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QUESTION: what is glass ceiling? Is breaking the glass ceiling possible in Africa and what are the challenges.

**What Is the Glass Ceiling?**

The glass ceiling is a metaphor referring to an artificial barrier that prevents women and minorities from being promoted to managerial- and executive-level positions within an organization. The phrase “glass ceiling” is used to describe 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 and implicit biases rather than defined corporate policies.

The concept of glass ceiling has emerged in social science research in general and higher education in particular over the past 20 years. These studies have described the impediments that women and people of color encounter in their quest for senior-level positions (e.g., CEOs) in society as glass ceiling effects. Literature, both empirical and non-empirical, has provided broad and varied interpretations of glass ceiling.

A glass ceiling represents a barrier that prohibits women from advancing toward the top of a hierarchical corporation.

Women in the workforce are faced with “the glass ceiling.” Those women are prevented from receiving promotion, especially to the executive rankings, within their corporation. Within the last twenty years, the women who are becoming more involved and pertinent in industries and organizations have rarely been in the executive ranks. Women in most corporations encompass below five percent of board of directors and corporate officer positions.

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.) In more recent years the analysis of the glass ceiling has expanded to include issues preventing not only women from moving up but also minorities.

IS BREAKING GLASS CEILING POSSIBLE IN AFRICA AND THE CHALLENGES

The glass ceiling is a difficult problem to tackle, but it is not impossible.

The African woman has always been so close yet so far away from her moment of glory. Between the kitchen and the boardroom is the glass ceiling that prevents her smooth ascension to positions of leadership. African women continue to be marginalized from attaining leadership positions in organizations despite the numerous efforts that have been made to achieve equality. The Africa Gender Equality Index of 2015 ranked the continent as having an average score of 54.1 out a possible 100 which is a visible pointer that the continent is making strides but gender parity and equal opportunities are still a far cry away. With numerous cultural barriers standing in the way of women’s ascension, the glass ceiling remains the present reality.

African countries like Liberia have managed to sustainably elevate their women with an estimated 30% of companies being led by a female Chief Executive. More so, 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.

The greatest battles the African woman has had to fight are those against widely held convictions that have always relegated her to a second class citizen whose forte is the kitchen. Gender equality is still some sort of favour men think they are doing women.

Another set-back in the African journey towards women empowerment has been cultural indoctrination. Women are taught from a tender age that success scares men away and they might not have families if they are successful. Men who are threatened by women’s success further perpetuate this belief. Marriage is essentially a luxury that ironically only the unsuccessful woman can afford. Many ladies are being pushed to give up on their lofty dreams of grandeur. The pressure cannot be underestimated as many girls are taught to value marital success over all else and they are falsely made to believe successful women do not get married.

The mindset of an individual especially a woman who has been influenced from her child hood and society , that she should be the full house wife and cater to the needs of the children, and working will make her less of a mother or even a wife, therefore makes her live with that mentality.. women still need to be reminded that being ambitious is okay and balancing your career and home life is possible.

Africa needs to start being serious about the ascension of women to top decision making jobs. The African women in turn 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. Only weak men are intimidated by a woman’s success. In fact, it is imperative that everyone start appreciating the rise of the 21st century woman who can stand on her own two feet without anyone holding her hand. Gender equality as a movement should therefore be financed to educate people that women can and should also be successful. The gender responsive budgeting models should be effectively implemented and not remain a novelty, scribbled in fancy diction and filed away. Laws and conventions that have been put in place should be enforced with a Norwegian rigor if all else does not work. The glass ceiling should be forcibly smashed if need be. So yes it is possible

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