
Beyond the Glass Ceiling: Leveraging Impression Management for Women's Career Success

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ABSTRACT

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Women predominantly occupy minority positions in decision-making positions, particularly in underdeveloped nations. This reflects the prevalence of the invisible glass ceiling beliefs (denial, resilience, resignation, acceptance) that impede women's subjective career success. This study proposes and tests that, to attain subjective career success, women in corporate environments may employ impression management tactics to route through the hindrances that glass ceiling beliefs offer. In contrast, women's career aspirations shape this relationship as they act as a buffer. More specifically, we examine whether women's glass ceiling beliefs influence their subjective career success. We also investigate whether impression management is a mediator and whether career aspirations are a moderator of this relationship, drawing from the Expectations States Theory (EST). Using snowball sampling, we obtained data from 291 women employed in tourism and hospitality sector firms. Our study concludes the significance of the four glass ceiling beliefs on women's subjective career success, and the importance of impression management tactics to navigate the glass ceiling beliefs to attain subjective career success. Our study also highlights that high career aspirations only support women who accept the glass ceiling. We provide study limitations, theoretical and practical implications, study contributions, and future research suggestions at the end.

Introduction

In today's organizational landscape, overcoming challenges requires effective job performance from all employees, regardless of gender. Women play a vital role in the workforce, contributing significantly to sustained organizational success and competitiveness (Panda, Rath, Rao, & Rao, 2024). Yet, women sparsely climb the executive ladder to the top (Tinuke, 2018) despite the communicated gender neutrality in firm policies and processes by management that points to its prevalence in both implicit and explicit forms and signs (He, 2025; Osituyo, 2018). Organizational barriers that influence the pace of women's career growth include masculine norms and beliefs (Carvalho, Costa, Lykke, & Torres, 2019), greater family-work conflict, and discrimination for women (Osman, Speer, & Weaver, 2025).

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Thus, the global gender bias and the glass ceiling for women prevent the full participation of women in the workforce as productive, committed managers capable of leading organizations. Few women worldwide receive promotions to power tiers and face greater hindrances in career advancement (Jejenywa, Mhlongo, & Jejenywa, 2024); thus, the prevalence of glass ceiling beliefs among women is notable. This problem is exacerbated in Pakistan due to the male-dominant nature of society, the distinct, gendered division of responsibilities within it (Hofstede, 2008), and the prevalence of deep-seated societal taboos (Imitrov, Jelen, & L'Etang, 2022).

Earlier studies conducted on the glass ceiling beliefs confirm its prevalence in the tourism sector of Turkey, (Tucker, 2007) how the glass ceiling impacts women, (Mooney & Ryan, 2009) discrimination barriers affecting women in the Spanish tourism industry, (Segovia-Pérez, Figueroa-Domecq, Fuentes-Moraleda, & Muñoz-Mazón, 2018) and glass ceiling perceptions in the accounting profession (Choi, 2019). More recently, Ramezani, Pourbairamian, Goharinezhad, Norouzi, Keshavarzi, & Sohrabi (2021) found a deficiency of career prospects for qualified females in the Iranian academic industry, while Fathy and Zidan (2020) concluded a lack of social support for women's subjective career success in Egyptian tourism.

While many studies have confirmed the prevalence of glass ceiling beliefs and how social and personal factors impact work outcomes, little attention has been given to how women's strategies influence the relationship between their glass ceiling beliefs and their career success. Moreover, most research related to glass ceiling beliefs has been conducted in Western settings and has examined precursors of glass ceiling beliefs (Clevenger & Singh, 2013) or explored managerial outlook on the glass ceiling phenomenon (Walsh, Fleming, & Enz, 2016). In addition, the tourism industry is well recognized for gender disparity as women are assigned jobs with lesser status, salary, and career development prospects (Guimarães & Silva, 2016; Santero-Sanchez, Segovia-Pérez, Castro-Núñez, Figueroa-Domecq, & Talón-Ballester, 2015). The studies focusing on glass ceiling beliefs in the tourism sector are scarce. Despite Lathabhavan & Balasubramanian's (2017) call for studying glass ceiling beliefs in various settings, there is a dearth of literature on the topic in Pakistan. Given that impression management tactics may help counter gender bias and stereotyping, assist in forming professional networks, and offer support for assertion and confidence at work (Brender-Ilan & Reizer, 2021), it becomes imperative to test a possible connection between glass ceiling beliefs and subjective career success. Additionally, career aspirations are known to influence work-related success (Kang & Kaur, 2021). Taken together, the paucity of research in these areas calls for investigating impression management as a mediator and career aspirations as a moderator of the relationship between glass-ceiling beliefs and subjective career success.

In view of the highlighted research gaps, the current study is guided by three objectives: one, to examine the direct relationship between glass ceiling belief and subjective career success; two, to test the mitigated role of career aspirations on the glass ceiling belief and subjective career success relationship; three, to examine a mediating role of impression management in the said relationship. In this way, our study expands earlier literature on women's glass ceiling beliefs by examining unexplored underlying mechanisms between women's glass ceiling beliefs and subjective career success.

Literature Review

Women's Glass Ceiling Beliefs

Glass ceiling denotes "... the culmination of various factors operating at societal, individual, organizational and policy level that prevent or restrict women from attaining top

management positions” (Taparia & Lenka, 2022). According to the career path survey, denial, resilience, resignation, and acceptance are glass-ceiling beliefs that are either optimistic or pessimistic and are considerably related to women’s career success (Arasu & Lathabhavann, 2017). Optimism elicits inner drive and enthusiasm for realizing work aims and generally paves the path for enhanced work performance and career goals, as opposed to pessimism (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007; Seligman, 1991).

Optimistic glass ceiling beliefs of denial and resilience positively influence career satisfaction (Hirschi, Nagy, Baumeler, Johnston, & Spurk, 2018; Smith, Crittenden, & Caputi, 2012) while pessimistic glass ceiling beliefs of resignation and acceptance unfavorably influence career satisfaction (Mohammadkhani & Gholamzadeh, 2016). Work engagement, happiness, and performance are higher in women who possess optimistic glass-ceiling beliefs regarding their career advancement compared with those with pessimistic beliefs in career progression (Smith, Crittenden & Caputi, 2012). Optimistic glass-ceiling beliefs lessen work stress and trigger positive emotions for the likelihood of promotions, while pessimistic glass-ceiling beliefs trigger negative emotions (Roman, 2017).

Subjective Career Success

Subjective Career Success refers to “... (an) individual's perceptual evaluations of, and affective reactions to their careers (Turban and Dougherty, 1994). Employees continually assess their professional achievements in comparison to their earlier set goals, while considering the goals they seek (Korman, Wittig-Berman, & Lang, 1981), implying that subjective career success is unique and varies among individuals. It also suggests that subjective career success would be high in an employee with a high income and job position due to work-related accomplishments, yet the individual may feel pressured for work and experience work-family conflict, which may dampen the subjective career success (Hildred, Piteira, Cervai, & Pinto, 2023).

Glass Ceiling Beliefs and Subjective Career Success

Denial, resilience, and subjective career success. Women who deny the glass ceiling believe that climbing the corporate ladder to the top involves facing similar plights for both genders (Balasubramanian & Lathabhavan, 2018) and that women’s struggles are no different (Khalid & Sekiguchi, 2019). Similarly, resilience allows individuals to anticipate productive future events (Lopez, Floyd, Ulven, & Snyder, 2000); hence, such women can recognize and cope with the glass ceiling effect (Mohammadkhani & Gholamzadeh, 2016). Resilience has been shown to boost work engagement and performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008) and positively correlates with happiness and work engagement (Smith, 2012). Thus, denial and resilience are expected to positively impact subjective career success. Based on this argument, the following is proposed.

H1: Denial and resilience will enhance subjective career success.

Resignation, acceptance, and subjective career success.

Resignation is a woman’s negative belief that inhibits them from breaking the glass ceiling, as they perceives undefeatable career barriers. Through upsetting self-efficacy, resignation deteriorates self-motivation, hampers goal setting, keeps women from expending greater effort for task achievement, and hinders work engagement (Simbula, Guglielmi, & Schaufeli, 2011). It threatens work performance and leads to a high turnover rate (Khalid & Sekiguchi, 2019), thus keeping women from attaining subjective career success. Resignation has also been found to relate negatively to happiness and emotional and physical well-being (Smith, Caputi, & Crittenden, 2012), indicating that resignation will negatively impact subjective career success.

Acceptance is another cynical glass-ceiling belief. Such women pursue personal-oriented or family-oriented lives and remain content with their existing job status while avoiding career

goals. They avoid promotions, higher responsibilities, and leadership positions (Ganiyu, Oluwafemi, Ademola, & Olatunji, 2018; Roman, 2017). Acceptance relates negatively to work engagement (Smith, Caputi, & Crittenden, 2012), suggesting that it will relate negatively to subjective career success. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Resignation and acceptance will reduce subjective career success.

Women's career aspirations as a moderator of the relationship between glass ceiling belief and subjective career success. Owing to the deep-seated gender stereotyping that men and not women are primary breadwinners (Bowles, Thomason, & Bear, 2019), women are submissive when bargaining their job-related factors, including salary, as they anticipate unfavorable consequences of such pursuits (Kugler, Reif, Kaschner, & Brodbeck, 2018). Jauhar and Lau (2018) also found that although permanent external factors such as culture, contacts, and organizational practices impacted women's career progression, social support did not moderate relationships between these factors and women's career progression. As for intrinsic motivators, Herrbach & Mignonac (2012) found that assigning worth and meaning to principles, abilities, and ideals moderates the relationship between gender discrimination and women's subjective career success. Women differ in their occupational self-efficacy and high occupational self-efficacy supports career advancement (Hartman & Barber, 2020), which lends to the idea that women would also differ in their career aspirations that would affect their subjective career success.

These studies indicate that intrinsic rather than extrinsic factors are likely to alter the relationship between glass ceiling belief and subjective career success in women. Thus, it is plausible that women with optimistic glass ceiling beliefs of denial and resilience will report higher subjective career success, and this relationship will be strongly positive for women with high career aspirations compared to women with low career aspirations. Also, women with pessimistic glass ceiling beliefs of acceptance and resignation will report negative subjective career success, and this relationship will be strongly negative when career aspirations are low and weakly negative when career aspirations are high. The following hypotheses are thus suggested:

H3: Women's career aspirations will moderate relationships of denial and resilience with subjective career success, such that the relationships will be strongly positive when career aspirations are high versus low.

H4: Women's career aspirations will moderate relationships of resignation and acceptance with subjective career success, such that the relationships will be strongly positive when career aspirations are high versus low.

Women's impression management as a mediator of the relationship between glass ceiling belief and subjective career success. Given that effectively managing one's impression is directly related to higher performance evaluations, competency ratings, promotability, and other favorable career progress prospects (Bolino, Long, & Turnley, 2016), impression management is a tool for work success (Bourdage, Roulin, & Tarraf, 2018). Through impression management tactics, people create an 'ideal' social identity in peers' and supervisors' perceptions with the aim of influencing material gains, such as higher performance ratings and better career opportunities (Brender-Ilan & Reizer, 2021). Impression management involves applying self-presentation tactics to maneuver one's impressions with customers and visitors (Netter & Raghbir, 2021) for a desired outcome through behaving in ways to advance self-interests, collaborating with others and creating a favorable influence (Bluvstein Netter & Raghbir, 2021).

Successful women managers effectively maneuver for career success through impression management tactics (Eaglin, 2019). Glass and Cook (2020) found that women in leadership ranks contrived for higher positions using networking and self-presentation methods. Duan, Xu, and Cai

(2021) found evidence that female employees had high impression management motives, which they used to boost their in-role performance, voice behavior, and supportive behavior. Another recent study by Akan and Oran (2022) concluded that businesswomen use self-promotion, ingratiation, and exemplification as aggressive impression management strategies for success. These studies offer substantial evidence that women with different glass-ceiling beliefs will employ impression management tactics to achieve work success. Specifically, impression management will mediate the relationship between the glass ceiling beliefs of denial, resilience, acceptance, resignation, and subjective career success. Therefore, the following are suggested:
H5: Impression management mediates the (positive) relationship between denial and subjective career success, as well as the (positive) relationship between resilience and subjective career success.

H6: Impression management mediates the (negative) relationship between acceptance and subjective career success as well as the (negative) relationship between resignation and subjective career success.

Underpinning Theory

We employ the Expectations States Theory (Berger, Fisek, Norman, & Zelditch, 1977) to elucidate suggested relationships. EST explains that social stereotypes influence perceptions of others' abilities. In line with this theory, expected career-related success is reduced among social typecasts, including women. Due to their perceived incompetence, leadership opportunities are reduced for marginalized groups such as women, which perpetuates the glass ceiling effect, resulting in low subjective career success. Moreover, women who are aware of such stereotypes may participate in impression management tactics to offset lowered expectations. Those with internalized low career success expectations based on their gender will develop low career aspirations and thus aim for low career goals, while women who have retained high career aspirations will have high performance and career expectations.

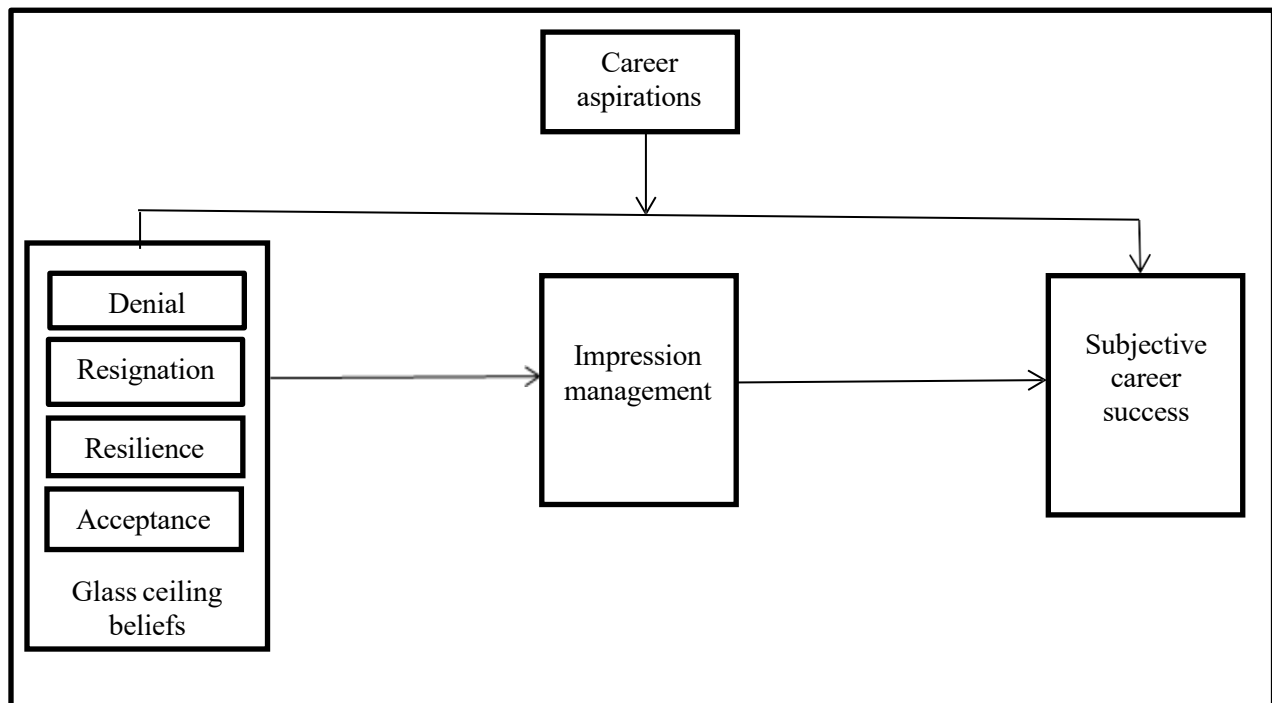


Figure 1: Theoretical framework for the Study

Methods

Study Sample and Data Collection Procedure

A correlational study design utilizing a survey method and a cross-sectional approach was employed to examine proposed relationships. Using snowball sampling (Cohen & Arieli, 2011), data were collected using self-administered questionnaires from women employed in the tourism and hospitality sector organizations whose head offices were situated in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. A female point of contact was approached in each firm who would use personal and professional contacts to disseminate questionnaires to other women, creating a referral chain. To minimize common method bias, the main point of contact was asked to assure study participants of anonymity and confidentiality of the data provided (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). The desired sample size was attained via this chain referral within a timespan of three months. Of the 500 questionnaires sent to the designated contact points, we received 291 complete responses with an effective response rate of 58.2% for final analysis. This was an adequate sample size because the sample it exceeded the calculated sample size of 129 with a 95% confidence interval using G power (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). Respondents were either graduates (62%) or had an undergraduate degree (38%) and were employed across various departments such as personnel/human resource management, accounting and finance, purchase and store, customer relations/ services, housekeeping, and food and beverage/ production. Respondents were women aged 35 years on average (SD=4.32) who had been employed in their current organization for more than 10 years (22%) 5-10 years (22%) 1-5 years (38%) and less than a year (18%). Middle-level management was the majority (58%), with lower-level management being the second majority (28%), followed by non-managers (14%).

Measures. We used validated scales with known psychometric properties to assess study variables.

Glass ceiling belief

The glass ceiling belief was assessed using Smith's (2012) 20-item Career Pathway Survey. Sample items include "Women and men have to overcome the same problems at the workplace", and "Women have the strength to overcome discrimination". Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .93.

Career aspirations

We measured career aspirations using O'Brien's (1996) eight-item Career Aspiration Scale that requires respondents to choose along a four-point frequency scale ranging from 'not at all true of me' (0) to 'very true of me' (4). Sample items include, "*I want to be among the very best in my field.*", and "*I will always be knowledgeable about recent advances in my field*". Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .92.

Impression management.

Bolino, Long, and Turnley's (2016) 22-item Impression Management Scale was used to measure impression management. This scale requires respondents to choose along a 4-point frequency scale ranging from 'strongly agree' (1) to 'strongly disagree' (4). Sample items include: (I) "*make people aware of my accomplishments*", and "*arrive at work early to look dedicated*". Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .91.

Subjective career success

Subjective career success was measured as a summation of career satisfaction, work engagement, job happiness, and innovative behavior scales. Career success was measured using Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley's (1990) five-item scale. We used the 17-item Work & Well-being Survey (UWES) to measure work engagement. To assess job happiness, we used 10 items from Salas-Vallina and Vidal's (2018) Happiness at Work scale. To tap innovative work behavior, De Jong and Hartog's (2008) 10-item Innovative Work Behavior scale (IWB) was used. All items were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale with scale anchors ranging from '1' representing 'strongly agree' to '5' representing 'strongly disagree'.

Sample items include, “*at my work, I feel bursting with energy*”, and “*I work with intensity on my job*”. Cronbach’s alpha for overall subjective career success was .88, which is adequate (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Results

Descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations, and Cronbach’s alpha for study variables are presented in Table I. As may be seen, all correlations were in the expected direction.

Table I: Descriptive Statistics, Bi-Variate Correlations, and Cronbach’s Alpha for Study Variables

	Mean	(\pm) SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Age (years)	35	2.32												
2. Education	-	3.01	.03	1										
3. Org tenure (years)	4.13	3.12	.13	.17*	1									
4. Managerial level	-	2.01	.22	.20*	.32*	1								
5. Glass ceiling beliefs	2.30	3.12	.05	-.03	.02	.18*	1 (0.93)							
6. Denial	2.31	1.10	.03	.21	.21*	.06	.30**	1 (0.81)						
7. Resilience	1.82	2.02	.10	.14	.24*	.33*	.23**	.21*	1 (0.83)					
8. Resignation	2.51	1.11	-.21	.23	.04	.21	.32**	.27*	.16*	1 (0.82)				
9. Acceptance	2.70	2.01	.02	.06	.11*	.28**	.11**	.18*	.15*	.20*	1 (0.79)			
10. Impression management	2.55	1.11	.06	.21	.31*	.08	0.33*	.41*	.33*	.31*	.27*	1 (0.91)		
11. Career aspirations	2.41	2.01	-.13	.11	.12*	-.05	0.21*	.23*	.35*	.21*	.18	.31**	1 (0.92)	
12. Subjective career success	1.25	1.10	.25	-.19	.03	.21	0.31*	.30**	.22**	.28**	.31**	.51**	.41**	1 (0.88)

$N=291$; Cronbach’s α are diagonally presented in parentheses; * $p < .001$, ** $p < .05$.

We conducted a structural model assessment using SMART PLS 3.3 to test all main, moderating, and mediation hypotheses. Table II and Figure 2 present all results. As may be seen, H1 has suggested that denial ($\beta=0.17$, $t=4.324$, $p<0.000$) and resilience ($\beta=0.192$, $t=4.683$, $p<0.000$) would positively correlate with subjective career success found statistical support. H2, which had premised that acceptance ($\beta=-0.072$, $p<0.05$) and resignation ($\beta=-0.162$, $p=0.000$) would positively correlate with subjective career success, found statistical support. Hence, all main effects of glass ceiling beliefs on subjective career success were fully supported.

The moderation effects of career aspirations were tested next. The interaction term for denial and resilience was statistically insignificant. Thus, support for H3 was not found. The interaction term for resignation (pessimistic glass ceiling belief) was insignificant, but was significant for acceptance ($\beta=0.065$, $p<0.05$) in such a way that the moderator, career aspirations, changed the original, negative relationship between acceptance and subjective career success to positive. Figure

2 presents a simple slope analysis to detect the nature and direction of the moderating effect. The figure confirms the finding that the acceptance–subjective career success relationship is negative when career aspirations are low and positive when career aspirations are high, thus partial support for H4 was found.

Mediation analysis to test H5 and H6, which had suggested mediation effects of impression management between the optimistic (denial, resilience) and pessimistic (acceptance, resignation) glass ceiling beliefs, was conducted next. Impression management mediated the denial–subjective career success ($\beta=0.048$, $p<0.005$) and resilience–subjective career success ($\beta=0.04$, $p<0.005$) relationships, suggesting support for H5. Impression management was also found to mediate the acceptance–subjective career success ($\beta=-0.043$, $p<0.00$) and resignation–subjective career success ($\beta=-0.055$, $p<0.005$) relationships, indicating support for H6.

Table 2: Structure Model Testing

Hypotheses	Path Coff	f ²	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	t Values	p Values	Result
D -> SCS	0.17	0.064	0.039	4.324	0.000	Supported
R -> SCS	0.192	0.09	0.041	4.683	0.000	Supported
Accept -> SCS	- 0.072	0.02	0.039	1.851	0.032	Supported
Resig -> SCS	- 0.162	0.063	0.041	3.989	0.000	Supported
D*CA -> SCS	0.018		0.039	0.475	0.318	Not Supported
R*CA -> SCS	- 0.062		0.039	1.599	0.055	Not Supported
Accept*CA -> SCS	0.065		0.037	1.754	0.04	Supported
Resig*CA -> SCS	- 0.018		0.038	0.474	0.318	Not Supported
R -> IM_ -> SCS	0.04		0.014	2.774	0.005	Supported (PM)
D -> IM_ -> SCS	0.048		0.018	2.691	0.005	Supported
Resig -> IM_ -> SCS	-0.055		0.021	2.632	0.005	Supported
Accept -> IM_ -> SCS	-0.043		0.016	2.608	0.000	Supported

N=291

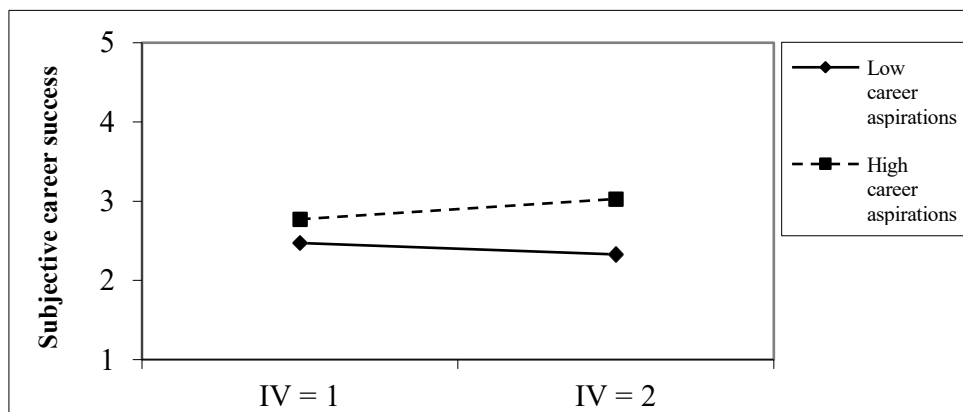


Figure 2: Simple slope analysis for career aspirations as a moderator of the acceptance–subjective career success relationship

Discussion

This study examined the impact of women's glass ceiling beliefs on subjective career success, the mediating effect of impression management in this relationship, and the moderating effects of career aspirations on the relationship between women's glass ceiling beliefs and women's subjective career success. Based on the literature review and drawing from the EST, six hypotheses were tested, and most found support. The four hypotheses that pertained to the main effect of women's glass ceiling beliefs on women's subjective career success were statistically significant, suggesting that women's glass ceiling beliefs are indeed an important predictor for subjective career success among the female workforce. These beliefs affect subjective career success through either enhancing or diminishing satisfaction, happiness, and work engagement, suggesting that denial and resilience lead to innovative work behaviors, career satisfaction, work engagement, and job happiness, ultimately boosting self-rated subjective career success. Resignation and acceptance, on the other hand, trigger reduced subjective career success by creating job-related dissatisfaction, disagreements, unhappiness, and a lack of innovative work behavior. Women with pessimistic glass ceiling beliefs of resignation and acceptance experience less success in their jobs due to their pessimistic beliefs that stir emotional distress and cognitive discomfort. Perceptions of unfairness and prejudice among women who experience these pessimistic beliefs subsequently undermine beliefs of career success, growth, and advancement among such women. Similar findings have been reported by earlier studies (Balasubramanian & Lathabhavan, 2018; Fathy & Zidan, 2020; Sharma & Kaur, 2019) as a consistent recognition of optimistic and pessimistic glass ceiling beliefs on women's self-rated subjective career success across a variety of occupations and cultures has been documented.

Results pertaining to the moderating effect of career aspirations on the relationship between the four glass ceiling beliefs and subjective career success showed mixed results. Career aspirations were found to significantly moderate the acceptance–subjective career success relationship only and in such a way that high career aspirations turned the positive relationship to negative. Unexpectedly, career aspirations did not moderate relationships of denial, resignation, and resilience with subjective career success. These results are interpretable in view of the post-COVID-19 era. Given that the tourism and hospitality sector was specifically hit hard by the pandemic (Chang, McAleer, & Ramos, 2020), it is possible that employees in this industry developed high job insecurity that affected their career-related motivation and resilience (Khan, Niazi, Nasir, Hussain, & Khan, 2021). The COVID-19-related fear dampened career aspirations among employees as they felt vulnerable and insecure (Hite & McDonald, 2020). After all, the Indigenous tourism and hospitality industry suffered sharp salary and perk cuts, zero annual increments, and huge layoffs. Other studies (Azmat, Cuñat, & Henry, 2020; Hartman & Barber, 2020) have concluded that men possess higher career aspirations. A novel finding is that career aspirations only modify the relationship between acceptance, which is a pessimistic belief, and subjective career success.

Another important finding of this study is that impression management is a mediator of relationships between the four glass ceiling beliefs with subjective career success. This finding indicates that the women who experience glass ceiling beliefs, whether optimistic or pessimistic, employ impression management tactics to achieve subjective career success. This corresponds to earlier arguments regarding the usefulness of impression management at work (Wulani, Handoko, & Purwanto, 2022). Impression management and political skill have been rendered as effective tactics for navigating decision-making to support self and organizational interests (e.g., Bolino, Varela, Bande, & Turnley, 2006; Castro, Douglas, Hochwarter, Ferris, & Frink, 2003).

Theoretical Contribution

This study makes notable theoretical contributions. Our results confirm the Social Expectations Theory as they suggest that social expectations that manifest as glass ceiling beliefs shape women's individual career outcomes. A novel contribution is that women who have internalized pessimistic glass ceiling beliefs (resignation, acceptance) are likely to attribute lost career opportunities. Albeit this aligns with social expectations, it adversely affects their career success. Conversely, women who have adopted optimistic glass-ceiling beliefs (denial, resilience) challenge such prospects. Though this opposes societal norms and expectations, such women achieve career advancement. Moreover, women respond to career-related biases by utilizing impression management to navigate through societal expectations in order to attain subjective career success.

Study Strengths and Limitations

This study has important strengths. One, we addressed specific problems of women's glass ceiling belief and subjective career success by establishing the prevalence of these trends in the targeted industry, i.e., the tourism and hospitality sectors. The two instruments used in this study are psychometrically sound. Limitations of this study include the cross-sectional study design that limits the causality in tested relationships (Aiken, West, & Millsap, 2008). The findings of the present study may not be relatable to other service industries due to varying industrial dynamics. Finally, bias in the chain referral snowball sampling is a possibility (Sharma, 2018).

Practical Implications

Through appropriate policies and well-designed organizational culture as instruments, managers should make planned efforts to root out or at least minimize gender bias that manifests during selection and recruitment, promotions, talent management, and succession planning in particular. Moreover, women employees should be made aware of and mentored on optimistic (acceptance, resilience) and pessimistic (denial, resignation) glass-ceiling beliefs for superior career-centered performance. Formal seminars and workshops should be conducted to create awareness of impression management tactics.

Future Research Directions

Future research may test the validity of these relationships in different contextual settings to build more generalizability. Data from men managers may be taken to test how men's perceptions of women's glass ceiling beliefs encourage or discourage career success. This would benefit managers, recruiters, and top management by providing a holistic perspective on how the 'total' workforce thinks. It would also be interesting to test how glass ceiling beliefs trigger turnover intentions or actual turnover among women employees, as a good number of women resign following marital or family commitments.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that glass-ceiling beliefs of denial and resilience enhance subjective career success, while glass-ceiling beliefs of resignation and acceptance reduce subjective career success. Results also show that, among the four glass ceiling beliefs, only acceptance significantly moderates the career aspirations–subjective career success relationship. Moreover, this study also found support for the argument that impression management significantly mediates the hypothesized relationships between all four glass ceiling beliefs and subject career success.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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