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QUESTION

**WHAT IS GLS CEILING? IS BREAKING GLASS CEILING POSSIBLE IN AFRICA,
WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?**

TABLE OF CONTENT

- **INTRODUCTION**
- **FACTORS THAT PROMOTING GLASS CEILING**
- **GLASS CEILING IN AFRICA**
- **CHALLENGES TO BREAKING IT IN AFRICA**
- **RECOMMENDATIONS**
- **CONCLUSION**
- **REFERNCE**

INTRODUCTION

‘Glass ceiling is a term that was popularized in a “wall street journal” article in 1986, in regards to corporate hierarchy (on barriers to women in high corporate positions). The term is used to explain the unequal treatment faced by women and today the minorities in a given a society. It involves those impenetrable barriers in an organization or society per-say that prevent or hinder women from attaining high position or lead in an organization or a society at large. The term could also be referred to as those difficulties faced by women that hinder them from reaching top positions in any organization.

Glass ceiling prior to the late twentieth and early twenty-first century affected mostly, if not only the women. However with the advent of globalization and the social changes around the world, the glass ceiling shifted including the minorities in the society which includes both sexes. There are several factors that necessitate this glass ceiling in any organization or society. This paper will be examining those factors, also it will analyze glass ceiling in Africa and whether or not is possible to break it, as well as highlight the challenges faced by Africans (women) in breaking it and we will be concluding with some recommendations on how to eliminate or reduce this glass ceiling in Africa.

FACTORS THAT PROMOTE GLASS CELING

Glass ceiling is a term that is being triggered or influenced by several factors which could be cultural, social, political or religious or psychological in nature. There are three main factors however that will be analyzed for the purpose of this work and they include the following.

Firstly, is the social role theory, this theory proposes that men and women in any organization act in accordance to the social roles allocated to them from birth. This social or gender role which are allocated based on the strength and physical characteristics of both sexes tend to influence or prevent women from attaining high positions in an organization. In other words, these social roles promote stereotype. These social roles which are sometimes influenced by our beliefs, norms, cultural values and so on tend to limit and hinder women from assuming leadership positions in any organization. Prior to the late twentieth and the twenty-first century, women were not even allowed to have education not to talk of working and even today, although women are now working , some are not well paid and some are not even allowed to lead in organizations because of how

the society from time being allocated from birth the gender roles to both sexes in relation to their beliefs, physical characteristics of men and women among other things. The belief is that women are weaker than men hence they are to assume smaller roles than the men of which we can't completely agree to that as we have some women who are stronger than men and more intellectually viable to assume certain roles in an organization than men but because the society has classified the women as weak and soft as well as inferior to men, they tend to give women in organizations smaller roles preventing them from reaching higher positions and making contributions towards development and growth of such an organization. Nigeria (Africa) is a good example of where the social role theory has created glass ceiling for women especially and therefore has prevented them from attaining leadership positions in an organization. One can hardly see a woman as the head of an organization especially in the north where the women are expected to seat at home all day they can't even go to market or anything women are only wives who take care of private responsibilities, they can't go to school, only about four percent of women in the north have access to education of which this education is among the things that could classify a woman access to a high position in an organization.

Another factor is gender stereotyping and discrimination, also known as subconscious discrimination. The "Office of the High Commissioner for Human Right" identified gender stereotype as a preconception about the characteristics that are or ought to be possessed by men or women as well as the roles to be performed by either sexes. This gender stereotype further creates discrimination against both sexes and or either of the sexes particularly the women who are being affected most in this gender stereotyping which could be consciously or unconsciously created. Gender stereotyping is an offshoot of the beliefs, norms, values or attitudes created in the minds of people in regards a particular sex right from birth which tends to influence their behaviors towards that group. The stereotype that men are superior to women and that women's role is in the kitchen has created this belief that a women cannot lead or is not meant to lead nor be ahead of a man and this has greatly limited the ability as well as the opportunities available for women out there as well as affected development in certain areas, it has prevented them from assuming leadership roles. The northern part of Nigeria is a typical example of how gender stereotyping and discrimination has been very visible where a woman cannot even go to work even in this twenty-first century, all she does is stay at home and even at home they are not allowed to come out the husband does every other thing and the wife's job is to cook, clean and take care of her family.

Furthermore, we have family and work conflict, which has to do with the dilemma between the kitchen or private role and the boardroom. Women mostly over the years have been faced with the challenge of creating a balance between taking care of the family which according to society is their primary duty and handling work in the corporate world. The fear that women may choose their family over work which could further limit effectiveness and efficiency in work place has hindered women from being promoted to top positions in an organization. Take for instance, during pregnancy a working woman may have to take maternity leave to avoid stress leaving the office space vacant and because of the division of labor that makes everyone within an organization important, there will be a problem so imagine giving a lady a higher position in an organization, what would happen? All these are the barriers that have hindered women from assuming leadership position in an organization.

GLASS CEILING IN AFRICA (IS BREAKING GLASS CEILING POSSIBLE TO IN AFRICA?)

Africa is a continent that when compared to other countries seem to have a higher percentage of glass ceilings within it affecting not just women but also the minority groups. The cultural norms, tradition, values, beliefs in fact the whole structure (patriarchal) of most if not all African societies however has placed women on more disadvantage and difficulty in breaking glass ceiling in Africa, though efforts have or are being made by African women but there are cultural, religious barriers that have prevented women from breaking through this glass ceiling in Africa.

Prior to the late twentieth and the twenty-first century, most African women could barely have any access to education not to talk of going to work, the work of women was specifically private including: cleaning of the house, cooking, taking care of husband and children while the men were to work and bring home money to cater for the families needs, the men could do anything they wanted since the social norms and traditions allowed for such women had no say in anything whatsoever. Even today, we can see that although women are now working, it's still difficult to see women leading in any organizations excepts they are the owners. The northern part of Nigeria and other parts of Africa till date forbid women from leading in any activities be it religious, social or political as long as there are still men. Also, although some of these women are allowed to work, they are paid less compared to the men and that is because there is the belief that men are the head of family and since they are the ones catering for the family's needs, they are to earn

more. More than just the working aspect, we also have the political aspect where in Nigeria especially, you hardly see a woman assuming the role of presidency or other higher offices in the political sphere of the country. In terms of education also, we still have only like four percent of women in the north part of Nigeria that are educated although in Africa generally, we have about fifty percent of girl child education although with quite poor facilities.

Regardless of the aforementioned inequality and discrimination (glass ceilings) in Africa, particularly Nigeria, we still have some progress being made towards breaking this glass ceiling in Africa be it in the social , political. Today unlike in the past, we have a lot of women involved in social works that based on strength and physical characteristics, women were not considered as strong to execute but today we can see women doing this jobs such as working in construction sites, flying planes and so on. we even have an airline in Nigeria where women are the ones flying planes an example of such airline is the air peace airline, Nigeria. Also, we have women holding high positions in higher institution. A good example can be seen in Afe-Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, where we have a female as the Deputy Vice Chancellor Administration by the name “ Elisabeta Smaranda Olarinde”.

In the political aspect, there has been some great improvement too. The records show that Africa has had a total of ten female presidents between 1993- 2018, from Burundi, South Africa, Liberia, Gabon, Mauritius (two), Malawi, Central African Republic and Ethiopia. Also, in Nigeria, the current Minister of Finance is a lady by the name “ Zinab Ahmed”, the Head of Nigeria Ports is also a female by the name “ Hadiza Bala Usman”. Women today with the advent of globalization have been able to assume some leadership role to an extent in Africa. Having looked at this we can say that it is possible to break glass ceiling in Africa as the little effort been put alongside the changes have triggered this improvement but as earlier stated there are some barriers which are either social or political or cultural that must be remove for this glass ceiling in Africa to reduce in relations to that of other states. Also in Rwanda which is ninth in terms of attaining gender equality has the women holding sixty- eight percent of the parliament.

CHALLENGES/ BARRIERS TO BREAKING GLASS CEILING IN AFRICA

There are several challenges or barriers to breaking glass ceiling in Africa. They include the socio-cultural barrier, political and religious, psychological barriers which will be discussed below.

First and foremost is, the socio-cultural barrier, which explains how the traditions, norms, beliefs, patterns within a society stand as obstacles to women leading in organizations. The pattern of most African societies which is Patriarchal in nature putting men as superior over women and has therefore made it difficult for the breaking of glass ceiling in most African societies. Most African societies because of the patriarchal nature of the society and their social norms and tradition which see women as having their role only in the kitchen and lacking the strength to handle public roles tend to admit smaller roles to women further limiting their abilities as well as the development of the continent as a whole since only a part of the population seems to be having much of the say in activities of within the region. The World Bank, for instance believe that “putting resources into women’s hands while promoting gender equality in the house hold and society results to a large development payoff” and therefore encourage women empowerment. But the patriarchal structures of this African society tend to empower the men in almost if not all aspects of a society which includes the social, economic and political sphere. In Nigeria for instance we can never boast of ever having at some point a female president since independence only the males have been ruling although we have some females involved in politics within the country but they are being assigned lesser roles and don’t even seem to be having much say even in their position which is still as a result of the believe that men are the ones to hold leadership positions and that they are superior to women. There is a coat that says “when you think leadership, you think men” this is a kind of stereotype that tends to justify this discrimination and inequality faced by women that seems to hinder them from reaching the high positions or taking up certain opportunities made available to them which more than helping them could also help develop the societies in which they are exist. Although to some extent in some African society with the emergence of globalization which creates awareness on some of this socio-cultural barriers and which has helped women to be more empower, we can see that there are some improvement in some countries like ;Rwanda and so on.

Another is the political barrier, by this we are referring to those political decisions or laws made by those in authority including the nature and character of a leader that tend to prevent or hinder women from attaining high positions or promoting inequality between both sexes. Nigeria

is a good example of an African country where these political barriers have stood as an obstacle to women's empowerment and assumption of leadership roles. The current president of Nigeria "president Muhammad Buhari in 2016 made a statement that " my wife belongs to the kitchen " a statement that signifies that women in Nigeria especially those in the north are still faced with challenge of glass ceiling. If a president of a country would say that then it means women are doomed because the president has the power to enforce that. Also still in 2016, a bill on gender equality was passed and the president choose to alongside other members of his cabinet to ignore the bill on gender and equal opportunities bill on the grounds that women can never be equal to men they even coated the bible saying that women are to be subordinate to men hence they wouldn't pass such a bill that gives women equal opportunities as the men. Majority of the decisions made by our political leaders in Nigeria seem not to favor women at all, the laws made tend to neglect the abilities and intellectual capabilities as well as the power of women in the society, this however is not new as the cultural norms and traditions of the society support this and even the women themselves seem not to be serious in fighting for their rights as they discriminate among s themselves also, we can see that women only hold four percent seat in the entire Nigeria parliament which further makes it difficult for them to air out their opinions on this ill- decisions that prevent women from attaining leadership positions. In a country like Rwanda where the women hold about sixty-eight percent of seat and where even the president who intellectually is bright and has recognized the need for both women and men to be given equal opportunities so as to promote development, it is easier for the women to lead because their laws permit it and evidence about development and growth can be seen in this country because more than just the men, the women have also been included in all activities affecting the country in fact , the country is like best and top ten among all the countries of the world to have been recognized for having attained a high degree of gender equality. This shows how the political decisions as well as the character and personality of a leader all which fall under the political barrier have in one way or the other stood as an obstacle preventing women empowerment and influence in the society.

Also, we have the religious beliefs, there are two basic religions in the world we have the Christian and Islamic religion and each of them have their own beliefs and norms that guide their way of worship and mode of behavior generally. While the Christian religion allows women more

opportunities in the outside world, the Muslims or Islam's religion tend to cage the women not allowing them the opportunity to participate in activities be it political, social or economic within the society and this has limited most women within this group from attaining high responsibilities or being empowered. The Islamic religion of the north hardly even permit women the right to education not to talk of working or involvement in politics except for the ones who may be educated and may have recognized the importance of both men and women influence in the society and even at that, there is a limit to where she could assume such leadership roles. The Muslims belief that their women have their role in the kitchen only and that men are the ones to do the outside work such as working, buy food stuffs from market for their wives and so on even during worship the men are the ones who lead you will never unlike the Christians see a women leading in prayers in an Islamic environment, similarly in their work place you can hardly see a woman leading.

Furthermore, we have the psychological barrier which has to do with our own thinking and mindset on the issue of glass ceiling. We the women are ourselves our very own problem to breaking glass ceiling in Africa. Right from birth w all were being socialized and oriented on social or gender roles and this has affected our thinking such that unconsciously, we tend to discriminate among ourselves and this has affected us and prevented us from rising against these inequalities facing us and which has limited us from assuming leadership roles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having examined the barriers or challenges to breaking glass ceiling in most African societies, I will suggest firstly in terms of the socio-cultural barriers hindering women's empowerment that awareness should be created in schools on the bad effect of these cultural norms, values and beliefs on women so as to raise an alarm that there is need for such beliefs and cultural norms to be reconstructed or removed from the society.

Also in response to the political barriers hindering women from assuming higher roles in the society as well as being allowed equal opportunities in the issues affecting the society, there is need to first and foremost choose through a more free and fair choose more intellectually smart leaders, leaders who are willing to promote equality of all for better empowerment of women and development of the country, also the laws and decisions made should only be enforced only when

they favor both sexes as they all are a part of the society and are equally need for a more sustainable growth and prosperity we can never always have only the men alone running a state as women at some point are needed given their soft and calm personality to handle certain issues and that's why even god after creating man , made a woman out of his ribs this shows the importance of each sex.

Furthermore, in the psychological barriers which involves the way we think about each other as a result of the orientation given from birth. Men from birth were made to believe that women are inferior and that women are weaker than men and therefore cannot lead the men plus we also have some women who equally join men to discriminate against other women which has slowed the progress in eliminating this glass ceiling. The suggestion made here is that awareness should be created through education so as to prevent further discrimination and stereotype against women and also since it's the orientation from birth that gives birth to these barriers there is need for some changes in the orientation given from birth by the parents and that is possible when people or the coming generations are enlightened on the effect of this beliefs, cultural norms and values that have been put in their mind and how it has come to affect the women at large.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion having examined what glass ceiling is and has been in Africa, we can say that it is possible to break glass ceiling in Africa seen how there has been changes from the late twentieth and twenty first century, we can see evidence in how we now have females leading in social activities as well as also their involved in politics which when compared to the past centuries where women were hardly even allowed to go out of their house, and when they had no rights at all has improved. These changes have shown that there is a possibility of breaking glass ceiling in Africa however; we still have a large way to go as a result of the social, cultural and political barriers among other barriers that have stood in the way of achieving great success in relation to other countries of the world.

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