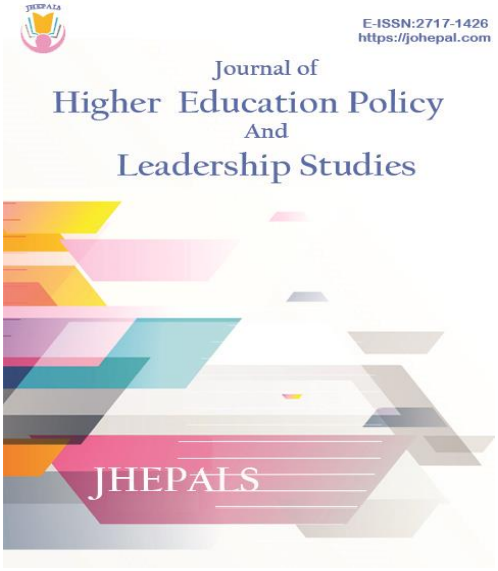
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The Glass Ceiling Phenomenon: Experiences of Female Workers in Indonesian HEIs and Its Relationship with Self-Efficacy and Self-Confidence



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Abstract

There are some sectors, such as higher education, that are associated with feminine qualities. In several Indonesian universities, the percentage of female lecturers far exceeds that of males, rendering higher education a sector predominantly led by women. Despite dominating the sector, women still face the glass ceiling phenomenon when reaching top management positions in universities. External factors, such as unsupportive organisations, have been recognised as the leading causes of this issue thus far. However, the role played by individual factors, such as self-esteem and self-confidence, in perpetuating the glass ceiling is hardly ever acknowledged. Using a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, this study aims to investigate the experiences of female academics in Indonesia concerning the glass ceiling phenomenon in relation to individual factors. The data analysis findings confirm that individual factors are as significant as external factors in perpetuating the glass ceiling. The gender quota policy is inadequate in resolving the glass ceiling phenomenon. However, this policy may contribute to positive exposure for women, suggesting that women possess the same abilities as men and may ultimately enhance women's confidence in their abilities.

Keywords: Glass Ceiling; Self-Efficacy; Self-Confidence; Gender Quota; Higher Education

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Introduction

Several sectors are considered synonymous with female characteristics. These include health, humanities, natural sciences and education (Aruan, 2020). Although the education sector is synonymous with women, gender inequality occurs primarily in managerial positions such as faculty deans, department heads, directors, and rectors.

According to a study conducted in 2017 at the University of Indonesia (UI), although the number of female lecturers reached 53% and male lecturers 47%, top-level academic positions such as professors were still dominated by male lecturers with a percentage of 89% while female lecturers were only 11% (Ariadno, 2017 as cited in Aruan, 2020). The same thing happened at Gadjah Mada University (UGM). At the beginning of lecturers' careers, there were more female lecturers; then, lecturers were male-dominated at the peak of their careers (Utarini, 2017 as cited in Aruan, 2020). This condition triggered the glass ceiling, defined as invisible and artificial barriers caused by prejudice and organisational models that prevent women from obtaining senior management positions (Kırmak, 2017).

There are various approaches to reducing the effects of the glass ceiling, one of which is implementing a gender quota policy (Kırmak, 2017). Gender quotas have already been tried in certain developed countries. In 2005, Norway introduced a law mandating every company to have a minimum of 40% female directors. This policy leads Norwegian companies to become more stakeholder-oriented. This policy increased profits for the company and impacted the country's development. Subsequently, gender quota policies were implemented in other developed countries, including France, the Netherlands and Belgium (Bericat & Sánchez-Bermejo, 2019).

The glass ceiling in higher education careers is often attributed to various factors, including socio-cultural norms that disproportionately burden women to manage household responsibilities. However, Gardiner and Tiggemann (1999) contested this view, who argue that employment barriers are often unrelated to domestic work responsibilities. Often, affirmative policies, such as gender quotas or supportive socio-cultural factors, may seem ineffective if women lack positive self-perception regarding their ability to solve problems around the social context. This self-perception, also known as self-efficacy, is a crucial determinant of career choices. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in facing and controlling situations within their environment. The self-efficacy theory has developed over time and has been examined for its impact on the glass ceiling phenomenon. Some studies indicate a connection between self-efficacy and the glass ceiling, as women with low self-efficacy can impede their careers and contribute to the individual factor in the formation of the glass ceiling (Lathabhavan & Balasubramanian, 2017).

In addition to self-efficacy, self-confidence is also one of the keys to career development. Self-confidence in women can impact their performance (Bericat & Sánchez-Bermejo, 2019). Some studies indicate that a decline in women's self-confidence positively impacts their participation and career development in the workplace (Bericat & Sánchez-Bermejo, 2019). Female employees tend to believe that their performance is significantly lower than their male counterparts.

KPMG's 'Breaking the Glass Ceiling' research report, which surveyed 150 female and 85 male respondents, found that 16% of working female respondents were afraid and worried that they would fail if they took on a top-level management role. This concern arises

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because women feel they do not have enough experience. In the research percentage, 25% of female respondents felt that society still believes that men are more suited to leadership, and this general perception can cause anxiety for women. Meanwhile, 29% of female respondents are also not confident when juggling the responsibilities of being a housewife and a leader in the workplace, as this is seen as a double burden. In addition, 30% of female respondents were also afraid of not having flexible working hours, which would cause them to neglect their role as housewives (Kırmak, 2017).

The double burden role between career and household is why female lecturers with doctoral degrees rarely occupy the highest positions in higher education institutions (Astuti, 2018). However, are in addition to considerations regarding a woman's double burden, low self-efficacy, and negative self-confidence able to explain the occurrence of the glass ceiling phenomenon in the education sector?

This study examines whether self-efficacy and self-confidence may explain the glass ceiling phenomenon. The rationale behind this is that the glass ceiling phenomenon is often a result of internal factors and not just external ones. In addition, the research will also examine whether gender quota policies can be a factor in eliminating the glass ceiling phenomenon in the Indonesian higher education sector.

Literature Review

Male Versus Female Leadership

Gender refers to the difference between men and women regarding roles, rights, functions and behaviours shaped by social values, culture and society (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2013). Stereotypes are preconceived opinions or attitudes held by groups or individuals, often stemming from sustained cultural beliefs. They can lead to negative and demeaning judgements (Saguni, 2014). Society still harbours rigid, conservative stereotypes about women as nurturers of children and men as breadwinners (Puspitawati, 2012). One of the earliest theories which explains leadership is the 'Great Man Theory'. This theory focuses on the heroic individual and asserts that leaders are born, chosen, and created by God (Bericat & Sánchez-Bermejo, 2019). The Great Man theory perpetuates the stereotype prevalent in global society that men are inherently suited to leadership roles (Van Wart, 2003). However, comprehensive research indicates that women are equally capable of being influential leaders, rendering the Great Man theory obsolete in its explanation of leadership (Kuruppuarachchi & Surangi, 2019).

Style and behaviour theory elucidates the handling of distinct situations, resulting in varying leadership styles, one of which may be influenced by gender. A leader's success hinges upon specific behaviours, attitudes, and character traits. This theory posits that leaders are made, not born.

Male leaders tend to provide explanations and understand their subordinates' mistakes. They also make decisions in a self-directed or authoritarian way. In contrast, women often adopt a transformational leadership style focusing on interpersonal skills and maintaining positive employee relationships (Oshagbemi & Gill, 2003). Some transformational theories are consistent with stereotypical female behaviours such as caring and empathy (Stempel et al., 2015). Additionally, it is believed that this leadership style enables women to achieve coherence and opportunities for career development (Eagly &

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Carli, 2003). Although transformational theory is often associated with feminine traits, women experience career gaps due to longstanding gender stereotypes that remain a significant societal challenge.

Glass Ceiling

Gender role theory is a social theory that thoughtfully analyses the glass ceiling, containing social role expectations on the behaviour of women and men (Innayah & Pratama, 2019). This theory also gave rise to a stereotype, prevalent in society until now, that women are responsible for domestic chores while men must earn a living to stabilise the household's financial situation.

The scarcity of women in leadership and senior management positions is widespread in nearly every sector (Dunn, 2007). So far, the under-representation of women in top organisational positions has been attributed to the absence of pro-women policies. However, Rai and Srivastava's (2010) research suggests that the glass ceiling phenomenon is, in fact, a myth and a self-created problem for individuals who are unable to reach the highest position in their company. Rai and Srivastava (2010) argue that women can reach the highest positions based on their willingness and ability. Therefore, attributing the glass ceiling solely to external factors is considered excessive. Glass ceilings frequently persist despite a socio-cultural environment that is highly supportive and affirmative towards women.

Unequivocally, Simpson et al. (2004) have stated that one of the most significant critical components of individual barriers is when a person consistently feels incapable and lacks confidence in their abilities. Kuruppuarachchi and Surangi (2019) refer to this sensation of inadequacy and mistrust as self-rejection. Fear of success is a common reason for self-rejection among women. Fear of success is the individual's fear of adverse societal outcomes such as loss of femininity, social self-esteem, and social rejection. The fear of losing love is considered a significant factor in developing the fear of success among women (Dowling, 2017).

Gender Quota

Gender quota policies can raise the number of women in leadership roles across various sectors, such as the environment, business, and education (Pande & Ford, 2012). Gender quotas can have significant symbolic effects on women's aspirations and accelerate women's access to leadership positions (Beaman et al., 2009).

Gender quotas have both positive and negative impacts. Those in favour of the gender quota policy believe that it can increase the number of women in leadership positions, thus providing more accurate representation. Meanwhile, opponents of the gender quota policy argue that it leads to crowd-out, whereby certain groups feel excluded due to the prioritisation of another group. Furthermore, some believe that affirmative policies such as gender quotas are ineffectual in significantly improving women's leadership. It occurs because affirmative policies are frequently not accompanied by policies that attempt to minimise women's leadership deficits resulting from personal factors or factors internal to the individual.

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The Glass Ceiling Phenomenon

Self-Efficacy and Self-Confidence

Individuals with a high perception of self-efficacy continue to strive towards achieving their goals, whereas those with a low perception of self-efficacy are expected to give up or not even try (Lathabhavan & Balasubramanian, 2017). In the same line, Edirisinghe and Thalgaspitiya (2016) have reported a strong positive correlation between individual barriers and the glass ceiling.

A person's failure to achieve a leadership position in an organisation may be due to low self-confidence. This cycle is often experienced by female employees who tend to have less legitimacy in an organisation. In the long run, this leads to an erosion of self-confidence, while initially, women and men do not have significantly different levels of self-confidence (Chusmir & Koberg, 1991).

Chusmir and Koberg (1991) conducted a study of women and men in top management positions. The study concluded that the group of women who were able to achieve leadership positions were women who had persistence and high self-confidence. It suggests that individual barriers, particularly self-efficacy and self-confidence, promote women's access to leadership positions.

Research Methodology

This study seeks to ascertain respondents' views on the 'glass ceiling' phenomenon in the Indonesian higher education sector using a phenomenological approach based on respondents' experiences, assumptions, and perspectives (Wahyuni, 2015). This research identifies the 'essence' of their interpretations and views on the topic using qualitative analysis following the Creswell and Creswell's (2023) phenomenological research methodology.

In this investigation, the data was collected using purposive sampling through in-depth interviews related to the glass ceiling of female academics within the Indonesian higher education sector who had more than two years of service and held various positions (e.g. vice deans, lecturers, and managers) and various ages and statuses.

The results of the interviews were then analysed using manual coding. The manual coding process comprised open, axial, and selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). During the open coding stage, the researcher scrutinises the interview results, exploring potential perspectives from all sources. The axial coding stage is a transition between the initial and theoretical coding processes. During this stage, data is sorted iteratively. Axial coding is utilised to examine the relationship between different categories and sub-categories. In the final stage of manual coding, selective coding, theories and patterns developed from the previous coding stages are brought together to produce findings that can explain the phenomenon under investigation (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Interviews were recorded by a video or voice recorder and transcribed verbatim, subject to the respondents' approval. This step is crucial for researchers to undertake the member-checking process, thus ensuring the authenticity of the data obtained (Wahyuni, 2015).

To uphold research ethics, each respondent presented and signed a consent form before the interview. Confidentiality of the participants' identities was assured and not disclosed publicly.

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Findings and Discussion

This study was undertaken in Indonesia. Two distinct age categories were established for the respondents: the younger group of individuals aged 28-55 years and the older group of individuals aged 56 years and above. The study interviewed a total of 10 participants. Three interviewees work at private universities, while the remaining seven work at public universities.

Table 1.
Respondents Characteristic

R	Age	Marital Status	Tenure	Job Position
R1	28	Not Married	4 Years	Lecturer
R2	26	Not Married	5 Years	Lecturer
R3	56	Married	24 Years	Head of Study Programme
R4	53	Married	4 Years	Lecturer
R5	84	Married	30 Years	Professor
R6	53	Married	2 Years	Lecturer
R7	54	Married	17 Years	Vice Dean
R8	28	Married	4 Years	Lecturer
R9	88	Married	32 Years	Faculty Manager
R10	68	Married	36 Years	Lecturer

All participants reported that self-efficacy and self-confidence impact the glass ceiling phenomenon and the professional advancement of women in higher education. Self-efficacy is critical in enabling women to attain top-level management positions, thereby facilitating the resolution of the glass ceiling issue in working settings.

> "When we understand that we are capable, self-efficacy affects the glass ceiling phenomenon. Realising that we are capable is significant; if we do not have self-efficacy, we will find it difficult to know and achieve our goals". (Respondent #2)

Self-efficacy levels may be lower among Indonesian women due to several factors, including societal and individual barriers.

> "In my opinion, anything can be done when we have strong determination. Indonesian women's self-efficacy goes back to us in the end. If we do not try because barriers from ourselves block us, we will never know that we can do it. Usually, we have not tried anything yet, but we have already said, 'I cannot'". (Respondent #4)

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The Glass Ceiling Phenomenon

Individual barriers are often caused by the cycle of self-rejection, which is a feeling that arises from the belief that they are not capable and not good enough. Essentially, women are just as motivated as men to develop their careers. However, before women reach the pinnacle of their careers, they have already chosen to give up and do not have confidence in their potential. Self-esteem can also refer to how people appreciate and value themselves (Rizwan & Ahmad, 2015).

Societal barriers occur due to external factors such as culture, religion, norms and mindsets of the community, family, and work environment around women. Most organisations try to practice equal opportunity. However, sometimes, some organisations show overt discrimination and make gender an issue. It automatically explains that the work environment can be a factor that can hinder career development, especially in women (Laurijssen & Glorieux, 2013). The research found that the career development problems experienced by women were not due to lack of motivation and work; these problems occur due to organisational culture and the lack of support given to female employees by top management (Jyrkinen & McKie, 2012).

Cultural differences in each country can indirectly explain some social norms hindering women's access to their career goals (Jayachandran, 2021). Women's low self-efficacy is not caused solely by individual barriers that originate from within women but is often driven by social barriers that cause women to feel they do not have the ability.

> "When we already have high self-efficacy, but our family and workplace environment is not supportive, (maybe) we can move forward, but it will feel harder to go through with it". (Respondent #8)

In KPMG's report entitled "Breaking the Glass Ceiling," ten methods to overcome the phenomenon in a company are detailed (Kırmak, 2017). Among these is the significance of possessing and cultivating a strong sense of self-confidence. Female managers are likely to be a specific group of women with persistence and high self-confidence. As a result, they can overcome numerous obstacles to attain top-level managerial positions in the workforce (Chusmir & Koberg, 1991).

> "Suppose we know we can do it, but we do not have high confidence to do it… that is what I think becomes more difficult, so self-confidence is critical to determine what kind of action we want to take to reach the top of our career". (Respondent #1)

The environment, however, will help shape one's character and traits. So, according to the respondents, parental upbringing will significantly affect a person's self-confidence.

> "Because it is impossible for someone to suddenly grow up to be confident or become someone with low confidence. There must be a reason for that. People cannot grow up just like that suddenly; the background, experience, parents' education, and how traumatic we were, are important factors in forming self-confidence". (Respondent #6)

Respondents confirmed that the glass ceiling phenomenon in Indonesian higher education often stems from problems within women themselves. Female academics often

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have a negative perception of themselves. Often, female academics do not believe in themselves, affecting their perception of their abilities.

Women with low self-efficacy may hinder their careers and be one of the factors in forming the glass ceiling that comes from the individual (Balasubramanian & Lathabhavan, 2017). Self-confidence and self-efficacy are pivotal in propelling women's careers in higher education in Indonesia. It was exemplified by one female respondent who was promoted to a leadership position in her faculty. Upon her appointment, she expressed scepticism regarding her abilities. However, it was later demonstrated that once in her position, she felt no barriers related to her competence.

> "When I was appointed as vice dean, I was a little hesitant at first, but I felt challenged too and finally, I was able to do it; as time went by, I learned a lot, met many people, my knowledge increased, I also gained more confidence and self-efficacy also increased so that, as our career path continues to rise, the learning process will also continue to grow". (Respondent #7)

Can gender quotas tackle the phenomenon of the glass ceiling? The respondents were unanimous in their opinion that gender quotas can only minimise the problem but not wholly eliminate or overcome it. Several studies have reported that despite women having advanced education, they are not proportionately represented in leadership roles and experience slow progress in career development (Bonebright, Cottledge, & Lonnquist, 2012).

> "In my opinion, this (gender quota) can be an opportunity for us as women to contribute to the country's development. Yes. It can minimise (glass-ceiling) too, but not eliminate it (glass-ceiling)". (Respondent #5)

It is believed that the main effect of gender quota policies is 'women supporting women', a phenomenon where other women are motivated to see the success of a woman who can take a leadership position. The increase in women's participation in the labour market and the rapid movement of women's career development means that women shouldering two responsibilities at once. It is because, in many cultures, including Indonesia, women are still expected to take care of the household even if they work. Women have more responsibilities than men because, in addition to working, women are expected to take care of children and the home, although trends show that there is a growing awareness of the division of domestic responsibilities between men and women (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000). Without the affirmation of the gender quota policy, it would be difficult for women with dual roles to compete openly with men.

This study, therefore, concludes that the general experience of women academics working in higher education in Indonesia is similar to some of the previous findings. Nixdorff and Rosen (2010) state that women's low self-efficacy and self-confidence often cause the glass ceiling phenomenon. It can be overcome by increasing the representation of women, including implementing affirmative action policies such as gender quotas. Exposure to successful women can provide role models for other women so that, in the long run, the glass ceiling phenomenon can be eliminated.

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Conclusion

The respondents' experiences support previous theories that the glass ceiling is not only caused by external factors such as the social and cultural environment but can also be caused by internal factors originating from women. Respondents' experiences suggest that gender quotas are still needed to encourage women to reach top positions in organisations, as women's success becomes a role model for other women. Nevertheless, gender quotas are not a solution that can eliminate the glass ceiling. This policy is seen as a way of reducing the problem but not as the primary solution.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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Human Participants

Before data collection, all respondents have been informed about the research objectives. All respondents have signed consent forms, and their anonymity was guaranteed.

Originality Note

The authors confirm that the manuscript is their original work, and if others' works are used, they are properly cited/quoted.

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