

Glass ceiling with obstacles: A study of work  
engagement and work empowerment of women in  
the hospitality industry

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## ABSTRACT

The hospitality industry is one of the most dynamic sectors in the world. It significantly contributes to a range of employment opportunities for women in the global economy. However, it also contributes to many challenges that impede women's work engagement and empowerment. The 'glass ceiling' effect is one of the most significant challenges limiting women's careers and access to managerial positions. There are several obstacles, such as gender inequality, that lead to unequal pay and a lack of opportunities for training and development. This study explores the glass ceiling and the obstacles within the hospitality industry that may limit women's advancement into their careers. The aim of the current study was to contribute to academic knowledge and suggest practical strategies to overcome the effects of the glass ceiling.

The findings revealed a significant negative relation between the glass ceiling and the work engagement and work empowerment of women in the hospitality industry. The study also highlighted the mediating role of work obstacles between the glass ceiling and employees' work performance. The findings of this study shed light on the myriad daily challenges that women face; they also underline the importance of addressing the effects of the glass ceiling and the need to cultivate an environment of equality, success, empowerment and supportive engagement for women employees in the hospitality industry.

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## **ATTESTATION OF AUTHOSHIP**

I hereby declare that the work I have submitted is entirely original, to the best of my knowledge and belief, and that it does not include any material that is substantially comparable to work that has been submitted for consideration for another degree or diploma from a university or other higher education institution, except for the instances noted in the acknowledgements.

Signed: Xuxa Sumathi Pereira

Date: 11/09/2023

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# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

With its dynamic and multifaceted nature, the hospitality sector serves as a cornerstone for experiences that cater to individuals seeking comfort, amusement, and a break from the mundane (Cook & Glass, 2014). This industry, which ranges from luxurious hotels to exotic cruises, local eateries and sprawling theme parks, provides an array of services designed to meet the unique demands of both domestic and international patrons. As an entity, it holds a distinctive place in the global economy (Boone et al., 2013). It does not just cater to leisure but is pivotal in supporting business travels, events, and international collaborations. The economic footprint of this sector is undeniably vast. Besides generating immense revenue, it is a hub of employment opportunities, contributing significantly to the global job market. It revitalises local economies by attracting tourists and professionals, injecting them with fresh revenue streams and fostering international collaboration (Boone et al., 2013). Governments worldwide, recognising its potential and economic benefits, invest significantly in the infrastructure and promotion of the hospitality sector. They work diligently to craft regulatory frameworks ensuring seamless expansion and growth.

The participation and contribution of women in the hospitality sector have been significant and transformative (Sharma & Kaur, 2019). Their presence, intricately woven with evolving gender dynamics and the unique demands of the sector, tells a story of resilience, adaptability, and prowess. In all its diversity, the hospitality industry provides a myriad of opportunities for women. Their roles span lodging, dining, entertainment, and other crucial areas, propelling the sector's expansion. Nevertheless, beneath this involvement lies an uneven terrain of opportunities (Sharma & Kaur, 2019). Women face persistent disparities, particularly in leadership roles, wage structures, and avenues for professional growth. Historical contexts have played a role in this. Stereotypes and biases, deeply ingrained over time, have often directed

women towards front-of-house roles (Sharma & Kaur, 2019). These positions, while vital, often limit their trajectory into administrative or executive roles traditionally occupied by their male counterparts. The narrative of women in hospitality is thus a blend of achievement and challenges, of recognition and the need for more significant equity.

A pervasive issue across industries, the 'glass ceiling' concept finds pronounced relevance in the hospitality sector (Bendl & Schmidt, 2010). This invisible yet formidable barrier, which prevents competent employees, especially women, from ascending the corporate hierarchy, has long impeded the realisation of accurate gender equity in leadership positions within the hospitality realm. The reasons are multifaceted. From entrenched stereotypes questioning women's leadership potential to their notable absence from decision-making processes, from the scarcity of mentorship avenues to pressing work-life balance challenges (Babic & Hansez, 2021) – a confluence of factors reinforces this ceiling. Moreover, the intrinsic nature of the hospitality profession, with its long hours, client-centric roles, and often stressful environments, exacerbates these challenges for women. Addressing the glass ceiling is not just about structural or policy changes; it requires a cultural shift, an industry-wide introspection, and proactive measures to level the playing field (Mooney & Ryan, 2009; Sabharwal, 2013).

A multifaceted strategy is needed to address women's work engagement in the hospitality sector. Initiatives that advance gender diversity dispel myths and pave the road for women to hold leadership positions are crucial (Lathabhavan, 2019). Furthermore, it is critical to promote a welcoming and inclusive workplace that values the contributions of women and offers resources to support them in overcoming obstacles. The continued quest for gender equality and workplace inclusiveness must critically emphasise women's empowerment in the hospitality sector. Work empowerment gives people the autonomy, resources, and tools to manage their responsibilities and effectively contribute to their organisations (Eagly & Carli, 2018). Because of the industry's particular difficulties and limited opportunities to affect

positive change, work empowerment has important implications for women working in the hotel sector.

While extensive, the discourse on women in the hospitality industry reveals gaps in academic exploration, especially concerning the interrelation between the glass ceiling, work engagement, and empowerment. Despite the sector's global influence and the pressing need for gender equity, there is a noticeable lack of comprehensive studies dissecting these dynamics. Unravelling this intricate interplay is paramount. Not only does it offer insights into the systemic challenges faced by women (Chung & Van Der Lippe, 2018), but it also provides a roadmap for tangible solutions. Understanding how these factors intersect, influence, and inform women's experiences is critical for their professional trajectories and foundational for the hospitality industry's broader growth, innovation, and success (Eagly & Carli, 2018).

## **1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

In order to better understand work engagement and work empowerment, the intention of this study was to address the critical research questions that can provide an understanding of the impact of the glass ceiling and the multiple workplace obstacles that women face within the context of the hospitality industry:

1. How does the presence of the glass ceiling impact the work engagement and work empowerment of women in the hospitality industry?
2. Whether work obstacles mediate the relationship between the glass ceiling and both work engagement and work empowerment, among women in the hospitality industry?

The research aimed to address the following goals in order to understand the work engagement and empowerment experiences of women who work in the hospitality industry, with a

particular focus on the glass ceiling and the obstacles preventing their career advancement within the industry:

1. To study the impact of the glass ceiling on the work engagement of women in New Zealand's hospitality industry.
2. To study the impact of the glass ceilings on the work empowerment of women in New Zealand's hospitality industry.
3. To investigate whether work obstacles mediate the impact of glass ceiling on work engagement and work empowerment of women in New Zealand's hospitality industry.

### **1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The importance of this study hinges on its meticulous analysis of the factors influencing women's empowerment and engagement within the hospitality sector. By delving into these factors, the study contributes significant insights to existing research, shedding light on women's challenges and opportunities in this industry.

Understanding the dynamics that enhance or hinder women's empowerment and work engagement is paramount. This research illuminates these dynamics and provides the groundwork for shaping informed strategic actions. By identifying and understanding these dynamics, the hospitality sector can refine its strategies to nurture an environment that genuinely supports women's aspirations and potential.

An essential contribution of this study is its spotlight on the imperative of creating an egalitarian workplace. The findings emphasize the need for inclusive workplaces where women do not just participate but are actively urged to advance and take leadership roles. The

importance of eradicating barriers hindering women's progress is underscored, stressing the need for an environment where women can thrive and make impactful contributions.

Moreover, the tangible outcomes of this study lay the foundation for actionable steps to bolster equality, engagement, and empowerment. With the insights provided, organizations can strategize to cultivate a culture that is both inclusive and encouraging for women. Such environments can enhance job satisfaction, employee retention, and workplace success.

By pinpointing the challenges unique to the hospitality sector, this study provides a roadmap for improving the working conditions of women. The emphasis on proactively identifying and countering these barriers equips organizations with the tools to foster women's growth. With suggestions like introducing targeted policies, comprehensive training modules, and mentorship initiatives, women's progression can be streamlined, ensuring fewer barriers hinder their advancement.

Lastly, against the broader context of gender inequality and the underrepresentation of women in pivotal roles, this study stands out as a contribution to hospitality research. It adds to the scholarly discourse and offers practical solutions, widening our understanding of women's experiences in the hospitality industry and proposing viable pathways for change.

#### **1.4 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

A few crucial terminologies are defined to provide context and clarity to the study. These terms must be understood in order to fully appreciate the study's focus, i.e., how their interactions within the hospitality industry influence the experiences, career advancement, and general workplace dynamics, of women employees.

### *Glass Ceiling*

A term denoting the invisible barriers preventing women and marginalized groups from advancing to the highest levels in organizations (Bendl & Schmidt, 2010).

### *Work Engagement*

Refers to an individual's positive emotional, cognitive, and behavioural connections to their job tasks (Eagly & Carli, 2018).

### *Work Empowerment*

The state where individuals have the agency and resources to influence decisions and take initiative in their job roles (Lashley, 2001).

### *Work Obstacles*

The challenges and barriers employees face that hinder their productivity, career advancement, or job satisfaction (Dickenson & Taylor, 2000).

## **1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION**

The literature on the hospitality sector in New Zealand is reviewed in Chapter 2, along with the topics of ‘work engagement’, ‘work empowerment’, and ‘work obstacles.’ The investigation of hypothesised relationships led to the development of a research framework, and the research paradigm and methodology are explained in Chapter 3, along with the sample, measurements, data collecting, analysis, and ethical considerations. Using SPSS Statistics 27, Chapter 4 covers the acquisition of data, assessment measurements, and hypotheses testing. In Chapter 5, the main conclusions are outlined, along with how they relate to the study’s research questions. After an examination of the implications for academics and business professionals, the chapter ends with ideas for further research.

## **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter commences with an overview of the New Zealand hospitality sector, and includes a thorough examination of the hospitality industry's glass ceiling effect. Following this, the importance of women's work engagement and empowerment in this line of work is highlighted. The final section discusses the workplace obstacles that prevent women from achieving future promotions and leadership positions, and a clear conceptual framework detailing the links among the variables hypothesised in this research study is presented.

### **2.2 OVERVIEW OF THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN NEW ZEALAND**

The hospitality sector, a cornerstone of New Zealand's economy, has experienced significant growth due to the inflow of domestic and foreign tourists. This sector, encompassing businesses like hotels, restaurants, bars, and cafes, is intrinsically linked to lodging, food, and drink services. With the consistent upswing in the tourism industry, there has been a considerable expansion in hospitality enterprises, intensifying the competition among them (Munasinghe et al., 2022).

The hospitality sector's growth in New Zealand is not only a reflection of increased tourist numbers but also of the evolving expectations of service quality and customer experience. As the industry becomes more customer-centric, there is a pressing need for staff training and development to ensure service excellence. The diversification of services, with a greater emphasis on personalized guest experiences, has become a differentiator for businesses within this competitive landscape (Macpherson, 2021)

Moreover, employment within the hospitality sector has seen shifts towards more flexible work arrangements, reflecting global trends and the need to adapt to an agile workforce (Goh, 2020).

The integration of part-time and seasonal workers presents both challenges in maintaining service standards and opportunities for a more dynamic staffing model.

The increase in competition can be attributed to the dynamic life cycle of the tourism sector (Sentia et al., 2022). The ease of market entry and exit permits new entrants, necessitating innovation among businesses to cater to shifting customer preferences. Technological advancement, especially in information and communication, has brought about seminal changes, enabling novel business models. Platforms like social media have revolutionized the industry, aiding travellers in information search and decision-making processes, thereby influencing their choices regarding accommodations (Dickens, 2021).

New Zealand's hospitality framework presents its own set of unique challenges and opportunities. Intense competition has resulted in restrictive pricing strategies and slim profit margins (Caitlan, 2021). This, combined with the overwhelming options available to consumers, results in low client loyalty. The problem is further compounded by high turnover rates typical of the sector (Zheng et al., 2020). However, tourism growth also offers silver linings. There is an increased emphasis on corporate social responsibility, with businesses addressing the potential detrimental impacts on economies, society, and the environment.

Sustainability, in particular, has been thrust into the spotlight. Driven by environmental concerns and increasing consumer awareness, the New Zealand hospitality sector has integrated sustainable practices into its operations. Innovations range from energy-efficient solutions like LED lighting to harnessing renewable energy sources such as solar panels. A holistic approach to sustainability is also evident in waste management strategies and food sustainability practices (Cammock et al., 2021). The emphasis on food sustainability is mainly fueled by the rising consumer demand for ethical consumption (Mancuso et al., 2021).

The sector's adaptation to digital transformation has been accelerated by the pandemic, with contactless services, online reservations, and digital marketing becoming standard practices. These changes not only cater to health and safety concerns but also reflect the industry's agility in adopting technological solutions to enhance operational efficiency and customer engagement (Fountain, 2021).

### **2.3 UNDERSTANDING THE GLASS CEILING EFFECT**

The glass ceiling concept embodies an invisible barrier, often obstructing women and other marginalized groups from attaining leadership roles in various industries (Morrison, 1992). Despite its widespread influence and significance, the hospitality industry remains plagued by this phenomenon. Not only does this invisible barrier negatively influence remuneration and career progression, but it also restricts access to decision-making roles.

Several studies have delved into how the glass ceiling impacts women's work engagement and empowerment within the hospitality sector. For instance, research by Lee et al. (2016) within Korean hotels highlighted gender discrimination and the absence of male co-worker support as primary hindrances to female managerial success. Such factors culminated in diminished job satisfaction and work engagement for women compared to their male counterparts. Similarly, Jang et al. (2014) explored the nexus between work engagement and perceived obstacles, like the glass ceiling, among female hospitality employees in South Korea. They discovered that challenges, ranging from entrenched gender stereotypes to a lack of achievement recognition, directly hampered work engagement.

Moreover, the repercussions of the glass ceiling extend beyond diminished engagement. Hsiao et al. (2019) assessed the role of organizational culture on women's perceptions of empowerment within Taiwanese hotels. They discerned that cultural norms favouring

hierarchy and traditional gender roles were culpable for the palpable empowerment deficit among women. Furthermore, the nexus between gender bias and career progression is undeniable. Kara et al. (2018) noted that male managers were predisposed to better promotional opportunities and superior remuneration than their female peers. Such disparities naturally culminate in reduced empowerment perceptions among female employees.

Researchers have postulated multiple interventions to ameliorate gender disparities and facilitate female progression within the hospitality sector. Wang et al. (2020) advocated diversity training programs in Chinese hotels to mitigate gender biases and augment work engagement. Concurrently, Choi and Park (2014) underscored the imperative of flexible work arrangements in South Korean hotels, deeming them instrumental in fostering work-life balance and curtailing gender prejudices.

### ***2.3.1 The Existence of a Glass Ceiling in the Hospitality Industry***

The intricacies of gender diversity assume heightened relevance within the New Zealand business landscape. Historically, men have dominated leadership echelons in the hospitality sector. Despite recent strides attributed to a burgeoning female workforce, a disproportionate representation persists at the zenith of the corporate ladder. Such disparities are often underpinned by entrenched stereotypes and biases that unfairly tout men as better suited for specific leadership roles (Chen et al., 2021).

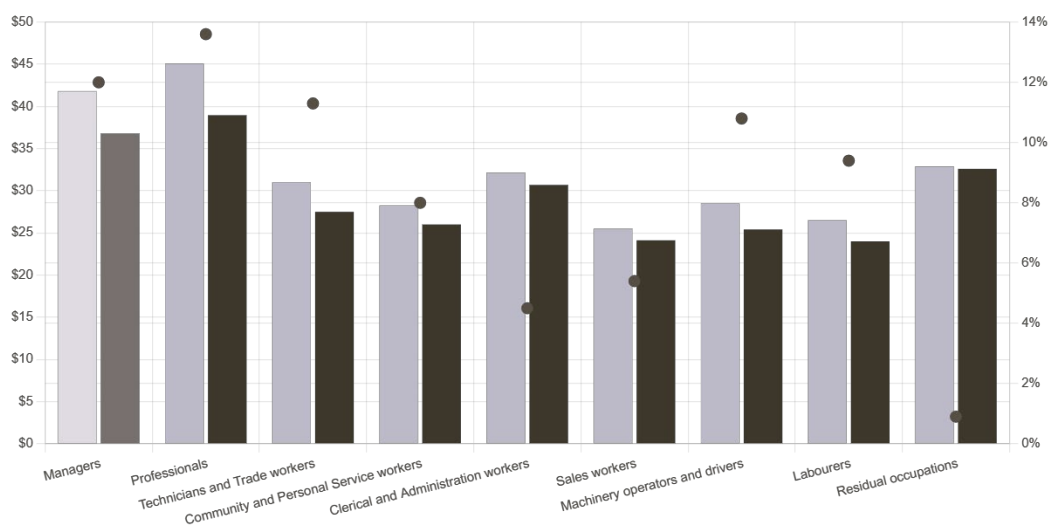
This gender bias permeates multiple facets of the industry. A conspicuous manifestation is the persisting gender pay gap, where women, despite holding analogous roles, consistently lag behind their male counterparts in remuneration. Such disparities foster inequality and adversely impact women's financial trajectories. Monolagi (2022) further expounds on the role of cultural gender stereotypes, asserting their influence on perceptions of women, especially women of

colour, in leadership capacities. Such stereotypes, fortified by cultural norms, perpetuate gender disparities within the hospitality sector.

However, the ramifications extend beyond perceptions. The limited representation of women in pivotal managerial roles translates to a diminished influence on decision-making, especially concerning gender-centric issues. As highlighted by Macpherson (2021), this deficit potentially relegates gender-related concerns to the periphery during organizational strategizing. Additionally, the challenge of work-life balance is particularly pronounced for women. The precarious nature of their employment, often characterized by temporary or part-time positions with limited job security, further exacerbates these challenges (Harkison & Coughlan, 2022).

Addressing the challenges mentioned earlier is important for the New Zealand hospitality sector. Initiatives, from bridging the gender wage gap to curating leadership development programs tailored for women, are indispensable. An industry-wide commitment to fostering an inclusive milieu can not only shatter the glass ceiling but also harness the latent potential of the female workforce, propelling the sector to global prominence.

*Figure 1 Men's and Women's hourly earnings by occupation, and gender pay gaps by occupation*



*Note: Men (light purple), Women (dark purple); <https://women.govt.nz/tools/whats-my-gender-pay-gap/occupation/managers>*

However, while sustainability remains a key focus, the 'glass ceiling' in the hospitality sector requires special attention. As depicted in Figure 1, there exists a discernible gender pay gap across various occupational strata (Ministry of Women, 2023). The hospitality industry is no exception. Despite a sizable number of women employees, there is a stark disparity in pay and representation, making the glass ceiling challenge ever more palpable.

The statistics highlight a troubling trend: the median hourly rates for women significantly lag behind their male counterparts (Ministry of Women, 2023). This discrepancy is emblematic of the economic disparity and the hurdles obstructing women's ascent to higher-paying roles. The representation of women in various capacities within the hospitality industry differs from that of the broader New Zealand workforce. A case in point is the 'manager' category, which is instrumental in shaping organizational ethos and decision-making processes. The glaring gender pay gap in leadership roles across sectors beckons a deeper examination of the inequalities entrenched in the hospitality sector's upper echelons.

This disparity underscores the need for a comprehensive examination of women's barriers, understanding the glass ceiling's intricacies, and identifying avenues to promote gender equity in the hospitality sector.

### ***2.3.2 Issues that Contribute to the Glass Ceiling Effect in New Zealand's Hospitality Industry***

Kumara (2018) explains that there is a noticeable inclination exists within the hiring practices, where doubts are cast on women's ability to align with the traditional image associated with management roles. Men, on the other hand, have typically benefited from their involvement in professional networks, which has facilitated their career advancement. This advantage often does not extend to women, who tend to be sidelined from these influential circles, thus lacking access to the critical insights and opportunities necessary for their professional development.

In a 2009 study, Mooney and Ryan examined the status of women managers in a global hotel chain across Australia and New Zealand, uncovering that the non-stop operational nature of the hotel industry often leads to a clash between professional duties and family life. This study revealed that hotel workers, especially women in managerial positions, typically miss out on family holidays to cater to hotel guests, thus sacrificing their family time. This dilemma is especially pronounced for woman middle-level managers who have to balance societal expectations of caregiving with their professional roles.

According to Zhou and Wen (2016), this double-duty significantly influences their satisfaction at work and their dedication to the organization. Women in upper management, particularly older ones, were found to be acutely aware of this issue and desired more adaptable working schedules, considering the usual operating hours of childcare services. The study emphasized the considerable challenge that women in this sector face in striking a balance between their professional responsibilities and family life, often leading to difficult career choices due to familial commitments, as discussed in the work of Zo (2013).

There is a consistent divide between the traditional societal roles attributed to women and the image projected by the construction industry. This gap is further widened by an inequitable evaluation of training requirements and a different yardstick used to measure success for women compared to their male colleagues, often leading to their limitation to secretarial roles (Cheng & Yang, 2021). Such practices pave the way for ongoing professional hurdles, including biases and the pervasive glass ceiling issue. Moreover, women in this field also grapple with challenges stemming from various political factors, such as the intricacies of labour laws, environmental regulations, trade barriers, and political stability (Cheng & Yang, 2021).

## **2.4 WOMEN'S WORK ENGAGEMENT IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**

The hospitality industry's inherent demands, characterized by its swift pace and continuous operation, pose unique human resource challenges. Baum (2006) drew attention to the direct link between the industry's extended hours and the heightened staff turnover, which disrupts service delivery and inflates recruitment costs. In facing such challenges, organizations strive to implement retention strategies that are critical to maintaining service quality, particularly in light of the unpredictable work schedules that Suhaimi and Seman (2019) identify as a barrier to achieving a healthy work-life balance. This struggle for equilibrium between professional demands and personal life can erode overall employee well-being, making the development of effective management strategies within the hospitality sector an imperative.

The pursuit of diversity and inclusion emerges as a strategic response to these industry-specific hurdles. Buhalis and Foerste (2015) emphasized that embracing workforce diversity is not merely a tokenistic gesture but a driver of innovation that directly elevates customer service experiences. As the industry's technological needs evolve, so does the necessity for continuous employee training to address emerging skill gaps. The hallmark of industry leaders, as identified in the research, includes not only fair compensation but also a commitment to workplace flexibility, which has been shown to foster a culture of inclusion and equity.

Women's progression to leadership positions within this context is often thwarted by entrenched societal biases and professional barriers. The collective research of Messarra (2014), Lent et al. (2000), and Kim (2014) underlines the significant deterrent effect of workplace gender bias on women's engagement and advancement. Their studies illuminate how various elements—ranging from the complexity of tasks, the prevailing organizational culture, the nature of peer relationships, to the level of support provided by management—form an intricate web that influences women's professional journeys. Specifically, Lee et al. (2016)

focused on the critical role that peer support plays in bolstering women's professional engagement, suggesting that empowerment within the workplace can be a collective effort.

The nuanced relationship between gender-based discrimination and job engagement was further explored by Sia et al. (2015), who found that while direct discrimination might not impede specific task-related engagement, it contributes to an overarching sense of inequality that undermines work engagement. This broad negativity surrounding perceived discrimination was corroborated by findings from Messarra (2014) and Kim (2014), whose work supports the view that perceived inequality is detrimental to overall engagement and satisfaction at work.

The significance of work-life balance is increasingly being recognized for its direct impact on work engagement among women in hospitality, as researched by Chen and Fellenz (2020) and Balasubramanian and Lathabhavan (2017). Their findings suggest that the degree to which personal and professional lives are harmoniously blended has profound implications for job satisfaction. Supporting this, Lam et al. (2019) identified that customer-centric work environments can enhance employees' sense of achievement and engagement, thereby emphasizing the value of aligning job roles with employee well-being. On the contrary, the advantages of an engaged workforce, which include fostering customer loyalty and cultivating a positive organizational culture, have been highlighted by Salanova, Agut, and Peiro (2005), showcasing the reciprocal benefits of employee well-being and organizational success.

The concept of the 'glass ceiling' is particularly tangible in the hospitality sector, where it represents a substantial impediment to women's advancement to senior roles, as discussed by Min and Yoon (2002). The challenge is exacerbated by gender dynamics and the biases women confront, especially in male-dominated fields, as detailed in the studies by Seyfi et al. (2020). Nevertheless, there's a silver lining, as Tabassum and Nayak (2021) observed that women often exhibit higher engagement levels, attributed to their effective client communication and a deep-

seated sense of purpose. Such findings suggest that overcoming the entrenched gender barriers could unlock significant potential, benefiting the workforce and the industry at large. From this synthesis, the following hypothesis is proposed:

***Hypothesis 1: The glass ceiling in the hospitality industry has a negative effect on women employees' levels of work engagement.***

## **2.5 THE WORK EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**

The hospitality industry is globally recognised for offering numerous employment opportunities, thanks to its position as one of the world's leading employers, as documented by Connolly and McGing (2007). However, even in such a prolific sector, women often find themselves under-represented in leadership positions, a disparity highlighted by Chung and Van Der Lippe (2018). Work empowerment can play a transformative role for women aiming to advance in their careers. Alhozi et al. (2002) emphasize that this empowerment assists women in overcoming obstacles, paving the way for career success. Kumara (2018) further elaborates that employee, when empowered, enjoy increased control over decisions, resources, and responsibilities. As Spreitzer (1995) indicates, these empowered individuals exhibit enhanced autonomy and competence.

Continuing with the theme of empowerment, its dimensions are multifaceted and can be viewed from diverse perspectives. The term 'empowerment' is frequently invoked at various governance levels, from local to international (Kaftandzieva & Nakov, 2021). Its interpretations often converge on themes like control, self-respect, and acceptance, as noted by Bhat and Fukey (2014). Marshall (2016) elaborates that empowerment grants individuals the liberty of self-governance, daily life control, and the avenue for instigating societal change. Several frameworks, such as Scheyven's (1999), dissect empowerment into political, social,

psychological, and economic dimensions. Reinforcing this, Connolly and McCain's (2007) study on Ireland's high-performance work practices underscores the hospitality industry's role in refining work environments, thereby augmenting employee representation and involvement. Diving deeper into the dynamics of the hospitality sector, it is evident that multiple variables dictate the empowerment women experience. A cornerstone of this empowerment stems from supportive leadership. Leaders who actively champion initiatives like gender equality programs create an ambience where women feel appreciated and poised for growth (Kumara, 2018). Mentoring plays an equally pivotal role, as described by Koberling (2003), where seasoned executives, particularly women, guide and advise their younger counterparts. Moreover, workplace flexibility, whether through adjustable schedules or remote work options, offers a lifeline to many women, especially those with familial responsibilities.

Progress in the hospitality industry towards genuine gender equality is palpable, yet a long journey still awaits. Several systemic hurdles persist, stunting women's career progression. Mitigating strategies, such as diversity training and sponsorship programs targeting women for top roles, can catalyse change (Chung & Van Der Lippe, 2018). Such initiatives sculpt an inclusive workspace where every employee, irrespective of gender identity, thrives. Koberling (2003) and De La Fuente Cabrero et al. (2018) argue for empowerment's profound effects on professional advancement. They suggest that empowered women embrace newer responsibilities and become robust advocates for their personal and professional growth.

Maclaren et al. (2013) highlight empowerment's broader societal impact and share how the hospitality sector uplifted women from impoverished regions in Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent. Such empowerment integrates into service practices and equips women to champion their cause. Interestingly, as Aithal (1999) posits, the hospitality sector veers away from superficial empowerment, instead homing in on sustainable employee empowerment.

According to Ashness & Lashley (1995), this industry's focus on empowerment arises from a need to refine customer service, eliminating conventional barriers that impede service speed. However, challenges like the glass ceiling persist, symbolizing gendered roadblocks that limit women's agency (Chung & Van Der Lippe, 2018). These challenges underscore the need to foster genuine empowerment, ensuring women can navigate and surmount workplace challenges effectively. Hence hypothesis 2 is proposed below:

***Hypothesis 2: The glass ceiling has a negative effect on the work empowerment of women in the hospitality industry.***

## **2.6 WORK OBSTACLES FOR WOMEN IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**

Women form a significant portion of the global workforce in the hospitality industry. Despite their considerable contribution, pervasive gender discrimination impedes their work engagement and work empowerment in the profession (Dashper, 2020). This discrimination manifests in various forms, including unequal pay, restricted access to leadership roles, and a diminished sense of respect among peers (Michailidis et al., 2012). Beyond these structural barriers, the hospitality sector presents specific challenges characteristic of its environment. A disturbing trend highlighted in the industry is the prevalence of sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination. Disturbing statistics from the International Labour Agency underscore the gravity of the problem. A staggering 80% of women in hotel hospitality roles have reported incidents of sexual harassment at their workplace (International Labour Agency, 2018). Such incidents perpetuate unhealthy power dynamics and breed a hostile working environment (Rowe et al., 2023). These factors can significantly diminish employee morale and productivity. Pioneering studies, such as those by Eller in 1990, emphasized the prevalence of sexual harassment in the high-contact environment of the hotel industry and the significant implications it has on the empowerment and engagement of women.

With its inherent demands, the hospitality sector further amplifies women's challenges (Park et al., 2019). Long work hours, inflexible schedules, and limited social interaction opportunities characterize the industry. These factors make it challenging for many women to balance their personal and professional commitments effectively. The fallout from this imbalance is evident. Many find pursuing their passions outside work or maintaining healthy external relationships arduous. Challenging work environments can make a situation complex and more difficult (Michailidis et al., 2012). Workplaces that fail to ensure the safety and well-being of their employees risk a slew of adverse outcomes: diminished work engagement, reduced organizational commitment, and an overwhelming sense of disempowerment (Park et al., 2021).

Moreover, limited opportunities for professional growth present a formidable challenge. An entrenched gender bias ensures that a large number of women find themselves pigeonholed into entry-level roles with negligible growth potential (Rowe et al., 2023). The gender wage gap further complicates matters. Research indicates a marked disparity in earnings, with women in the hospitality sector often earning significantly less than their male counterparts for equivalent roles (Caas et al., 2019). This impacts the individuals directly and propagates broader issues related to economic inequality.

Stereotypes and ingrained gender biases impede women's rise to leadership roles. Misconceptions surrounding gender roles and capabilities often influence perceptions, casting doubts on the leadership potential of women, regardless of their qualifications and achievements (Dashper, 2020). The lack of women in decision-making roles and limited sponsorship opportunities further stagnate their progress. However, it is essential to note that structured mentoring programs can bridge this gap. They offer the necessary support, motivation, and networking opportunities that are pivotal for career advancement. However, many women seeking leadership roles in the hospitality sector often need guidance to navigate

this journey (Shrestha, 2020). Inflexible working conditions, extended working hours, and rigid schedules are endemic to the industry, presenting unique challenges, especially for women.

Hypothesis 3 is presented below:

***Hypothesis 3: The glass ceiling has a positive effect on work obstacles faced by women employees in the hospitality industry.***

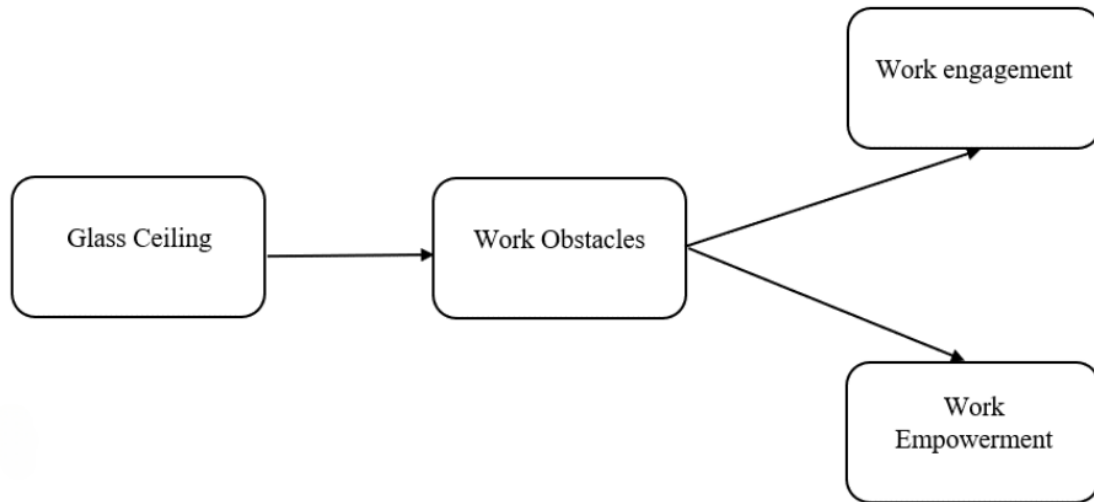
Given these insights, the research aims to explore the intricate mechanisms through which the glass ceiling impacts women in the hospitality sector, using 'work obstacles' as the pivotal mediating factor with the following hypotheses:

***Hypothesis 4: Work obstacles mediates the effect of the glass ceiling on women's work engagement in the hospitality industry.***

***Hypothesis 5: Work obstacles mediates the effect of the glass ceiling on women's work empowerment in the hospitality industry.***

Using the context of women workers in the hospitality sector, the framework of this study is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Proposal research framework



*Hypothesis 1: The glass ceiling in the hospitality industry has a negative effect on women employees' levels of work engagement.*

*Hypothesis 2: The glass ceiling has a negative effect on the work empowerment of women in the hospitality industry.*

*Hypothesis 3: The glass ceiling has a positive effect on work obstacles faced by women employees in the hospitality industry.*

*Hypothesis 4: Work obstacles mediates the effect of the glass ceiling on women's work engagement in the hospitality industry.*

*Hypothesis 5: Work obstacles mediates the effect of the glass ceiling on women's work empowerment in the hospitality industry.*

## **CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The methodology component of the research study, a crucial section that describes how data was gathered and evaluated, is examined in this chapter. According to Creswell (2014), the methodology portion of a research proposal is of utmost importance as it fully describes all the crucial aspects of the study that are necessary for replication. This chapter focuses on the research paradigm in detail, and follow with a discussion relating to the sample population, and measurements. Next, the data collection and analysis processes, i.e., through the use of a survey using a Likert scale, and through SPSS Statistics version 27, respectively. Finally, the chapter acknowledged the ethical considerations.

### **3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

The word ‘paradigm’ derives from the Greek verb ‘*paradeiknunai*’, which means, ‘to compare or exhibit’, (Reader’s Digest Universal Dictionary (1988, p. 1122)). It serves as an example or pattern for an idea. A paradigm is often thought of as a grouping of core beliefs. The foundations of qualitative and quantitative research approaches are differing philosophical traditions, each of which embraces a range of assumptions and opinions. Positivist, interpretive, radical, and poststructuralist are the four paradigms outlined by Grant and Giddings (2002) to explain differing ontological and epistemological stances, and preferred research methodologies among academics.

The study adopted a realist ontological approach within a positivist paradigm, presuming that objective realities and casual correlations could be investigated through methodical observation and measurement. It accepted that such concrete elements as the glass ceiling and employment obstacles could be scientifically studied to fully understand how these elements impacted the

experiences of women in the hospitality sector. According to Grant and Giddings (2002), the study has taken an objectivist epistemological stance, emphasising the significance of an objective world that can be ascertained by empirical study. The intention of the study was to gain an objective understanding of the effects of the glass ceiling on work engagement, work empowerment, and work obstacles among women in the hospitality sector, by gathering quantitative data through questionnaires, and statistical analysis.

Deductive reasoning has been used in this study, beginning with existing ideas and hypotheses as the foundation for the investigation. Quantitative approaches have been used in line with the positivist paradigm's emphasis on measurement and objective analysis (Grant & Giddings, 2002). Data were gathered from a sample of women employees in hospitality businesses through the use of a structured questionnaire with Likert scale items. Using this method, numerical data was able to be gathered and statistically examined to test hypotheses and reach conclusions.

The positivist methodology of the research paradigm emphasised empirical observation, measurement, and quantitative analysis (Wang et al., 2016). Its mission was to study the connections between the glass ceiling, workplace engagement, workplace empowerment, and workplace obstacles, for women working in the hospitality sector. By employing this paradigm, the study aimed to add insightful knowledge and inform initiatives for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the industry.

### **3.3 SAMPLE**

The study primarily focused on women in various hospitality-related sectors in New Zealand. The vastness of the hospitality sector encompasses various businesses, from lodging and dining

to travel and related services. New Zealand was chosen to highlight the potential cultural and contextual factors influencing relationships within its unique hospitality landscape.

The emphasis on women was a deliberate choice, driven by preliminary indications that the glass ceiling phenomenon particularly hindered their career advancement within the sector. This approach aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of experiences across the diverse range of women working in different facets of New Zealand's hospitality industry. The objective was to delve deep into their professional challenges, particularly concerning career progression.

Determining an appropriate sample size is often debated in academic circles. Bryman and Bell (2015) define an 'adequate sample size' as the number of participants necessary to yield desired research outcomes. Guided by Frechtling's (2007) recommendation, this study set its sights on a minimum of 180 respondents based on the study instrument's 36 items. However, considering potential dropouts and the need for a more robust data set, the targeted range was between 200 and 250 respondents.

To achieve this, a survey method was employed. Using platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, the survey aimed to tap into a broad audience, anticipating notable visibility, especially in metropolitan hubs like Auckland, but ensuring coverage across New Zealand. By targeting women aged 18 or older in the hospitality sector and providing the convenience of online participation, the study aimed for a diverse and comprehensive representation of experiences.

### **3.4 MEASUREMENTS**

To ensure the highest level of validity and data quality, only well-established and frequently used measures, reported on in published empirical investigations were utilised in this study.

Each survey item was graded using a seven-point Likert scale (see Appendix 1), with values ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 7 (Strongly Disagree).

**Glass Ceiling:** Participants were required to declare their agreement or disagreement with a range of statements relating to the glass ceiling effect, using a one-to-seven-point rating scale (Shaji et al., 2021). In order to understand their perspectives on the subject area, participants were asked to rate the degree to which they believed that obstacles associated with the glass ceiling effect, affected their jobs. The literature review emphasised that obstacles to job success for women include discrimination based on gender, and unequal opportunities. Notably, glass ceiling statements, such as, GC4, “There is a lack of equal assignment opportunities”, and GC6, “Women are not promoted to senior management positions at the same rate as men in some hospitality organisations”, specifically address issues experienced by women in the hospitality industry.

Table 1. Statements relating to the glass ceiling effect

| <i>No.</i> | <i>Part 1. Glass ceiling</i>  |
|------------|---|
| GC1        | Women and men have to overcome the same problems at the workplace   |
| GC2        | Managers do not offer good opportunities  |
| GC3        | I am ostracized from social and informal networks of communication  |
| GC4        | There is a lack of equal assignment opportunities   |
| GC5        | Society perceives women as having lower competence than men   |
| GC6        | Women are not promoted to senior management positions at the same rate as men in some hospitality organisations                     |
| GC7        | Many hospitality organisations have been able to create an environment of inclusion, while many more have not achieved this success |

**Work Engagement:** Given the glass ceiling phenomenon discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), it was deemed essential to incorporate this variable into the survey instrument in order to understand women’s levels of work engagement in the hospitality industry. The relationship between work engagement and the ways that female employees regard their work environment, opportunities, and empowerment, is substantial (Kim, 2015). The evaluation of the phrases, WE2, “I am immersed in my work”, and WE7, “At my job, I am very resilient mentally”, both of which demonstrate the attention and commitment these women put into their work obligations, reflects this congruence. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) was used for applied in this study (Carmona-Halty et al., 2019). Each statement was assigned a score, with one denoting the maximum level of agreement, and seven denoting the opposite.

*Table 2. Measurement of work engagement*

| <i>No.</i> | <i>Part 2. Work engagement</i>                          |
|------------|---|
| WE1        | I am proud of the work that I do                        |
| WE2        | I am immersed in my work                                |
| WE3        | I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose   |
| WE4        | It is difficult to detach myself from my job            |
| WE5        | When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work |
| WE6        | I am enthusiastic about my job                          |
| WE7        | At my job, I am very resilient, mentally                |

**Work Empowerment:** The inclusion of this topic was important, as it resonates with the understanding that permeates the workplace in the hospitality sector, and also plays a crucial role in promoting the career advancement and empowerment of female employees. Building

on the framework referred to in Chapter 2, the notions of self-determination, self-respect, and acknowledgement are central to all dimensions of empowerment (Bhat & Fukey, 2014). Work empowerment statements that explored the capacity to exert control over one’s own work circumstances and decision-making processes, included, WEP2, “I am in charge of my work situation”, and WEP4, “I think I can say what I want to say to my supervisors”.

The items used to measure work empowerment in this study was derived from the Menon Empowerment Scale (Menon, 2001), a widely recognized instrument for evaluating empowerment in organizational settings. The adoption of the Menon Empowerment Scale provides a robust framework for capturing the nuances of empowerment as experienced by individuals in the hospitality industry. Each response is rated from 1 (strongly Agree) to 7 (strongly Disagree) on a Likert scale.

*Table 3. Measurement of work empowerment*

| <i>No.</i> | <i>Part 3. Work empowerment</i>                              |
|------------|--|
| WEP1       | I feel confident in making decisions about my work load      |
| WEP2       | WEP2 I am in charge of my work situation.                    |
| WEP3       | No matter what I do, my work problems do not improve         |
| WEP4       | I think I am able to say what I want to say to my supervisor |
| WEP5       | I am not allowed to make decisions in my work situation      |
| WEP6       | My innovative ideas are received well by my supervisors      |
| WEP7       | I could do a better job, but no one would notice             |

**Work Obstacles:** The term, ‘work obstacle’ has been used in this study to evaluate the difficulties and obstacles faced by women employees in the hospitality sector. As discussed in Chapter 2, prejudice based on gender still looms large over the hospitality industry. It takes the form of unequal pay, restricted access to leadership positions, and a lack of respect amongst co-workers (Michailidis et al., 2012). The responses highlight the importance of mentoring (WO2) and the under-representation of women in leadership roles (WO4) as significant obstacles to advancing women’s careers. The act advocating for and supporting women employees has the potential to shed light on the pervasive nature of gender-based bias and emphasize the importance of recognizing and valuing the achievements made by women in the sector. The Work Experience Measurement Scale (WEMS) was used in this study (Nilsson et al., 2013), and a scale from one (Strongly Agree) to seven (Strongly Disagree) was used to rate each item.

*Table 4. Measurement of work obstacles*

| <i>No.</i> | <i>Part 4. Work obstacle</i>   |
|------------|--|
| WO1        | <i>I have difficulty in balancing work and family responsibilities</i> |
| WO2        | <i>There is a lack of mentorship</i>                                   |
| WO3        | <i>I am paid less compared to male co-workers</i>                      |
| WO4        | <i>There is an absence of women in leadership positions</i>            |
| WO5        | <i>There is discrimination during promotion</i>                        |
| WO6        | <i>There needs to be adequate recognition of the work I carry out.</i> |
| WO7        | <i>I experience gender discrimination at work</i>                      |

**Demographic Information:** The survey included an examination of demographic information. Participants were kindly asked to provide information about their gender, age, department,

level of experience in their current job, and tenure. They were also asked how frequently they had changed employment; those who regularly changed jobs were likely to have different experiences and issues than those with a more stable work history. Another important demographic factor, marital status, can impact women's workplace experience, and the existence of children under the age of 14 years was another factor vital for understanding the wide range of obstacles women face in the workplace. Notably, women raising small children may face various obstacles at work, including a lack of support for flexible work schedules, opportunities for career growth, and access to services.

### **3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

On May 4, 2023, AUTECH (Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee) approved this research study (see Appendix 1), and *Glass Ceiling with Obstacles: A Study on Work Engagement and Work Empowerment of Women in the Hospitality Industry* was assigned the AUTECH Approval Number, 23/90. Stringent precautions were implemented to safeguard the security and privacy of the researcher and participants. The survey was created with total anonymity in mind, and all data gathered has been kept confidential. As required by AUTECH, a covering letter and a Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix 1) were included with the survey. The objectives of the study, any possible dangers or unpleasant side effects, as well as the supervisor's and the researcher's contact information, were all included on the information sheet. Participants gave their complete agreement to participation by answering the questionnaire. Additionally, to guarantee anonymity, no personally identifiable information was added to any collected data when loaded into SPSS.

### **3.6 DATA COLLECTION**

Data for this study were gathered using a sampling method where participants are chosen based on ease of access and availability via an online survey from May to early July 2023. This approach was chosen due to its efficiency and effectiveness in reaching a targeted demographic within the hospitality industry across New Zealand. To capture a representative sample, advertisements were strategically placed on several social media platforms known for their extensive user base and engagement among the target demographic. Specifically, ads were placed on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn platforms selected for their prominence in social networking and professional engagement. The ad was not limited to specific localities; instead, they utilized the platforms' algorithms to target users across New Zealand based on their employment in the hospitality sector, their engagement with related content, or their affiliation with industry-specific groups.

While Auckland's status as New Zealand's largest urban centre was anticipated to naturally attract a higher visibility due to the dense population and active social media use, the advertisements were not exclusively targeting Auckland audiences. The social media channels used have a global reach and allow for targeting based on user behaviour and interests, which facilitated the inclusion of participants from all regions of New Zealand, ensuring a diverse and inclusive sample reflective of the country's hospitality workforce. To bolster the survey's reach and credibility, each advertisement was distinctly marked with the official logo of Auckland University of Technology (AUT), as documented in Appendix 2. The survey's design prioritized respondent anonymity, adhering strictly to ethical guidelines for online data collection. This was an essential measure to ensure unbiased and honest responses from participants, who could provide information without concerns over privacy or potential impact on their employment.

### 3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Statistics 27 was used for data analysis. Every survey question was entered into the SPSS software. The dummy codes for variables, including gender (e.g., "Do you identify as a woman?"), relationship status (where '1' indicates being married or in a long-term relationship, and '2' indicates being single), and having children under fourteen years were used. The respondent's age, experience, and tenure were numerically coded from '1 to 5' and '1 to 6', respectively, and entered as years. The frequency of job switches and the department of employment were classified as categorical variables, with codes ranging from '1 to 5' and '1 to 10'.

Before hypothesis testing, frequency analyses were undertaken to examine the demographic data. Subsequently, reliability tests were performed on all instruments using Cronbach's alpha for the scale with item deletion (Wan et al., 2014). A Cronbach's alpha value above 0.7 is generally considered acceptable reliability, values above 0.8 indicate good reliability, and those above 0.9 represent excellent reliability. On the other hand, values below 0.6 may suggest poor reliability. The instruments' dependability was then evaluated in light of these benchmarks and compared to findings from earlier studies.

Following the reliability assessment, the mean values of the significant variables 'glass ceiling', 'work engagement', 'work empowerment', and 'work obstacles' were calculated. The independent variable, 'glass ceiling', and the two outcome variables, 'work engagement' and 'work empowerment', were subjected to factor analysis. This procedure was carried out to confirm content validity (Field, 2020). Bivariate correlation and hypothesis testing were subsequently used to examine Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3.

'Work-related obstacles' were suggested and used as a mediator for Hypotheses 4 and 5. Using SPSS, Baron and Kenny's (1986) mediation analysis approach was used to examine the

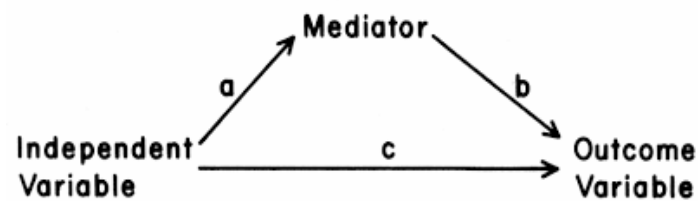
mediating role of the work hurdle between the glass ceiling and work engagement/empowerment. This method comprised the following four steps.

*Step 1: The regression of outcome variables on the independent variable is significant.*

*Step 2: The regression of the mediation on the independent variable is significant.*

*Step 3: The regression of the outcome variables on the mediator is significant.*

*Step 4: The regression of the outcome variable on the mediator, while controlling for the independent variable, is significant. Meanwhile, the regression of the outcome variable on the independent variable, controlling for the mediator, is non-significant and nearly zero.*



*Figure 3. The mediator model (Baron & Kenny, 1986)*

## CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The major conclusions drawn from the data analysis are presented in this chapter. Demographic information relating to the participants, e.g., age, job history, length of time in the hospitality business, and family circumstances, is presented first. Following this, the reliability tests are described, and then the five hypotheses offered in the research framework (Chapter 2) are examined and discussed in the chapter's concluding section.

### 4.2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

This section delves into the descriptive statistical analysis of the research participants, providing a comprehensive overview of their demographic characteristics. This analysis is crucial as it offers insights into the diversity and representativeness of the sample, which in turn influences the generalizability and relevance of the research findings. The data, detailed in Table 5, encompass a range of demographic variables such as age, work experience, departmental, job switch and family situations.

#### *Age:*

The age distribution of participants demonstrated a broad representation among the various age groups. The 30-39 years group accounted for the highest percentage (30.0%), followed by 40-49 years (24.1%), and 18-29 years (23.6%). Only a small number of participants (0.5%) were older than 60 years, while 21.8% of participants were aged 50-59 years.

#### *Work Experience:*

The participants' years of industry experience were well-distributed, showing a gradual accumulation of responders at various levels of experience. Most participants (45.5%) reported

that they had eight to ten years of experience, while only 0.5% said they had less than two years. Participants with less than two years of employment comprised the smallest group (6.4%), while participants with 11 or more years of employment (12.7%) were distributed less evenly.

*Departments:*

Participants were spread out among several hospitality-related departments. Food and Beverage had the highest participation (15.0%), closely followed by Front Office, and Human Resources (13.2%). The Security presence was small (4.5%).

*Job Switching:*

The data showed the frequency of participants’ job changes, with the majority (53.6%) reporting that they had rarely done so. Those who had ‘never’ switched accounted for 17.3%, with 28.2% reporting that they had ‘sometimes’ switched.

*Family Situations:*

Most respondents (92.3%) reported that yes, they were currently in a relationship, while a smaller proportion (7.7%) stated no, that they were single. Most participants (66.4%) also had children aged under 14 years.

*Table 5. Demographic statistics*

|               | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Age</i>    |               |                       |
| 18 - 29 years | 52            | 23.60%                |
| 30-39 years   | 66            | 30.0%                 |
| 40-49 years   | 53            | 24.1%                 |

|                               |     |        |
|-------------------------------|-----|--------|
| 50-59 years                   | 48  | 21.8%  |
| 60 or older                   | 1   | 0.50%  |
| <i>Work Experience</i>        |     |        |
| Less than 2 years             | 1   | 0.50%  |
| 2-4 years                     | 16  | 7.3%   |
| 5-7 years                     | 62  | 28.2%  |
| 8-10 years                    | 100 | 45.5%  |
| 11 or more years              | 41  | 18.60% |
| <i>Department</i>             |     |        |
| Front office                  | 29  | 13.20% |
| Housekeeping                  | 22  | 10.0%  |
| Food and beverage             | 33  | 15.0%  |
| Kitchen and food production   | 24  | 10.9%  |
| Marketing                     | 26  | 11.8%  |
| Human resources               | 29  | 13.2%  |
| Maintenance                   | 25  | 11.4%  |
| Accounts and finance          | 22  | 10.0%  |
| Security                      | 10  | 4.50%  |
| <i>Job switch</i>             |     |        |
| Often                         | 2   | 0.90%  |
| Sometimes                     | 62  | 28.20% |
| Rarely                        | 118 | 53.6%  |
| Never                         | 38  | 17.3%  |
| <i>Relationship status</i>    |     |        |
| In a relationship             | 203 | 92.30% |
| Not in a relationship         | 17  | 7.70%  |
| <i>With Children under 14</i> |     |        |
| Yes                           | 146 | 66.40% |

|                      |     |        |
|----------------------|-----|--------|
| No                   | 74  | 33.60% |
| <i>All responses</i> |     |        |
| Total                | 208 | 100%   |

---

### 4.3 RELIABILITY OF MEASUREMENTS

The reliability of the instruments used in this research is crucial for ensuring that the measurements accurately reflect the constructs they are intended to measure. Reliability scores are presented in Table 6, which displays the Cronbach's alpha for each scale. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group (Field, 2020). It is considered to be a measure of scale reliability. A higher value indicates a higher level of internal consistency and reliability of the scale. For all four measurements, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were discovered to be more than (.78) (Table 6). The alpha coefficient for 'work engagement' was the highest (.86), indicating a high level of internal consistency. On the other hand, 'glass ceiling' had the lowest alpha coefficient (.79), which is consistent with other studies of a similar nature, and indicates a reliable enquiry.

These reliability scores are important as they indicate that the scales used in this study are reliable tools for measuring the constructs of the glass ceiling effect, work engagement, work empowerment, and work obstacles.

*Table 6. Reliability scores of the instrument*

---

|   | <b>Scale</b>     | <b>Cronbach's alpha</b> |
|---|------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Glass Ceiling    | 0.79                    |
| 2 | Work Engagement  | 0.86                    |
| 3 | Work empowerment | 0.84                    |
| 4 | Work Obstacle    | 0.82                    |

---

An eigenvalue greater than 1 was required for extraction. According to the analysis, all five factors had eigenvalues higher than this limit (see Table 7). Notably, one factor showed a noticeably higher eigenvalue, and different properties compared to the other components. Similarly, the eigenvalues of the remaining four factors exceeded the pre-determined cutoff of '1', so they were also retained.

*Table 7. Eigenvalues and total variance*

---

|           | Initial Eigenvalues |               |               |
|-----------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Component | Total               | % of variance | Cumulative %  |
| <b>1</b>  | <b>7.396</b>        | <b>35.221</b> | <b>35.221</b> |
| <b>2</b>  | <b>2.769</b>        | <b>13.186</b> | <b>48.408</b> |
| <b>3</b>  | <b>1.358</b>        | <b>6.467</b>  | <b>54.875</b> |
| <b>4</b>  | <b>1.090</b>        | <b>5.188</b>  | <b>60.063</b> |
| <b>5</b>  | <b>1.066</b>        | <b>5.076</b>  | <b>65.140</b> |
| 6         | 0.988               | 4.702         | 69.842        |
| 7         | 0.886               | 4.218         | 74.060        |
| 8         | 0.742               | 3.536         | 77.596        |

|    |       |       |         |
|----|-------|-------|---------|
| 9  | 0.694 | 3.307 | 80.902  |
| 10 | 0.618 | 2.943 | 83.845  |
| 11 | 0.553 | 2.632 | 86.477  |
| 12 | 0.493 | 2.347 | 88.823  |
| 13 | 0.433 | 2.062 | 90.886  |
| 14 | 0.422 | 2.009 | 92.895  |
| 15 | 0.355 | 1.689 | 94.584  |
| 16 | 0.296 | 1.411 | 95.996  |
| 17 | 0.218 | 1.038 | 97.034  |
| 18 | 0.201 | 0.955 | 97.989  |
| 19 | 0.158 | 0.752 | 98.741  |
| 20 | 0.147 | 0.699 | 99.440  |
| 21 | 0.118 | 0.560 | 100.000 |

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The scree plot, a graphical representation of which is shown in Figure 4, illustrates the eigenvalues of each factor. This plot helps to visually determine the number of factors that should be retained in a factor analysis; the point where the slope of the curve sharply changes, known as the ‘elbow’, suggests the optimal number of factors to consider (Field, 2020). In the analysis, the elbow of the scree plot is prominently noticeable around the horizontal values, ‘1 - 5’, suggesting that five primary factors should be retained for further analysis. This deduction aligns with standard factor analysis practices, where the scree plot is instrumental in pinpointing the number of significant underlying dimensions in the dataset. The main findings from the factor analysis affirm that the internal coherence of the measurements was reasonable.

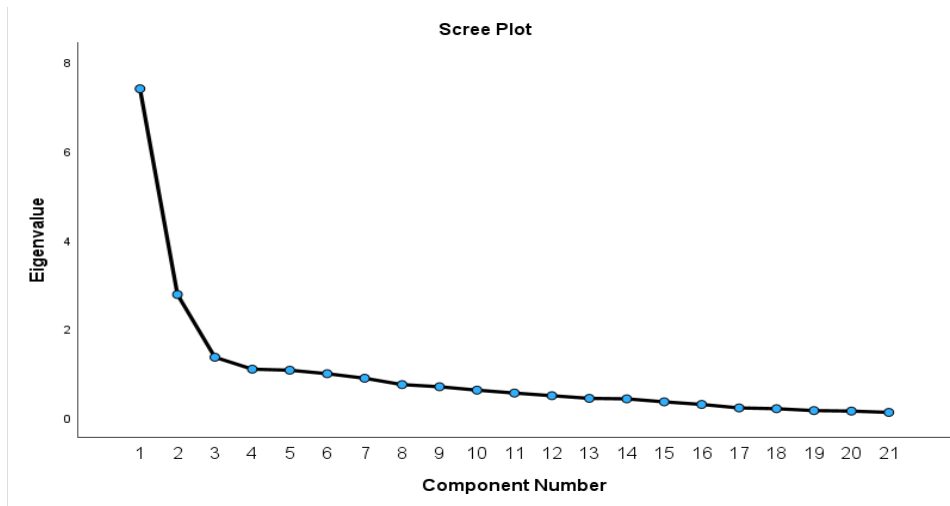


Figure 4. The scree plot on factor analysis of ‘glass ceiling’, ‘work engagement’ and ‘work empowerment’.

#### 4.4 HYPOTHESES TESTING

The Pearson correlation coefficients that show the relationships between the essential variables are displayed in the correlation analysis table (Table 8).

Table 8. Correlation analysis

|        | Age     | Tenure  | GC      | WE      | WEP     | WO |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----|
| Age    | 1       |         |         |         |         |    |
| Tenure | .613**  | 1       |         |         |         |    |
| GC     | -.188** | -.276** | 1       |         |         |    |
| WE     | .171*   | .132    | -.322** | 1       |         |    |
| WEP    | .101    | .034    | -.221** | .803**  | 1       |    |
| WO     | -.114   | -.174*  | .361**  | -.468** | -.366** | 1  |

\*\*p<0.01 (2-tailed); \* p< 0.05; N = 208

Note: GC (Glass ceiling), WE (Work Engagement), WEP (Work Empowerment), WO (Work Obstacle)

***Hypothesis 1: The glass ceiling in the hospitality industry has a negative effect on women employees' levels of work engagement.***

Table 8 shows a statistically significant negative correlation between 'glass ceiling' and 'work engagement' ( $r = -0.322, p < 0.001$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1. This finding suggests that levels of work engagement among women employees in hospitality businesses have a tendency to decline as perceptions of the glass ceiling grow. This result offers evidence in support of Hypothesis 1.

***Hypothesis 2: The glass ceiling has a negative effect on the work empowerment of women in the hospitality industry.***

As per Hypothesis 2, the results show a statistically significant negative relationship between 'work empowerment' and 'glass ceiling' ( $r = -0.221, p < 0.001$ ) (see Table 8). This significant and negative correlation indicates that a woman's sense of workplace empowerment in the hospitality industry has a tendency to decline as perceptions of the glass ceiling intensify. This result provides evidence in support of Hypothesis 2.

***Hypothesis 3: The glass ceiling has a positive effect on work obstacles faced by women employees in the hospitality industry.***

As per Hypothesis 3, there was a significant positive correlation between 'glass ceiling' and 'work obstacles' ( $r = 0.361, p < 0.001$ ) (see Table 8). This discovery offers evidence in support of Hypothesis 3.

***Hypothesis 4: Work obstacles mediates the effect of the glass ceiling on women's work engagement in the hospitality industry***

Table 9. Work obstacle's mediation analysis between glass ceiling and work engagement

| Model |  | Standardised coefficients beta | t      | Sig    |
|-------|--|--------------------------------|--------|--------|
| 1     | Regressing WE intentions on GC         | -0.322                         | -4.879 | <0.001 |
| 2     | Regressing WO on GC                    | 0.361                          | 5.556  | <0.001 |
| 3     | Regressing WE on WO                    | -0.468                         | -7.605 | <0.001 |
| 4     | Regressing WE on WO controlling for GC | -0.176                         | -2.703 | 0.005  |
|       | Regressing WE on GC controlling for WO | -0.405                         | -6.224 | <0.001 |

Note: GC (Glass ceiling), WE (Work Engagement), WEP (Work Empowerment), WO (Work Obstacle)

*Step 1: The regression of outcome variables (work engagement) on the independent variable (glass ceiling) is significant.*

The first step was to examine the connection between 'glass ceiling' and 'work engagement'. According to regression analysis (see Table 9), 'glass ceiling' had the coefficient ( $b = -0.322$ ,  $t = -4.879$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), which reveals a statistically significant negative relationship between work engagement and the glass ceiling. This suggests that work engagement tends to decline as perceptions of the glass ceiling grow.

*Step 2: The regression of the mediator (work obstacles) on the independent variable (glass ceiling) is significant.*

This stage focused on the relationship between 'glass ceiling' and 'workplace obstacles.' 'Glass ceiling' had the coefficient ( $b = 0.361$ ,  $t = 5.556$ ,  $p = < 0.001$ ), according to the regression analysis (see Table 9). This coefficient showed a positive correlation between 'glass ceiling'

and 'work obstacles' and was statistically significant. This demonstrates how difficulties at work tend to increase along with the notion of the glass ceiling.

*Step 3: The regression of the outcome variables (work engagement) on the mediator (work obstacles) is significant.*

In this step, the connection between work engagement and involvement at work was investigated. Referring to Table 9, regression analysis produced a coefficient for 'work obstacles' of ( $b = -0.468$ ,  $t = -7.605$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This coefficient, which showed a negative correlation between 'work obstacles' and 'work engagement', was significant. This implies that lower levels of work engagement correlate to more significant work obstacles.

*Step 4: The regression of the outcome variable (work engagement) on the mediator (work obstacle) controlling for the independent variable (glass ceiling) is significant, but the regression of outcome variable (work engagement) on the independent variable (glass ceiling), controlling for the mediator (work obstacle) is non-significant and nearly zero.* In the final stage of the analysis, the focus was on assessing whether 'work obstacles' continued to exert a significant influence on 'work engagement' even when accounting for the impact of the 'glass ceiling.' The adjusted analysis, which controlled for the influence of the glass ceiling, revealed that work obstacles maintained a significant relationship with work engagement ( $b = -0.176$ ,  $t = -2.703$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ), as shown in Table 9. This indicates that even when the glass ceiling effect is considered, work obstacles continue to significantly correlate with work engagement levels. The second part of the analysis involved controlling for the impact of work obstacles to evaluate the direct effect of the glass ceiling on work engagement. According to the data in Table 9, with work obstacles accounted for, the coefficient for the glass ceiling in predicting work engagement was  $b = -0.405$ ,  $t = -6.224$ ,  $p = < 0.001$ . Although the association between the glass ceiling and work engagement becomes stronger, the relationship remains statistically

significant. This suggests that work obstacles partially mediate relationship between the glass ceiling and work engagement. Therefore hypothesis 4 is partially supported.

***Hypothesis 5: Work obstacles mediates the effect of the glass ceiling on women’s work empowerment in the hospitality industry***

*Table 10. Work obstacle’s mediation analysis between glass ceiling and work empowerment*

| <b>Model</b> |   | <b>Standardised coefficients beta</b> | <b>t</b> | <b>Sig</b> |
|--------------|---|---------------------------------------|----------|------------|
| 1            | Regressing WEP intentions on GC         | -0.221                                | -3.259   | 0.001      |
| 2            | Regressing WO on GC                     | 0.361                                 | 5.556    | <0.001     |
| 3            | Regressing WEP on WO                    | -0.366                                | -5.636   | <0.001     |
| 4            | Regressing WEP on WO controlling for GC | -0.103                                | -1.483   | <0.001     |
|              | Regressing WEP on GC controlling for WO | -0.328                                | -4.736   | 0.140      |

*Note: GC (Glass ceiling), WE (Work Engagement), WEP (Work Empowerment), WO (Work Obstacle)*

*Step 1: The regression of outcome variables (work empowerment) on the independent variable (glass ceiling) is significant.*

This stage looked at the connection between the glass ceiling and workplace empowerment. The regression analysis shows a statistically significant negative correlation between ‘glass ceiling’ and ‘work empowerment’ (b = -0.221, t = -3.259, p = 0.001) (see Table 10). This demonstrates how work empowerment declines when opinions of the glass ceiling rise.

*Step 2: The regression of the mediator (work obstacle) on the independent variable (glass ceiling) is significant.*

This step examined the connection between the glass ceiling and workplace obstacles. As can be seen in Table 10, the regression analysis revealed that the coefficient for ‘glass ceiling’ was ( $b = 0.361$ ,  $t = 5.556$ ,  $p = < 0.001$ ), demonstrating a statistically positive link between work obstacles and the glass ceiling. This implies that there is a connection between the glass ceiling and facing genuine difficulties in women employees’ professional lives.

*Step 3: The regression of the outcome variables (work empowerment) on the mediator (work obstacle) is significant.*

The relationship between a work obstacles and work empowerment was investigated in the next stage. According to results from the regression analysis (see Table 10), the coefficient for ‘work obstacles’ was ( $b = -0.366$ ,  $t = -5.636$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating a significant negative link between work obstacles and a decline in work empowerment.

*Step 4: The regression of the outcome variable (work empowerment) on the mediator (work obstacle) controlling for the independent variable (glass ceiling) is significant, but the regression of outcome variable (work empowerment) on the independent variable (glass ceiling), controlling for the mediator (work obstacle) is non-significant and nearly zero.*

In this final stage of analysis, the focus was to evaluate if ‘work obstacles’ significantly influenced ‘work empowerment’ while considering the impact of the glass ceiling. Adjusting for the ‘glass ceiling’ effect, the coefficient for ‘work obstacles’ still showed a significant relationship with ‘work empowerment’ ( $b = -0.103$ ,  $t = -1.483$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), as indicated in Table 10. In the second part of the analysis, to assess the direct impact of the glass ceiling on work empowerment, ‘work obstacles’ were controlled for. Upon adjusting for ‘work obstacles’, the coefficient for the ‘glass ceiling’ became statistically insignificant ( $b = -0.328$ ,  $t = -4.736$ ,  $p = 0.140$ ), as shown in Table 10. This change indicates that the direct relationship between the

glass ceiling and work empowerment loses its significance when work obstacles are taken into account, suggesting that work obstacles mediate the relationship between the glass ceiling and workplace empowerment. This demonstrates a full mediation effect. This mediation analysis offers evidence in support of Hypothesis 5.

A summary of the tested hypotheses and their results is shown in Table 11. It highlights the relationship between the Glass ceiling and factors like work engagement, work empowerment and work obstacles. The data reveals that while glass ceiling negatively correlates with work engagement and work empowerment, it positively correlates with work obstacles. Additionally, work obstacles act as a partial and full mediator in the relationship between Glass ceiling and both work engagement and work empowerment respectively.

*Table 11. Summary of hypotheses*

| <b>Hypothesis</b>       | <b>Supported</b> | <b>Unsupported</b> | <b>Notes</b>                   |
|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>H1 GC → WE</i>       | √                |                    | Negative Correlation (Table 8) |
| <i>H2 GC → WEP</i>      | √                |                    | Negative Correlation (Table 8) |
| <i>H3 GC → WO</i>       | √                |                    | Positive correlation (Table 8) |
| <i>H4 GC → WO → WE</i>  | √                |                    | Partial mediation (Table 9)    |
| <i>H5 GC → WO → WEP</i> | √                |                    | Full mediation (Table 10)      |

*Note: GC (Glass ceiling), WE (Work Engagement), WEP (Work Empowerment), WO (Work Obstacle)*

## **CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 5, the discovered themes are first aligned with the data analysis findings and the body of prior literature to address the research objectives presented in Chapter 1. The chapter then explores the study's theoretical and practical ramifications for academics and industry professionals in the hospitality sector. The final section reviews and discusses the findings and restrictions of the research. Additional suggestions for upcoming research projects intended to delve deeper into the subject are then provided.

### **5.2 DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS**

#### ***5.2.1 The Relationship between Glass Ceiling and Work Engagement***

The relationship between the glass ceiling and work engagement is significant in understanding gender dynamics within the hospitality sector. Chapter 2 detailed various studies showcasing the detrimental effects of the glass ceiling on women's career progression and work experience. The data from Chapter 4 further confirms this, revealing a negative relationship between the glass ceiling and women's work engagement. Specifically, the results suggest that the glass ceiling might adversely affect work engagement. This finding aligns with the theoretical framework from Chapter 2, suggesting that gender-based restrictions, exemplified by the glass ceiling, could potentially limit women's agency, autonomy, and decision-making capacity at work (Chung & Van Der Lippe, 2018).

Drawing from this, there is an implication that glass ceiling challenges dampen women employee's enthusiasm and engagement. Addressing Research Question 1: "How does the existence of the glass ceiling impact the work engagement of women employees in the

hospitality industry?" These insights shed light on businesses need to be more cognizant of these challenges.

### ***5.2.2 The Relationship between the Glass Ceiling and Work Empowerment***

Understanding its impact on workplace empowerment, especially in the hospitality industry, is pivotal for addressing persistent gender gaps. Chapter 2's literature highlighted the cyclical nature of how the glass ceiling perpetuates limited career growth, wage disparities, and exclusion from crucial organizational roles. This lack of empowerment can be tied to systemic barriers restricting women's control over their careers and work experience. Chapter 4's analysis further solidifies this by showing a significant negative relationship between the glass ceiling and work empowerment in the hospitality industry. This correlates with insights from Chapter 2 emphasizing the collective efforts needed to enhance empowerment by dismantling organizational barriers (Koberling, 2023).

Considering the above, Research Question 1's component, "How does the presence of the glass ceiling impact the work empowerment of women employees in the hospitality industry?" finds relevance in these findings. They underscore the possibility that the glass ceiling in the hospitality sector could be a significant factor hindering women's professional growth and empowerment.

### ***5.2.3 Work Obstacles as a Mediator***

Exploring work obstacles as potential mediators can provide deeper insights into the manifestation of gender discrimination in the hospitality sector. Chapter 2 highlighted how workplace challenges, such as limited access to leadership roles and lack of adequate support networks, play a role in the endurance of gender challenges. Chapter 4's findings reaffirm this,

showcasing a positive association between the glass ceiling and work obstacles. Concurrently, a negative relationship exists between the glass ceiling and work empowerment and engagement. This suggests that workplace obstacles could act as a mediator between the glass ceiling and its impacts on women in the hospitality industry.

Answering the components of Research Question 2: "whether work obstacle mediation contribute to the relationship between the glass ceiling and work engagement and work empowerment of women in the hospitality industry". The data analysis offers significant insights into the connection between these variables. Specifically, the mediation effects of work obstacles become evident through the relationships established by the coefficients. This emphasizes the value of a comprehensive understanding of these dynamics for potential future interventions.

### **5.3 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS**

This research contributes to the scholarly understanding of gender dynamics, particularly in the hospitality industry context. Based entirely on women's experiences, the study unpacks the complexities relating to work engagement, work empowerment, and workplace obstacles. The empirical data strengthens the claims of existing literature made by Sharma & Kaur (2019) that focuses on the challenges women face in the hospitality industry, particularly with regard to work engagement and empowerment. Their research shed light on the gender disparities and obstacles women encounter while pursuing career advancement in this field. Lathabhavan (2019) delved into similar themes, exploring the impact of workplace obstacles and the glass ceiling on women's career progression in the hospitality sector adding nuances by highlighting the mediating role of workplace obstacles in the relationship between the glass ceiling and both work engagement and empowerment. The negative relationships these constructs have with the glass ceiling have implications for women aspiring to leadership positions in the hospitality

industry. This paves the way for future theoretical endeavours to re-conceptualise empowerment and engagement in gendered professional landscapes.

The theoretical discourse surrounding workplace obstacles has also been enriched by this research. While obstacles have been conventionally viewed in a general sense, this study places them firmly within the context of gender dynamics, emphasising their role as mediators in the broader interplay of gender-based discrimination, empowerment, and engagement. This necessitates a revision of current theories to factor in the magnified effects of such obstacles within such gendered spaces as the hospitality industry.

This research has contributed depth to theoretical frameworks by elucidating the intricate relationships among work obstacles, empowerment, and engagement. Instead of examining these elements in isolation, the research underscores its interconnectedness and mutual influence, particularly in environments marked by pronounced gender disparities. It was found that work obstacles can hinder empowerment and diminish engagement levels, especially for women facing gender-related challenges. This interconnectedness highlights the need for a holistic approach to understanding and addressing these issues. Moving forward, academia has an opportunity to further refine and expand upon these theoretical insights, seeking to provide a richer and more nuanced understanding of women's experiences in the hospitality sector and other contexts.

#### **5.4 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The findings from this research, as laid out in Chapter 2, offer clear directives for overcoming the challenges faced by women in the hospitality sector. Foremost among these challenges is the pervasive glass ceiling, which hampers both work engagement and empowerment. There's a pressing need to address this alongside specific workplace hurdles, such as restricted

managerial opportunities and inadequate supportive networks (Koberling, 2023). Addressing the glass ceiling necessitates more than just acknowledging its existence; it demands action. Adopting transparent recruitment and promotional procedures can keep insidious biases at bay, reducing the overarching effects of the glass ceiling. Simultaneously, workshops aimed at current leadership can play a pivotal role in making them more aware of the subtle ways in which the glass ceiling manifests and its subsequent consequences (Sharma & Kaur, 2019).

The barriers to women's success in the workplace aren't just overarching societal issues but also more direct, tangible work obstacles. For instance, the dearth of managerial roles and limited mentorship opportunities act as substantial hindrances to women's aspirations. To mitigate this, it's imperative for the hospitality sector to initiate mentorship programmes tailored for women. Such programmes can be instrumental in honing their skills and guiding them towards leadership positions. In parallel, leadership training focused on equipping women with the skills essential for top managerial roles can be a significant step in addressing the gender disparity at leadership levels (Lathabhavan, 2019). An explicit, defined career progression path is invaluable. Women in the hospitality sector often find themselves navigating ambiguous routes to leadership. By clarifying these paths, we can ensure women are not only qualified but also motivated to move ahead (Koberling, 2023). Demonstrating such proactive endeavors is a testament to a company's dedication to equity in the workplace.

Furthermore, creating an organizational culture that invites open dialogue about gender-related challenges can spur transformative change. Encouraging women to vocalize their experiences and hurdles will lead to more tailored and effective strategies to combat these issues (Daspher, 2020). Such dialogues could be promoted through feedback sessions or platforms dedicated to collaborative problem-solving.

In essence, these practical suggestions, rooted in the findings from Chapter 4, provide the hospitality sector with a tangible course of action. By implementing the strategies mentioned above, the industry can forge a path towards a more inclusive and egalitarian work environment through proactive initiatives, dismantling barriers (such as the glass ceiling), and addressing specific work-related obstacles.

## **5.5 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Recognising the study's limitations is necessary while reflecting on the research findings. First, because the sample size was not large, it is wise to proceed cautiously when extrapolating the findings to a broader population. Online survey response rates vary considerably, and non-response bias (in which the opinions of non-respondents differ from those of respondents) may be introduced by a low response rate. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design of the study has constrained the establishment of casualties, or the tracking of variable changes over time. Validity could be improved by combining data collection techniques, such as interviews and observations.

The emphasis of the study was on the hospitality sector, and the conclusions, therefore, might only partially apply to other businesses. Anonymous surveys distributed through social media channels were used to obtain the self-reported data. Self-report bias, where respondents may give answers that are consistent with their prejudices or perceptions of social desirability, can be introduced by this technique.

The number of variables in the study, which concentrated on work engagement, work empowerment, and work obstacles, could have been greater. Investigating organisational culture, leadership philosophies, or mentorship programmes could also have provided a more

complete picture. Even allowing for variations in demographics, unmeasured factors may still impact connections. It is essential that all other potential circumstances be taken into account.

Exploring the role of organisational culture could be a promising direction. Examining whether this would help or hinder a women's job advancement could be instructive. Another approach would be to assess the efficiency of interventions, e.g., inclusiveness or leadership development policies. An understanding of the topic could also be improved by looking at experiences across many industries, taking intersectionality into account, and using mixed-methods approaches. Comprehensive narratives could be captured by mixing qualitative and quantitative data.

In conclusion, while the current research has produced valuable results, it is crucial to recognise the limitations. The additional suggestions mentioned above could also assist in the promotion of gender equality and professional empowerment for women. The study does, however, set the scene for a more thorough investigation into the effects of the glass ceiling on women's job advancement. Additionally, it begins a conversation around the importance of women in the hospitality sector being able to work on their own terms, being empowered at work, and having meaningful, professional interactions.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

The complex mechanics of the glass ceiling effect, work engagement, work empowerment, and the work obstacles faced by women in the hospitality sector, are all relevant and valuable insights provided by this research study. The glass ceiling stands out as a powerful barrier, hampering women's career advancement, preventing them from obtaining leadership roles, and maintaining long-standing gender imbalances. This report is a wake-up call, highlighting the need for concerted action to remove these obstacles and promote gender equality in the hospitality industry.

This study has shown the processes through which the glass ceiling affects women's work engagement and work empowerment. It also demonstrates the complex interplay of these characteristics by examining the mediating role of work obstacles. A comprehensive understanding of the severe effects of the glass ceiling on women's professional careers has been achieved through a seamless integration of empirical evidence and theoretical concepts. These identified relationships open the door for focused interventions that have the potential to break the cycle of prejudice and create a setting that is both inclusive and uplifting.

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# APPENDIX

## Appendix 1 Participation Sheet and Survey Questionnaire



The Glass ceiling with obstacles

Welcome to My Survey

**Dear Participants,**

I am writing to invite you to participate in a survey that aims to explore the glass ceiling and the obstacles within the hospitality industry that may limit women's advancement into leadership roles. This survey is part of a research study that seeks to understand the relationship between work empowerment and engagement and how that may impact an individual's ability to overcome these obstacles.

In particular, I am interested in the opinions and experiences of women related to this topic. Your participation is incredibly valuable to the research and will help to inform our understanding of the topic. The survey will take approximately 3 to 5 minutes to complete. Your responses will remain anonymous, and all data collected will be used for research purposes only.

I would be grateful if you would take the time to complete this survey. If you have any questions about the survey or the research, please feel free to contact me via email at [xuxa\\_pereira2000@yahoo.com](mailto:xuxa_pereira2000@yahoo.com). Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Xuxa Pereira



The Glass ceiling with obstacles

Participant information sheet

**Date Information Sheet Produced:**

27/02/2023

**Project Title**

Glass ceiling with obstacles: A study of work engagement and empowerment of women in the hospitality industry

**An Invitation**

Dear Participants,

My name is Xuxa Pereira, a student studying Master's in International Hospitality Management at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). My supervisor for this research study is Dr Pola Wang from the Department of Hospitality and Tourism, School of Hospitality and Tourism at Auckland University of Technology. I am conducting a research study on the existence of a glass ceiling with obstacles related to women's work empowerment and engagement. I invite you to participate in a study that seeks to understand the factors contributing to the glass ceiling in the hospitality industry and how women can overcome these obstacles.

**What is the purpose of this research?**

The purpose of this research study is to comprehend the causes of the glass ceiling within the hotel industry and how women can get through these barriers. The study aims to advance our knowledge of the connections between empowerment and engagement. It will also provide light on how barriers can act as a mediator in the interaction between work engagement and empowerment. The present research will also suggest ways to encourage women in the hotel industry to engage in their careers and feel empowered.

**How was I identified, and why am I invited to participate in this research?**

You have been identified as an eligible participant based on demographic information such as your age, occupation, and gender.

We welcome all individuals to participate in this study that meets the following criteria:

- You are over the age of 18
- You identify yourself as a woman
- You work in various sectors of the hospitality industry

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

There is no need for you to do anything to indicate your agreement to participate in an anonymous survey. If you click on the link to the survey and participate, it is assumed that you consent to participate. Once the survey is completed, submitted responses cannot be withdrawn as the survey is anonymous. You can close the browser and exit the survey if you change your mind.

**What will happen in this research?**

If you participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire on the existence of a glass ceiling with obstacles negatively related to women's work empowerment and engagement.

**What are the discomforts and risks?**

It is highly unlikely that you will face any discomfort or risk in this questionnaire.

**How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and anonymous. You are under no obligation to complete the questionnaire. You have the freedom to withdraw at any stage without completing the questions.

**What are the benefits?**

The research aims to contribute to understanding how work empowerment and engagement are related. In addition, it will provide insights into how obstacles can mediate the relationship between these two variables. This research study will identify strategies for overcoming the obstacles and promoting work engagement and empowerment among women in the hospitality industry. The researcher of this research study will gain a Master's degree in International Hospitality Management.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

Your participation and responses are all anonymous. All the completed questionnaire data will be combined with all the other participant's data. Your anonymity is wholly assured throughout the entire study and after its completion. Please note that your response to the questionnaire will be stored for a while. The data will be destroyed after a set number of years.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The survey should take you anywhere from 3 to 5 minutes to complete. There will be no cost in this study if you wish to participate. We understand that time is essential and value your participation in this study.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

Your participation is entirely voluntary.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

If the results are required, participants can bookmark the link below to receive a summary of the findings.  
[https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-W1Y3Sdbe0cYWWVcEUamoA\\_3D\\_3D/](https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-W1Y3Sdbe0cYWWVcEUamoA_3D_3D/)

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project can contact the Project Supervisor -  
Dr Pola Wang

Pola.wang@aut.ac.nz

Dr Pola Wang: 099219999 ext. 6544

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK,  
ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext. 6038.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep the information sheet. You may contact the research teams members using the details shown below:

**Primary Researcher Contact Details:**

Xuxa Sumathi Pereira

xuxa\_pereira20002yahoo.com

0273835457

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Dr Pola Wang

Pola.wang@aut.ac.nz

Dr Pola Wang: 099219999 ext. 6544

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 4/05/2023, AUTEK Reference number 23/90 Glass ceiling with obstacles: A study of work engagement and empowerment of women in the hospitality industry.**



The Glass ceiling with obstacles

General information

- 1. Do you identify yourself as a woman?
  - Yes
  - No
  
- 2. What is your age?
  - Under 18
  - 18-29
  - 30-39
  - 40-49
  - 50-59
  - 60 or older
  
- 3. How many years of experience do you have working in the hospitality industry?
  - Less than 2 years
  - 2-4 years
  - 5-7 years
  - 8-10 years
  - 11 or more years
  
- 4. About how many years have you been in your current position?
  - Less than 2 years
  - 2-4 years
  - 5-7 years
  - 8-10 years
  - 11 or more years

5. Which department do you work in?

- Front office
- Housekeeping
- Food and beverage
- Kitchen and food production
- Marketing
- Human resources
- Maintenance
- Accounts and finance
- Security
- Other (please specify)

6. In general, how frequently do you switch jobs?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

7. Are you married or in a long-term relationship?

- Yes
- No

8. Do you have children under the age of 14?

- Yes
- No



## The Glass ceiling with obstacles

### Part 1: Glass ceiling

**Please tick the degree that you agree with in the following statements.**

**(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Somewhat Disagree; (4) Neither Agree Nor Disagree; (5) Somewhat Agree; (6) Agree; (7) Strongly Agree**

9. Women and men have to overcome the same problems at the workplace

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

10. Managers do not offer good opportunities

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

11. I am ostracized from social and informal networks of communication

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

12. There is a lack of equal assignment opportunities

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

13. Society perceives women as having lower competence than men

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

14. Women are not promoted to senior management positions at the same rate as men in some hospitality organizations

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

15. Many hospitality organizations have been able to create an environment of inclusion, while many more have not achieved this success

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



## The Glass ceiling with obstacles

### Part 2: Work engagement

**Please tick the degree that you agree with in the following statements.**

**(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Somewhat Disagree; (4) Neither Agree Nor Disagree; (5) Somewhat Agree; (6) Agree; (7) Strongly Agree**

16. I am proud of the work that I do

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

17. I am immersed in my work

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

18. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

19. It is difficult to detach myself from my job

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

20. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

21. I am enthusiastic about my job

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

22. At my job, I am very resilient, mentally

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



## The Glass ceiling with obstacles

### Part 3: Work empowerment

**Please tick the degree that you agree with in the following statements.**

**(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Somewhat Disagree; (4) Neither Agree Nor Disagree; (5) Somewhat Agree; (6) Agree; (7) Strongly Agree**

23. I feel confident in making decisions about my work load

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

24. I am in charge of my work situation.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

25. No matter what i do, my work problems do not improve

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

26. I think I am able to say what I want to say to my supervisor

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

27. I am not allowed to make decisions in my work situation

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

28. My innovative ideas are received well by my supervisors

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

29. I could do a better job, but no one would notice

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



## The Glass ceiling with obstacles

### Part 4: Work obstacle

**Please tick the degree that you agree with in the following statements.**

**(1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Somewhat Disagree; (4) Neither Agree Nor Disagree; (5) Somewhat Agree; (6) Agree; (7) Strongly Agree**

30. I have difficulty in balancing work and family responsibilities

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

31. There is a lack of mentorship

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

32. I am paid less compared to male coworkers

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

33. There is an absence of women in leadership positions

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

34. There is discrimination during promotion

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

35. There needs to be adequate recognition of the work I carry out.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

36. I experience gender discrimination at work

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



The Glass ceiling with obstacles

Thank you for your participation. I appreciate it!

Please bookmark the link below to receive a summary of the findings.  
[https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-W1Y3Sdbe0cYWWVCCeUamoA\\_3D\\_3D/](https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-W1Y3Sdbe0cYWWVCCeUamoA_3D_3D/)

## Appendix 2 Survey social media advertisement flyer

### ★ YOUR OPINION MATTERS! ★

**Are you a woman aged 18 or older working in the hospitality industry? I want to hear from YOU!**

**I am conducting a survey to better understand the challenges and opportunities women face in the hospitality sector. Your insights will help my research study and develop strategies to support and empower women in this dynamic industry.**

**Click on the link below to participate** ↓

#### **Survey Details:**

- Duration: 3 - 5 minutes**
- Confidential and anonymous**
- Open to women aged 18 or older working in all sectors of the hospitality industry**

**Your feedback is invaluable! Together, we can make a difference!**

**#WomenInHospitality #YourVoiceMatters**



SURVEYMONKEY.COM

**Can you spare a few moments to take my survey?**

Please take the survey titled "The Glass ceiling with obstacles". Your feedback is important!