interviews with female executives in the RMG industry, allowing for an exploration of their experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding the glass ceiling. These interviews were semi-structured, providing a balance between predetermined questions and the flexibility to explore new themes as they emerge. The quantitative aspect will encompass a structured survey administered to a particular sample of female executives within the RMG sector. The survey has been designed to gather numerical data on various aspects related to the glass ceiling, allowing for statistical analysis to identify trends and patterns. This mixed-method approach is beneficial for this research as it provides a more holistic understanding of the glass ceiling phenomenon in the context of the RMG industry. It allows for triangulation, where findings from different methods can converge, enhancing the credibility and validity of the research outcomes (Nayak & Singh, 2021; Pandey & Pandey, 2021; Patel & Patel, 2019). By utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods, this study aims to offer a nuanced and evidence-based perspective on gender disparities and the glass ceiling, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

3.2.4 Research Strategy

Research design refers to the overall framework and strategy employed by researchers to plan and conduct a study. It encompasses the methodological approach, data collection methods, procedures for data analysis, and the theoretical framework guiding the research. The research design outlines how the study will be conducted, including the specific steps and techniques used to address the research questions or objectives (Davidavičienė, 2018; Devi, 2017). This chapter presents the overall design of this research.

This research began with a pedantic identification of the research area, which focused on exploring the glass ceiling phenomenon within the RMG industry in Bangladesh. This initial step involved conducting an exhaustive review of existing literature to gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic and identify gaps or areas requiring further investigation.

Subsequently, a thorough review of the literature was undertaken to investigate relevant theories, concepts, and empirical findings pertaining to the research area. This literature review served as the foundation for identifying key constructs, variables, and theoretical frameworks that informed the study's theoretical underpinnings. Concepts and variables relevant to the research area were then identified and conceptualized, aligning with the research objectives and theoretical perspectives gleaned from the literature. Consequently, theoretical perspectives from diverse disciplines, including organizational behavior, sociology, and gender studies, were integrated to provide a holistic understanding of the glass ceiling phenomenon. This interdisciplinary approach enriched the theoretical framework and captured the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation. Drawing upon the conceptual framework and theoretical insights, research hypotheses were formulated to test specific relationships and propositions regarding the glass ceiling phenomenon and its determinants. These hypotheses were guided by theoretical propositions and empirical evidence from previous studies.

Throughout the process, theoretical propositions and hypotheses were refined through iterative feedback and discussion with academic peers, advisors, and experts in the field. This iterative refinement ensured the theoretical validity and coherence of the research framework. The finalized theoretical framework, encompassing key constructs, theoretical perspectives, and research hypotheses, served as the basis for the subsequent empirical investigation and data analysis.

3.2.4.1 Qualitative Aspect

For the qualitative aspect of the study, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants for the interviews. Purposive sampling involves deliberately selecting individuals who possess the specific characteristics or experiences relevant to the research topic, ensuring that the sample is highly informative and representative of the phenomenon under investigation. In this study, the sample for the interviews consisted of 13 female executives working within the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry in Bangladesh, which is sufficient as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1992); Mohajan (2018), (Davis, 2011) and (Aziz, 2021). The selection criteria focused on identifying participants who had firsthand experience with the glass ceiling phenomenon and could provide rich insights into its manifestations, challenges, and implications within the industry. To ensure diversity and depth in the sample, efforts were made to include participants from various levels of seniority, job roles, and years of experience within the RMG sector. This approach aimed to capture a broad spectrum of

perspectives and experiences, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the research topic. Participants were approached through professional networks, industry associations, and referrals from key informants familiar with the RMG industry. Potential participants were provided with detailed information about the study objectives, the interview process, and their rights as participants. Those who expressed interest in participating were then screened to ensure they met the eligibility criteria and could contribute meaningfully to the study. The final sample comprised individuals who exhibited a range of experiences, viewpoints, and insights related to the glass ceiling phenomenon, ensuring depth and richness in the qualitative data collected. The qualitative interviews were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility and depth in exploring participants' perspectives, experiences, and perceptions regarding the glass ceiling within the RMG industry. Through open-ended questions and probing techniques, the interviews elicited detailed narratives and nuanced insights, providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon from the participants' own perspectives.

3.2.4.2 Quantitative Aspect

Several considerations were taken into account to determine the appropriate sample size, aligning with the research objectives, methodological approach, and practical constraints. The sample size calculation process involved specifying an effect size and power level to determine the required number of participants. For this study, an effect size of 0.5 and a power level of 0.80 were selected based on standard conventions in research methodology. The effect size of 0.5 indicates a moderate effect, suggesting a moderate strength of association between variables or a moderate difference between groups. This effect size was chosen to ensure that the study could detect meaningful relationships or differences with sufficient precision. The power level of 0.80 signifies an 80% probability of detecting a true effect if it exists. This level of power is commonly accepted in research as it provides a balance between sensitivity and practicality, ensuring that the study has a high likelihood of detecting significant effects while minimizing the risk of false negatives. By inputting these specific parameters into the sample size calculation formula within G*Power, the software determined that a sample size of 107 participants would be necessary to achieve the study's objectives with a 95% confidence interval.

The items included in the survey questionnaire and interview checklist were carefully selected based on established scales and adapted to suit the specific context of the study. Additionally, new items were developed to ensure comprehensive coverage of the variables under

investigation. The questionnaire encompassed factors such as personal beliefs, organizational dynamics, socio-cultural influences, risk aptitude of organizations, work engagement, and perceptions of the glass ceiling. Each factor included a set of related questions grouped into sub-scales, with each sub-scale representing a particular dimension of the factor. For example, the personal factor sub-scale included items such as confidence in abilities, emotional suitability for senior management roles, and perceptions of competitiveness. Similarly, organizational factors encompassed items related to work performance evaluation, career opportunities, gender discrimination, and support for work-life balance.

The development of the questionnaire drew upon existing research and scales relevant to the study topic. For instance, items assessing work engagement were adapted from established measures such as the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). Likewise, perceptions of the glass ceiling were assessed using items adapted from prior research on gender disparities in the workplace (Smith, Crittenden, & Caputi, 2012).

3.2.5 Time Horizon

In research, the time horizon refers to the period over which the study is conducted. The selection of an appropriate time horizon is crucial as it influences the depth and breadth of the study and affects the generalizability of the findings.

The researcher of the present study selected the cross-sectional time horizon following the guidelines of Dooley (1990); Smith (1981). The decision to opt for a cross-sectional approach is rooted in the research objectives and the nature of the study's focus. The research aims to investigate the current experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by female executives in the RMG industry concerning the glass ceiling. A cross-sectional study, offering a 'snapshot' of the prevailing conditions, aligns well with this objective. Moreover, considering the practical constraints of time, resources, and the scope of the study, a cross-sectional approach is the most feasible (Dooley, 1990; Stempel & Westley, 1981). It allows for efficient data collection from a diverse sample of participants within a manageable timeframe. The research is focused on understanding the present dynamics, identifying patterns, and exploring the perceptions and experiences of female executives in the RMG industry as they stand at the current moment. Thus, a cross-sectional study is the most suitable time horizon to fulfill the research objectives effectively and efficiently, providing valuable insights into the research questions and contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the glass ceiling phenomenon in the context of the RMG industry.

3.3 Target Population and Sampling Design

Female executives working in different levels at Garment manufacturing factories formed the Population of our study, where exact number of female executives employed in RMG industry is unknown. In the pursuit of appropriate research strategies to effectively attain the research objectives, this study has selected surveys and interviews as the primary methods for data collection. Both these strategies offer unique advantages and are particularly well-suited to gather information about the experiences, perspectives, and attitudes of female executives concerning the glass ceiling in the RMG industry. This study went for purposive sampling technique adoption. For ensuring reliability, accuracy and relativeness of analysis with the research objectives data collection was done through purposive sampling. First of all location of the RMG factories were selected purposively and 6 cities were chosen. They are Dhaka City, Ashulia, Gazipur, Mymensingh, Narayanganj and Chittagong. After selecting location of the factories, to ensure diversity and reduce biasness, the researcher ensured to collect data from 5 specific departments. They are Production, Buying House, Supply Chain, Quality and Human Resource. Structured questionnaire was circulated among the sample. And here in survey convenience sampling was done. And for the qualitative analysis 13 individuals have been selected related to the research area purposively.

3.4 Sample Size Determination

3.4.1 Sample Size Determination : Qualitative Interviews

Key Informant Interviews (KII), as a research strategy, involve engaging in qualitative discussions with participants to gain in-depth insights into specific topics or issues. This method allows for a personal and interactive approach, providing a profound understanding of the participant's experiences and viewpoints (Graziano & Raulin, 1989; Mitchell & Jolley, 1988). In this study, 13 interviews had been conducted with female executives in the RMG industry to understand their experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding the glass ceiling. The semi-structured nature of interviews allowed for flexibility, enabling the exploration of emerging themes while maintaining a predefined set of questions. The advantages of utilizing interviews include the depth of insights obtained, the flexibility the semi-structured format offers, and the establishment of a personal interaction between the

researcher and the participant, promoting candid and comprehensive responses (Mitchell & Jolley, 1988; Mohajan, 2018; Nayak & Singh, 2021).

3.4.2 Sample Size Determination: Quantitative Survey

Surveys, on the other hand, are a quantitative research strategy involving the collection of structured data from a predetermined sample. Surveys utilize questionnaires with closed-ended questions, often employing rating scales or multiple-choice formats (Dooley, 1990; Graziano & Raulin, 1989; Gupta & Gupta, 2022; Judd et al., 1991).

Women from 50 RMG originations has been selected. At first step, locational diversity of factories is ensured, selected companies were in Dhaka city, Gazipur, Ashulia, Savar, Naranayangoj and Chittagong to reflect more generalized response from social context. In next step, ensured selected factories are varied in production specialization, Knit, Woven and Sweater. Later, representation from different scale of organization has been ensured to avoid bias response from similar organization culture, hypothetically larger organizations presumed have better organizations culture. Finally, female employees from this selected organizations are chosen for the study.

In this research, surveys have been administered to 108 female executives in the RMG industry. The sample size has been selected using the G-Power tool, which is suggested by several authors (Devi, 2017; Goddard & Melville, 2004; Stempel & Westley, 1981). Setting the known population at 20% (Kothari, 2004), the sample to include 10% of the known population (Graziano & Raulin, 1989), and setting the alpha at 5%, the G-power revealed the sample size to be 107 with 80% power. The structured questionnaire facilitated the collection of quantitative data regarding gender disparities, perceptions of the glass ceiling, and organizational dynamics. The advantages of employing surveys lie in their efficiency in collecting data from a large number of respondents, the quantifiable nature of the data generated, and the comparability of responses due to the structured format.

The table 3 presents the distribution of 108 female executives across different locations and divisions within the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry. In terms of location, the sample includes 8 executives from Dhaka City, 22 from Savar, 10 from Ashulia, 49 from Gazipur, 8 from Mymensingh, 6 from Narayanganj, and 6 from Chittagong. Regarding divisions and functions, there are 27 executives in Production, 22 in Buying House, 27 in Supply Chain, 14 in Quality, and 20 in Human Resource. This distribution ensures a diverse representation from various geographical areas and functional roles within the RMG sector.

Table 3: Sample Obtainment

Location	Division					Total
	Production	Buying House	Supply Chain	Quality	Human Resource	
Dhaka City	2	1	3	1	1	8
Savar	5	7	8	1	1	22
Ashulia	1	1	1	3	4	10
Gazipur	16	10	12	2	10	49
Mymensingh	1	1	1	4	1	8
Narayanganj	1	1	1	1	2	6
Chittagong	1	1	1	2	1	6
Total						108

The selection of surveys and interviews as the research strategies is based on the need to gather comprehensive and complementary data. Utilizing surveys ensures a wide representation of female executives in the RMG industry, providing quantifiable insights into gender disparities and perceptions related to the glass ceiling. The structured questionnaire allows for efficient data collection and facilitates statistical analysis, aiding in identifying trends and patterns. On the other hand, interviews are vital to capture the nuanced and qualitative aspects of the experiences and perspectives of female executives. By engaging in personal interactions through interviews, this study aims to delve deeply into the subjective realities of the participants, offering a detailed understanding of their challenges, aspirations, and perceptions concerning the glass ceiling. By integrating both surveys and interviews, this research seeks to triangulate the findings, validating and enriching the understanding of gender disparities and the glass ceiling phenomenon in the RMG industry. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data will lead to a more comprehensive and nuanced interpretation of the research objectives, ultimately enhancing the credibility and robustness of the study.

3.5 Measurements and Scale Development

In any research, the process of measuring variables accurately and reliably is fundamental to understanding the phenomenon under investigation. The selection of appropriate measurement tools and the development of sound scales are critical aspects that significantly impact the research's validity and credibility.

3.5.1 Interview Checklist Development

The interview checklist is designed to comprehend the experiences, beliefs, and perceptions of female executives regarding career advancement and the glass ceiling. The questions were semi-structured and open-ended. This question structure encouraged respondents to provide detailed and comprehensive responses. The questionnaire covers a range of topics, including career aspirations, perceived barriers, understanding of the glass ceiling, beliefs about achieving senior roles, work-family balance, and personal identity. The checklist were adapted from the research conducted by Ezzedeen et al (2015). The questions are carefully crafted and contextualized to ensure they are clear, concise, and capable of eliciting meaningful insights from the interviewees. The structure of the interview questionnaire allows for qualitative analysis, enabling the researchers to identify patterns, themes, and unique perspectives. The interview questions used in this research are presented in Appendix A1.

3.5.2 Questionnaire for Surveys

The questionnaire designed for surveys is structured to capture data on various factors related to the glass ceiling phenomenon and its impact on women in the RMG industry. The items in the questionnaire are carefully selected to represent different dimensions including personal, organizational, socio-cultural, risk aptitude of the organization, work engagement, and perceptions regarding the glass ceiling (Bazazo et al., 2017; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006; SARIÇİÇEK et al., 2017; Smith, Crittenden, & Caputi, 2012). The Likert scale is used for respondents to rate their agreement or disagreement with each item, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This scale allows for quantitative analysis of responses, enabling the researchers to derive numerical data for statistical analysis.

3.6 Instrument Design

The scales used in the survey questionnaire are based on established measures from prior research. The items are adapted and modified to suit the specific context of the study, which is the glass ceiling phenomenon in the RMG industry. Additionally, new items are developed to ensure comprehensive coverage of the variables under investigation. For each factor (personal, organizational, socio-cultural, risk aptitude of the organization, work engagement, and perceptions of the glass ceiling), a set of related questions is grouped. These questions form sub-scales, with each sub-scale representing a particular dimension of the factor. The sources

from where the components of the questionnaire is adapted is indicated in table 4. Validity and reliability tests have been conducted to ensure the robustness of the scales. Validity has been assessed through content validity, where 3 academicians and experts in the field had evaluated the relevance and appropriateness of the items. Reliability has been assessed using measures such as Cronbach's alpha to ascertain the internal consistency and stability of the scales.

Table 4: Measurement Scales

Factors	Items	References	
Personal	I am not confident in my abilities	Bazazo et al. (2017)	
	I am not emotionally suited to be a senior manager		
	I am not competitive		
	My subordinates don't have confidence in my leadership		
	I am not a high achiever		
Organizational	My work performance is fairly evaluated		
	There are few career opportunities for me		
	There is gender discrimination in my workplace		
	I am not assigned to high visibility positions		
	I have to work extra hard to be recognized		
	I am not given support to balance multiple roles		
	I am not respected by male colleagues		
I didn't consider myself a leader			
Socio-Cultural	My family members and society believe working outside is inappropriate for me		Devasahayam (2018)
	The culture of my surroundings is not friendly to the working-class women		
	Women in my family and society are not habituated to working outside		
Risk aptitude of organization	Women struggle in decision to move to high level management	(SARIÇİÇEK, Çopuroğlu, and Aytekin, 2017)	
	Children prevent women from work		
	Women can't do high level management		
	Women managers can't decide fast and logical		
	Women can't succeed at management because they are more sentimental than men		
	I am enthusiastic about my job		
	I am proud of the work that I do.		
	To me, my job is challenging.		
My job inspires me.			
Glass Ceiling	Women face no barriers to promotions in most organizations	(Smith et al., 2012)	
	Women and men have to overcome the same problems at the workspace		
	Women leaders are seldom given full credit for their success.		
	If women achieve promotions, they might be accused of offering sexual favours		
	Women who have a strong commitment to their career can go right to the top		
	Women in senior positions face frequent putdowns of being too soft or too hard		

3.6.1 Operational Definition

The operational definitions provided in this section aim to encapsulate the core elements of the study, ensuring precise and consistent understanding throughout the analysis. By delineating these variables, we can establish a structured framework that facilitates the exploration of the intricate relationships within the context of the Ready-Made Garments (RMG) industry. This structured approach is crucial for examining the glass ceiling Phenomenon and its determinants, thereby contributing to a nuanced comprehension of gender disparities and barriers to advancement in organizational settings. The definitions presented herein will serve as a guide for interpreting the hypotheses and empirical findings, ensuring clarity and coherence in the subsequent analysis.

Table 5: Operational Definition

Variable	Definition	Citation
Organizational Factors (ORG)	These include elements such as organizational policy, structure, and culture that significantly affect the formation and intensity of the glass ceiling. Organizational policies may involve promotion practices, gender equality initiatives, and support systems, while structure refers to hierarchy and decision-making processes that can either hinder or facilitate women's advancement. Organizational culture encompasses the values, beliefs, and behaviors that characterize how gender is perceived and treated within the workplace.	Rajasekar and Beh (2013); Kabir (2020); Karmaker & Fatema (2020); Sharmila Sayeed (2020); Khair (2019)
Personal Factors (PER)	Individual characteristics including interpersonal relationship-building capabilities, readiness to fulfill informal roles, and attitude towards work and managerial positions. These factors determine how effectively an individual navigates workplace dynamics, builds professional networks, and displays leadership qualities. Personal attributes such as self-confidence, resilience, and motivation also play crucial roles in career progression and overcoming barriers like the glass ceiling.	Belasen (2017); Mohapatra (2017); Words of wisdom from women to watch (2017)
Social Factors (SOC)	External influences that encompass cultural norms, family structure, and societal gender roles which affect the formation of the glass ceiling and employee behavior. Cultural norms dictate the societal expectations of gender roles	Bzdek (2009); Katsirikou and Skiadas (2012); Cooper (2014); McConnell-

	both at work and home, influencing how women balance professional and personal responsibilities. Family structures, such as support from spouses and extended family, can impact women's career aspirations and opportunities. Societal attitudes towards gender equity and women's professional capabilities also shape workplace dynamics and opportunities for advancement.	Ginet (2011); Ragins and Kram (2007)
Risk Aptitude (RIS)	The degree to which organizations perceive and react towards risk, influenced by internal and external factors such as market conditions, industry dynamics, and organizational culture. This includes the willingness of organizations to make bold decisions that can impact their competitive edge, innovation, and overall success. Organizational risk aptitude reflects the propensity to engage in strategic initiatives, adopt new technologies, and explore uncharted markets while considering the potential benefits and drawbacks.	Elacqua et al. (2009); Wilson & Gilligan (2005); Chin (2009)
Work Engagement (WOR)	The level of enthusiasm and dedication an employee feels towards their job, influenced by both personal and organizational factors. High work engagement is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in work tasks, leading to increased productivity and job satisfaction. Organizational support, recognition, and opportunities for professional development enhance work engagement. Conversely, workplace barriers, discrimination, and lack of support can diminish engagement levels.	Haugen et al. (2010); Thomas and Wilcox (2005); LaGuardia-Kotite (2012); Roberts et al. (2019)
Glass Ceiling (GLC)	Invisible barriers that prevent women and minorities from advancing to top-level positions within an organization. These barriers are often systemic and stem from entrenched stereotypes, biases, and discriminatory practices. The glass ceiling manifests in limited career opportunities, unequal pay, and lack of representation in leadership roles. It encompasses both explicit and implicit barriers, such as exclusion from critical networks, lack of mentorship, and organizational cultures that favor male leadership.	Arrighi (2007a); Bzdek (2008); Information Resources Management Association (2020)

3.7 Validity and Reliability of Measurement Instruments

To ensure validity of the scale, researcher conducted content validity, face validity, construct validity, convergent validity and discriminant validity.

3.7.1 Content Validity

To understand questionnaire is relevant to the topic, content validity has been tested. To ensure the validity of the measurement scale, instrument was sent to small group ; two academicians and two industry experts in the field for skilled review. Content validity Index (CVI) was calculated from their feedback, which eventually helped to ensure the relevance and appropriateness of the items included in the questionnaire.

3.7.2 Face Validity

Surface validity or face validity was conducted based on subjective judgement of small group of respondents who were untrained on subject matter. Word formulation, understandability and readability of the items (Broder et al.,2007) confirmed face validity of the instruments. Rewording, rearrangement of senescence and slight modification of questionnaire was done for better understanding of the respondents.

3.7.3 Construct Validity and Reliability Testing

Furthermore, reliability testing was conducted to ascertain the internal consistency and stability of the scales. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for each sub-scale to assess the reliability of the items within it. The coefficient values indicated satisfactory levels of internal consistency, ensuring that the items within each sub-scale measured the same underlying construct reliably.

3.8 Pilot Survey and Pilot Testing

A pilot survey, comprising 30 participants, was conducted to assess the clarity, comprehensibility, and usability of the survey questionnaire. The pilot survey facilitated an evaluation of the appropriateness of response options and allowed for the identification of any technical issues or logistical challenges in survey administration procedures. The analysis of the pilot data indicated that the criteria recommended by Rogers (2010) were satisfied, demonstrating the initial effectiveness of the survey instrument. However, to further refine the questionnaire and ensure optimal clarity and comprehensibility, additional feedback was

gathered through 9 follow-up interviews with individuals who participated in the pilot survey. Subsequent to the pilot survey, slight revisions were implemented to the questionnaire based on the suggestions gathered from the follow up interviews and suggestions of three industry experts. Specifically, adjustments were made to clarify ambiguous or confusing language, streamline the structure and flow of the questionnaire, and improve the overall user experience for survey respondents. Finally, this research moved towards comparing and contrasting the findings of this research with existing empirical evidence, several key steps were undertaken to assess the consistency, divergence, or novelty of the results obtained.

As suggested by Gupta and Gupta (2022); Rajasekar and Verma (2013), pilot testing is an important step in research surveys to ensure accurate and usable results. The process involves pretesting and testing the survey instrument and procedures before wide distribution. The mentioned authors suggested that the goal of pilot testing is to assess question understanding, reliability, clarity, and usability. It allows for improvements to be made based on respondent feedback, resulting in a more precise and reliable survey. It also helps to tailor the content and format of the questionnaire to the target population. By incorporating design improvements based on observations from previous waves of pilot testing, the survey can be made clearer and more user-friendly. Furthermore, it allows for the identification and resolution of any issues or confusion that respondents may have with the survey questions.

Based on these suggestions, the researcher gathered feedback of 30 respondents, regarding the comprehensibility. The feedback suggested that the questionnaire is clear both in terms of items and purpose. The feedback also indicated that the participants understood the purpose of the research and data confidentiality. Again, with the 30 data, the researcher produced a 5000 resamples, which were then tested using SmartPLS four. Based on PLS Algorithm, acceptable level of validity from Measurement model was ensured by factor loading of 0.7 or more. The analysis indicated that the results are sufficient all the indicators, including convergent and discriminant validity, and model fit, satisfied the parameters set by Triyawan (2023). Thereafter, the researcher proceeded with the data collection from the target sample.

3.9 Data Collection Process

In this study, as already stated, data collection and analysis encompassed both quantitative and qualitative approaches, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the glass ceiling phenomenon in the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry of Bangladesh. The subsequent data analysis utilized SmartPLS for the quantitative survey data and NVivo for qualitative insights gathered through interviews.

3.9.1 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 female employees from the RMG industry in Bangladesh. The interviews were between 30 to 45 minutes, giving them sufficient scope for becoming semi-structured (Devi, 2017). The interview protocol included open-ended questions that allowed participants to express their perspectives on the glass ceiling, barriers faced, and potential solutions. These interviews provided qualitative depth and a more nuanced understanding of the subject.

3.9.2 Survey

The survey was designed based on established scales and customized to suit the research context, incorporating Likert-scale questions to assess various aspects related to the glass ceiling. A total of 108 female employees from the RMG industry in Bangladesh participated in the survey, providing quantitative insights into their perceptions and experiences regarding the glass ceiling phenomenon. The G-power calculation indicated the sufficiency of 107 responses for this research, which is also discussed in an earlier sub-chapter.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

While conducting this study, the research addressed several ethical considerations. Informed consent was rigorously obtained from all participants, clearly explaining the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, benefits, and the voluntary nature of participation, ensuring participants understood they could withdraw at any time without repercussions. Confidentiality and anonymity were paramount; personal identifiers were removed or anonymized to protect participants' privacy, and data were securely stored with access restricted to the research team. Minimizing harm was critical, especially given the sensitive nature of discussing workplace discrimination and career barriers. The research was designed to avoid psychological distress,

and support or referrals were provided when necessary. Treating participants with respect and fairness throughout the research process was crucial, recognizing their contributions and ensuring no coercion or undue influence. Transparency and honesty were maintained in all interactions, avoiding deception unless ethically justified and disclosed as soon as possible. Ethical approval was sought from a relevant institutional review board or ethics committee to ensure compliance with ethical standards and guidelines. Finally, the research findings were reported and disseminated accurately and responsibly, acknowledging any study limitations and making the insights accessible to participants and stakeholders who could benefit from the research. This comprehensive ethical approach ensured the integrity and ethical soundness of the study, promoting trust and respect among participants and contributing to meaningful, positive change in the industry.

3.11 Tools for Data Analysis

3.11.1 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using NVivo 14, a software specializing in qualitative data analysis. NVivo facilitated the organization, coding, and thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. Through this qualitative analysis, recurring themes, patterns, and variations in experiences related to the glass ceiling were identified, providing a qualitative understanding of the phenomenon.

3.11.2 Quantitative Analysis

For the survey data, SmartPLS 4.0.9.8 (Partial Least Squares) was utilized for structural equation modeling. SmartPLS is suitable for complex models and allows for both measurement and structural model assessments. The quantitative data were analyzed to measure the relationships between different variables and assess the impact of the glass ceiling on women's progression in the RMG industry.

For the quantitative data analysis, the survey responses were processed using SmartPLS 4 (Partial Least Squares), a statistical software suitable for structural equation modeling (SEM). SEM allowed for the examination of relationships between different variables and the assessment of the impact of the glass ceiling on female executives' progression in the RMG industry. The analysis involved constructing and testing structural models to identify significant relationships and causal pathways among the variables under investigation.

SmartPLS facilitated both measurement and structural model assessments, enabling the researchers to evaluate the validity and reliability of the measurement scales used in the study. This software provided robust statistical techniques to analyze complex models and derive meaningful insights from the quantitative data collected through the surveys. In addition to quantitative analysis, qualitative data analysis was conducted using NVivo 14, a software specializing in qualitative data analysis. NVivo facilitated the organization, coding, and thematic analysis of the interview transcripts obtained from female executives in the RMG industry. The qualitative analysis involved systematically examining the interview data to identify recurring themes, patterns, and variations in experiences related to the glass ceiling phenomenon. Through in-depth coding and categorization of the qualitative data, the researchers gained a deeper understanding of the subjective perspectives, challenges, and aspirations of female executives regarding career advancement and gender disparities in the workplace. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods, the study aimed to triangulate findings from different data sources, enriching the understanding of the glass ceiling phenomenon in the RMG industry. The combined approach allowed for a comprehensive examination of the research questions, providing a nuanced and multi-dimensional perspective on the subject matter.

3.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, the research methodology employed to investigate the complex phenomenon of the glass ceiling in the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry of Bangladesh has been meticulously outlined. Acknowledging the lack of prior studies encompassing all objectives and research questions, the research methodology was formulated through a comprehensive analysis of available research methods. The foundational framework chosen was the Research Onion Model by Saunders et al. (2007), within which post-positivism was selected as the research philosophy. The post-positivist philosophy aligns with the objective of combining empirical rigor with an understanding of the intricate social aspects surrounding the glass ceiling. The choice was justified by comparing it to other philosophical options like positivism, interpretivism, phenomenology, and constructivism. The emphasis was on the need for a balanced approach recognizing both objective and subjective elements. The research approach followed the deductive method, allowing testing of existing theories within the context of the RMG industry. To gain a comprehensive understanding, a mixed-method approach was

utilized, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. The qualitative aspect involved in-depth interviews, while the quantitative aspect employed a structured survey. The combined approach ensured a thorough investigation, leveraging the strengths of both methods. In terms of the time horizon, a cross-sectional study was chosen, given its alignment with the research focus on current experiences and perceptions. Questionnaires for surveys and interviews were developed, selecting appropriate items based on existing research and modifying them to suit the context. The data collection included 108 survey responses and 13 interviews with female RMG employees. To analyze the data, SmartPLS was used for quantitative survey data, allowing examination of relationships and patterns, and NVivo for qualitative insights from interviews, aiding in identifying themes and variations. Through this comprehensive methodology, the aim is to shed light on the intricate and pervasive issue of the glass ceiling in the RMG industry, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and equitable workplace for female executives.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Data analysis is carried out as the statistical assessment of the study. This chapter starts by addressing the steps required in the process of data preparation, which involves data editing and coding to alter and arrange the data structure. This also includes data screening and data cleaning, which involves the identification and rectification of the anomalies like data entry errors, blank responses, straight lining, missing data, outliers, and other similar anomalies. These are the preparatory steps taken before carrying out the PLS-SEM analysis. During this, assumption testing, response bias check, and checking of common method variance have also been conducted. The dimensions of quality education-based data collected from various respondents have been analyzed with both descriptive and inferential statistics. The data analysis was done in the Microsoft Excel, SPSS (Version 27) software, and the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique with SmartPLS 4 (Version 4.0.9.8) software. The PLS-SEM has been gaining increased usage in various social sciences. Two stage analytical procedures were recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). This stage considers both the measurement model and the structural model. Construct reliability and validity evaluation which means measuring the consistency and accuracy of the variables measured by several items. Consistency Reliability and Indicator Reliability are carefully tested so that the measurement model can be assessed. The two types of validity including the convergent validity and the discriminant validity have also been tested for the measurement model to be assessed. The SEM technique was used to test the proposed hypotheses for the structural model.

4.2 Data Preparation

Data preparation is an initial stage of data analysis prior to the research model evaluation. Data editing, data coding, and data entering are the important phases of the data preparation process that are carried out to make the data accurate and adequate (Blumberg et al., 2014). The researcher has infused the following elements inside this region.

4.2.1 Data Structure

The paper-based survey questionnaire was used for the manual data collection process. After carrying out the necessary information collection, a data structure has been built. As already mentioned, a questionnaire was prepared comprising 49 closed-ended questions and served as items or indicators for 7 constructs and 3 sub-constructs. These constructs and sub-constructs are specific to different empirically proven glass ceiling determinants.

Later, the information was coded, in which numerical values assigned to any categories helped in easing the evaluation of the items into a pre-set group or category (Blumberg et al., 2014; Hair et al., 2017). The items on the independent and dependent variables in this study were pre-coded with a scale of 1-5, where 1 meant a strong disagreement and 5 represented strong agreement. Later, each of the responses was post-coded, where the various responses had different numbers assigned to them (Blaikie, 2003).

4.2.2 Data Screening and Data Cleaning

Data screening and data cleaning were conducted by verifying data entry errors, data straightening, determining blank responses and absent data.

4.2.2.1 Data Entry Error

Two procedures were adopted to check the data entry errors in this study including random case checking and sampling checking. SPSS program was used to conduct the sampling check. All the fields were put in either the ascending or descending order to detect the wrong data input or any entry out of range in the incorrect responses. In some instances, the wrong values might be posted instead of the correct ones. A sampling check was conducted to detect such fault. Besides, this study has randomly selected 10% of the total cases for the purpose of conducting random case checks.

4.2.2.2 Blank Responses

The blank responses in the questionnaires accumulated from the respondents were checked by using Microsoft Excel. The sample was cleaned off the questionnaires which had any blank response for the independent variables and the dependent variables. The Excel

COUNTBLANK function was also used by the researcher to check that all the queries were answered by the respondents.

4.2.2.3 Straight-lining

The straight-lining issue was not seen in the data. Microsoft Excel 2016 was used by the researcher to examine the feedback for the detection of straight lining issues. Straight lining is a phenomenon where a respondent provides the same response to many queries (Hair et al., 2017). The straight-lining was checked using simple standard deviation formula applied on all the responses in each case. According to Hair et al. (2017), the presence of the straight-lining issue can be indicated by a 0-standard deviation. However, no single instance in the data had a 0 standard deviation, implying that the whole dataset is usable for statistical testing.

4.2.2.4 Missing data

There were no missing data issues during this research. The used software named Smart PLS is capable of automatically detecting any missing data issues. Data screening and cleaning are procedures that aim to identify any missing element within a dataset. Missing data are defined as cases where respondents fail to answer specific questions (Cantrell & Lupinacci, 2007). The effects of missing data result in the lowering of the statistical power and precision of estimates, thus providing wrong conclusions. (Graham, 2003).

4.2.3 Outliers

All variables both independent and dependent of this research were checked for outliers. Outliers are defined as the unusual or extreme responses to a specific topic or to all the questions (Felt et al., 2017). Outlier detection and removal are considered necessary because it can destroy the normal distribution of the data and yield biased results (Hellerstein, 2008). The outlier test was conducted in SPSS 27, using Box and Whisker Plots, for each individual constructs. However, no outlier was identified.

4.3 Assumption Testing

The essential statistical procedure underlying the multivariate analysis is assumption testing. The need to check assumptions comes from two reasons which include (a) the complexity of the relationships and, (b) the complexity of the analysis and results (Anderson, 2001). The first reason is attributed to the numerous amounts of constructs that can yield distortions and bias.

The second aspect is associated with the indicators of assumption violation (Hair et al., 2011). In this research, certain assumption tests have been carried out as followed:

4.3.1 Normality

The first assumption of multivariate analysis is normality, and it is determined through the assumption of normal distribution in each item and in all linear combinations of the items (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2003). This study used the statistical power analysis tool, Web Power, to measure multivariate skewness and kurtosis. This tool is available on the website (Tehseen et al., 2017; Cain et al., 2017). The Web Power tool calculated univariate as well as multivariate skewness and kurtosis. Regarding univariate analysis, a cutoff value of ± 2 was used for skewness and ± 7 for kurtosis (Kim, 2013; Wulandari et al., 2021). The optimal value for skewness varies from -1 to +1, and the value between -2 and +2 is usually considered acceptable. Values outside the range of -2 to +2 are actually strong indicators of nonnormality (Hair et al., 2021). Conversely, regarding the multivariate test, the cutoff value for skewness at 5% significance level was found to be 0.187, which was based on the (critical value of $b_{1,2}$) taken from Mardia's table 2. Moreover, regarding the kurtosis, the lower limit was found to be 6.115, and the upper limit was found to be 7.231 based on the sample size of 108 (Mardia, 1974).

Output of Skewness and Kurtosis Analysis

Variables	Skewness	SE skew	Z skew	Kurtosis	SE Kurt	Z Kurt
PER	0.895	0.26	3.448	0.151	0.514	0.294
ORG	-0.497	0.26	-1.914	-0.067	0.514	-0.130
SOC	0.365	0.26	-1.405	-1.098	0.514	-2.136
RIS	0.607	0.26	2.336	-0.264	0.514	-0.515
WOR	-0.300	0.26	-1.155	-0.624	0.514	-1.214
GLS	-0.514	0.26	-1.980	-0.556	0.514	-1.081

Mardia's multivariate skewness and kurtosis

Measure	b	z	p-value
Skewness	4.563428	65.409135	0.1825021
Kurtosis	45.170010	-1.339271	0.1804824

4.3.2 Normality of the Error Terms

The researcher has used the normal probability plot, also known as the P-P plot, to assess this second multivariate analytic assumption, represented by the normal distribution. The researcher has created this plot using the Excel sheet with the latent variable scores. The researcher has clicked descriptive statistics in the SPSS software to obtain the P-P plot after importing data files and after the analysis phase. Then, variables are introduced to create this plot. The points are shown to lie very close to the diagonal line. Therefore, based on that, it could be concluded that the errors are distributed normally. The dependent variable is the Glass Ceiling (GLC).

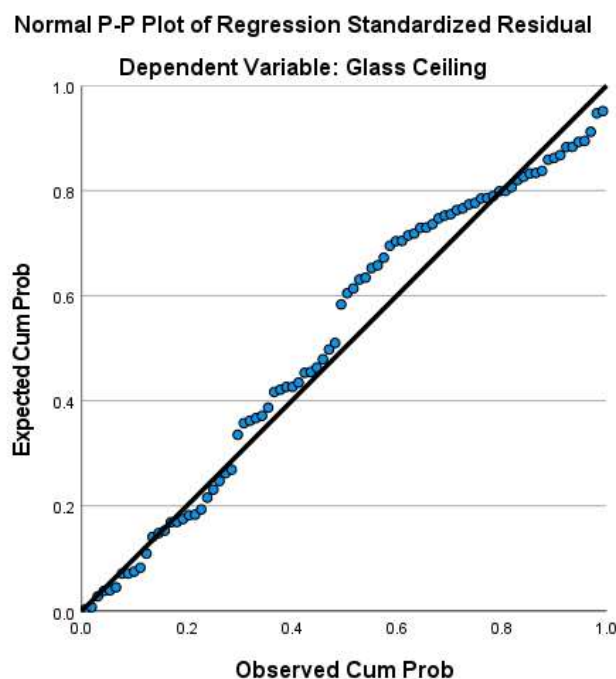


Figure 8: Standardized P-P Plot for Glass Ceiling

4.3.3 Linearity

in multivariate analysis, linearity is the third premise, which indicates a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables. This study conducted a regression variable plot to ascertain that a straight line could be traced on the dependent variable, GLC. This study used the SPSS software to produce six variable diagrams, where GLC was always plotted on the vertical axis and PER, SOC, ORG, RIS, and WOR were plotted on the horizontal axis. It is

arguable that the data in this study met the assumption of linearity, as it was possible to draw a straight line for all the variables.

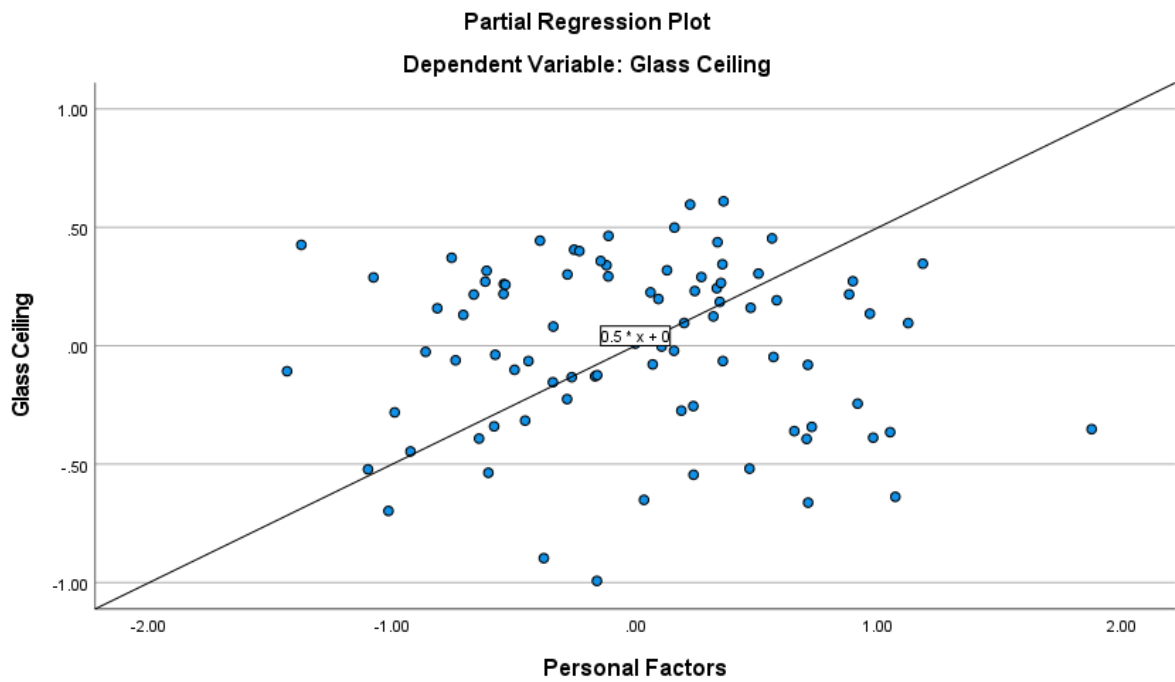


Figure 9: Partial Regression Plots Based on Personal Factors as Independent Variable

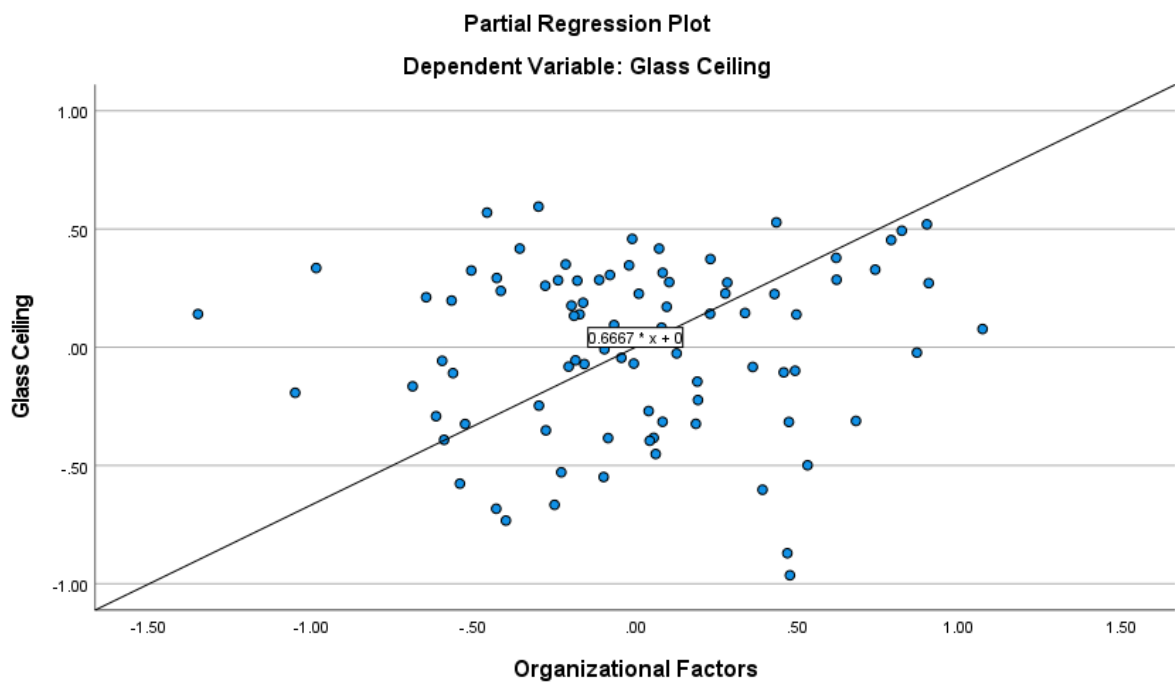


Figure 10: Partial Regression Plots Based on Organizational Factors as Independent Variable

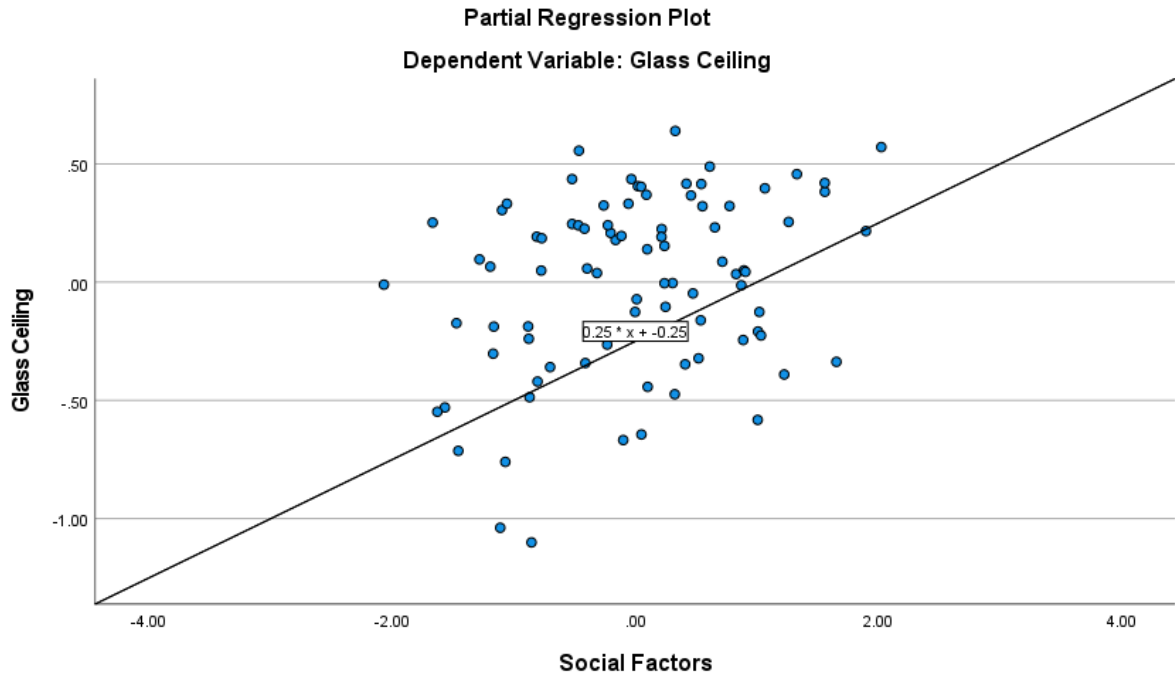


Figure 11: Partial Regression Plots Based on Social Factors as Independent Variable

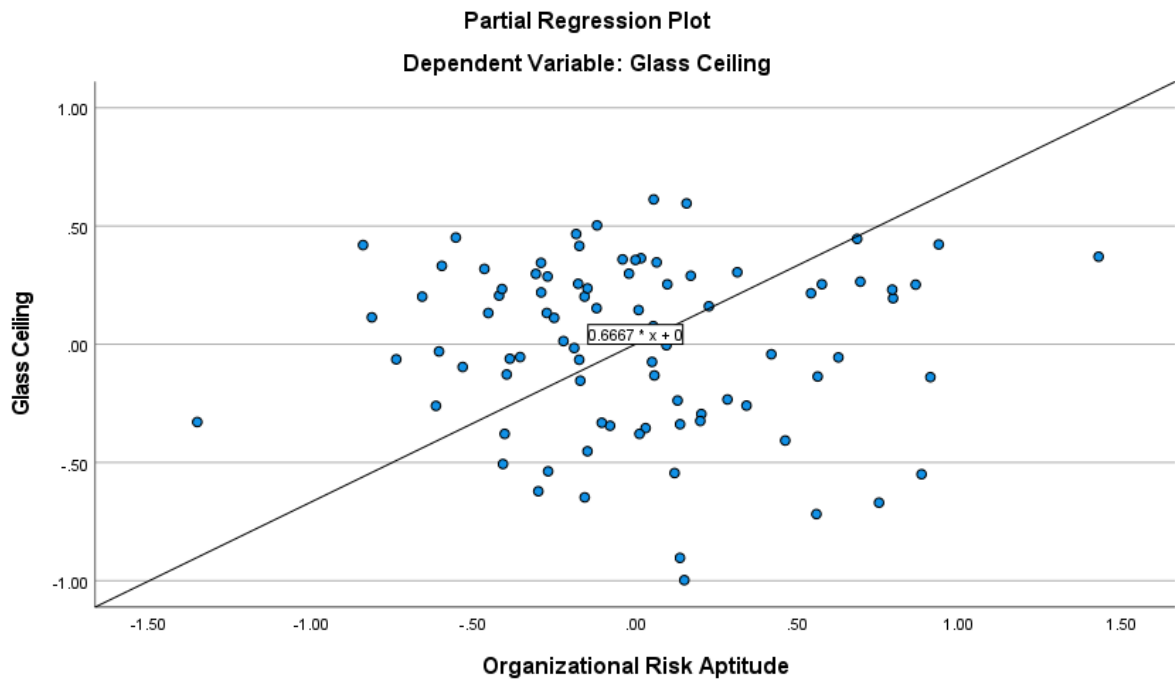


Figure 12: Partial Regression Plots Based on Organizational Risk Aptitude as Independent Variable

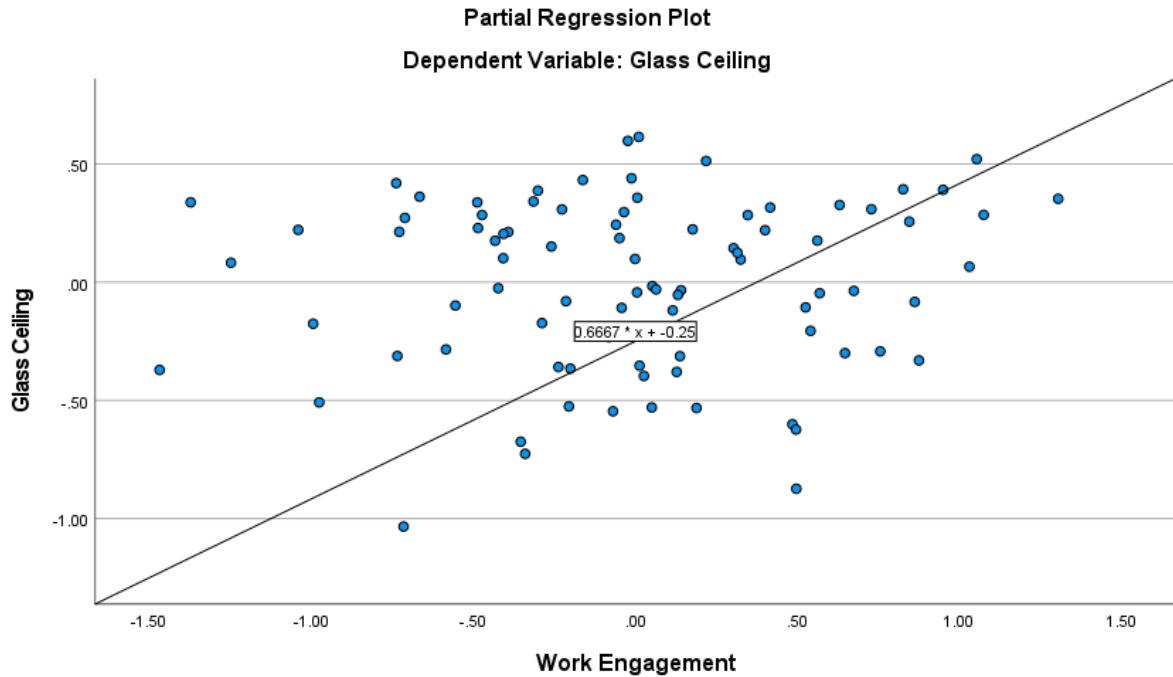


Figure 13: Partial Regression Plots Based on Work Engagement as Independent Variable

4.3.4 Constant Variance-Homoscedasticity

This assumption says that the variance should be equal and constant that is, homoscedastic rather than varying that is, heteroscedastic, and is therefore the fourth assumption. One of the assumptions in regression analysis is homoscedasticity. It concerns the way error terms or residuals are distributed equally. To carry out this test, a scatter plot was constructed by plotting the regression standardized residual against the regression standardized predicted value. This study showed a similar pattern throughout the plot. The researcher, through the SPSS software, conducted a linear regression analysis, which had GLC as the dependent variable, while PER, SOC, ORG, RIS, and WOR as the independent variables.

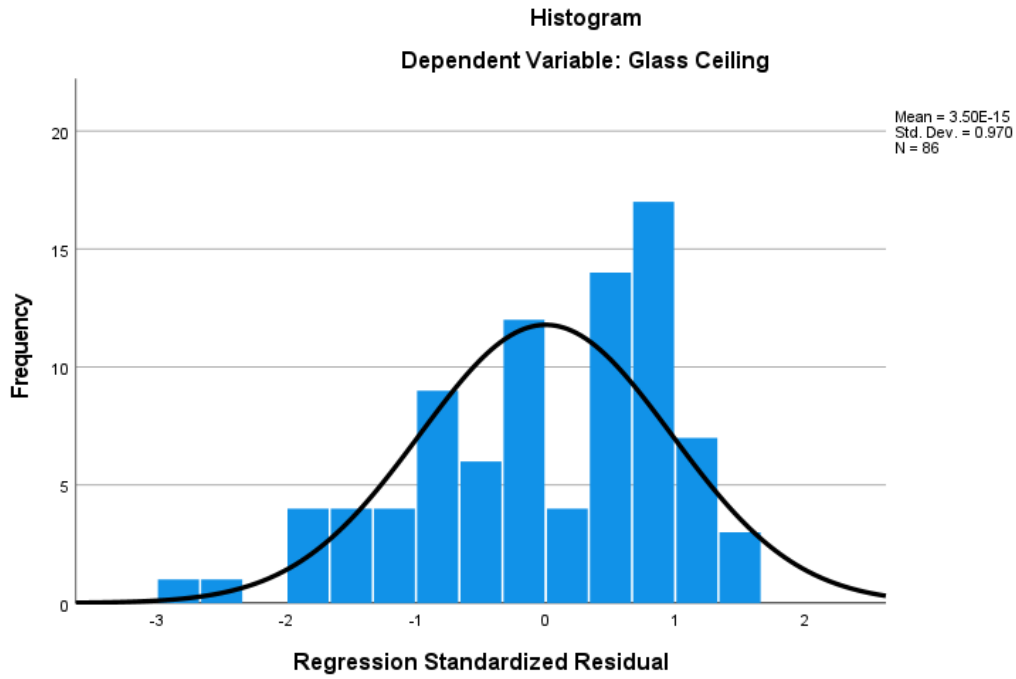


Figure 14: Regression Standardized Residuals Histograms

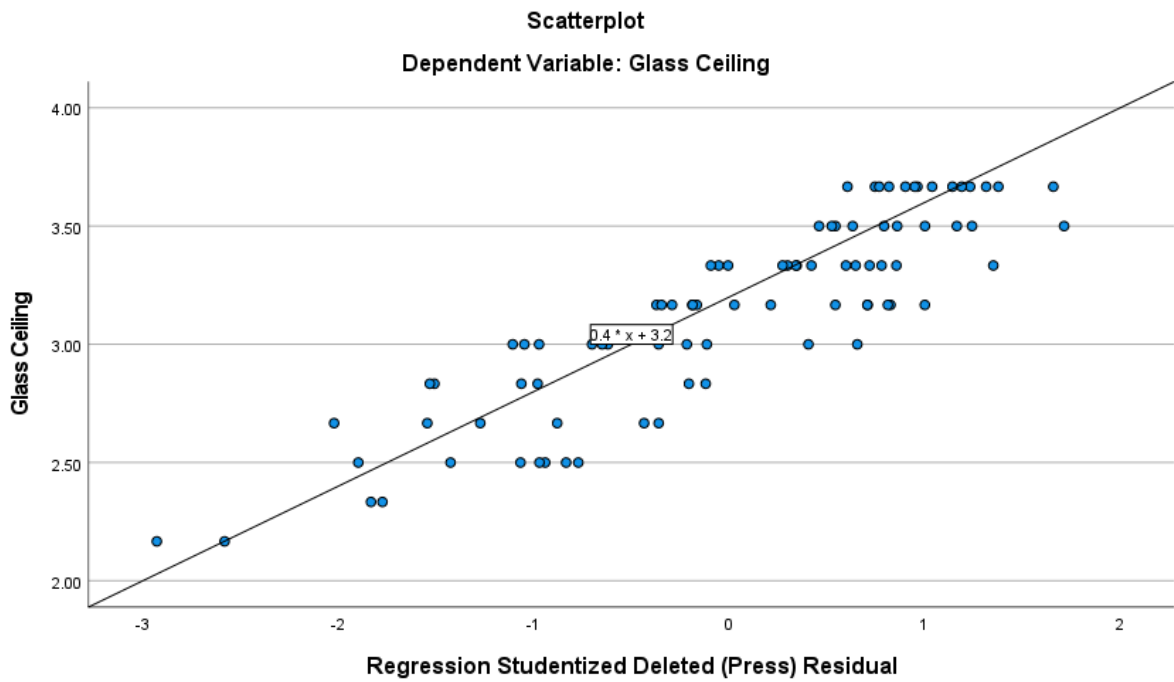


Figure 15: Regression Studentized Deleted Residual

4.3.5 Autocorrelation

Autocorrelation is the fifth assumption in multivariate analysis which emphasizes that the error terms of a given model should not be correlated or there should exist no autocorrelation. For examining autocorrelation, the Durbin-Watson statistics have been used in this study. With the help of the SPSS software the researcher has examined the Durbin-Watson test. The reference value of the Durbin-Watson statistics should be between 0 to 4. This study found a value of 3.981 which was within the range.

4.4 Response Bias Check

Responses collected from respondents must be free from bias. Otherwise, the results of the research will be questionable or invalid. To increase the response rate and get bias-free responses, this study has used a multimode method of conducting face-to-face surveys. As per the sample design described in the previous chapter, the data have been collected. Therefore, the data collection technique has ensured that there is no bias.

4.5 Common Method Variance (CMV)

The CMV may be an issue as all of the data for this research came from not more than a single source. A systematic error variance that is shared between the variables is represented when they are measured by the same sources or methods. when data is accumulated through self-administered questionnaires, The risks of CMV can be significant to validate the constructs from the same respondents (Podsakoff et al., 2012). CMV can add systemic error to a study and can corrupt the validity of the constructs, according to Tehseen et al (2017). This study has utilized both procedural and statistical corrections before and after the data collection to reduce CMV in this study. The CMV is statistically checked through the marker variable approach, full collinearity test, and Harman's single factor test. The researcher has not utilized the marker variable approach, the third statistical method, in this study. The first two methods, Harman's single factor test and full collinearity test, are utilized.

4.5.1 Harman's Single Factor Test

The results from Harman's single factor test indicate that the first factor accounts for 48.401% of the total variance initially, reducing to 40.683% after extraction. Since no single factor

explains a majority of the variance (over 50%), common method bias is not a significant concern in this dataset (Hair Jr et al., 2017). The variance is fairly distributed among multiple factors, with the first two factors together accounting for 70.169% of the variance. This distribution suggests that the data is not predominantly influenced by a single underlying common method, affirming the validity of the constructs measured.

Table 6: Harman’s Single Factor Test

Factor	Total Variance Explained			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	Initial Eigenvalues % of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.904	48.401	48.401	2.441	40.683	40.683
2	1.306	21.768	70.169			
3	.683	11.386	81.555			
4	.536	8.926	90.481			
5	.344	5.732	96.213			
6	.227	3.787	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

4.5.2 Full Collinearity Test

Another method of identifying CMV was using a full collinearity test. The rationale behind this method is to establish those constructs that had a VIF of five or higher (Kock and Lynn, 2012). The SPSS software program which was run in computing collinearity statistics, produced the VIF and tolerance. In the research paradigm, the dependent variable was OSBE; the other variables were independent constructs. The analysis indicates that all the independent constructs have tolerance values less than the 0.93 threshold (Menard, 1955; Myers, 1990) and that all the constructs have VIFs less than the 3-5 range, which is considered acceptable (Becker et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2021). Therefore, the results of the study have once again been proven to be free of common method variance.

4.6 Descriptive Statistics

Table 7: Demographic Profile

4 Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	108	100%
Age Group		
18-25	14	12.96%
26-40	82	75.92%
41 and above	12	11.11
Education		
Secondary	1	0.92%
Undergraduate	44	40.74%
Postgraduate	57	52.77%
Other	6	5.55%
Work Experience		
0-5 Years	28	25.92%
6-10 Years	36	33.33%
11-15 Years	29	27.03%
16-20 Years	12	10.81%
21 or above years	3	2.70%
Current Position in the Organization		
Employee	40	37.03%
Executive	64	59.26%
Board Members	4	3.70%

The descriptive analysis conducted for this research revealed the demographic profile of the participants. Table 7 presents the key demographic characteristics. Firstly, as the table indicates, 100% of the participants were female, supporting the methodological stance the researcher adopted, described in the earlier chapter. While most participants were between 26 to 40 years old (75.92%), people below 26 years old (12.96%) and more than 40 years old (11.11%) have also been incorporated into the sample. More than half of these participants (52.77%) have a postgraduate degree, and 40.74% have a graduate degree. 5.55% of the participants had completed other academic programs, and 0.92% completed only the secondary education. Additionally, 33.33% of these participants had a working experience of 6 to 10 years. 25.92% indicated their work experience to be less than six years. The rests have more than ten years of working experience. Lastly, 36.40% hold a non-managerial or employee role in the organization, and 60.36% hold different executive positions. Only 4 participants (3.70%) serve as board members.

4.7 Qualitative

4.7.1 Demographic Profile

To reduce the bias in the responses, the researchers followed the guidelines of Alase (2017) and gathered the participants with different backgrounds and family dynamics. In the following section (Table 8), descriptions of the participants were attached.

Table 8: Summary of the Participants' Description

Sl	Age group	Location of upbringing	Location of job	Years of Experience
1	41-45	Rajshahi (City area)	Dhaka	13
2	36-40	Bhola (Rural part)	Chittagong	16
3	31-35	Dhaka (City area)	Dhaka	8
4	26-30	Rangpur (City area)	Dhaka	12
5	36-40	Dhaka (City)	Dhaka	14
6	26-30	Dhaka (City area)	Dhaka	5
7	26-30	Dhaka	Dhaka	4
8	31-35	Natore (Rural area)	Dhaka	12
9	26-30	Khulna (City area)	Dhaka	2
10	41-45	Khulna (City area)	Dhaka	17
11	26-30	Dhaka	Chittagong	5
12	31-35	Rajshahi (City area)	Dhaka	8
13	31-35	Dhaka	Dhaka	8

As Table 7 indicates, the participants were from various occupations such as merchandising manager, head of research and development, assistant manager, chief marketing officer, and so on. These participants had work experience ranging from two to thirteen years. Although seven of the thirteen respondents had their upbringing outside of big metropolitan cities, they all have to work in the two biggest cities Dhaka and Chittagong. Their salaries ranged from twenty-five thousand takas to two hundred and thirty thousand takas. Eleven of the thirteen participants are married. All of them have completed their bachelor's degree and almost half of the participants have completed their post-graduate degrees.

4.7.2 Quality Assurance

As per the recommendation of Zamawe (2015), this research utilized the NVivo 14 software, which allowed the researchers to code the interview transcript, identify the themes, organize them, and make it easier to handle critical information while enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings. The tool also enabled the researchers to replace the pen-and-paper method and use an easier data management process. Following the procedures suggested by

the mentioned author, the researcher gathered the data, stored them separately, and classified them with appropriate or relevant themes. Through this collaborative practice, this research ensured investigator triangulation, as advocated by (Archibald, 2016). This triangulation also enhanced the credibility and validity of the research.

4.7.3 Thematic Analysis

The factors contributing to the existence of the glass ceiling have been listed in Figure . The mentioned percentages in the list indicate the portion of the interview participants narrating the themes. The thematic analysis conducted for this research provides valuable insights into the existence of the glass ceiling in Bangladesh’s RMG industry and its impact on women in the workforce. The findings reveal that despite the rapid efforts made to incorporate women into the workforce and add them to the nation’s human capital, women in the RMG industry continue to face barriers that limit their ability to reach managerial or decision-making positions. The study identifies three main factors contributing to the glass ceiling, including social, organizational, and personal factors.

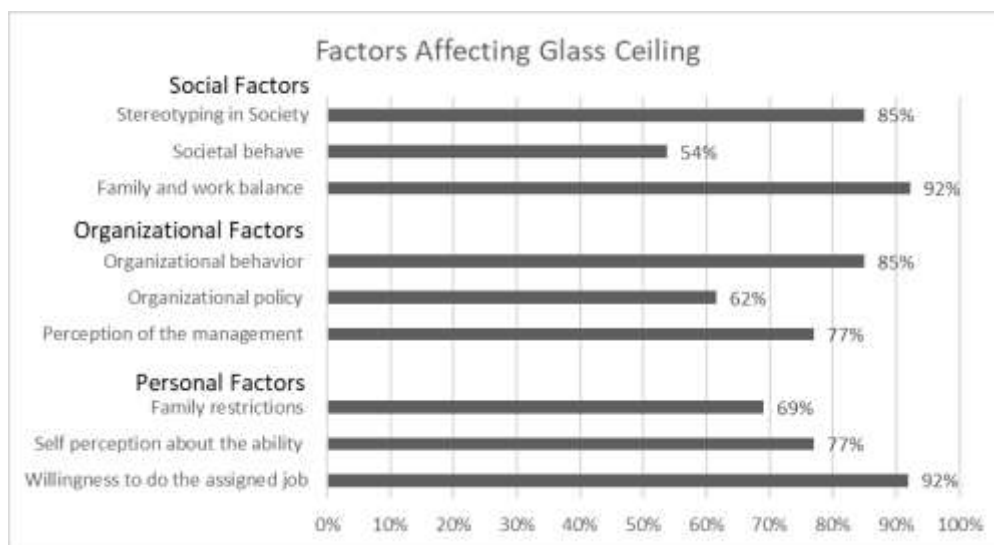


Figure 16: Factors Affecting the Glass Ceiling.

Social factors, first category identified in the analysis, play a crucial role in shaping the gendered work experiences of women in the RMG industry. Societal stereotyping, family-work balance, and organizational factors are three key elements contributing to the existence of glass ceiling. Within the societal realm, certain roles and professions are unfairly associated with either gender, which leads to the undervaluation and underrepresentation of women in specific fields. Societal expectations, particularly traditional gender roles, create obstacles for women striving to balance their work and family duties, thereby hindering their pursuit of career

advancement. The second category, organizational factors, plays an equally crucial role in shaping women’s career prospects. This category comprises organizational behavior, policies, and management perceptions, all of which influence the glass ceiling phenomenon. The organizational culture and values can either facilitate or impede women’s advancement. Regrettably, within the Bangladeshi RMG industry, a gender bias culture prevails, favoring men for promotions and opportunities over women. Furthermore, organizational policies restrict women’s career growth prospects, such as limitations on travel and the requirement for female employees to obtain permission from male family members to work outside the home. Finally, the management’s biased perception that men are better suited for managerial or decision-making roles leads to the overlooked potential of highly qualified women. In the thematic analysis, the third and final category to consider revolves around personal factors. These personal aspects encompass elements like familial constraints, self-perceived competence, and the readiness to undertake assigned roles, all of which exert constraints on women’s opportunities for career progression. To elaborate, familial restrictions pertain to the societal and cultural norms that exert pressure on women to adhere to traditional gender roles, thereby constraining their potential for career advancement. A significant influence is exerted by women’s self-assessment of their abilities and competencies, which can curtail their confidence and willingness to pursue career-advancing opportunities. Additionally, the social and cultural expectations imposed on women limit their preparedness to embrace additional responsibilities or challenges within their professional endeavors.

Table 9: Frequently Used Words

Word	Length	Count	Weighted percentage (%)
career	6	107	1.84
female	6	99	1.70
position	8	91	1.56
believe	7	89	1.53
family	6	81	1.39
think	5	77	1.32
work	4	71	1.22
male	4	69	1.18
barriers	8	67	1.15
women	5	57	0.98
Executive	9	51	0.88
management	10	49	0.84
job	3	47	0.81
organization	12	42	0.72

Table 9 reveals that some of the most commonly used words narrated by the interviewees include career, female, position, believe, family, think, work, male, barriers, women, executive, management, job, and organization. These frequently used words are also revealed in the word cloud presented in Figure . In the following section, these frequently used words are discussed while referring back to the themes identified through the qualitative analysis conducted for this research.

The word "career" appears as the most frequently used word in the thematic analysis, indicating the significance of the topic of career advancement for women in the RMG industry of Bangladesh. The thematic analysis unequivocally affirms the presence of substantial impediments that hinder women's career progression, preventing them from attaining managerial or decision-making roles. The term "barriers" underscores the gravity of these obstacles and their profound impact on the advancement of women in their careers. Frequent usage of words such as "female," "position," and "believe" underscores the pervasive influence of societal stereotypes and biases on the glass ceiling phenomenon within the RMG industry of Bangladesh. It is evident that prevailing perceptions often cast doubt on women's suitability for managerial or decision-making positions, resulting in their undervaluation and underrepresentation in specific fields. This sentiment finds resonance in the prominent occurrences of the terms "male" and "management," implying a bias in favor of men when it comes to promotions and opportunities. The term "family," with its substantial prevalence, accentuates the weight of social and cultural expectations imposed on women in Bangladesh. These expectations invariably compel women to conform to traditional gender roles and responsibilities, rendering the balancing act between work and family commitments a formidable challenge. The frequent appearance of the term "job" further implies that women may encounter difficulties in assuming added responsibilities or embracing new challenges in their careers due to the societal pressures they face. Lastly, the recurrent presence of "work" and "organization" underscores the pivotal role played by the organizational culture and values within the RMG industry of Bangladesh in shaping the contours of the glass ceiling. These factors wield considerable influence in determining women's prospects for advancement.. The use of the word "executive" highlights the significant disparities in the representation of women in senior-level positions. Women face many limitations in their opportunities for career advancement, such as policies that restrict their travel or require permission from male family members to work outside the home.



Figure 17: Word Cloud

Figure presents the most frequently used words narrated together during the interviews. Quotes, including- the glass ceiling is acting as a barrier to my career advancement; there are some barriers for me in my organization related to the glass ceiling; and contradictorily, the glass ceiling does not exist in my organization, have been identified through the word tree analysis conducted through NVivo.

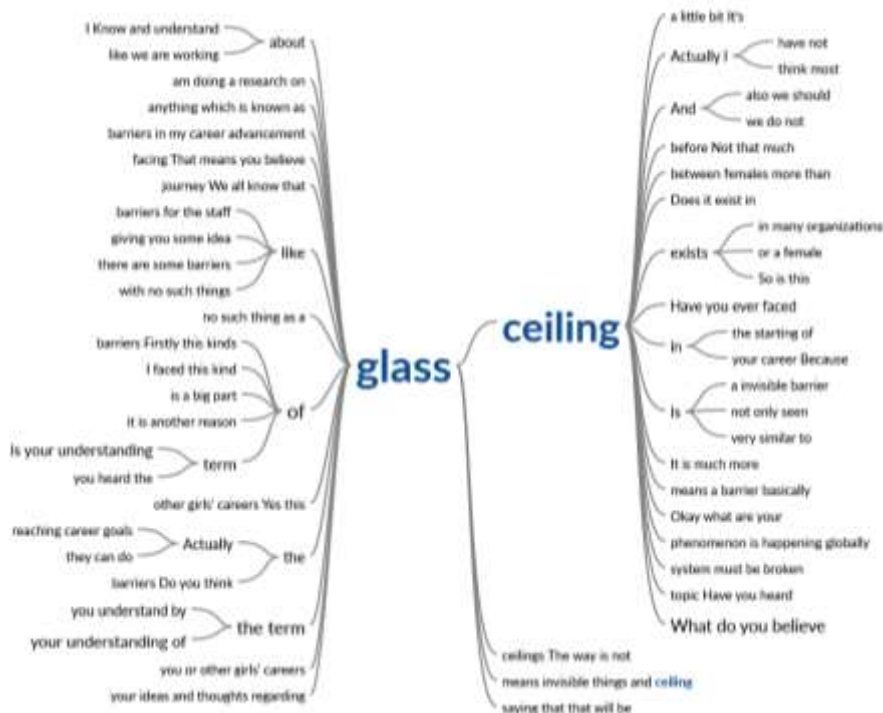


Figure 18: Word Tree Analysis

4.7.4 Existence of the Glass Ceiling

92% of the participants confirmed that the glass ceiling exists in their organization. When asked about this existence, Respondent 4 replied that-

"There are some invisible trouble or barriers are exists. Sometimes I was shocked that some female peer were quit their job because of their in-laws sickness. Then I was also face this kind of situation and supposed to do that. There are some barriers like this which can not be seen or overcome. My family barrier was my babies when they were little. But most of the big barrier was mentality of the management like I was doing full time duty but they thought that I was not doing my work properly. Also when I was join in this company, I got a tour offer with my colleagues within six months but I didn't get permission to go from my parents. This is the actual reality of our society. But my organization grows a positive mentality among colleagues day by day."

4.7.5 Social Factors Affecting the Glass Ceiling

The impact of societal factors for enforcing the glass ceiling is also evident from the expressions of the participants. For example, respondent no 6 expressed that-

"Women also have to face family barriers or restrictions. This restriction is mostly increased after marriage because of responsibilities."

4.7.6 Organizational Factors Affecting the Glass Ceiling

Several respondents reported the organizational issues that may lead to the glass ceiling in the work environment of the Bangladeshi RMG businesses. Among the respondents, the first one described the situation with a thorough elaboration. The expression was as follows.

"I observed that I did my best in my organization, but I don't get enough appreciation in my career somehow. So the egoistic matter still exists in the organization. Sometimes I hear from my junior female colleague that there is no self-appreciation for their work also. Basically the male leader thinks that he taught all of the procedures of the words to the female Junior College so he deserves all the credit."

4.7.7 Personal Factors Affecting the Glass Ceiling

A visible pattern for personal factors also emerged in the responses. For instance, respondent 9, when asked about career opportunities available to women in comparison with men, replied that,

"Sometimes we think that I am not capable of doing this because I am girl or female, so it's actually our lacking."

4.8 Quantitative

4.8.1 Analysis and Results

The researcher utilised the measurement model and the structural model for analysing the data gathered through the survey. The techniques recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) were adopted to test the reliability and validity of the measurements, as well as the research hypotheses. Further, the nonparametric procedure, bootstrapping, enabled by the software SmartPLS, was applied to generate 5000 resamples, which were then used to investigate the significance of the path coefficient and the loadings of the model.

4.8.2 Measurement Model Analysis

Figure 19 illustrates the measurement model evaluated through the analysis. For this evaluation, the two types of validity, namely, convergent and discriminant, were examined.

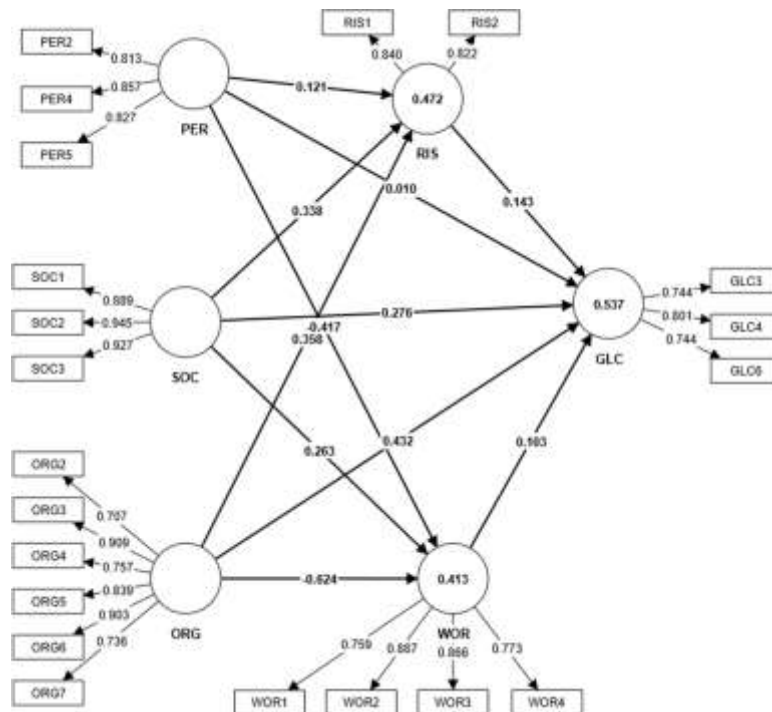


Figure 19: Results of the Measurement Model

4.8.3 Convergent Validity

In their research, Gholami et al. (2023) utilised the loadings of the outer model, rho_A, average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), and Cronbach's Alpha to measure the convergent validity. As they suggested, the loadings need to be higher than 0.5, corresponding to the AVR being 0.5. The procedures and acceptance criteria argued by the mentioned researchers were adopted for this research. It has been noted that the loading scores of certain items fall below the threshold of 0.5, with corresponding average values of 0.5. Consequently, items such as PER1, PER3, ORG1, GLC1, GLC2, and GLC5 have been deleted from the analysis. The analysis indicated that all the scores of loadings were greater than 0.707, and the corresponding AVR of all constructs were greater than 0.583. These scores have been summarised in Table # 10. In addition, the values of Cronbach's Alpha were higher than 0.712, and the scores of composite reliabilities were higher than 0.807. Thus, as the literature proposes, the convergent validity of the constructs is evinced.

Table 10: Convergent Validity

Items	Loadings	Cronbach	rho A	CR	AVR
PER2	0.813	0.778	0.779	0.871	0.693
PER4	0.857				
PER5	0.827				
ORG2	0.707	0.894	0.9	0.92	0.66
ORG3	0.909				
ORG4	0.757				
ORG5	0.839				
ORG6	0.903				
ORG7	0.736				
SOC1	0.889				
SOC2	0.945				
SOC3	0.927				
RIS1	0.84	0.721	0.71	0.818	0.691
RIS2	0.822				
WOR1	0.759	0.844	0.899	0.893	0.678
WOR2	0.887				
WOR3	0.866				
WOR4	0.773				
GLC3	0.744	0.712	0.72	0.807	0.583
GLC4	0.801				
GLC6	0.744				

4.8.4 Discriminant Validity

In their article, Henseler et al. (2015) revealed and criticised the incapability of the Fornell-Lacker criterion for discovering the lack of discriminant validity. These authors suggested using the hetero-trait and mono-trait (HTMT) ratio of correlation to eliminate the limitation of the Fornell-Lacker criterion. As proposed by the literature, the score for HTMT cannot be greater than 0.85 (Kline, 2018) or 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001) for the constructs not to raise questions regarding the possibility of discriminant invalidity. As summarised in Table # 11, all the scores are lower than the mentioned-recommended values by Gold et al. 2013. Therefore, discriminant validity for all the constructs is confirmed. Additionally, for this research, the Fornell-Lacker Criterion has also been tested. This test also confirms the discriminant validity of the constructs as the values are greater than the correlations among the variables.

Table 11: Discriminant Validity HTMT

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6
GLC						
ORG	0.894					
PER	0.241	0.189				
RIS	0.324	0.899	0.39			
SOC	0.856	0.831	0.278	0.887		
WOR	0.286	0.546	0.532	0.313	0.317	

Table 12: Discriminant validity FORNELL-LARCKER CRITERION

	GLC	ORG	PER	RIS	SOC	WOR
GLC	0.835					
ORG	0.598	0.828				
PER	0.13	0.132	0.772			
RIS	0.499	0.678	0.341	0.675		
SOC	0.61	0.757	0.188	0.681	0.928	
WOR	-0.106	-0.449	-0.472	-0.291	-0.278	0.827

4.8.5 Common Methods Bias and Causality

In previous scientific works that applied cross-sectional surveys for data collection, the Common Method Bias (CMB) has been accepted several times. Kock (2015) suggested that the influence caused by the instructions given at the top of the questionnaire may result in a certain amount of common variation as different respondents answer the same questions while following the same general direction, which can be carried out and visible within the indicators. Contradictorily, Podsakoff (2003) suggested that the intertwined state between social desirability and answering questions in a specific way might result in the presence of CMB. This study utilised a cross-sectional survey questionnaire to collect the data, which led to the question concerning the possible existence of CMB. To alleviate the impacts of CMB on this study, the researcher sectioned the questionnaire based on preidentified dependent and independent variables. In addition, the presence of CMB has been examined using several techniques. Firstly, a conservative version of Harman's One-Factor Test was performed, which verified the findings being not biased due to a single informant. The outcome of the test showed that the single factor predicted 43.02% of the total variance, which led to the conclusion that CMB is not a significant issue in this study. Secondly, the correlation market technique was applied, revealing a very negligible difference between unadjusted and adjusted correlation. Further, no change was found in the significance of correlation. Therefore, CMB has not been considered an impactful or significant issue for this research. Moreover, to validate the hypothesis-testing process through structural model analysis, causality has been tested using a nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NBCDR), applying the techniques suggested by Kock (2015). The author argued for a minimum 0.7 NBCDR score for any structural equation model to be deemed acceptable, while the analysis conducted for this research revealed it to be 0.78. Thus, causality, again, is evident and tenable.

4.8.6 Structural Model Analysis

The extent of the inner model loadings and path coefficient found through bootstrapping (5000 resamples) is depicted in Figure.

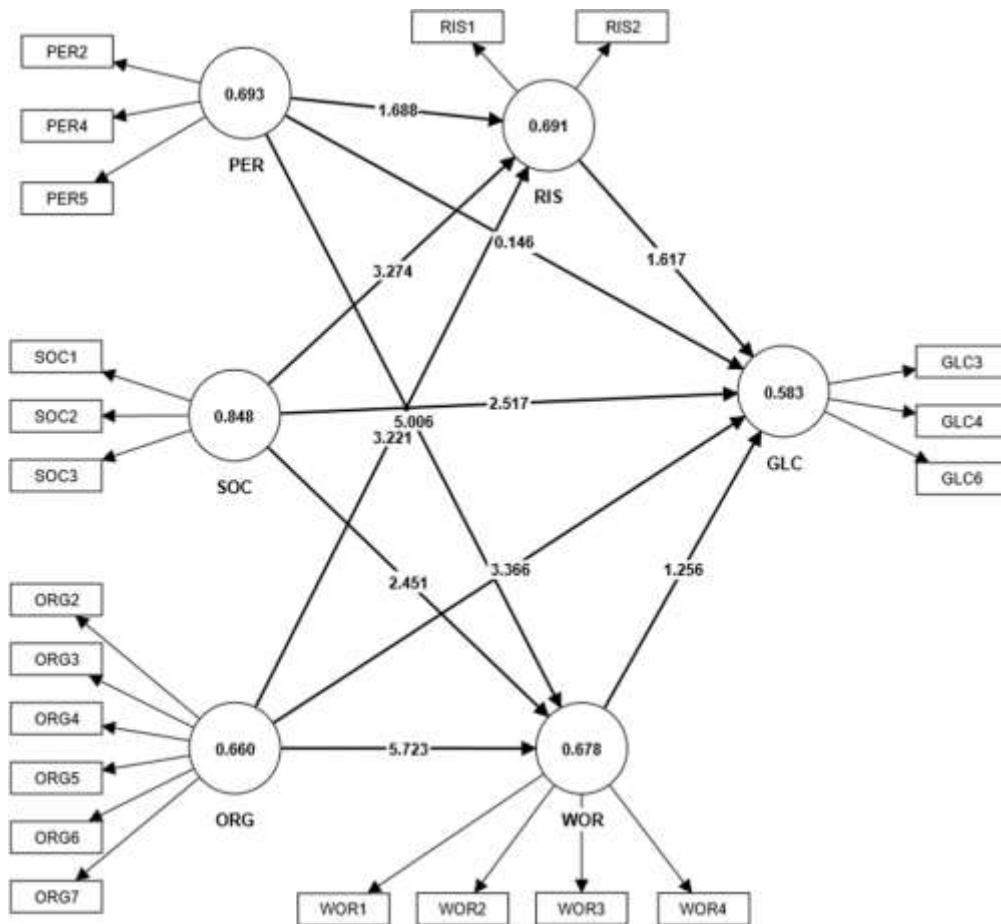


Figure 20: Results of Bootstrapping

4.8.7 Results of Hypotheses Testing

Hair et al. (2017) and Luguina (2015) recommended the evaluation of R^2 , the beta (b) value, the t-value, the corresponding p-value, predictive relevance (Q^2), and effect size (f^2) through the 5000 resample-based bootstrapping technique. Sullivan and Feinn (2012) suggested that the p-value does not indicate the extent of impact; rather, it confirms the effect's existence. Based on this argument, they recommended analysing the effect size (f^2) alongside the p-value. Additionally, Hair et al. (2017) proposed the reporting and interpretation of substantive significance (f^2) as well as statistical significance (p-value) for testing the hypotheses.

These suggested measurement tools have been adopted and interpreted for this research, a summary of which has been presented in table # 13. The analysis revealed that, organizational factors, social factors, and organizational risk aptitude are positively influencing the glass ceiling. Organizational factors and social factors are also positively influencing organizational risk aptitude. A similar relationship is present between organizational factors and work

environments, personal factors and work environments, and social factors and work environments. Therefore, these findings validate or support H1, H2, H3, H6, H8, H9, and H10.

Contradictorily, the influence of personal factors on the glass ceiling and organizational risk aptitude and the influence of the work environment on the glass ceiling are statistically insignificant. Hence, the findings do not support H4, H5, and H11.

Furthermore, all the constructs predict and explain at least 43.09% of the dependent variable glass ceiling. The Q2 scores are also greater than 0.19, indicating that all the variables have some extent of predictive relevance. Additionally, all the VIF scores are within 0.2 to 5, indicating the inexistence of any collinearity issue.

Additionally, the analysis revealed indirect relationships between the constructs. Baron and Kenny (1986) argued for the presence of a third and intermediating variable that affects the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable to be considered as indirect relationships. In other words, the authors suggest that the effects or influences of the independent variable (x) on the dependent variable (y) are intermediated, or modified, or mutated by the third variable (z). In this research, Work Environments and Organizational Risk Aptitude have been considered as the intermediating variables. The roles and directions of the intermediating variables are depicted in table 13. The analysis revealed that the work environment slightly ($t = 2.200$) mediates the relationship between Organizational Factors and Glass Ceiling. Further, a slight mediating role of Organizational Risk Aptitude ($t = 2.513$) has also been identified between the variables Organizational Factors and Glass Ceiling. This mediating variable also affects the relationship between Personal Factors and Glass Ceiling ($t = 2.207$). Again, the analysis shows that the Work Environment mediates ($t = 1.968$) the influence of Personal Factors on the Glass Ceiling. Hence, H12, H14, H15, and H16 are supported by the findings considering the positive one-directional influence of the mediating variables. However, Work Environment and Organizational Risk Aptitude do not mediate ($t = 1.582$ and $t = 0.108$) the influence of Social Factors on the Glass Ceiling. Therefore, H13 and H17 are rejected.

Table 13: Results of the Hypotheses Test

	Relations*	O*	M*	STDEV*	T value	P value	Decision	R²
H1	ORG -> GLC	0.432	0.428	0.128	3.366	0.001	Supported	0.453
H2	ORG -> RIS	0.358	0.353	0.111	3.221	0.001	Supported	0.575
H3	ORG -> WOR	-0.624	-0.621	0.109	5.723	0.000	Supported	0.568
H4	PER -> GLC	0.010	0.010	0.071	0.146	0.884	Not supported	0.453
H5	PER -> RIS	0.121	0.123	0.072	1.688	0.092	Not supported	0.575
H6	PER -> WOR	-0.417	-0.420	0.083	5.006	0.000	Supported	0.568
H7	RIS -> GLC	0.143	0.143	0.089	1.617	0.106	Not supported	0.453
H8	SOC -> GLC	0.276	0.284	0.110	2.517	0.012	Supported	0.453
H9	SOC -> RIS	0.338	0.343	0.103	3.274	0.001	Supported	0.575
H10	SOC -> WOR	0.263	0.260	0.107	2.451	0.014	Supported	0.568
H11	WOR -> GLC	0.103	0.096	0.082	1.256	0.209	Not supported	0.453

*O – Original sample; M – Sample Mean; STDEV – Standard Deviation; ORG – Organizational factors; RIS – Risk aptitude of the organisations; WOR – Work Engagement; PER – Personal Factors; SOC – Social Factors; GLC – Glass Ceiling.

Table 14: Specific Indirect Effect

Hypotheses	Relations	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Decisions	Mediation
H12	ORG -> WOR -> GLC	-0.139	0.063	2.200	0.028	Supported	Partial Mediation
H13	SOC -> WOR -> GLC	0.056	0.036	1.582	0.114	Not supported	No Mediation
H14	ORG -> RIS -> GLC	0.006	0.050	2.513	0.010	Supported	Partial Mediation
H15	PER -> WOR -> GLC	-0.108	0.056	1.968	0.045	Supported	Full Mediation
H16	PER -> RIS -> GLC	0.003	0.031	2.207	0.015	Supported	Full Mediation
H17	SOC -> RIS -> GLC	0.005	0.047	0.108	0.914	Not supported	No Mediation

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The discussion centres on two critical aspects: the presence of the glass ceiling phenomenon in the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry of Bangladesh, and the contributing factors that bolster this invisible barrier. The literature review provided a strong foundation for this discussion, incorporating the gendered organization theory and highlighting the significance of the RMG sector in Bangladesh.

5.2 Glass Ceiling in Bangladesh's RMG Sector

The RMG industry in Bangladesh, being a pivotal contributor to the country's economy, heavily relies on female labour. However, despite this reliance and their notable contribution, women encounter formidable challenges hindering their career advancement within the sector. This observation aligns with previous studies (Chowdhury et al., 2014; Islam & Jantan, 2017; Sharma, 2015). The glass ceiling, as elucidated by Acker (1990), presents itself through the prevalence of male-dominated values and norms that impede women's recognition and progression into leadership positions. These findings underline a disconcerting reality — the industry's core, constituted primarily by female workers, is afflicted by gender biases favouring men.

5.3 Summary of the Literature Review

The discussion now focuses on the factors perpetuating the glass ceiling phenomenon in Bangladesh's RMG sector. The analysis synthesizes the socio-cultural and organizational components identified in the literature.

5.3.1 Socio-cultural Factors

Socio-cultural factors, deeply rooted in societal norms and beliefs, play a pivotal role in perpetuating gender disparities within the workforce (Escobar-Lemmon et al., 2021; Nasser,

2018; Pasha et al., 2020). In Bangladesh, these factors manifest as pervasive stereotypes that certain jobs are more suitable for men, echoing the gendered organization theory's assertion regarding the preference for masculine traits within organizational cultures (Rodriguez & Guenther, 2022). Furthermore, the societal expectation that women shoulder a significant burden of household chores exacerbates the work-life imbalance, influencing their professional performance (Faruk, 2021; Islam & Jantan, 2017).

5.3.2 Organizational Structure

The organizational structure and policies significantly influence the glass ceiling's persistence (Lathabhavan & Balasubramanian, 2017; Subramaniam et al., 2016). In the RMG sector of Bangladesh, organizational subfactors, encompassing biased management responses and discriminatory policies, are instrumental in reinforcing gender biases that favor men in job positions and allowances (Islam & Jantan, 2017; Rahman & Siddiqui, 2015). These structural constraints within organizations contribute to the entrenchment of the glass ceiling.

5.3.3 Socio-cultural Factors and Glass Ceiling

Building upon the socio-cultural factors influencing the glass ceiling, a deeper analysis reveals the multi-faceted impact of these elements. Social norms perpetuate a discriminatory environment, restricting the career growth of women (Escobar-Lemmon et al., 2021). The deeply ingrained perception that certain jobs are inherently better suited for men contributes to the unequal distribution of opportunities within the RMG sector in Bangladesh (Nasser, 2018; Pasha et al., 2020). This prejudice extends to limiting women's participation in leadership roles, aligning with the gendered organization theory (Rodriguez & Guenther, 2022).

5.3.4 Organizational Structure and Glass Ceiling

Further exploration of the organizational structure reveals a critical interplay between organizational values, policies, and the perpetuation of the glass ceiling. Biased management responses and discriminatory policies are manifestations of the underlying gendered norms within the RMG sector of Bangladesh (Islam & Jantan, 2017; Rahman & Siddiqui, 2015). These structural elements have substantial repercussions, stifling opportunities for women and amplifying the disparities in job positions and allowances (Khuong & Chi, 2017; Subramaniam et al., 2016). The literature highlights the urgent need for organizational reform to dismantle these barriers.

5.4 Qualitative Findings

The qualitative analysis revealed critical insights into the existence and perpetuation of the glass ceiling phenomenon within Bangladesh's RMG industry. The demographic profile of the participants showcased the diverse backgrounds and experiences that were carefully considered to reduce response bias. Notably, the majority of participants hailed from various cities but were predominantly working in Dhaka and Chittagong, indicating the urban concentration of opportunities within the sector.

5.4.1 Factors Contributing to the Glass Ceiling

The thematic analysis unearthed three overarching categories of factors contributing to the glass ceiling: social, organizational, and personal

5.4.1.1 Social Factors

Societal norms and stereotyping significantly shape the work experiences of women in the RMG industry (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Preconceived notions about gender-appropriate roles and societal expectations concerning family-work balance pose formidable challenges for women, hindering their progress within the sector.

5.4.1.2 Organizational Factors

Organizational culture, policies, and management perceptions profoundly influence career progression (Kalev et al., 2006). A prevailing gender bias culture within the RMG industry, favoring men for promotions and opportunities, is evident. Restrictive policies further limit women's growth, such as travel constraints and requiring female employees to seek permission from male family members to work outside the home.

5.4.1.3 Personal Factors

Personal aspects such as familial constraints, self-perceived competence, and the willingness to undertake assigned roles influence women's opportunities for career advancement (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Cultural and societal expectations place significant constraints on women,

affecting their readiness to embrace additional responsibilities or challenges in their professional endeavours.

5.4.1.4 Existence and Perceptions of the Glass Ceiling

Overwhelmingly, 92% of participants acknowledged the presence of the glass ceiling within their respective organizations. Their narratives shed light on the invisible yet potent barriers that impede their career advancement.

5.5 Quantitative Findings

The quantitative analysis, employing a robust measurement and structural model, validated several hypotheses related to the factors influencing the glass ceiling.

5.5.1 Factors Influencing the Glass Ceiling

Organizational factors, social factors, and organizational risk aptitude were found to have a positive influence on the glass ceiling, aligning with existing literature (Powell & Butterfield, 2015). However, personal factors were not found to significantly impact the glass ceiling. The influence of personal factors on the glass ceiling phenomenon has been a topic of interest in various studies. Bombuwela and Alwis (2013) investigated the impact of the glass ceiling on women's career development in private sector organizations in Sri Lanka. Their study revealed that individual factors, organizational factors, and cultural factors significantly affected women's career development, while family factors influenced the glass ceiling. This indicates that personal factors may not directly impact the glass ceiling itself but can affect women's career advancement.

Similarly, Uduwella and Jayatilaka (2019) examined the consequences of the glass ceiling on women's career development in the non-state banking sector in Colombo. They identified individual, family, organizational, and cultural factors as components under the glass ceiling, suggesting that personal factors may not directly contribute to the existence of the glass ceiling but can influence women's career progression within specific organizational settings. Furthermore, Smith et al. (2012) developed the Career Pathways Survey to assess women's beliefs regarding the glass ceiling, encompassing factors such as personal qualities, gender-based policies, social network resources, and political awareness. Although personal qualities

were recognized as a factor, the study did not explicitly establish a direct link between personal factors and the glass ceiling.

On the other hand, social and organizational factors were found to significantly impact the glass ceiling. Social and organizational factors have been identified as significant contributors to the glass ceiling phenomenon in various studies. Weyer (2007) highlighted the role of gender bias in evaluation as a primary cause of the glass ceiling, emphasizing the impact of social factors rooted in expectation states theory. Additionally, Babic and Hansez (2021) discussed how organizational culture, reflecting shared values and beliefs, can influence the emergence of the glass ceiling within organizations.

Moreover, Saleem et al. (2017) and Uduwella and Jayatilaka (2019) emphasized the importance of organizational culture, gender biases, and lack of organizational support as factors contributing to the glass ceiling effect at the organizational level. These studies underscore the significance of social and organizational factors in perpetuating barriers to women's career advancement and leadership opportunities.

Furthermore, Neugart and Zaharieva (2018) explored the impact of social networks on promotions and the glass ceiling effect, highlighting how hierarchical firm structures and social network clustering can amplify barriers to advancement. The study by Islam & Jantan (2017) identified organizational and social culture, along with the lack of career encouragers, as key barriers for female employees in the RMG industry of Bangladesh, further emphasizing the influence of social and organizational factors on the glass ceiling.

In conclusion, the synthesis of these studies underscores the critical role of social and organizational factors in shaping the glass ceiling phenomenon, highlighting the need for systemic changes and cultural shifts within organizations to address gender biases and promote gender equality in the workplace.

5.5.2 Mediating Effects

Work engagement and organizational risk aptitude were identified as mediating variables in the relationship between organizational factors and the glass ceiling. Additionally, the work engagement was found to mediate the relationship between personal factors and the glass ceiling.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

6.1 Recommendations

Addressing the glass ceiling in Bangladesh's RMG sector requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach, one that tackles both the structural barriers within organizations and the deep-rooted societal norms that contribute to gender inequality. The first step in this process should be targeted policy interventions aimed at challenging and transforming the societal attitudes and cultural norms that perpetuate gender biases. Societal expectations and stereotypes regarding women's roles in the workforce often hinder their career progression, limiting opportunities for professional advancement. As noted by Faruk (2021) and Islam & Jantan (2017), raising awareness through campaigns and educational initiatives is crucial to combat these stereotypes. These initiatives should aim not only to highlight the detrimental effects of gender-based discrimination but also to promote the idea that career opportunities should be determined by merit and capability, rather than gender. Such efforts can help shift public perceptions and create a more inclusive environment in which women can thrive professionally.

In parallel with societal interventions, organizational reforms are equally critical in addressing the glass ceiling within the RMG sector. As Lathabhavan and Balasubramanian (2017) and Subramaniam et al. (2016) emphasize, it is essential for organizations to actively promote diversity and inclusion across all levels of the workforce. This includes creating pathways for women to enter leadership roles and ensuring that women have equal opportunities to advance through transparent promotion mechanisms. Organizations must adopt clear and objective criteria for promotion that are free from gender biases, ensuring that decisions about career progression are based solely on skills, experience, and performance. In addition to promoting fairness in promotion practices, providing equal opportunities for skill development is crucial. Offering training programs that help women acquire the skills necessary to succeed in higher positions can empower them to break through the glass ceiling and take on leadership roles within the sector.

Moreover, the involvement of both governmental bodies and industry stakeholders is necessary to create a lasting and systemic change in the RMG sector. Governments can play a critical role by enforcing policies that support gender equality in the workplace, such as mandating equal pay for equal work, improving workplace safety, and ensuring legal protections against discrimination. However, policy change alone is insufficient; it must be accompanied by strong commitment from industry stakeholders, including RMG manufacturers, unions, and civil society organizations, to implement and monitor these changes. A collaborative approach, where various actors work together towards common goals, is essential for creating an environment where women can access the same opportunities for career advancement as their male counterparts.

Ultimately, addressing the glass ceiling in Bangladesh's RMG sector requires a shift in both societal attitudes and organizational structures. By combining efforts to challenge gender stereotypes with organizational reforms aimed at increasing transparency, diversity, and equal opportunity, stakeholders can create a more equitable and empowering work environment. This holistic approach will not only benefit women but will also contribute to the broader economic and social development of Bangladesh, fostering a more inclusive and competitive RMG industry.

Policy makers should take necessary steps for strengthening labour laws, offering tax breaks on paid maternity leaves and childcare facilities, laws for preventing workplace harassment and nationwide awareness campaigns for preventing workplace glass ceiling and improve opportunities for their career growth.

As the results show that social and organizational factors along with organizations risk preference and environment affects glass ceiling and career advancement of women executives, practitioners need to focus on implementing fairness in recruitment, reward system and appraisal without any biasness. Workplace infrastructure, flexible work environment, childcare support, mentorship, regular sensitivity training are must for creating career growth opportunities for women executives of RMG sector.

6.2 Research Contributions

6.2.1 Academic Contributions

This research makes several significant contributions to the understanding of the glass ceiling phenomenon, offering both qualitative and quantitative perspectives on the issue. By employing a mixed-methods approach, the study provides a more holistic view of the barriers women face in the workforce, particularly within Bangladesh's RMG sector. The qualitative insights derived from interviews complement the quantitative data, allowing for a deeper exploration of the underlying causes and effects of the glass ceiling, while also offering actionable recommendations for both organizational practice and policy. This dual-perspective methodology enriches the findings and presents a comprehensive picture of the glass ceiling's impact on women's professional advancement in the RMG industry.

A key innovation of this research is its identification of two previously unexplored factors—risk aptitude and work engagement—as significant contributors to the dynamics of the glass ceiling. While factors such as personal, social, and organizational influences on the glass ceiling have been studied extensively in existing literature, the roles of risk aptitude and work engagement have not been scientifically examined in this context before. Risk aptitude refers to an individual's willingness and ability to take calculated risks, which can be a crucial determinant in career advancement, particularly in a competitive and male-dominated environment like the RMG sector. Work engagement, on the other hand, refers to the level of enthusiasm, commitment, and energy an individual brings to their job. High work engagement is often linked to increased productivity and career progression, yet it can be hampered by gender-based barriers such as the glass ceiling. By integrating these two factors into the study, this research expands the current understanding of the glass ceiling and introduces new variables that could play a pivotal role in mitigating its effects.

In addition to these novel factors, the research incorporates previously studied personal, social, and organizational factors, which are already recognized in the literature as contributing to the glass ceiling. By combining these established factors with the new dimensions of risk aptitude and work engagement, the study constructs a comprehensive research framework that is tailored specifically to the context of Bangladesh's RMG sector. This framework is not only valuable for studying the glass ceiling in Bangladesh but is also adaptable for use in similar industries or contexts in other developing countries. The framework's fit is empirically established through the research, providing evidence of its relevance and applicability.

Therefore, this study offers a robust model that can guide future research in this area, facilitating the investigation of gender-related barriers in other developing economies where similar cultural, social, and organizational dynamics may exist.

Finally, this research validates the applicability of the Gendered Organization Theory (GOT) in the context of Bangladesh. The confirmation that GOT is relevant in understanding the glass ceiling in the RMG sector is a significant contribution, as it strengthens the theoretical foundation for further research on gender and organizational dynamics in Bangladesh. By applying the concepts and principles of GOT, which emphasize the ways in which gender is embedded in organizational structures and processes, this research provides valuable insights into how gender biases and inequalities are perpetuated within organizations. This confirmation will encourage other researchers in Bangladesh to explore the theory's broader applications, not only within the RMG sector but also across different industries and contexts. The use of GOT in this research can also inspire new avenues for scholarly inquiry, particularly in terms of how gendered structures within organizations can be reformed to promote equality and inclusivity.

To improve the robustness and applicability of future studies, several recommendations can be made. First, researchers should strive to include a broader and more diverse sample of participants, encompassing women from a greater number of organizations within the industry. This would ensure that the findings are more representative and reflective of the experiences of a wider range of individuals. Additionally, cross-industry comparisons could offer valuable insights into whether the factors identified in this study are specific to the RMG sector or if they are applicable to other industries as well. Such comparative research would enhance the understanding of the broader patterns and dynamics at play in the context of developing countries. By acknowledging these limitations and adapting the research design accordingly, future studies can provide more comprehensive and generalizable insights into the issues explored in this study.

6.2.2 Practical Implications

This research offers several practical implications for managers and practitioners operating within the Bangladeshi Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry. First and foremost, through a comprehensive and rigorous review of existing literature, the study identifies a range of key factors that empirically contribute to the formation and impact of the glass ceiling in the sector.

This valuable insight can serve as a foundation for managers to develop and implement organizational mechanisms designed to mitigate the effects of the glass ceiling. By recognizing and addressing these critical factors, such as gender biases in hiring, promotion, and career development, managers can create a more inclusive workplace environment where women have equal opportunities to advance. Furthermore, organizational policies can be designed to prevent or curb activities and practices that sustain or exacerbate the glass ceiling, ultimately fostering a more equitable work environment for all employees.

In addition to the literature review, the qualitative insights gathered from the interviews provide further understanding of the specific challenges women face in the Bangladeshi RMG sector. The research reveals that the social and cultural context of Bangladesh significantly influences women's ability to engage in work outside the domestic sphere. Societal norms and traditional gender roles often place constraints on women's participation in the workforce, particularly in sectors like RMG, which require long hours and may involve physically demanding tasks. These cultural barriers often create an environment where women's contributions to the workforce are undervalued or overlooked. Based on these findings, policymakers in Bangladesh are urged to initiate positive interventions aimed at raising awareness and challenging these restrictive societal norms. Public awareness campaigns, along with education and outreach programs, can play a vital role in shifting cultural attitudes and normalizing the presence of women in the workforce. By tackling these societal and cultural constraints, policymakers can help create a more inclusive environment for women to enter and progress in the labor market.

Moreover, the quantitative assessment of the factors contributing to the glass ceiling presents several critical areas requiring attention from managers, policymakers, and employees alike. This assessment highlights the need for targeted interventions in areas such as equal pay, workplace safety, skill development, and gender-sensitive leadership practices. By addressing these factors, stakeholders can collectively work towards removing barriers that prevent women from reaching their full potential within the RMG sector. Additionally, the findings of this research have implications that extend beyond the workplace, contributing to broader societal goals, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, the research aligns with SDG 5, which advocates for gender equality, and SDG 10, which calls for reduced inequalities. Achieving these goals in Bangladesh requires concerted efforts from all sectors of society, including the RMG industry, to promote gender equity and social inclusion. By addressing the issues identified in this study, the RMG sector

can contribute significantly to these global sustainability objectives, helping to reduce gender-based disparities and create a more inclusive and equal society.

6.3 Study Limitations and Future Research Directions

The generalizability of the findings in this study is notably constrained, primarily because the research was focused on a single industry within one country. Specifically, the study concentrated on the ready-made garment (RMG) sector in Bangladesh, which limits the applicability of its findings to other industries within the country, or to similar sectors in different developing nations. The role of various factors identified in this research may not be relevant or applicable outside the context of the RMG industry in Bangladesh. Furthermore, the methodological approach of utilizing self-reported surveys introduces several potential biases that could affect the accuracy and reliability of the results. Self-reported data are inherently susceptible to various forms of bias, such as response bias, where participants may provide answers they believe are socially desirable, or cultural bias, where responses may be influenced by cultural norms or expectations. Additionally, sampling bias could have been introduced due to the self-selection of participants or the limited scope of the survey.

Another notable limitation of the study lies in the selection of interviewees. The 13 individuals interviewed were drawn from a network that was closely associated with the researcher, which raises concerns about the potential for selection bias. This could have led to an overrepresentation of certain perspectives or experiences, further diminishing the study's external validity. Selection bias in qualitative research, particularly when participants are recruited from a specific social or professional network, can limit the diversity of viewpoints and reduce the extent to which the findings can be generalized to the broader population.

Moreover, the study faced challenges in terms of data availability, particularly with regard to the number and locations of RMG businesses in Bangladesh. The lack of comprehensive and reliable data on the RMG sector meant that the study could only include a relatively small sample of 36 organizations. This small and geographically concentrated sample size further restricts the potential for generalizing the findings to the broader RMG industry in Bangladesh or to other countries. In order to enhance the generalizability of future research, it is essential that researchers address these limitations, such as by obtaining more representative data on the industry as a whole.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the pervasive phenomenon of the glass ceiling within the Bangladeshi Ready-Made Garments (RMG) industry, examining the intricate amalgamation of societal, organizational, and personal factors that impede women's ascent to senior managerial and decision-making roles. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining qualitative and quantitative analyses to provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges that female executives face in a male-dominated environment. The research has been conducted based on two objectives. To find if really glass ceiling exists and if exists, what are the factors creating glass ceiling and affecting the career growth of women executives of RMG sectors in Bangladesh. From the analysis through using a mixed research design, it is clearly visible that in the RMG sector of Bangladesh glass ceiling exists. And from survey data and in depth interviews it was also identified like social and cultural norms, organizational environmental factors, perception of individuals and organizational risk preference. So both of the objectives were fulfilled through the study. The findings also highlight a stark underrepresentation of women in upper management, attributed to invisible yet palpable barriers erected by deep-rooted societal norms, biased organizational structures, and individual psychological barriers stemming from cultural expectations. The quantitative aspect of the study surveyed 108 female employees, laying a data-driven foundation that illuminated the disparities in career progression opportunities between genders. Women reported not only slower career advancement but also encountered more obstacles compared to their male counterparts, pointing to a systemic bias that necessitates broad organizational changes to foster equality. On the qualitative front, interviews with 13 women provided deeper insight into the personal and professional hurdles they encounter daily. These discussions revealed frequent experiences of discrimination, a lack of supportive mentorship, and prevailing cultural biases favouring male leadership styles, all of which combine to reinforce the glass ceiling. The application of Gendered Organization Theory provided a valuable lens through which to view how gender biases are woven into the fabric of corporate practices and cultures. This theoretical framework helped classify various factors affecting women's preferment in organizational hierarchies and underscored that the RMG industry's culture is overtly gendered, structuring men as leaders and women as supporters, which intrinsically disadvantages women.

The implications of these findings are vast and call for a multi-pronged approach to dismantle the barriers identified. Policy interventions are crucial and should aim at creating equitable pathways for women's advancement. This includes enforcing existing policies and introducing new ones that prevent discrimination in hiring and promotion practices. Organizations should be encouraged, possibly through incentives, to develop transparent criteria for advancement that are strictly monitored for gender bias. Additionally, there is a pressing need for leadership training programs that account for gender dynamics and mentorship programs that connect women with senior leaders to bridge the confidence gap and prepare them for executive roles.

Despite its insights, the study acknowledges limitations, notably its focus on a single industry, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, while the sample size was sufficient for exploratory analysis, future research should expand this to ensure broader representativeness. Investigating the intersectionality of gender with other factors such as age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status would also enrich understanding of the dynamics at play. Longitudinal studies could track changes over time, particularly in response to implemented policy changes, providing a clearer picture of progress.

This research underscores a critical issue within one of Bangladesh's key economic sectors and issues a call to action not just for the RMG industry but for all sectors where gender inequality prevails. It calls for a concerted effort from all stakeholders—industry leaders, policymakers, and civil society—to commit to substantive changes that foster a more inclusive and equitable work environment. Such efforts are essential not only for the empowerment of women but also for the broader economic health and global competitiveness of the nation. In conclusion, the thesis serves as a foundation for future inquiry and action, advocating for a collaborative approach to address and dismantle the systemic issues contributing to the glass ceiling. By highlighting specific areas for policy change and organizational reform, it provides a roadmap for stakeholders to initiate and sustain efforts towards a significant transformation in the professional landscape for women in Bangladesh. Only through sustained effort and commitment to gender equality can we hope to see a dismantling of the barriers that restrict the professional growth of women in the RMG sector and beyond.

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APPENDIX

A1: Interview questions

Demographic Questions

1. Experience
2. Current position in the organization
3. Years holding
4. Years holding current position

1. What are your career and lifestyle goals? Are you considering senior management positions?
2. What do you believe you have to do to achieve your goals? Do you believe that you will ultimately end up in the roles to which you aspire?
3. Do you believe that your career options are different from the options of your male peers?
4. Do you believe that your male colleagues face similar barriers to reaching their career goals?
5. Do you believe that you could end up in a senior management or executive-type role?
6. What is your understanding of the term “executive”? Would you want to be an executive?
7. Do you believe that you can easily access these roles? What do you believe it will take?
8. What is your understanding of the term “glass ceiling”? What do you believe it means for you and your career?
9. Do you believe there are barriers to your career advancement? What are these barriers? Are these barriers different from those of the generations before you?
10. What do you believe you have to do to overcome these barriers? How will you ensure that you become “successful”? How will you know if you are “successful”?
11. What do you believe will be the primary relationships in your life as you move forward?
12. Do you feel there is a connection between these relationships and your career paths?

13. Can a woman combine executive work and family? Is it easy for young and successful women to find a partner?

14. How important is having a family to your personal identity? Do you believe that you can “have it all”? Or will you have to make choices?

15. Thinking back on our discussion, do you have any other final thoughts?

Interview questionnaire developed by, Ezzedeen, Budworth, and Baker (2015).

A2: Glass ceiling Questionnaire

Dear Respondents,

This survey is part of an academic research (DBA) project aimed at evaluating the impact of different factors on the corporate tendency of gender discrimination guided mainly towards women in terms of promotions and other benefits.

We cordially request your participation in this academic research. This survey is confidential. Your personal information, including your emails, will neither be saved nor be used to trace you and your organization. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and used only for academic purposes.

This survey will require roughly three minutes to complete. Read all the sections of the questionnaire carefully and respond with your honest opinion.

Thank you for your participation in advance.

Factors	Items	References
A. Personal The following statements are corresponding to the personal factors that may influence the existence or severity of the glass ceiling. Please read each statement and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with it.	I am not confident in my abilities	Bazazo et al. (2017)
	I am not emotionally suited to be a senior manager	
	I am not competitive	
	My subordinates don't have confidence in my leadership	
	I am not a high achiever	
B. Organizational	My work performance is fairly evaluated	

The following statements are corresponding to the organizational factors that may influence the existence or severity of the glass ceiling. Please read each statement and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with it.	Replace: My work performance is always fairly evaluated.	
	There are few career opportunities for me Replace: There are many career opportunities for me.	
	I am not assigned to high-visibility positions Replace: I am assigned to a position that requires frequent interaction with others.	
	I have to work extra hard to be recognized Replace: I can work less and still get recognized in my organization.	
	I am not given support to balance multiple roles Replace: everyone supports me to balance my work, personal, and family life.	
	I am not respected by male colleagues	
	I didn't consider myself a leader	
C. Socio-Cultural The following statements are corresponding to the sociocultural factors that may influence the existence or severity of the glass ceiling. Please read each statement and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with it.	My family members and society believe working outside is inappropriate for me	Devasahayam (2018)
	The culture of my surroundings is not friendly to the working-class women	
	Women in my family and society are not habituated to working outside	
D. Risk aptitude of organization	Women struggle in decision to move to high level management Replacement: It is extremely easy for a woman to decide whether they want to pursue a high-level management position or not.	(SARIÇİÇEK, Çopuroğlu, and Aytekin, 2017)
	Children prevent women from work Replace: Children always prevent women from work	
	Women can't do high level management Replacement: Women can't do the tasks of a high-level manager.	
	Women managers can't decide fast and logical	
	Women can't succeed at management because they are more sentimental than men	
E. Work engagement	I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.	

	Replace: I don't find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.	(Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova, 2006)
I am enthusiastic about my job Replace: I am not enthusiastic about my job.		
I am proud of the work that I do. Replace: I am not proud of the job I do.		
To me, my job is challenging. Replace: To me, my job is not challenging.		
My job inspires me. Replace: My job does not inspire me.		
<p>F. Latent factor: Glass Ceiling</p> <p>The following statements are corresponding to the existence of the glass ceiling in the RMG sector of Bangladesh. Please read each statement and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with it.</p>	Women face no barriers to promotions in most organizations	(Smith et al., 2012)
Women and men have to overcome the same problems in the workspace		
Women leaders are seldom given full credit for their success. Replace: Women leaders are always given full credit for their success.		
If women achieve promotions, they might be accused of offering sexual favors Replacement: If women achieve promotions, they will not be accused of providing unethical and dishonorable services to the higher authority.		
Women who have a strong commitment to their career can go right to the top Replace: Even with a strong commitment to their career, women cannot go to the top.		
Women in senior positions face frequent putdowns of being too soft or too hard Replacement: Women in senior positions are never considered as too rude/hard or too friendly/soft by the subordinates.		