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Unveiling the glass ceiling phenomenon and mitigating strategies through organizational justice: a conceptual paper

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ABSTRACT

The article proposes a conceptual framework to explain how organizational justice can mitigate the negative effects of glass ceiling on women's career advancement and consequently create an equal ground for women to advance their careers just like their male counterparts. The article uses the Social Role theory and the Rawlsian theory of justice to propose a conceptual model with hypotheses that are backed by logical and theoretical arguments. This conceptual paper proposes that personal, societal, and organizational barriers would have a negative effect on women's career advancement but organizational justice could positively moderate such a relationship by eliminating the negative effects of glass ceiling and thereby creating equal competitive grounds for both women and men to advance in their career. The paper offers practical suggestions on the need for managers to give the needed attention and importance to the three main dimensions of organizational justice as this has the possibility of ensuring that glass ceiling is reduced to the barest minimum in order to create a conducive environment will be created for both men and women to progress in their career. Thus the paper argues that organizational justice can moderate the negative relationship between glass ceiling and women's career advancement.

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1. Introduction

Ghanaian corporate women, just as women in many developing and even developed countries, face several hindrances and obstacles in their attempt to progress in their careers or advance to high managerial positions as compared to their male counterparts in organizations (Sharma & Kaur, 2019). Women struggle to get fair representation in corporate organizations, which subsequently affects their career advancement, and the obstacles that prevent women from achieving their full potential in order to progress to top managerial positions is what is referred to in the literature as glass ceiling (Dimovski et al., 2010).

Glass ceiling, in simple words, can be defined as the invisible artificial barriers which are main posed by organizational as well as ideological prejudices and discriminations that hinder women's career advancement or promotion to managerial positions (Ramos et al., 2022). Kalungu and Bing (2018) argue that the concept of glass ceiling demonstrates a disadvantage, especially for women when it comes to their career advancement. The concept of glass ceiling has two main parts, thus 'glass' and 'ceiling'. The 'glass' aspect refers to the fact that these barriers that prevent women's career advancement are mostly not apparent, and the 'ceiling' part means that the barriers prevent the upward advancement of women's career advancement (Hossain, 2020).

Sharma and Kaur (2019) identified three main dimensions of glass ceiling namely: personal, organizational, and societal barriers. The personal barriers include factors such as low self-esteem, challenge aversion, and desperate treatment. Organizational barriers encompass issues such as unfavorable work

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environments, discrimination against as well as unfair corporate policies, while societal barriers refer to issues that relate to family priorities and responsibilities and work-family imbalance among others.

Glass ceiling is a global phenomenon that has attracted the attention of scholars as it occurs in both developed as well as developing countries although it is more prevalent in developing countries. Samaei et al. (2021) conducted a study in England and found that glass ceiling exists in many companies. The findings of the study indicated that although women had the same qualifications as males in most organizations, women received lower salaries than their male counterparts because there were many obstacles that prevented women from advancing to senior managerial positions. The study of Triana et al. (2021) supports this assertion as the study discovered that although there was no difference regarding the difference in the qualification level among males and females who worked in high technology companies in the USA, there were significant differences regarding the positions held by males and females where males held high managerial positions while females held lower positions.

In South Africa, the study of Kiaye and Singh (2013) identified that glass ceiling was prevalent in most organizations in Durban. The study argued that glass ceiling existed in terms of organizational barriers, which created gender discrimination among workers where males were favoured more than females, which in effect created a situation where females were less respected and not given the needed support to advance in their careers.

Organizational justice can simply be defined as the employee perception of fairness in terms of resource allocation, information flow, and procedure for decision-making (Sujono et al., 2020). Yean and Yusof (2016) identified three dimensions of organizational justice: distributive, procedural, and interactional. Distributive justice is the perceived fairness regarding how outcomes are distributed in an organization (Yean & Yusof, 2016). Examples of outcomes that are generally distributed in organizations are pay and benefits that are allocated to individual employees as well as redundancies. According to this concept, a distribution is perceived to be fair and just if it is in accordance with well-established norms of allocation that have been instituted by the organization.

Procedural justice refers to the fairness of the process that leads to outcomes (Yean & Yusof, 2016). This dimension focuses on the steps taken by management to arrive at a just and fair decision. This refers to issues relating to steps taken regarding equal employment and promotion opportunities, a just reward system as well as fair disciplinary actions.

Interactional justice refers to the fairness and just treatment that employees receive when they interact with people in authority (Hadi et al., 2020). Interactional justice can be improved when managers provide the necessary information and rationale for arriving at a particular decision. According to Colquitt (2001), interactional justice can be divided into two main elements thus: interpersonal and informational justice. Interpersonal justice describes the employee's perception of how they are treated in terms of respect and courtesy while informational justice, on the other hand, refers to the employees' perception of how management provides timely and adequate information as well as an explanation.

Career advancement generally refers to higher-level jobs in the job hierarchy of a particular organization. Women's career advancement refers to the upward movement of women regarding level, position, and title in the organizational hierarchy (Mohamed et al., 2021). This study seeks to find out how the three main dimensions of glass ceiling (personal, organizational, and societal barriers) affect the career advancement of Ghanaian women in corporate organizations and how organizational justice can moderate this relationship so as to suggest innovative ways by which managers could deal with glass ceiling and consequently ensure that women also have equal opportunity to advance their career at the workplace.

2. Research questions

The research questions that will underpin this study are:

1. What is the effect of personal barriers on the career advancement of Ghanaian women?
2. How do societal barriers affect the career advancement of Ghanaian women?
3. What is the effect of organizational barriers on the career advancement of Ghanaian women?

4. How does organizational justice (distributive, procedural, and interactional justice) affect the relationship between glass ceiling and the career advancement of Ghanaian women?

3. Theoretical development

Two main theories will underpin this conceptual framework: 1) the Social role theory and 2) the Rawlsian theory of Justice. The social role theory helped to explain the relationship between glass ceiling and career advancement. However, since the social exchange theory does not explain how organizational justice can impact the relationship between glass ceiling and career advancement, the social role theory would be supported by the Rawlsian theory of justice, which aided in the selection of organizational justice variables to moderate the relationship between the Independent and dependent variable.

3.1. The social role theory

The social role theory was propounded by Eagly (1997) in her attempt to explain how sex difference between males and females is used to define roles that invariably determine social behavior (Eagly, 1997). The main argument of the theory is that societal stereotypes about gender over time becomes norm and behavior that are institutionalized in society or organizations and are then used to determine roles among male and females (Eagly & Wood, 1999). The theory argues that these norms of behavioral predispositions over time tend to be considered desirable and accepted for each sex, which eventually forms stereotypes that become the basis for typical social roles assigned to men and women. The implication is that men become recognized as the breadwinners and as such deemed it appropriate to hold higher positions in an organization which consequently creates barriers for women to advance to higher positions (Schneider & Bos, 2019).

Also these assigned behaviours or roles stereotyped women to be unfit for leadership roles, leading to prejudice and discrimination against women who seek to advance their careers and acquire high positions in an organization (Fyall & Gazley, 2015).

According to the theory, these gender stereotypes and biases disvalue women's performance and also create a situation where women are seen as incompetent hence female employees in corporate organizations do not receive the resources and support that they need to improve themselves and advance their careers (Scalambrino & Lowery, 2017). The main assumption of the theory is that prescribed roles that are assigned to individuals based on gender invariably tend to become the accepted norm over time and consequently create indirect or invisible barriers (glass ceiling) that prevent advancement from one's assigned position (career development). This assisted in the selection of the glass ceiling and career advancement variable for the study.

The Social Role theory originated as an effort to understand the causes of sex differences and similarities used by societies to determine and in the organizational settings to determine who should perform what kind of role and vice-versa (Eagly et al., 1981). According to the theory, men and women are assumed to possess certain qualities that ideally predispose them to the different roles they perform and the different positions they occupy. In the organizational setting, the positions occupied by some leaders are determined based on their sex, and sometimes, organizational policies are enacted to entrench such positions. These practices subsequently discriminate against gender and make it possible for a particular gender to advance to top managerial positions at the expense of the other. In some situations, these roles are developed from consensual beliefs within society about the attributes of women and men and are based solely on gender, and in most cases, it puts women at a disadvantage position.

From this assumption, the social role theory argues that there is bias in the evaluation of women leaders caused by the gap between the rater's stereotypes about women and the rater's implicit constructs of leadership (Helfat et al., 2006). The core assumption of this theory is society allocated positions and roles to that men and women solely based on gender differences, and this over time becomes norms and practices that are widely accepted. These stereotypes about the roles that certain genders can perform most affect women in their attempt to move to top managerial positions (Hollingworth, 1916).

3.2. Rawlsian theory of justice

Rawlsian (1958) propounded the theory of justice, which is adopted by this study because of its usefulness in the selection of the organizational justice variable as a moderator for the study.

The main assumption of this theory is that for an organization to function effectively, it is imperative that organizations institute measures that will help ensure fairness and eliminate impartiality. Rawlsian theory of justice emphasizes procedural justice, distributive and interactive justice that can be applied by organizations so as to practice ethical human resource management in an organization which will invariably lead to fairness in the organization. Two main prepositions are made by this theory:

- a. 'Every employee should have an equal right to the full adequate scheme of equal basic liberties which is compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for all' (distributive justice).
- b. 'Social and economic equalities are to satisfy two conditions. First, they must be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity (procedural justice, p. 168); and second, they must be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society or organization' (interactive justice).

According to Rawls' theory of justice, all major resources of an organization, including information and opportunity, money and income, and the foundations of self-respect, should be distributed equally among all employees (Rawls et al., 1973). Everyone needs to be treated equally and given the same opportunity, which is the central tenet of this theory. It can be concluded that companies should restructure their policies to offer equal opportunities for appropriately qualified individuals regardless of gender, race status, or religion. In order to promote women's representation in managerial positions, women should also be empowered to take on tough jobs similar to those of their male counterparts. Employers should therefore fairly include more women in their board meetings where important decisions are taken since everyone deserves to be treated equally and given the same opportunity.

According to the theory, organizations mostly ensure fairness by concentrating much attention only on procedural justice but it is imperative that distributive and interactive justice are also given equal attention (Fia & Sacconi, 2019). Ensuring justice and fairness in the organization implies instituting strong and effective mechanisms to ensure that the process of reaching outcomes, the procedure for distributing outcomes, and the process of interaction among employees are just to all without any discrimination or biases. Organizations that are able to ensure procedural, distributive, and interactive justice are likely to reduce glass ceiling problems (Wesarat & Mathew, 2017). This theory thus helped in the selection of organizational justice as the moderator for the study.

4. Hypothesis development

4.1. The relationship between personal barriers and career advancement

Personal barriers include factors such as lack of self-esteem, challenge aversion, and desperate treatment that serve as a hindrance to the career development of women in corporate organizations (Sharma, & Kaur, 2019). These barriers tend to create obstacles that prevent women from developing strong self-esteem and confidence that are needed to help the progress of their careers. In some situations, women face the challenge of aversion, which discourage them from making the necessary efforts to advance in their career.

According to Liu et al. (2020), a person's personality is made up of his actions toward other people as well as his attitude, traits, and thinking. The Five Factor Model, put forth by Costa & McCrae in 1992, explains how a person's personality and various behaviors are related. Personality attributes refer to a woman in a leadership position's aspirations and self-assurance (Triana et al., 2021).

When compared to men, who exhibited more forceful and influential conduct in leadership positions, certain women are found to lack fundamental qualities and abilities like ambition and confidence, which has created a barrier for women to advance up the career ladder (Dowling, 2017). The definition of ambition is the desire to advance one's managerial position (Shabbir et al., 2017). According to earlier

research, both men's and women's ambition is a reliable predictors of management promotion (Triana et al., 2021). Self-confidence is acquired via social and professional experiences, and it plays a significant role in determining a person's desire for career advancement (Buser, 2016; Datta & Agarwal, 2017).

Women's career advancement is hampered by the fact that they are less ambitious and self-assured than men, which has led to a lower public profile for them (Hunton et al., 1996). Women who lack self-assurance can impede their own job growth. Women don't apply for promotions because they lack confidence and are afraid of failing. Despite being academically successful, women have self-confidence issues (Sharma & Kaur, 2019). Although women in the study were shown to be competitive, ambitious, and emotionally suited to managerial positions, another study indicated that personality qualities did not significantly influence women's career development to top management. The study, therefore, hypothesizes that:

H1: There is a negative and significant relationship between personal barriers and career advancement

4.2. The relationship between societal barriers and career advancement

Societal barriers as such conditions or factors in a person's environment that can have a hindering effect on functioning and that create disability, which in turn leads to a lack of advancement or subsequently, exclusion (Sharma & Kaur, 2019). Societal barriers describe issues that relate to family priorities and responsibilities and work-family imbalance, among others.

Family obligations significantly affect women's job development in top management, according to a prior study. The majority of people believe that males should be the breadwinners while women should be the homemakers or mothers. People believe that women are more suited to play loving and caring roles like parenthood than management roles like decision-makers (Kongsomrarn et al., 2022). As women are still primarily responsible for caring for children and doing housework, their capacity to pursue a career route is limited, and family commitment has become one of the obstacles to women's career advancement (Eghlidi & Karimi, 2020; Da Silva et al., 2022). Family men are viewed as the main breadwinners and are the best prospects for top management roles because they have fewer obligations to their families and can concentrate on acquiring the necessary professional skills and meeting the requirements of senior management positions (Mkhatshwa & Genc, 2022; Wolfram et al., 2020). In addition, women are aware that having a child will alter the dynamics of the family and prevent them from advancing to top management positions, so they decide not to have children or even postpone their commitment to becoming spouses or mothers (Hossain, 2020; Eghlidi & Karimi, 2020). While some women purposefully opt to advance their careers more slowly while having children (Mkhatshwa & Genc, 2022). However, several studies discovered that having children does not seem to be a significant obstacle to women's job advancement (Wolfram et al., 2020). They discovered that family was not a hindrance to married women managers' careers but rather a source of incentive.

According to the findings, women may also have a harder time juggling their work aspirations with their family obligations. Long hours and frequent relocations are typical requirements for success in the hospitality sector, and it can be challenging to balance these demands with family obligations (Mkhatshwa & Genc, 2022).

H2: There is a negative and significant relationship between societal barriers and career advancement

4.3. The relationship between organizational barriers and career advancement

Organizational barriers encompass issues such as a negative work environment, gender discrimination, and biased corporate policies (Sharma, & Kaur, 2019). When women are not given the necessary support and conducive atmosphere to work and advance their careers due to unfavorable organizational policies, it can affect their career development.

Organizational practices include managerial hiring and promotion procedures as well as performance reviews, training, and development (Ramos et al., 2022). The top management, which is predominately made up of men, typically develops and sets these practices. These organizational practices would typically lead to workplace discrimination by men, and gender stereotyping is ongoing and reflected in the

workplace, including treating women as second-class citizens, discriminating against them during the managerial recruitment process, opportunities for promotion and performance evaluation, and lowering the authority and salary offered to women for the same position held by men (Edirisinghe, 2018; Virakul, 2000).

Due to men's managers' lack of understanding of women's lives and misinterpretation of women's motivations, promotion criteria like performance evaluation, networking, and succession planning will create a glass ceiling that will prevent women from rising to higher executive levels (Mahal, 2014). The decision-makers comfort level with promoting women is one subjective factor that makes the promotion criteria at the top management level unfavorable and disadvantageous to women. This means that decision-makers will typically favour candidates with whom they feel more at ease, such as those they know, trust, and can work with (Ponomareva et al., 2022). Because comfort is subjective, decision-makers frequently use it as a justification for choosing males for high managerial positions (Ponomareva et al., 2022). Ponomareva's conclusions, however, are not supported by the findings of Metz's study, which indicated that comfort is unrelated to promoting women to top executive positions.

H3: There is a negative relationship between organizational barriers and career advancement.

4.4. The moderating role of distributive justice on the relationship between personal barriers and career advancement

Distributive justice is the perceived fairness regarding how outcomes are distributed in an organization (Yean & Yusof, 2016). Examples of outcomes that are generally distributed in organizations are pay and benefits that are allocated to individual employees as well as redundancies. According to this concept, a distribution is perceived to be fair and just if it is in accordance with well-established norms of allocation that have been instituted by the organization (Wesarat & Mathew, 2017). In the event that outcomes are distributed fairly in an organization, it would create a situation that would enable the women to enroll in training programmes or courses that help them overcome their personal barriers and subsequently progress in their careers. Equally distribution of outcomes in the organization thus enables women to have the needed resources to add value to themselves and become more confident in themselves to pursue their objectives and advance their careers. This is to say that when outcomes in the organization are fairly distributed, women would have the same resources and opportunities as their male counterparts and would assist in mitigating or possibly eliminating all forms of social barriers that hinder their career development (Foley et al., 2002). This would empower them to balance family responsibilities with work and consequently focus on their progression to high managerial positions.

When justice is distributed fairly in accordance with well-established norms of allocation that have been instituted by the organization, it creates an avenue that empowers all employees. Thus in the event that outcomes are distributed fairly in an organization, it would create a situation where all employees would have access to training programmes and courses that would equally empower them to progress to top managerial positions. The study, therefore, hypothesizes that:

H4: The negative relationship between personal barriers and career advancement will be lower when distributive justice is effective.

4.5. The moderating role of distributive justice on the relationship between societal barriers and career advancement

The fairness of the decision about the allocation of resources within an organization is known as distributive justice (Colquitt, 2001). As a result, distributive justice relates to the distribution of resources, whether they be financial or non-financial, like awarding a bonus to an employee who meets predetermined organizational or performance goals. Distributed resources could be concrete (money), like a pay-check, or intangible (non-financial), like adulation.

Employees think that distributive justice has been achieved when their work and rewards are seen equally. Employers can completely eliminate the problem of unfair or unequal resource distribution by emphasizing these two methods when allocating resources (Foley et al., 2002). This will subsequently

create an avenue where women both men and women would be valued in the same way or will receive the same praise and bonus for the same work done. Since distributive justice involves the equal distribution of both financial (salary, bonuses) and non-financial (praise, commendations), it could help women overcome some societal or cultural barriers by installing a culture where both male and female employees are seen as equal to occupy top management positions. It would help correct certain negative perceptions where society sees males as the main breadwinners and are the best prospects for top management roles because they have fewer obligations to their families and can concentrate on acquiring the necessary professional skills and meeting the requirements of senior management positions (Khosla, 2021).

When outcomes in the organization are fairly distributed, women would have the same resources and opportunities and receive the same recognition as their male counterparts in the organization (Qu et al., 2020). This would assist in the mitigating or possible elimination of all forms of social barriers that hinder their career development. This would empower them to balance family responsibilities with work and consequently focus on their progression to high managerial positions. In this regard, this study hypothesizes that:

H5: The negative relationship between societal barriers and career advancement will be lower when distributive justice is effective

4.6. The moderating role of distributive justice on the relationship between organizational barriers and career advancement

When justice is distributed fairly in accordance with well-established norms of allocation that have been instituted by the organization, it creates an avenue where the policies of the organization are applied equally to all irrespective of gender (Suh & Hijal-Moghrabi, 2022). In the event that outcomes are distributed fairly in an organization, it would imply that organizations would have policies that are not discriminatory to women or policies that would directly or indirectly place them at a disadvantage with their male counterparts (Russen et al., 2021). This will then minimize biased policies and offer equal opportunities for women to advance to top management positions just as their male counterparts in the organization.

Organizational barriers: encompass issues such as a negative work environment, gender discrimination, and biased corporate policies that prevent women from advancing in their careers (Sharma, & Kaur, 2019). Distributive justice can help minimize organizational barriers, such as the unavailability of institutional opportunities for women and biased policies that prevent women from advancing to top leadership or managerial positions (Akpebu Adjah & Van der Walt, 2019). Also, the traditional condescending attitude of male bosses toward working women serves as an organizational barrier that prevents women from advancing in their career advancement (Abdullah et al., 2019). At workplaces, and in even some cases at home, women are excluded from strategic decision-making, which in effect hampers their ability to acquire decision-making capabilities. This phenomenon in turn affects their confidence, self-esteem, and their leadership abilities however effective distributive justice can help curb this problem (Akpebu Adjah & Van der Walt, 2019). This is to say that organizational barriers that inhibit women's career progression to top managerial positions which include discriminatory policies towards promotion and appointment procedures would be minimized or possibly eliminated if distributive justice is effective. The study, therefore, hypothesizes that:

H6: The negative relationship between organizational barriers and career advancement will be lower when distributive justice is effective

4.7. The moderating role of procedural justice on the relationship between personal barriers and career advancement

Procedural justice refers to the fairness of the process that leads to outcomes (Yean & Yusof, 2016). This focuses on the steps taken by management to arrive at a just and fair decision. In situations where procedural justice is fairly ensured, all employees would have equal access to promotional opportunities without any form of discrimination (Brown et al., 2010). Procedural justice ensures that fair systems are

in place that enables all person to have equal access to employment opportunities at all level in an organization. This would assist the women in obtaining the needed support from the organization to overcome personal obstacles that hinder their career development (Waqar et al., 2019).

Procedural justice also ensures that reward systems instituted are just and well-known to all individuals. Also, disciplinary measures that are taken against all employees are well-stated and applied without fear or favour. Procedural justice thus ensures fairness in the policies of the organizations regarding how individuals are rewarded or punished and this create an equal avenue for all to strive to achieve the stated rewards for accomplishing assigned goals or task. Thus by ensuring fair procedural justice, the procedure by which both men and women are promoted within the organization will be just and not discriminatory (Wan & Chan, 2018). This will in turn enable women to have equal access to obtaining the needed resources such as training, and access to workshops, and courses that would equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge needed to advance in their careers. This study hypothesizes that:

H7: The negative relationship between personal barriers and career advancement will be lower when procedural justice is effective.

4.8. The moderating role of procedural justice on the relationship between societal barriers and career advancement

Procedural justice also focuses on the steps taken by management to arrive at a just and fair decision. Scholars have measured procedural justice in two main forms, namely process control and decision control (Przęczek et al., 2020). Process control looks at the degree to which employees can influence the decision-making process as well as the circumstances in which these decisions are carried out. Decision control on the other hand looks at the degree to which employees can influence the reasons that underline the making decisions in an organization (Yunita & Darma, 2020). In this regard, if procedural justice is effectively ensured, it would offer women the opportunity to have equal levels of influence on how the decisions are made, as well as the rationale that was used in making such decisions as far as wages, promotion, and equal opportunities are concerned. Women will thus be seen as equally qualified to take part in the decision-making process. This will subsequently assist them in obtaining the needed support from the system to overcome societal obstacles that hinder their career development (Wilkinson et al., 2018). Thus, by ensuring fair procedural justice, women would also have the ability to obtain the resources, skills, and knowledge required to advance to top management positions in the organization. Therefore, this study assumes that:

H8: The negative relationship between societal barriers and career advancement will be lower when procedural justice is effective.

4.9. The moderating role of procedural justice on the relationship between organizational barriers and career advancement

Procedural justice requires that organizations implement six principles to ensure that both the outcome and the sources are fair (Yunita & Darma, 2020). These principles are the principles of consistency (procedures must be constant across time and in comparison to employees), the principle of non-bias (all procedures must treat all employees in the same manner), the rule of repair (procedures must include the possibility of appealing a decision or another mechanism to remedy any wrong decisions), the principle of participation (all interested parties should be able to participate in the process), the principle of accuracy (decision-makers must read all information relevant to the implementation of the procedure and use it properly in the process while implementing the procedures), the principle of ethics (all decisions resulting from the application of the procedure should be based on moral and ethical values accepted by employees (Bhattarai, 2020).

By instituting the above-mentioned principles into the practice of the organization, it would help to smooth out the flaws in the distribution systems of an organization as far as equal and fair organizational policies are concerned, which in turn will ensure that organizational policies and practices applied to both male and female are not discriminatory (Chordiya, 2022). Researchers have dubbed this

phenomenon the ‘fair process effect’, which creates an avenue where company policies are fair and applied to all irrespective of gender, race, or color (Cropanzano et al., 2007). The consequence of ensuring fair organizational policies and practices is that women will not face unfavourable organizational policies that will inhibit their career progression. Based on this assumption, this study hypothesizes that:

H9: The negative relationship between organizational barriers and career advancement will be lower when procedural justice is effective.

4.10. The moderating role of interactive justice on the relationship between personal barriers and career advancement

Interactive justice refers to the fairness and just treatment that employees receive when they interact with people in authority. Interactive justice can be improved when managers provide the necessary information and rationale for arriving at a particular decision (Suh & Hijal-Moghrabi, 2022). Interactional justice can be divided into two main elements: interpersonal and informational justice. Interpersonal justice describes the employee’s perception of how they are treated in terms of respect and courtesy, while informational justice, on the other hand, refers to employees’ perception of how management provides timely and adequate information and explanation (Colquitt, 2001).

Interactive justice ensures that individuals are treated with maximum respect and courtesy as well as given the needed information in a timely manner to facilitate their progress and advancement of their careers. The delivery of information in a timely manner and treating the individual with respect boosts their self-confidence and encourages them in the quest to progress to top management positions.

Enhancing interactive justice in organizations ensures fairness in the policies of the organization by granting access to all individuals to the necessary information needed to ensure their advancement. When a company’s policies are fair in the distribution of information and gives maximum respect to all individuals in the organization, it creates a conducive environment for all to advance their career (Wilkinson et al., 2018). When interactional justice is effective, all individuals in the organizations would have the needed information as to what they should do to acquire the needed skills and knowledge to aspire to top management positions (Ramos et al., 2022). Also, informational justice would ensure that both men and women are treated with the same respect and are aware of the kind of support that the organization for instance provides to all employees to develop themselves in order to occupy top managerial positions. This will offer the opportunity for women to develop their self-esteem and confidence in order to overcome personal barriers that inhibit their career progression.

H10: The negative relationship between personal barriers and career advancement will be lower when interactive justice is effective.

4.11. The moderating role of interactional justice on the relationship between societal barriers and career advancement

Interactional justice ensures fairness and just treatment of employees when they interact with people in authority. Interactive justice requires managers to provide the necessary information and rationale for arriving at a particular decision. When interactional justice is effective in an organization, it ensures that both men and women are treated equally in terms of respect and courtesy and also provides timely and adequate information for all employees irrespective of their gender, race, or colour (Triana et al., 2021). Offering the same respect and information to both men and women would help do away with some of the negative societal stereotypes about women and place them on equal grounds to compete with their male counterparts at work for top management positions. Interactional justice describes the employee’s perception of an anticipated time in getting information and justifications for the process and its outcomes (Madera et al., 2019). When this is ensured in the organization as expected, it will help minimize stereotypes against women in the organization and empower them to effectively compete for top management positions in the organization as their male colleagues.

If individuals have access to timely information that is of good quality, they feel they have been treated well and equipped with the necessary information to undertake activities that would help them

advance in their careers (Liu et al., 2020). Thus, interactional justice ensures that individuals are treated with maximum respect and courtesy as well as given the needed information in a timely manner to facilitate their progress and advancement of their careers. The delivery of information in a timely manner and treating the individual with respect boosts their self-confidence and encourages them in the quest to progress to top management positions. It also helps to eliminate the negative stereotypes that may arise as a result of one's gender. This study thus hypothesizes that:

H11: The negative relationship between societal barriers and career advancement will be lower when interactive justice is effective.

4.12. The moderating role of interactional justice on the relationship between organizational barriers and career advancement

One of the fundamental reasons that account for why interactive justice has grown to be popular and important as far as ensuring fairness in the policies and rules of an organization is that, unlike distributive and procedural justice, managers at the lower level do not normally have control over, managers at all levels in the organization can have control over interactive justice (Scheuer & Loughlin, 2020). Managers can use it to achieve the desired result by ensuring the fair distribution of information to all employees in the organization in a timely manner. This is to say that lots of managers, especially those at the lower level, mostly have little or sometimes no influence on both distributive and procedures justice, but when it comes to the manner in which employees are communicated with or given information, all managers both at the lower and high level have full control over it (Suh & Hijal-Moghrabi, 2022). Managers can therefore use interactive justice to weaken the negative effects that unfair distribution and procedures could have on the behaviour and commitment of employees in an organization (Liu et al., 2020). Enhancing interactional justice ensures fairness in sharing the policies and rules of the organization regarding promotion and other opportunities to all individuals in order to utilize such information for their career advancement. When a company's policies are fair in the distribution of information and gives maximum respect to all individuals in the organization, it creates a conducive environment for all to advance their career and compete on fair grounds for top management positions.

H12: The negative relationship between organizational barriers and career advancement will be lower when interactive justice is effective

5. Conceptual model

5.1. Definition of key variables

Glass ceiling refers to invisible artificial barriers which are mainly posed by organizational as well as ideological prejudices and discriminations that hinder women career advancement or promotion to managerial positions (Yagüe-Perales et al., 2021).

Personal barriers include factors such as lack of self-esteem, challenge aversion and desperate treatment that inhibit the upward progression of women (Sharma, & Kaur, 2019).

Organizational barriers encompass issues such as negative work environment, gender discrimination and biased corporate policies that prevent women for advancing in the career (Sharma, & Kaur, 2019).

Societal barriers: This refers to issues that relates to family priorities and responsibilities, work-family imbalance among others which directly or indirectly compel corporate women to focus on family duties and give little attention to their career progress. (Sharma, & Kaur, 2019).

Organizational justice: This refers to the employee perception of fairness in terms of resource allocation, information flow and procedure for decision making (Sujono et al., 2020).

Distributive justice: this is defined as the perceived fairness regarding the outcomes are distributed in an organization (Yean & Yusof, 2016). Examples of outcomes that are generally distributed in organizations are pay and benefits that are allocated to individual employees as well as redundancies.

Procedural justice: refers to the fairness of the process that leads to outcomes (Yean & Yusof, 2016). This dimension focus on the steps taken by management to arrive at a just and fair decision. This refers

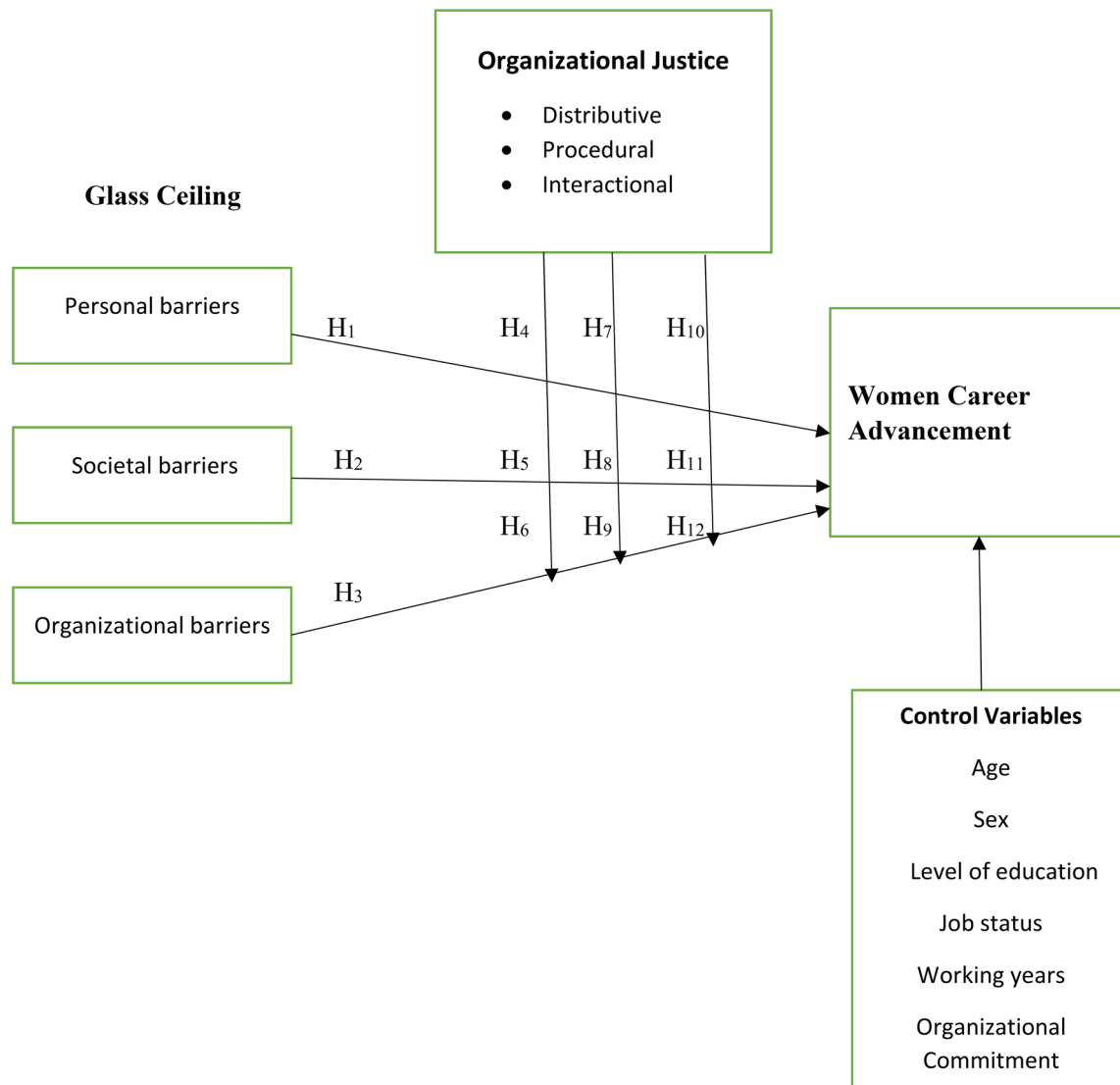


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

to issues relating to steps taken regarding equal employment and promotion opportunities, just reward system as well as fair disciplinary actions.

Interactional justice: refers to fairness and just treatment that employees receive when they interact with people in authority (Hadi et al., 2020). Interactional justice can be improved when managers provide the necessary information and rationale for arriving at a particular decision. According to Colquitt (2001) interactional justice can be divided into two main elements of justice thus: interpersonal and informational justice.

Women career advancement: refers to the upward movement of women regarding level, position and title in the organizational hierarchy (Mohamed et al., 2021). Kelly and Marin (1998) argue that barriers external to the individual also such as organizational culture and ethics play a significant role in the career advancement of women in modern times.

6. Discussions

The study proposes a conceptual framework on how the three main dimensions of glass ceiling: personal, societal, and organizational barriers affect women's career advancement (Figure 1). These three main barriers hinder women's career advancement or promotion to top managerial decision-making positions.

The first research question of the study delves into the ramifications of personal barriers on the professional progression of Ghanaian women despite the efforts made by Non-Governmental organizations, Civil Society groups and Governmental reforms to promote the career advancement of women over the years (P. Botchway and Kwarteng, 2018). Personal barriers encompass elements like educational background, self-perception, confidence levels, and work-life balance, challenge aversion, and desperate treatment. These barriers tend to create obstacles that prevent women from developing strong self-esteem and confidence that are needed to help the progress of their careers (Dollia et al., 2018). In some situations, women face the challenge of aversion, which discourage them from making the necessary efforts to advance in their career. Understanding the sway of personal barriers is pivotal in crafting precise interventions. For instance, exploring the efficacy of educational opportunities, mentorship programs, and self-esteem workshops in mitigating these barriers is indispensable. Insights may underscore the necessity for tailored career development initiatives addressing specific challenges encountered by Ghanaian women on a personal level.

The second research question is to examine the effect of societal barriers on career advancement of women by delving into the broader societal milieu, investigating how cultural norms, stereotypes, and societal expectations impinge on the career progression of Ghanaian women. Societal barriers refer to issues that relate to family priorities and responsibilities, and work-family imbalance among others. Societal barriers describe issues that relate to family priorities and responsibilities, and work-family imbalance and other family obligations which significantly affect women's job advancement to top management (Kongsomrarn et al., 2022).

As women are still primarily responsible for caring for children and doing housework, their capacity to pursue a career route is limited, and family commitment has become one of the obstacles to women's career advancement (Eghlidi & Karimi, 2020; Da Silva et al., 2022). The societal backdrop significantly molds career trajectories hence scrutinizing the impact of social barriers such as cultural expectations on gender roles, societal attitudes toward working women, family obligations and the prevalence of gender biases in professional settings provides a holistic understanding and remedies that can be used to mitigate such barriers (Mkhatshwa & Genc, 2022; Wolfgram et al., 2020).

The third research question is to assess the effect of organizational barriers such as discriminatory policies, biased promotion practices, and unequal opportunities on career advancement of women. Organizational barriers encompass issues such as unfavorable work environments, discrimination, and unfair corporate policies (Sengupta et al., 2022). When women are not given the necessary support and conducive atmosphere to work and advance their careers due to unfavourable organizational policies, their career development can be affected (Ramos et al., 2022). The top management, which is predominately made up of men, typically develops and sets these practices. Some of these organizational practices would typically lead to workplace discrimination by men, and gender stereotyping is ongoing and reflected in the workplace, including treating women as second-class citizens, discriminating against them during the managerial recruitment process, opportunities for promotion and performance evaluation, and lowering the authority and salary offered to women for the same position held by men (Edirisinghe, 2018). Identifying specific organizational barrier policies is crucial for formulating targeted strategies. Research may unearth insights into discriminatory policies, disparities in leadership opportunities, or gender-based wage gaps. The findings of the study could guide the creation of policies promoting inclusivity, employee diversity training, and the adoption of gender-neutral promotion criteria.

Overall, it can be argued that all these types of barriers serve as a hindrance preventing women from advancing in their careers. However, where there exists effective organizational justice, the effect of glass ceiling on the career advancement of women is likely to be minimized. Yean and Yusof (2016) identified three dimensions of organizational justice: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice.

Distributive justice is the perceived fairness regarding how outcomes are distributed in an organization (Yean & Yusof, 2016). If outcomes are distributed fairly in an organization, it would create a situation that would enable the women to possibly enroll in training programs or courses that help them to overcome their personal barriers and subsequently progress in their careers. The distribution of outcomes in the organization thus enables women to have the needed resources to add value to themselves and become more confident in themselves to pursue their objectives and advance their careers.

Procedural justice also focuses on the steps taken by management to arrive at a just and fair decision. Scholars have measured procedural justice in two main forms, namely process control and decision

control (Pręcerek et al., 2020). Process control looks at the degree to which employees can influence the decision-making process as well as the circumstances in which these decisions are carried out. Decision control on the other hand looks at the degree by which employees can influence the reasons that underline the making decisions in an organization (Yunita & Darma, 2020). In this regard, if procedural justice is effectively ensured, it would offer women the opportunity to have equal levels of influence on how the decisions are made as well as the rationale that was used in making such decisions as far as wages, promotion, and equal opportunities are concerned. Women will thus be seen as equally qualified to take part in the decision-making process. This will subsequently assist them in obtaining the needed support from the system to overcome societal obstacles that hinder their career development (Wilkinson et al., 2018).

Procedural justice requires that organizations implement six principles to ensure that both the outcome and the sources are fair (Yunita & Darma, 2020). These principles are the principles of consistency (procedures must be constant across time and in comparison to employees), the principle of non-bias (all procedures must treat all employees in the same manner), the rule of repair (procedures must include the possibility of appealing a decision or another mechanism to remedy any wrong decisions), the principle of participation (all interested parties should be able to participate in the process), the principle of accuracy (decision-makers must read all information relevant to the implementation of the procedure and use it properly in the process while implementing the procedures), the principle of ethics (all decisions resulting from the application of the procedure should be based on moral and ethical values accepted by employees (Bhattarai, 2020). Instituting the above-mentioned principles into the practice of the organization it would help to smooth out the flaws in the distribution systems of an organization as far as equal and fair organizational policies are concerned, which in turn will ensure that organizational policies and practices applied to both male and female are not discriminatory (Chordiya, 2022).

Thus, understanding the function of organizational justice is paramount for fostering equitable and supportive work environments. Investigating how distributive justice (fairness in outcomes), procedural justice (fairness in processes), and interactional justice (fairness in interpersonal treatment) interact with the glass ceiling can provide insights into cultivating resilient organizational cultures. This understanding may guide the development of policies addressing systemic biases, promoting transparent decision-making processes, and enhancing interpersonal relationships within the workplace.

To sum it up, the research questions of the study collectively offer a comprehensive exploration of the intricate factors influencing the career advancement of Ghanaian women. The findings have the potential to contribute to evidence-based interventions, policies, and practices that advance gender equity and empower women in professional settings.

7. Contribution to practice and theory

The paper emphasizes the need for managers to give the needed attention and attach more importance to the three main dimensions of organizational justice as this has the possibility of ensuring that glass ceiling is reduced to the barest minimum or perhaps eliminated so that a conducive environment will be created for both men and women to progress in their career. If outcomes such as pay and benefits as well as information are distributed equally in a fair manner in an organization, it will create an equal ground for both men and women to compete fairly for top managerial positions.

Theoretically, the study affirms the social role theory propounded by Alice Eagly (1997) by providing insight into how societal, personal, and organizational barriers can affect the career progression of women. The study extends the social role theory by providing an understanding of how organizational justice can moderate the relationship between glass ceiling and women's career advancement. Thus one can argue that the study throws more light on how Rawlsian theory of justice can mitigate the negative effect that glass ceiling could have on women career advancement.

8. Conclusion

This paper seeks to throw insight into the negative relationship that exists between glass ceiling and women's career advancement. Thus it explores how personal, societal, and organizational barriers affect women's career advancement and the need to put in place adequate measures to deal with these

barriers to create an equal platform for competition between men and women as far as career advancement is concerned. It also explains the role that distributive, procedural, and interactional justice could play in order to minimize or eliminate the negative effect of glass ceiling on women's career advancement. The paper argues that the management of organizations should place emphasis on the three dimensions of organizational justice as this has the possibility of ensuring that women are supported and given the needed resources to progress to top management positions just as their male counterparts.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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