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 **QUESTION: What is Glass ceiling? Is breaking the Glass ceiling possible in Africa? and what are the challenges?**

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**WHAT IS GLASS CEILING?**

 The glass ceiling is a metaphor referring to an artificial barrier that prevents minorities and women from achieving elevated professional success. The phrase “glass ceiling” describes the difficulties faced by women when trying to move to higher roles in a male-dominated hierarchy. The barriers are most often unwritten, meaning that women are more likely to be restricted from advancing through accepted norms.

Glass ceiling also refers to the attitudes and traditions in a society that prevent women from rising to top jobs, pay raises, and further opportunities. It is a real barrier through which the next stage or level of advancement can be seen, but cannot be reached by women in an organization or company. This barrier exists due to implicit prejudice on the basis of sex. Although generally illegal, such practices is prevalent in most countries.

It is a "glass" because it's not usually a visible barrier, and a woman may not be aware of its existence until she "hits" the barrier. In other words, it's an explicit practice of discriminating against women

The glass ceiling concept was first popularized in a 1986 Wall Street Journal article discussing the corporate hierarchy and how invisible barriers seemed to be preventing women from advancing in their careers past a certain level. (In 2015, the Wall Street Journal itself reported that the concept goes back to the 1970s, quoting Gay Bryant, former editor of Working Woman magazine, and the concept may have originated with two women at Hewlett-Packard.)

**IS** **BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING POSSIBLE** **IN AFRICA?**

Women tend to be limited by various factors, which are found in the system of the society such as patriarchy, structure of production and reproduction, among others. In an African society, a woman is expected to be domesticated rather than be a goal setter and getter. One may probe on why many more African women do not move up the business ladder making it difficult to break the glass ceiling in Africa.

Using Nigeria as an example, Nigerian women’s entry into the ‘corridors of power’ or ‘arenas of power’, whether in governance or political decision-making has been at a very slow pace. After the country’s independence in 1960, women progression into the ladder of high political offices has not been entirely encouraging.

Breaking the Glass ceiling can be achieved to an extent in Africa this is so because, patriarchy is a major barrier to women ascension to key positions in Africa, Africa is typically a highly patriarchal society, where men as seen as the dominant powers and women as subordinate. Many African societies still maintain patterns of male privilege and power, and ‘consciously’ holds on to the belief that men are to command and women are to obey.

In Africa, Rwanda is making great attempts in breaking the glass ceiling by showing exemplary achievement of gender equality in Parliament. This can be perceived as a ray of hope in Africa. Another country that ought to be recognized is Liberia, Liberia have managed to sustainably elevate their women with an estimate of 30% of companies being led by a female Chief Executive. To a greater extent, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the country’s President rewrote world history by becoming the first female President in Africa. Malawi’s Joyce Banda and Central African Republic’s Catherine Samba Panza followed soon after to further cement the rise of the modern woman in Africa. It is easy to then assume that these are milestones that prove equality is now a reality. Yet there are 52 countries in Africa and only three have had female heads of state. It is better than nothing but it is also proof that the society is not yet as fair and as equal as it should be although it can be perceived as a steady progress.

I’m of the opinion that African governments should do more to achieve a more equitable state of affairs in order to completely shatter the barrier. African women in return need to have a change of mindset and fight the “woman for a kitchen” mental syndrome that keeps holding them back. It is possible to have a perfect family and be successful all at once. Breaking the Glass ceiling is attainable in Africa if only the right measures are taken.

**THE CHALLENGES FACED**

Breaking the glass ceiling has been a difficult problem to tackle, but it's not impossible. Factors as the following has made it difficult for women to break through the glass ceiling in Africa include:

**1. Societal norms and pressure**

The society we live in has its expectations, usually African Society expects that by a certain age a female child should be married, followed by the bearing of children. Even if one wanted to spring up and be successful in terms of a career, it then becomes hard as they have many breaks in their careers to fulfill societal expectations. At the end of it all, many young females have set marriage goals only and leaving out career goals.

**2. The Mind-set**

Most people have been dragged down by the “I can’t do it” or “I am not good enough” mind set. Most women will wait decades to be approved by certain people or societies, they seek approval in whatever they do, this follows them even in the workplace where they would rather be led than to lead as they somehow have the ‘I can’t do it’ or ‘I am not good enough’ mind set.

**3. Mixing Personal and Professional relationships**

There should be a thick line between personal life and a professional life. From experience, it has proven that most relationships especially that of subordinate and “boss”, are one sided, where it is usually the subordinate employee who does not gain much career growth especially if the relationship ceases.

**CONCLUSION**

 With all being said, in order to break the glass ceiling in Africa, the issue has to be addressed and tackled using all means possible as the issue of glass ceiling is often disguised as culture or tradition. In hopes that in the nearest future glass ceiling will be completely broken as this is very much possible in Africa.

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