**NAME: ADENUOYE GRACE OLAJUMOKE**

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**COURSE TITLE: GENDER STUDIES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**QUESTION:**

**WHAT IS GLASS CEILING? IS BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING POSSIBLE IN AFRICA AND WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES.**

Glass ceiling is a metaphor used to represent an invisible barrier that keeps a given demographic (typically applied to minorities) from rising beyond a certain level in a hierarchy.

The metaphor was first coined by feminists in reference to barriers in the careers of high-achieving women. In the US, the concept is sometimes extended to refer to obstacles hindering the advancement of minority women, as well as minority men.

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.

In 1839, French feminist and author [George Sand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Sand) used a similar phrase, *une voûte de cristal impénétrable*, in a passage of *Gabriel*, a never-performed play: "I was a woman; for suddenly my wings collapsed, ether closed in around my head like *an impenetrable crystal vault*, and I fell....". The statement, a description of the heroine's dream of soaring with wings, has been interpreted as a feminine [Icarus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icarus) tale of a woman who attempts to ascend above her accepted role.

The first person said to use the term *Glass ceiling* was [Marilyn Loden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marilyn_Loden) during a 1978 speech. At the same time, according to the April 3, 2015, Wall Street Journal, completely independent of Loden, the term glass ceiling was coined in the spring of 1978 by Marianne Schriber and Katherine Lawrence at Hewlett-Packard. The ceiling was defined as discriminatory promotion patterns where the written promotional policy is non-discriminatory, but in practice denies promotion to qualified females. Lawrence presented this at the annual Conference of the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press at meeting the National Press.

Since Nigeria’s independence in 1960, women have continued to be underrepresented in politics. 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. There are perspectives in literature that there exist impermeable and impenetrable barriers that prevents women from reaching top positions in offices. Although women in many parts of the world have made strides into politics in the 21st century but a remarkable breaking of the glass ceiling is yet to be witnessed.

Over the past few decades, there have been noticeable changes in the roles women play in the society. Although the traditional role of women as home makers is changing all over the world, only few Nigerian women have made their way up the leadership level. There are some challenges that are holding the women down from reaching top positions or venturing into politics. The major challenge to women ascension to key political positions is patriarchy. Nigeria, just as many other societies, is a highly patriarchal society, where men are seen as the dominant powers and the women are subordinate.

There is also the issue of culture and religion that pose great challenges to Nigerian women. It should be recall that in April 2016 the first Gender Equal Opportunity Bill presented to the Nigerian Senate was rejected and the argument of the senators was that the country’s culture and religion forbids women equality with men.

Another challenge to women’s participation in politics in Nigeria is the political party structure/system. The party structure can impede participation women because information about politics can be disseminated through channels that men have more access to than women do.

Inadequate formal education is also one of the challenge. The United Nations Development programme (2006) pointed that women constitute 60% of the informal sector workers. In the present Nigerian society particularly the Northern region, education for women has not been totally accepted as early marriage still thrives.

In conclusion, the achievement made by women are undisputable. Women’ increasing participation in politics and the holding of key political positions are noteworthy.

Reference

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331439255