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COURSE : IRD318
COURSE TITLE : GENDER STUDIES

What is glass ceiling?

A 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.Minority women often find the most difficulty in "breaking the glass ceiling" because they lie at the intersection of two historically marginalized groups: women and people of color.

"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.

Glass ceiling can also be defined as an impermeable and impenetrable barrier, which prevents women from reaching senior positions in offices and organizations (cited in Osondu-Oti, 2015). Glass Ceiling applies to women as a group who are kept from advancing higher because they are women (Morrison et al., 1987). Fagenson-eland and Parker (1998) cited in (Osondu- Oti and Omole, 2016) identified features of an organization with glass ceiling. These are organizations that are often non-supportive working environment for women; organizations that tend to highlight gender differences, weaknesses and exclude women from group activities because of gender differences, and organizations that do not tend to help females to prepare for management positions or prepare women workers on how to achieve or balance work with family and personal life issues. Glass Ceiling is not one ceiling or wall in one spot, but rather many varied and pervasive forms of gender bias that occur frequently in both overt and covert ways. Bombuwela and Chamaru, 2013).

Is breaking glass ceiling possible in Africa?

The Nigerian Constitution provides for equal rights, so from a policy point of view, there is no discrimination. However, the glass ceiling, that invisible barrier to advancement that women face at the top levels of the workplace, remains a big problem and a challenge to society. According to research from the University of Chicago, School of Business, there are factors beyond gender discrimination in the workplace that are holding women back. Although women have surpassed men in educational attainment, they are vastly underrepresented in top-paying jobs. Women with college degrees often choose to work in fields that offer lower incomes. Psychological differences between men and women could account for up to 10 percent of the pay gap. Much of the existing research concludes that women are more risk-averse than men are. The willingness to take risks helps employees compete for higher paying jobs and negotiate higher salaries. Whether men and women are born with different attitudes toward risk or the differences are taught, understanding the role of nature versus nurture is key to closing the gap.

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.

What are the challenges of glass ceiling?

Women leaders contribute positively to organizations yet remain significantly underrepresented in corporate leadership positions. While the challenges women face are well-documented, less understood are the factors that shape the experience and success of women who, against significant odds, rise above the glass ceiling. This paper analyze the conditions under which women are promoted to top leadership positions and exploring the opportunities and challenges they face post-promotion. We draw on two data sources: comparison of the career trajectories of all women who have ever served as CEO in the Fortune 500 with a matched sample of men CEOs as well as in-depth interviews with women executives across a variety of sectors. Our analysis reveals that women are more likely than men to be promoted to high risk leadership positions and often lack the support or authority to accomplish their strategic goals. As a result, women leaders often experience shorter tenures compared to male peers. We consider the implication of our findings for theory, research and practice.

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 favor men think they are doing women. A case in point is Zimbabwe's new constitution which provides for a mandatory quota of 30% women representation in the Parliament and Senate. It seems like a step in the right direction as women currently make up 35% Zimbabwe's two law-making houses.