NAME: Minka Eleanor Salka

MATRIC NUM: 17/SMS09/058

DEPARTMENT: International Relations and Diplomacy

COURSE TITLE/CODE: IRD318- Gender studies

DATE: 12th April, 2020.

**QUESTION**

What is Glass Ceiling? Is breaking the Glass Ceiling possible in Africa? What are the challenges?

**INTRODUCTION**

The term “Glass Ceiling” is a metaphor. “Women have reached a certain point; I call it the glass ceiling” (Gay Byrant “*The Working Woman Report”*, 1984). The concern is after all the years of women’s toiling and hardship they are limited to a certain stage and position at work organizations and are not given top managerial positions to handle and this is termed “glass ceiling leadership”. The proportion of women in the workforce has grown from just over a third of all workers in 1970 to almost half of the total workforce in 2012.

All over the whole world some countries have been able to acquire some certain level and has cracked to an extent the glass ceiling and has quite a number of women at top positions in most of the country’s organization, But has Africa?. The continent Africa will be used as a case study as assessing the ability to have at least a crack on the glass ceiling leadership or has broken it completely.

**A Brief History and Evolvement of the term “Glass Ceiling”**

Dating from time, the origin of the metaphor “glass ceiling” came about 40 years ago, when an American management consultant and diversity advocate in person of Mary Loden sat on a panel called “Mirror, Mirror on the Wall.” She sat there listening to women blame themselves for their lack of success at work. When it was her turn to speak, she disagreed. She said there had to be an invisible barrier to their advancement that people did not recognize. Loden called it the “glass ceiling”.

Its second occurrence came to use in a 1984 book, “*The Working Woman Report”,* by Gay Bryant. Later which became the outburst of the term was when it was used in a 1986 Wall Street Journal article when two Wall Street Journal reporters coined the phrase to describe the invisible barrier that blocks women from the top jobs.

**Glass Ceiling as a concept / Definition of Glass Ceiling**

The phrase ‘glass ceiling’ was initially used to refer to women who could not break through a certain threshold when attempting to advance in their careers. It now also applies to other minorities facing hurdles that prevent them from achieving upper-level positions and leadership roles in the corporate world.

The causes of glass ceiling leadership are majorly: Religion, Little women at the political sectors to take a stand fight and challenge the need for women to occupy managerial sectors, Prejudice and stereotypes: this was the top barrier for attaining leadership at top managerial positions, Racism, Society as a whole.

The poor attainment level of glass ceiling leadership has only lead to various effects and at the detriment of the country as the continuous marginalization of one sex (female) is just another factor limiting development and a major contributor to underdevelopment. We have major effects such as: the cycle of unfulfilled career expectations among women can spread insecurity and even lead to depression.( Sheryl Sandberg “Lean In”, 1993.) , women are still paid less, and motherhood still carries a risk of complete career derailment.

**AFRICA AS A CASE STUDY**

During the last 30 years there have been a number of signs of improvement in Africa in the quest for its attainment of gender equality. There have been a certain level of achievement in the fight against gender inequality notably that there is no country in Africa that prohibits women suffrage, rights to property, right to freedom of speech, with this it is with no doubt that Africa has made progress in bridging its gender disparity gaps.

The concern of glass ceiling leadership has been brought to limelight as a focus and challenge for African countries to sit on. Although other areas of inequality has recorded progress but the glass ceiling initiative is still far from achievement as majority of countries in Africa are yet to even have attain a medium percentage of women working in top managerial positions in organizations.

The major setback and the hindrance of Africa reaching a level breaking of the glass ceiling scenario is majorly traced to the burden from religion and largely from society as a whole.

**Religion** is a major factor that brings a halt to the vision of leadership lead in and control by women. Religion In Africa are numerous as Africans are known to be cultural and traditionally based individuals as are hell bent in obeying its traditions and cultures. 70% of Africa’s religion does not permit the dominance of women, it does not permit for the women to be at the top as women are marginalized to private sectors and are not to be seen out of the home to occupy managerial positions.

**Society as a whole:** Among societal barriers were those associated with opportunity and attainment, prejudice and bias, and cultural, gender, and color-based differences. With regard to these barriers, the commission stated that while leadership cannot make society blind to culture, gender, or color, it can demand and enforce merit-based practices and behavior within a company. The commission believed that these actions alone would substantially diminish the power of stereotyping.

**Level of glass ceiling leadership in Africa (progress or failure)**

Africa has recorded successes and through its difficult conditions still struggles to in some certain countries in women attaining great heights and leadership roles in organizations. Organizations can be political, economic, and social.

Africa has been able to bridge the gap of glass ceiling leadership in political organizations as the major problem and area of concern is in the social and economic organizations.

**In political sphere:** It is also a notable fact that Africa has made improvement and great records in women’s presence in political organizations. Countries making giant strides in Africa are; Rwanda, South Africa, Mozambique. In South Africa and Mozambique, for example, women hold 30 per cent of the seats in parliament. In February 2004, Mozambique became the first country in the region to appoint a woman as Prime Minister, Ms. Luisa Diogo. In Rwanda, women lead the world in representation in national parliaments. There, 49 per cent of parliamentarians are female.

**How glass ceiling leadership and involvement of women added or attained a certain level of development for the country.**

In some countries, the presence of women in parliament has made a difference in the adoption of gender-sensitive policies. Because of pressure from women, some countries now have affirmative action policies, such as quotas, to increase the number of women in decision-making positions. In South Africa, women parliamentarians succeeded in passing various pieces of legislation, such as those legalizing abortion, countering domestic violence and ensuring child support.

In Uganda, women parliamentarians helped to adopt legislation making rape a capital offence. In 2003, following a long delay, Mozambique passed a family law considered pivotal for the emancipation of women in that country. “If we had just one sex in parliament, the bill would have been weaker,” says the country’s higher education minister, Ms. Lidia Brito.

In total the presence of women at political organizations can raise a stand for all women as it can raise pressure and awareness to the political leaders in the need for equal treatment of all women

**In economic organizations**: Only [23 of the biggest African companies across the world](https://pitchbook.com/news/articles/how-many-billion-dollar-companies-have-female-founders) have female founders, while women are underrepresented in CEO positions, too, with only [4% of Africa Fortune 500](http://fortune.com/2016/06/06/women-ceos-fortune-500-2016/) companies having a female CEO. For women the level is so disappointing, as only 4% hold a C-suite role among these companies. In the same [2018 Woman in the Workplace study](https://womenintheworkplace.com/), we learn that for every 100 men who are promoted to manager level, only 79 women are promoted and, if we break down the data even more, just 60 women are promoted not only with qualification skills but through

We can see that women are getting more places in the board, but men outnumber women significantly in all regions. For example, between 2005 and 2014 African companies had 14% women in their boards and this percentage rose to 24% since 2014. In other areas the inequality of men and women is even larger: for example, in Botswana, the same metric went from 1% to 2% and in South Africa from 15% to 18%.

Finally, working women may now get higher salaries than in the past, but they still [make less than their male colleagues](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/09/gender-pay-gap-facts/). Based on [data from the Africa Census Bureau](https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-income-people.html), a woman makes 80.5 cents for every dollar a man earns. And when it comes to the highest incomes, the job aggregating service, found that only 11% of those who earn more than $100,000 per annum are female employees.

**Effect of glass ceiling**- the cycle of unfulfilled career expectations among women can spread insecurity and even lead to depression.( Sheryl Sandberg “Lean In”, 1993 pg32.) , women are still paid less, and motherhood still carries a risk of complete career derailment. the commission also found that where women held senior positions, their compensation was lower than that of their male counterparts. The effect of this low level of occupancy of women in economic organizations has only dragged the continent as a whole to its fallen knees. The more African leaders fail to realize the presence of women in top managerial positions the same way will be the stagnant economy of the continent as a whole.

**CHALLENGES**

This invisible yet discernible barrier prevents women and minorities from rising beyond a certain level of the hierarchy within an organization. . To put it plainly, the glass ceiling keeps the top jobs for the boys, owing to a thing called ‘privilege’ (in many countries, it is specifically white male privilege).

**Challenges of glass ceiling attainment**

**Work relationships**: Laff (2006) finds that women are inhibited in the workplace because of their limited access to capable mentors. Many people prefer to have mentors of the same gender because they tend to understand the challenges most commonly faced. Most employees tend to bond through similar interests. Since there tend to be few executive women; many women are unable to find a female mentor.

**Globalization:** Globalization presents many new barriers for women. Senior level managers and top executives now have even more responsibility and higher expectations than before. Due to the time pressures and relocations of many businesses, top executives have had to move to new towns, cities, and countries. This presents a large barrier for many women with families and a working spouse or significant other (Wellington, Kropg, & Gerkovich, 2003).

**Culture and society**: Perhaps more surprisingly, the largest problem, however, has not been family issues; it has been adoption of new cultures and social norms. Women may also experience resistance in other cultures to female leadership. Many countries will simply not deal with a women executive because of their beliefs and perceptions that women are incapable of doing business effectively (Strout, 2001).

**Life-style conflicts**: For many women, in addition to the roles they hold in their companies, they remain the primary caretakers for their families (Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2009). As the time constraints and demands of a job become more important upon, promotion forces many women to choose between family and career. According to Jack and Suzy Welch (2007), very few women CEOs and women executives have children due to the affect it would have on their career. Conversely, many women have voluntarily left their jobs due to family decisions (Baxter, 2000; Wallace, 2008). While a decreasing number of women are taking pregnancy or childcare leaves, 32% of women still leave their jobs once they have children and become reluctant to work long hours due to their responsibilities at home further hindering her promotion likelihood (Woodard, 2007; Hewlett, 2002; Lyons & McArthur, 2005).

**Stereotyping and leadership styles:** Past perceptions of leadership skills, competence, and assertiveness may hinder the ability of women to succeed in management. Many companies associate masculine characteristics with success and achievement. These include assertiveness, aggressiveness, and task-oriented leadership abilities (Jogulu & Wood 2006; Envick, 2008). Other stereotypes of women include the expectation of being modest, quiet, selfless, and nurturing (Eagly & Carl, 2003).

**Actions taken by Africa**

* Numbers of African countries have adopted a tool known as gender budgeting (see Africa Recovery, April 2002). Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda are among the countries currently assessing their budgets along gender lines.
* Many African organizations are implementing leadership development programs aimed solely at women leadership success. These programs identify barriers and obstacles and then suggest strategies for women to circumvent these barriers. The goal of these programs is to facilitate excellent women leadership abilities.

**Recommendation**

• Raise awareness about gender disparity.

• Educate the management and employees on gender bias.

• Establish an equal opportunity policy.

• Create a safe and respectful work environment.

• Address preconceptions and stereotypes.

• Treat gender diversity as a business priority

**Conclusion**- Breaking the glass ceiling is a complex affair and requires action on several fronts. The governments, academic institutions, employers, and women themselves are key players in breaking down the barriers that are holding women back. . If society continues to deny the existence of the glass ceiling, women and minorities are inevitably going to be struck by it.

**REFERENCING**

Baxter, J., & Wright, E. O. (2000). The glass ceiling hypothesis: A reply to critics. Gender and Society, 14(6), 814-821. 6 Nov. 2008, retrieved from.

Eagly, A. H., & Carl, L. L. (2003) The female leadership advantage: An evaluation of the evidence. The Leadership Quarterly, 14, 807-834.

Gay Byrant “The Working Woman Report”, New york times (1984).

Hughes, R. L., Ginnett, R. C., & Curphy, G. J. (2009). Leadership enhancing the lessons of experience. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Jogulu, U., & Wood, G. (2006). The role of leadership theory in raising the profile of women in management. Equal Opportunities International, 25(4), 236- 250.

Laff, M. (2006). The invisible wall. T+D. (61), 32-38

Sheryl Sandberg *“*Lean In”, 1993 pg32

Strout, E. (2001). Confronting the glass border. Sales & Marketing Management, (153), 19.

Wellington, S., Kropf, M., & Gerkovich, P. (2003). What’s holding women back. Harvard Business Review, (81), 18-19.

Woodard, T. (2007). Developing women leaders: It’s now a bottom line issue. Competence Women, 10-11.