Vin-Ajuonuma Anita

IRD 318

17/sms09/091

Assignment

What is glass ceiling ? Is breaking the glass ceiling possible in Africa and what are the challenges?

Glass ceiling" means an invisible upper limit in corporations and other organizations, above which it is difficult or impossible for women to rise in the ranks. "Glass ceiling" is a metaphor for the hard-to-see informal barriers that keep women from getting promotions, pay raises, and further opportunities. The "glass ceiling" metaphor has also been used to describe the limits and barriers experienced by minority racial groups. It is "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 not an explicit practice of discriminating against women though specific policies, practices, and attitudes may exist that produce this barrier without the intention to discriminate.

The term was invented to apply to major economic organizations, like corporations, but later began to be applied to invisible limits above which women had not risen in other fields, especially electoral politics.The U.S. Department of Labor's 1991 definition of the glass ceiling is "those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management-level positions.

“Glass ceilings exist even in organizations with explicit policies around equality of advancement when there is implicit bias at work or even behavior within the organization that ignores or undermines the explicit policy.

African Society many times expects a woman 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 and these are some reasons:

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 studies, 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.

4.Male Domination

African societies give room for men to voice their opinions in every sphere of life and believe that the role of the women should be played only within their households doing jobs like cooking, cleaning and caring for the family . Hence, the woman is neglected and denied the chance to participate in political activities or business/ office activities as they as seen as subordinates to the men .

Breaking the glass ceiling in Africa might just be possible and these are some strategies that will help to ensure the possibility:

1)Break into male-dominated fields early and often.

We can encourage girls and young women to challenge male-domination wherever it occurs. Just because a space has historically been occupied by men does not mean it should remain that way. With resilience, awareness, and a little cheerleading, young women can become confident participants in any male-dominated space.

2)Release yourself from the “good girl” mentality.

In school, girls are rewarded for being nice, compliant, and patient. At work, women are not rewarded for these qualities. In fact, they are often held back by them.

Being a professional leader means taking risks and navigating conflict. It requires speaking up about opinions, asserting ideas, and rendering your achievements visible. But the “good girl” has not practiced these skills. When we encourage young women to release themselves from the “good girl” mentality, we invite them to express their authentic selves. From this place, they will make their richest contributions to society.

3)Affirm other women.

Women are collectively owed centuries of overdue acknowledgement for their gifts. We can honor that historic deficit by affirming women widely today. We can challenge a “mean girl” culture that is rooted in insecurity in order to bring forward a world in which women are committed to each other’s growth.

When we tell women that they are amazing, impressive, brilliant, and strong, we support them in seeing their own worth. The more we help each other make our talents and achievements visible, the more momentum we will gain as we rise up together. We can change the discourse for the next generation and model admiration over envy when speaking of other women.

We are on the precipice of a changing world. Today’s girls are better educated, stronger, and more vocal than ever. As they navigate their lives, we can ensure they have the tools they need to break through any barriers standing between them and their dreams.

References

Lioness of Africa : Breaking through the glass ceiling

ellevatenetwork: To shatter glass ceilings, spread these four messages to young women.page