**UJILE ANTHONY CLAUDE**

**17/SMS09/090**

**IRD 318**

**QUESTION: What is Glass Ceiling? Is Breaking the Glass Ceiling Possible in Africa and what are the challenges?**

The metaphor Glass Ceiling was coined in a 1978 by Marianne Schriber and Kathrine Lawrence, who were corporate women for the Hewlett Packard organization. The term “Glass Ceiling’ is commonly used to describe barriers faced by women who attempt to attain senior positions in corporations, government, education and non-profit organizations. For emphasis, the Glass Ceiling concept has often been used to describe invisible barriers of lass, through which women can see elite positions but cannot reach them. The barriers prevent large numbers of women and ethnic minorities from obtaining and securing the most prestigious and highest earning jobs in the work force.

The Ceiling could be defined as a discriminatory promotion pattern where the written promotional policy is non-discriminatory, but in practice denies promotion to qualified females. The codes of this Ceiling are not found in any corporate manual or even discussed generally at business meetings, it is an invisible and unspoken phenomenon that exists to keep executive level leadership positions in the hands of males. Glass Ceiling can also be called gender discrimination in the work place.

**REASONS FOR GLASS CEILING**

* **SOCIAL ROLE THEORY**: These are cultural problems fueled by de facto practices which are motivated by stereotypical gender roles in the society. Men and women act according to gender roles. Stereotypes exist and they affect the careers of women and minorities and are always damaging and long-lasting.
* **GENDER DISCRIMINATION**: Discrimination in the work place is a top impediment as it halts progress and development. Subconscious discrimination makes it feel like men are the only ones capable of leadership. Most often, women and minorities are passed over for promotions and raises, and are refused key projects, or often paid less or fired because of their gender or minority status.
* **FAMILY AND WORK CONFLICT**: This bias perceives women as less competent from the idea that women would put family first over the job at hand. Women are less likely to get raises due to this bias. The demands of childcare, housework and other lie chores outside of work fall more heavily on women than on men. Higher paying occupations are more inflexible and require more time commitment. Women have a harder time with this inflexibility because they remain somewhat responsible for taking care of the home, including raising children.

Breaking the glass ceiling in Africa is possible but would be a herculean task. African women continue to be marginalized from attaining leadership positions in political parties and organizations despite the numerous efforts made to achieve balance. The continent is making strides but gender parity and equal opportunities are a far cry away. With numerous de facto barriers standing in the way of the rise of women.

Out of the 54 African states, only 3 have had female heads of State. This is proof that the society isn’t where it ought to be and evidence of the highly patriarchal African society.

**CHALLENGES**

* **CULTURAL INDOCTRINATION**: In certain parts of Africa, women are taught from a young age that success scares men away, this way of thinking has led many young women ladies give up their lofty personal dreams, for the option of marital success over all else and often live with the belief that successful women do not get married.
* **ABSENCE OF LAWS**. The absence of laws that promote equal representation of women and men in leadership positions in both public and private sector is a major challenge that impedes women advancing to corporate boards. African countries need to implement policies which promote gender balance in leadership positions at work.
* **LACK OF MALE SUPPORT**: The struggle for work place gender equality would have been long achieved with the support of male counterparts. This lack of a united front makes it seem like push to break the glass ceiling has only feminine benefits. Male support is needed is the goal is to be achieved.
* **PATRIRIACHY**: this is a term used to describe male dominance. The barrier against female career progression reflects the Nigerian society, and the traditional roles into which women are conditioned to perform and segregated from male domestic and corporate responsibilities. Nigeria operates a patriarchal system in which gender inequality is determined by patriarchal division of labor. In Nigeria, patriarchy gives preeminence to men as authority holders and decision makers in domestic and corporate affairs.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

In conclusion, I offer the following steps to be adopted to foster a faster breaking of the glass ceiling.

* The African government could take a leaf from the Norwegian government’s law put in place, that go as far as enforcing the dissolution of companies that do not comply with the quotas set in place to maintain gender balance in public companies.
* The African women need to have a change of thinking. Effort should be made to fighting the ’’woman for kitchen” mentality that holds them back.
* Gender equality as a movement should be financed to educate people that women are capable.
* The government should provide grass root awareness programs for the girl child to ensure they’re encouraged to be the best. The ministry of women affairs should be among the top prioritized ministries.

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