

“Glass Ceiling”-Oppression of Professional Women in our Male-Dominated World”

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Opinion

I will start with this question: “Would things have been different in 2008 if the unexpected collapse of the giant corporation called ‘Lehman Brothers’ had been ‘Lehman Sisters?’” The ironic question, sincerely well-intentioned but at the same time caustic in an Aristophanist style, played many times in the International Media after the ‘fall’ of the company with the same name which is assumed to have functioned as the “starting point” of the Global financial “mini-crash” that began in 2008. The ‘rhetorical’ question was poignant and comprehensive, and brought to the fore a reality faced by many professional, talented women employed in middle and senior management positions in educational institutions, business and politics. For example, while women outnumber men in many University departments and schools, they subsequently fall behind in terms of their professional development and their careers. Stereotypical ‘interpretations’ abound and focus, almost as a rule, on women’s preference for creating a family and having children, choices that are certainly at the expense of their career and prevent them from devoting the required energy, interest and zeal to their professional activities. Logically, therefore, the development of women as executives of companies and organizations lags behind compared to their male colleagues. This seemingly logical interpretation and explanation of reality is tenuous as relevant scientific research signifies that even executive women who are willing to “sacrifice” the classic female propensity towards motherhood and family creation continue to remain in the middle and upper levels of the executive hierarchies and despite the fact that they possess all the necessary training, skills, experience and leadership talents, they are often surpassed by their male competitors who may possess the same qualifications as them. In the final analysis, there are those who claim that businesses, organizations, educational institutions and society as a whole lose by preventing women from their right to rise to the highest levels of management. These tactics end up being very expensive, creating an income loss which is not reflected in the annual balance sheets. In other words, when the education, experiences, skills and talents of female executives are not properly utilized, businesses and organizations and, by extension, societies in general, lose. This should bring to mind the relevant findings of research on the topic of ‘tacit knowledge’ which when it remains unused in many businesses and organizations costs very dearly. The “glass ceiling” phenomenon is a widespread practice in the everyday life of businesses and organizations, in the field of education and in politics. I have paid special attention to the ‘glass ceiling’ phenomenon in my free to download e-book titled ‘Fundamentals of Communication, PR & Leadership’: <http://bookboon.com/en/fundamentals-of-communication-p-r-and-leadership-ebook>. Fifteen years ago, relevant research highlighted the fact that the “glass ceiling” as a reality still exists in the USA not only despite the introduction and enforcement of the now historic “Civil Rights Act of 1964” which aimed to prohibit all forms of discrimination, but also despite the requirements introduced by Title II of the “Civil Rights Act of 1991” which established the “Glass Ceiling Commission” to control related phenomena. According to FORTUNE in the 500 largest companies of the USA

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only 44 women (8.8%) are in the top position of the pyramid of their administrative hierarchy. <https://fortune.com/2022/05/23/female-ceos-fortune-500-2022-women-record-high-karen-lynch-sarah-nash/>. Things are not better for women in the UK as in the country's 100 largest FTSE-100 companies only 9 women are at the top of their management pyramid (8%). <https://www.roberthalf.co.uk/press/only-nine-ftse-100-companies-headed-women-study-finds>. In the business world, of the 500 largest companies worldwide, only 4.8% have a woman at the top of their management pyramid. <https://fortune.com/2022/08/03/number-of-female-ceos-running-global-500-companies-hits-record-high/>. While the reality is impressively negative for women executives in the business world, it is, unfortunately, not better in academia.

On an international scale in universities, while the percentages of female students exceed those of men, and almost as a rule in the student bodies women make up 55% and men 45% looking at the existing numbers of members of Teaching-Research-Staff and administrative executives' men clearly outnumber women. Even a cursory look at educational institutions on a global scale will reveal that there are more men holding the positions of Rectors, Chancellors, Deans and Presidents than women. Specifically, in the top 200 Universities of the world only 43 have female professors

as Rectors, Chancellors, Deans and Presidents <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/best-universities/top-10-universities-led-women>. In the top 130 US universities, women who hold the position of President or Chancellor make up 22% despite the fact that as holders of Doctorate degrees in the last decade women are a clear majority. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelnietzel/2022/03/01/new-evidence-shows-large-gender-gap-in-leadership-of-major-us-universities/?sh=3e8fe5bb302a>. Appreciating the phenomenon, I could say that in the 21st century, private and public businesses and organizations, on a global scale, continue to operate with the classic patriarchal type of power structure. Unfortunately, the specific form of oppression which prohibitively functions as a "glass ceiling" and keeps women in positions much lower than their qualifications and abilities has as a real impact, in addition to the psychological cost for them, a huge economic cost in our male-dominated societies. Will there ever be a large-scale group of dynamic women executives who, paraphrasing that classic Marx & Engels call, will call on women executives to "unite" as they have nothing to lose but much to gain from the crash of the "glass ceiling" that keeps them trapped in the middle and upper hierarchies of corporate, academic and political life... Will, I wonder closing, the day ever come when the "glass ceiling" will be crushed?