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MATRIC NO: 18/sms09/093.

COURSE NAME: GENDER STUDIES IN INTERNATIONAL RELTIONS.

COURSE CODE: IRD 318.

DATE: SATURDY, 25TH APRIL.

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

The term **Glass Ceiling** in a simple definition is an invisible barrier to the professional advancement of women and barriers to high paying careers, promotions, leadership positions, equal pay and freedom from workplace discrimination. It is basically barriers and hinderances in the society that prevents women from leading organizational or reaching senior positions in their places of work due to some stereotypical and discriminatory factors against them.

Glass ceiling occurs due to some major reasons which affects our societies today. The first is **the social role theory** which proposes that the reason why women aren’t put in top positions in work places or leadership position is basically because of the stereotypical roles in the society which have put men as leaders by nature and has put women in a disadvantaged position in terms of authority and status. The theory suggests that gender ceiling is due to stereotypes rooted deep in our culture and existence as people and so long as these stereotypical roles exist, women will always be put in the less advantageous positions in the work place. These roles include the belief that a woman’s place is in the kitchen and a man is the bread winner and lord of the household.

The second reason of glass ceiling is **gender sterotyping and subconscious discrimination** which is basically discrimination unintentionally. At times people are not aware that the decisions they make or comments they make might be very discriminating to people and genders. This reason explains that some people believe that certain roles are allotted to certain gender. For instance, the position of presidency is normally a man’s job because well men have occupied that position for a while. So, when a woman goes for the position of the president it is quite uncommon and she is most likely ignored because it isn’t her place or hasn’t been. It is done subconsciously because this is a general stereotype that men are the only fit gender for positions of authority.

The third reason is **FAMILY AND WORK CONFLICT**. This is a very usual dynamic that women face that hinder them from reaching top managerial positions and earning as much as the male simply because they are female and due to the enormous responsibilities, they face as female, they might not put the same effort into work as men. Being wives, mothers and home keepers, they are seen as uncertainties as they could face immediate emergencies at any time. For instance, work leave because of a sick child, or maternity leave so there is hinderance to placing them at top positions because this could affect the work as many employers believe that women will choose their families over their jobs when it comes down to it.

So now, is breaking glass ceiling possible in Africa and what are the challenges? In my personal opinion anything is possible, but the place where we are now as a continent is making things very uncertain for the future of gender equality. Africa as a whole, we have a lot of far reaching traditions that date many years back. These traditions are outdated and need to be modernized but a whole lot of people don’t agree to it. Most people believe that a woman’s place is in the kitchen and she shouldn’t intimidate the male specie. So how then can we break gender ceiling when women will not even be given an opportunity to perform and know their ability; it is worse to k now that the bill for gender equality was thrown away in Nigeria because it didn’t probably fit the requirements of tradition which is very sad. I believe glass ceiling can be broken in Africa when we learn to let go of discriminatory traditions and modernize. Tradition in Africa is the major challenge we face in the fight for gender equality and breaking glass ceiling in Africa. If we can modernize some of these traditions which will alter the stereotypical roles placed on gender then maybe we have a chance at equality and giving women a voice.

In a world where women have proved more than capable to rule and equals to men, Africa is still blinded by so much tradition that it constantly suppresses girls and women to shrink their potential teaching them that their husbands are superior and not to take on roles to threaten the man but I believe letting go of the traditions will surely bring a new dimension to breaking the glass ceiling, achieving higher work positions and women empowerment.