**IRD 318 Assignment**

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1. What is Glass ceiling? Is breaking the glass ceiling possible in Africa and what are the challenges for women in the 21st century?

Answer

What is glass ceiling?

A glass ceiling represents a barrier that prohibits women from advancing towards the top of a hierarchical corporation. The glass ceiling metaphor has been used to describe invisible barriers “glass” through which women can see elite positions but cannot reach them “ceiling”. These barriers prevent large numbers of women and even ethnic minorities from obtaining and securing the most powerful, prestigious, and highest-grossing jobs in the workforce. Moreover, this effects prevents women from filling high-ranking positions and puts them at a disadvantage as potential candidates for advancement.

Women in workforces are faced with this barrier are constantly prevented from receiving promotions, especially to the executive rankings, within their corporation. Within the last twenty years, the women who are becoming more involved and pertinent in industries are organizations have rarely been in the executive ranks. Women in most corporations encompass below five percent of board of directors and corporate officers positions

Is breaking the glass ceiling possible in Africa?

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 countries like Liberia have managed to sustainably elevate their women with an estimated thirty percent of companies being led by a female chief executive. More so, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the county’s president rewrote world history by becoming the first female president in Africa. Malawi’s Joyce Banda and Central African Republic’s Catherine Samba Panaza followed soon after to further cement the rise of modern women in Africa. It is easy to then assume that these are 52 countries in Africa and only three have had female heads of state. It is better that nothing but it is also proof that society is not yet as fair and as equal as it should be, female president would not make the news. People still make noise because it is monumental feat considering the highly patriarchal African landscape. The greatest battle the African women 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. A case in point is Zimbabwe’s new constitution which provides for a mandatory quota of thirty percent of women representatives in a parliament and senate. It seems like a step in the right direction as women currently make up thirty five percent Zimbabwe’s two law-making houses. However, Netsai Mushonga, the national coordinator of the women’s coalition of Zimbabwe noted that the last election, “it was not unusual for women to be told, we gave you sixty seats, what more do you want?” this steals the thunder from what is supposed to be positive steps as it confirms the assertion that men still think they are doing women favours by implementing policies that promote equality.

What makes this glass ceiling harder to break is a simple factor of women from a tender age being taught 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 beliefs. Marriage is essentially a luxury that ironically only the unsuccessful women 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.

Africa needs to start being serious about the ascension of women to top and core area of business and decision making. The African woman in turn need to have a change of mind set and fight the societal stereotypes, I do personally believe the glass ceilings can be broken for the great steps have been taken throughout the twenty first century and with extra effort from both sides and large amount of seriousness it can be achieved, because the simple fact of seriousness is the major problem, society as a hole both men and women don’t see the glass ceiling as a problem, some women even suffer from it without knowing. A serious amount of focus is the key moving factor to affect this issue in Africa and the world.

Challenges for women in the 21st century

1. Societal norms and pressure: the society we live in has expectations, usually African society expects that by a certain age a female child should be married, following by the bearing of a child. Even if one wanted to spring up and be successful in terms of carer, it then becomes hard as they have many breaks in their careers to fulfil societal expectations. At the end of it all, many young females have set marriage goals only and leaving out career goals.
2. Mind-set: most people have been dragged down by the “I can’t do it” or “I am not good enough” mind set. Most women will wait decades to be approved by certain people or societies, they seek approval in whatever they do, this follows them even in the workplace where they would rather be led than to lead as they somehow have the “I can’t do it” or “I am not good enough” mind set.
3. Patriarchy: the biggest challenge facing women in the world today is especially evident in politics. Regardless of a woman’s experience, education or abilities, the patriarchal nature of the world societies fosters the perception that women are less qualified and less competent than men. What patriarchy has done is convince people that strong and intelligent women represent a problem; a disruption to the social order rather than an integral part of it.
4. Sexism, racism and economic inequality: the extremely potent combination of sexism, racism, and economic inequality, this may seem like too broad an answer but it pretty much covers it on both a domestic and global front. All of the individual challenges we may be tempted to rank are symptomatic of these massive systemic power imbalance, working in tandem.
5. Navigating career and motherhood: the good news is that economic and political freedom for women of all races and socioeconomic background is the highest its ever been. Working moms do have the luxury of “learning in” to either their careers or motherhood, but rarely both at once. Enabling a mother to re-enter the workforce where she left off should be commonplace. But solving the “on-ramp problem” for talented women who choose to pause their careers to prioritize family life still eludes us.