



The Future of Women in Leadership, Breaking the Glass Ceiling: A Global Perspective

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INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary root of leadership studies (Hopkins & O’Neil, 2015), which began in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, four main perspectives in leadership theories were studied, including trait, contingency, authentic, and contemporary, as well as transformational and authentic forms of leadership styles. It is important to note that the trait style of leadership was mainly researched during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as trait theories became the great man approach, where high-achieving leaders were examined and sought, in an effort to identify the difference in characteristics between a leader and non-leader. The understanding of leadership (Ayman & Korabik, 2010) has largely based on the results of studies conducted on white men in the USA. As a result, the current society tends to see leadership traits as similar to those attributed to white men (Schwanke, 2013; Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

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When it comes to the study of leadership, it is necessary to include gender and culture (Ayman & Korabik, 2010), as its exclusion restricts the scope of understanding in this area. The second-generation form of gender bias, as reported by Kacmar, Bachrach, Harris, and Zivnуска (2011), is a major but an unseen form of barriers to women's advancement; it stems from cultural beliefs about gender, workplace structures, as well as practice patterns that tend to work in favor of men. Organizational hierarchies for example in which men dominate, and leadership practices that connect leadership with behaviors that are believed to be common or more appropriate in men, unintentionally communicate that women are not suited for leadership roles. There is also the tendency for those in leadership to want to only deal with individuals who look like them. As a result, men who are already in leadership positions advocate for and sponsor other men when leadership opportunities arise. As a result, some women may find it difficult to be seen or see themselves as leaders. Additionally, Ayman and Korabik (2010) stated that factors such as stereotypes, role expectations, power and status differentials, in-group and out-group, and much more can have important impacts on many aspects of leadership. Since those in the majority seem to privilege most with these attributes, they tend to create obstacles that mostly women and those in ethnocultural minorities may need to overcome to attain leadership positions or become successful. Although the nature of the issues about leadership seems like it is changing, Kimball (2015) believed that businesses, government, and the society still have more work to do. A study conducted by the University of California-Davis showed that, of the California's 400 largest companies surveyed, women hold about 13.3% of the board positions, while men hold about 86.7% of the seats.

Further, according to Kimball (2015), nearly 10.5% of the highest paid executives are women, and 89.5% are men, while 52 organizations have chief executive officers (CEOs) who are females, and executive compensations differ. For example, the executive pay for females is 1.9 million dollars and 2.1 million dollars for men at the medium. The study also showed that software sectors have the highest quantity of women directors (15.5%), with the financial sector representing the greatest percentage (14.1%) of women among highest paid executives. Ayman and Korabik (2010) reported that both culture and gender have a physical and value component, as both affect the uniqueness and group cohesion, interpersonal interactions, as well as access to power and resources.

Additionally, the cultural and ethnic value that people hold tends to be intrapsychic views that are learned in the same way that gender roles, beliefs, and attitudes are. Like gender, the physical characteristics that separate people, into different cultural and ethnic groups, also act as indicators of status that primes stereotypes and grant privileges.

In Nigeria for example, culturally and historically, a typical Nigerian woman is supposed to be a homemaker, one who cares for her husband primarily, her children, and other members of the family, stated Sokefun (2010). A woman's other responsibilities could also include, farming to feed the family as well as engaging in the petty trade of produce, cooked foods, or household ingredients. What most fail to understand is that, while in this position, women are still an important group of people who have a crucial role to play, particularly, in the social, political, and economic transformation of any nation. Saudi women (Thompson, 2015) face issues on three different levels: their families, the society, and the nation. Although some women are making strides in all works of life, some still face continuous restrictions from their families, in regard to customary roles and responsibilities, thus, creating a work-life balance that she is obligated to resolve, since she is seen as the cause of the problem in the first place. In addition to caring for the smaller immediate families, some Saudi women are also responsible for their extended families, and on a national level, some find themselves working in positions they may not like, while there, their performance is constantly under scrutiny.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the future of women in leadership. I first briefly explain the current leadership landscape for women; I then review the major theoretical approaches to women in leadership, presenting key findings of the future of women in leadership. Additionally, I present an argument as to why women's leadership matters, the future of women in leadership in global businesses, as well as the future of women leadership in the next decade and beyond. Studies regarding the future of women in leadership from a global perspective have rarely been explored.

For example, there seems to be a concern about the need to cultivate and develop more women leaders in all segments globally, as well as the need for more women to take on serious leadership roles in sectors

such as higher education, business, and the Military (Bark, Escartin, & van Dick, 2014; Madsen, 2012). However, there are often unseen obstacles and barriers that lead to an ill-representation of women in both leadership and upper-level management, which Smith, Caputi, and Crittenden (2012) stated requires an ongoing investigation into its causes and consequences.

Some research that focuses on women issues in the USA indicated that it might take up to 73 years before both men and women reach equality in the boardroom of the top 500 organizations. Additionally, the United Kingdom Equal Opportunity Commission (Smith et al., 2012) indicated that it would take about 65 years for women to achieve equality with men as directors within the British top 100 organizations. Mollel and Tshabangu (2014) also shared that leadership is important, particularly, women leadership because there is a gender difference when it comes to leadership, as a result, women bring diverse assets to both leadership and management positions, these assets help organizations maintain competitive advantage.

CONCEPTUALIZING THE NEED FOR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Several theories can provide a suitable framework for conceptualizing the future of women in leadership. The role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002) suggested that perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles leads to two forms of prejudice: first, when women are regarded less favorably than men in regard to possibly occupying leadership roles, and secondly, evaluating behaviors that realize the prescriptions of a leadership role that is less encouraging when women enacted it.

In addition to approaches and outlooks being less optimistic toward female than potential male leaders, it is also more challenging for women to develop into leadership roles and succeed in their various leadership roles. The role congruity theory considers the agreement between gender roles and other roles, particularly, leadership roles. The probability of prejudice against female leaders that tends to be integral in female gender role follows from its dissimilarity to the beliefs that individuals naturally have about leaders. People, therefore, are inclined to have a dissimilar belief about leaders and women as well as comparable beliefs about leaders and men. Because, prejudice

(Eagly & Karau, 2002) can come about when observers judge women as the actual or probable occupier of a leadership role, due to the discrepancy between the mostly communal qualities that observers associated with women and the mostly agentic qualities they believe are essential for a leader to succeed.

A huge portion of the social role theory stated that the majority of the belief about the traits of men and women pertains to the communal and agentic attributes. Further, the social role theory and the leadership categorization theory (Kacmar et al., 2011) stated that gender differences occur because of two interrelated processes: social learning and societal power relations behavior, meaning that some of what may be seen as gender suitable behaviors are usually learned through social modeling and strengthened through society's power and status structures.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although women have been entering managerial and professional US workplaces at about the same rate as men (Kacmar et al., 2011), they, however, remain hugely underrepresented at senior levels within the organization. At the start of the twenty-first century (Bark et al., 2014), about 50% of the workforce in some of the European countries and the USA were females. Additionally, more women are currently attaining equal or slightly higher education than their men counterparts; as of 2012, the number of 30- to 34-year-old populace who have a tertiary education in Germany and Denmark, for example, was 32.9 and 52.6%, respectively. In fact, Kacmar et al. (2011) shared that as of 2011, only 2.2% of women were fortune 500 CEOs, and about 15% of them were elected to the board seats and corporate officer positions within these same organizations. This is even more of an issue among African American women who although they account for about 12% of the managerial and professional labor force, only make up 3% of Fortune 500 directors. In Europe, women only make up one-third of the managerial positions; however, only 1.8% of them are CEOs, and about 10% occupy the board seats of Financial Times 500 companies.

According to a 2016 report from Catalyst, in India, the participation of women in the labor force continues to drop, as women's labor force participation dropped from 34.1% in the years 1999 and 2000 to only 27.2% in 2011–2012. Additionally, Kacmar et al. (2011) posited that only 11% of large companies' CEOs in India are women; among

recent graduates from leading business schools worldwide, the career progress of some women lags when compared to their men counterpart. Further, 54% of the organizations on the Bombay Stock Exchange have zero women on its board. Of the board seats and chairs of other organizations, women hold only 7.7 and 2.7% of board seats and chairs, respectively.

In countries like Japan, women tend to leave the labor force once they get married or have children; as a result, the rate of Japanese women in labor force as of 2014 was 49.2% compared to their men counterparts who had 70.4% participation rate in the same year. Further, women are underutilized because as many as 3 million women worldwide are currently not working, but would like to work according to Catalyst 2016 report.

In 2015, African Development Bank (ADB) reported that African women who make up a little over half of the continent's growing population, and contribute extensively to the continent, are among the poor, mainly because they are a part of the 70% who constitute the informal sector.

Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, and Woehr (2014) also asserted that as of 2012, women held only 19.1% of the parliamentary seats globally, and only 16.8% in the US Congress, meaning that they held just 90 out of 535 available seats. Further, the same 2016 Catalyst report showed that in the USA, women held 51.5% of management, professional, and all related positions; they hold only 20 or 4% CEO positions at S&P 500 organizations, even though the growing labor force of women's participation peaked in 1999 at 60%. For example, out of the 19.2% of women who were on S&P Board in 2014, 80.2% were white, 11.7% were black, 4.4% were Latina, and 3.7% were Asians.

A 2017 Catalyst report also showed that in China, the world's most populated country, men are more in number than women. Women make up about 48.6% of China's population. Due to long maternity leave (98 days) given to Chinese women, some employers sometimes use it as a reason to deny them employment. Additionally, more than 75% of women surveyed asserted that they were let go once they became married or had children. Although women have high labor force participation rate, very few of them are in leadership roles. For example, 17.5% of organizations in the country have women as top managers, and only 17% of all legislators, senior officials, and managers were women as of 2016. Furthermore, women represented only 9.2% of individuals on the

board, and in 2015, 22% of CFOs of organizations were women. It is also important to note that approximately 3.2% of women were CEOs in 2013 and less than one-quarter (24.2%) of all positions in the country's single-house Parliament are held by women. Of the ministerial positions in China's government, women held about 12% in 2016, and only four with a female head of state in the past 50 years.

On the other hand, a 2016 report from Catalyst showed that in Australia, the growth in management positions for women is increasing, but at a much slower rate, as women make up 15.4% of CEO's positions. Women also hold 33% of senior management positions and represent 23.6% of the board of directors; however, some of the above statistics are because of the passage of the diversity-related corporate governance code amendment between June 2010 and November 2012. For example, the women on the board of directors from 2006 to 2009 were 9%, 8%, and 8%, respectively. After the passage of the diversity-related corporate governance code of amendment however, the percentage of the women on the board of directors rose from 11% in 2010 to 20% in 2015.

Even in academia, gender inequality still exists (Cairncross, 2015), as more men continue to control senior leadership positions globally. That seems to be the case in South African Universities, where some women are still working on establishing themselves within the epicenter of the academic enterprise. Male voices still dominate the position of power and institutional direction; this situation has been worsened by women's somewhat recent entry into academia; as a result, they have further been marginalized from senior leadership positions of academies. Although women realize many responsibilities and play important roles in academia within several universities, their contributions have rarely been acknowledged. Nigeria is another example where some artificial analysis of government policies and program on women may suggest that Nigerian women have made strides in the areas of political and socioeconomic status (Sokefun, 2010).

Some might even refer to women who are in leadership positions, serving as Ministers, Vice-Chancellors, Permanent Secretaries, State Commissioners, Senators, Members of Federal and State House of Assemblies, Local Government Chairmen and Counselors, as well as top Executives in State, Federal, and Private sectors. However, according to Ekpe, Alabo, and Egbe (2014), women have been sidelined in political arenas, to the extent that they have not held more than 15% of elected offices in the country.

The glass ceiling phenomenon (Appelbaum, Shapiro, Didus, Luongo, & Paz, 2013; Davis & Maldonado, 2015) is an unseen barrier to advancement that is based on organizational or attitudinal biases. It is also a concept which can be costly to an organization in terms of lost productivity among women but particularly, women of color, as well as turnover costs and annual salaries.

Like the term glass ceiling, labyrinth is another term (Schwanke, 2013) that has been used to describe some of the challenges and barriers some women navigate as they make their way to senior leadership positions within their organizations. Although the media and other contemporary outlets report that this glass ceiling is being shattered, the reality, said Davis and Maldonado (2015), is that it still exists. For example, Schwanke (2013) stated that less than 16% of corporate officers and board members of Fortune 500 companies are women.

For those who achieve these positions, it usually comes at a cost, as they tend to carry burdens such as stereotyping, prejudice, sexual stereotyping, isolation, tokenism, as well as sexual harassment. Catalyst (2016) also reported that although an additional quarter of a billion women globally have gone into the labor force since 1996, the labor force participation of women has, however, decreased from 52.4 to 49.6% between 1995 and 2015. Women have to combat gender wage gap issues, as women only make 77% of what men make, meaning that women are currently making what some men were making 10 years ago as the average global annual pay for women is 11 thousand dollars, compared to 21 thousand dollars that their men counterpart are making.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Although there has been an increase in the number of female employees in middle management positions (Schwanke, 2013; Davis & Maldonado, 2015), it seems like executive positions continue to be led by men. Some research goes further by presenting a comparison of women in management today and those who were housewives in the 1960s; as a result, the media and cultural references accept and celebrate equality achievement among women when in reality, that is not the case. This perceived equality, asserted Schwanke (2013), creates confusion and contradiction as women are largely underrepresented in governance, directorship, as well as executive leadership.

When it comes to leadership, women tend to face two types of issues: one is seen within the society in general, and the other is found in the corporate setting. Societal issues are forces that are rooted deeply in both public policy and culture. In Canada for example, Schwanke (2013) reported that a Corporal and a 20-year veteran of The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCM) force complained about sexual harassment within the force, as well as a long-term abuse where her supervisors treated her as a potential sexual toy and was often offered for sex. The force Commissioner at the time specified that the structure of the system within the force tends to make it difficult to appropriately address the allegations because the force is working with an outdated system.

According to a 2016 report from Catalyst, compared to 1976 when only 37.1% of Canadian women were in the workforce, 47.2% of women are in the workforce in 2015; however, the number of women going into senior management positions seems to have stalled, as men are two to three times more likely to make it to senior management position than women. Although this shows an increase in the overall participation of Canadian women in the workforce, nonetheless, there is only one woman CEO on the Canadian TSX 60 (a stock market index of 60 large organizations listed on the Toronto stock exchange). In 2014, the Canadian stock index companies had only 20.8% of women occupying its board seats. Schwanke (2013) further asserted that when maternity leave is favored over paternity leave, or when a woman is encouraged to work lesser hours after the birth of a child, but men are not allowed to do the same, it brings about the social reinforcement that only women have the ability to fulfill the commitment to family responsibilities.

One would assume that with the increased participation of women in the workplace (Schwanke, 2013), that their domestic responsibilities would be lessened, however, that does not seem to be the case as some studies suggested that an average American woman spends approximately 13.2 hours on housework alone compared to men who spend only 6.6 hours. This disparity in the hours spent on housework creates a scenario where women's work-life balance becomes unhealthy, as they manage both their careers and domestic work. Other barriers that some women encounter include the lack of or limited human capital, which makes it difficult for some women to either gain meaningful employment or attain leadership positions.

Structures within the organization can also affect women's growth potential (Schwanke, 2013), meaning that the way an organization is structured can not only interfere with but also inhibit the advancements of more females within an organization. For example, existing networks such as the old boy's network can be difficult for women to break into, as some women are usually uncomfortable networking within such environments, and some may not have the extra time to spend outside working hours, due to their domestic commitments. Also, some men are not intent on receiving new female members within this club, hence making it difficult for some women to receive the support they may need at that level of leadership.

Appelbaum et al. (2013), Cook and Glass (2014), and Schwanke (2013) further reported that some women also have to deal with the issue of glass cliff, as those who make it through the glass ceiling are seen as the best candidates to take over departments that are in crises, which at times sets them up for failure. Some may become overwhelmed, stressful, or end up leaving the role entirely, mainly because they have inadequate network and support around them. As a result, they are seen as incompetent, unwilling to do what it takes to accomplish the task at hand, or unfit for that level of leadership.

WHY WOMEN LEADERSHIP MATTERS

Women leadership matters because the misperception of the effectiveness of leadership between men and women remains, as gender biases that see leadership qualities to be mainly related to male qualities stubbornly persist in some organizational cultures and can be difficult to overcome, said Schwanke (2013) and Davis and Maldonado (2015). Typically, there are ways in which the society expects men and women to act within it; this collective knowledge (Schwanke, 2013), can be divided into two categories: descriptive and prescriptive. Descriptive deals with how the society feels both men and women typically act, and prescriptive is the way the society feels both men and women should act; additionally, society holds a certain level of attitude toward leadership traits. Some leadership traits associated with both men and women tend to be different, for example, communal qualities which consist of helpfulness, affection, and gentleness are usually attributed to women, while agentic traits are usually associated with men, consisting of assertion and control.

These generalized expectations (Schwanke, 2013; Davis & Maldonado, 2015), create room for widespread stereotyping that can occur within the workplace and the society as a whole. When some women make it to senior level positions, they tend to experience complexity in the way they are expected to act, because as a member of the female gender, they are expected to exhibit the communal qualities as well as the agentic qualities, because it tends to be the most desired and supported form of leadership trait. The issue of prejudice and discrimination is something else most women, particularly those in leadership have had to endure. As Appelbaum et al. (2013) explained it, women are regarded as being less capable than men in regard to leadership roles; therefore, their leadership aspirations tend to be hindered.

Socially and culturally, women in leadership are important as some researchers have suggested that women leaders tend to make a difference for girls and women by strongly influencing lawmaking in the way that favors other women and girls. Women also tend to positively influence change in issues concerning health, community well-being, poverty, family welfare, as well as understanding the need to reach consensus on some policies according to DiLanzo (2016).

THE FUTURE OF WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN GLOBAL BUSINESSES

Kacmar et al. (2011) suggested that how individuals end up becoming leaders as well as how they take on leadership roles is a matter of identity. A leader's identity is not the same as the position the individual has held in the past, but evolves as the individual engages in two core interrelated tasks: the ability to develop one's sense of purpose as well as how a leader internalizes that identity. Internalizing a leader's identity is a relational and a social process that allows an individual and the people around him or her to begin to see him or herself and be seen as a leader. This can be achieved when the individual takes on activities and actions that are leadership in nature, and in the process, accumulates experiences that informs his or her sense of self as a leader, in addition to views about his or her fit to take on leadership roles in the future.

That same 2016 Catalyst report however, stated that some women do not realize the opportunity to take on those activities and actions that are considered leadership in nature. For example, in India, the directorship position, a role seen as a precondition to becoming a CEO on the Bombay Stock Exchange 100, only eight or 2.5% of those roles are held by women.

Kacmar et al. (2011) further asserted that it is essential to note that the process of taking on leadership roles can either produce positive or negative outcomes when applied. For example, receiving validation for an individual's view of themselves can boost his or her confidence and increases his or her motivation to lead and pursue new opportunities allowing him or her to practice leadership. As an individual's opportunity for leadership increases, so does the likelihood that the individual can not only receive endorsements but also receive assignments that are leadership in nature.

When a leader is internalized (Kacmar et al., 2011), his or her interest is sustained to the level that he or she begins to practice and develop complex leadership skills by taking risks that would allow him or her to experiment and reach for unfamiliar leadership roles. The negative aspect of this process involves one that diminishes an individual's confidence and motivation to pursue leadership opportunities or develop themselves further. A leader's identity is connected to their self of purpose, therefore, anyone aspiring to be a leader should pursue issues that are aligned with their personal values, as that would satisfy their human needs and would help them to become successful leaders. The changing demographics of the workplace and the ongoing shifts in the global environment (Davis & Maldonado, 2015) have created a need for new leadership ways to manage individuals.

Therefore, there is a need for women leaders to be identified and developed enabling them to effectively work across geographical areas. To accomplish this identification and development of women, Davis and Maldonado (2015) asserted that organizations need to select and develop leaders who are capable of managing the organization as a whole; these individuals should be diverse and include both men and women who are capable of meeting the challenges that are presented by the new global economy. In the global markets that are increasingly becoming competitive, some organizations are beginning to realize how barriers to the advancement of women, particularly African American women, could be damaging to the effectiveness of their various organizations. As the barriers to the advancement of women weaken organizational performance and compromise the central principles of equal opportunity and social justice, organizations cannot afford to waste its human resources.

The discussion about the future of women's leadership should also include societal transformation as in the case of the change taking place in Saudi Arabia, Europe, Japan, Canada, and some parts of Africa and Asia. The social change regarding women leadership in Saudi Arabia (Thompson, 2015) is being managed and directed through the acquisition of leadership skills in administrative, social, economic, and political areas. This skills acquisition would enable them to add to the national development, and the formation of a knowledge-based society. The 2015 African Development Bank report stated that, to help the European economy during the economic crises, the region quickened women's access to leadership roles by having some countries and organizations reassess its policies, governance code, regulatory framework and changed the structure of the corporate and senior management to prevent the same issue from recurring in the future.

Further, in 2015 Japan employed a strategy that would utilize women's skills to help its sluggish economy, as data from the Ministry of Labor indicated that the country's GDP would grow more if women were included in the workforce. Some countries in Africa have government mandate in regard to the number of women representation on the boards of government-owned organizations, while private organizations in some African countries (Kenya, Morocco, Malawi, Nigeria, and South Africa) and in Asia (Malaysia, Hong Kong, India, and Brazil) have added diversity as principles of good corporate governance. Unfortunately, there are other countries in Africa, who do not view the lack of women in top leadership positions as an issue, consequently, indicating that awareness and acceptance are something that takes time to be embraced; therefore, the need for more women in leadership roles requires continuous repetition.

THE FUTURE OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP IN THE NEXT DECADE AND BEYOND

Since the year 1945 (Keohane, 2016), nearly 100 women have been elected presidents or prime ministers; some women are currently senators, university president's, head of foundations, supreme court justices, corporate CEOs, as well as other positions where women were previously not allowed to serve. When this same trajectory is projected forward, it might be easy to believe that the future will continue to move in

this direction, a situation where there will be more women leaders and leadership positions can finally become gender-neutral. Sometimes, it feels like this situation is the only way forward; it is only a matter of time before gender-neutrality is finally achieved.

However, the barriers such as glass ceiling, glass cliff, glass border, labyrinth, and so much more barriers that some women have to face remain; it also suggests that some women's path to top leadership is not straight. Still, with several studies undertaken by women's groups, academic, accounting and investment firms, as well as management consulting firms from countries around the globe, all presented a link between more women in senior corporate leadership roles and the organization's financial well-being according to a 2015 report from African Development Bank. Some studies have also shown that there are more educated women today than before; these women possess unexploited talents that can enable them to become better leaders. Cook and Glass (2014) found that women's movement and tenure within the workplace are affected by diversity; therefore, the need to integrate more women into the role of the board of directors cannot be overly stated as it considerably increases the likelihood that she would be appointed CEO. Additionally, there is a substantial encouraging relationship between the number of women on the board of directors and a woman's length of occupancy in CEO role.

These findings, said Cook and Glass (2014), suggested that diversity among decision makers have a huge impact regarding women's ability to overcome the glass ceiling and other barriers regarding women in the workplace face. On the other hand, some women are pessimistic about making it to top leadership positions, feeling that they can never break the glass ceiling no matter how hard they try. However, integrating women into decision-making positions earlier in their careers can help dispel this feeling, while making room for more women to be easily promoted into leadership positions and lead for a long period. Other women leaders can be responsible for ensuring that the societal status of women is improved. This improvement in the societal status of women (Thompson, 2015) can be accomplished if and when they act as role models to other women by encouraging change and inspiring people of all ages, particularly younger women who can contribute to a more progressive society.

Organizations and non-governmental agencies should implement targeted training that would help women to identify their career goals and

the types of leadership positions they are interested in, enabling them to gain insights into senior leadership roles.

Further, mentorship, encouragements, and invitation to apply for top leadership positions can help to combat some of the stereotypes and challenges that some women face.

Although it is not easy to foretell things that are yet to be seen, and since women are still operating in a system that was developed by and for white men, some of their gifts and talents seem to have been silenced within this system. Therefore, it is important to use the progress that has been made thus far as a springboard toward the next ten years and beyond.

Almost 50% of the world's population are women (Adeelanjum et al., 2012; Fapohunda, 2012), and 50% of people in some countries are also women. For example, 50% of the 150 million populace in Nigeria are women, further, Pakistani women make up about 50% of the economy, their economic involvement, however, remains low, as women-owned enterprises only represent 3% of the 3.2 million enterprises in the country. It is also important to note that women tend to lead in regard to food production (Iyiola & Azuh, 2014), as 80% of the food produced in sub-Saharan Africa, 50–60% in Asia, 26% in the Caribbean, 34% in the Middle East and North Africa, and more than 30% in Latin America were manufactured by women. As a result, the question remains, how can any economy, culture, business, or country thrive when approximately half of its population seem to be ignored.

THE CURRENT STATE OF WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN POLITICS AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT POSITIONS

In the year 2015, approximately 22% of members of parliament were women; this is about 10% increase from the number of women in parliament in 1995 according to DiLanzo (2016). In the same year 2015, roughly 30 countries in the world had approximately 30% or more women ministers, with only 17.7% of ministers worldwide being women. As a matter of fact, in 2015, only 19 women were serving as heads of states, women comprised less than 10% of parliament throughout 38 countries worldwide, and only 29% of senior management position in public sectors 2012.

THE STATE OF WOMEN LEADERS IN POLITICS AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT GLOBALLY IN 2012 AND 2015

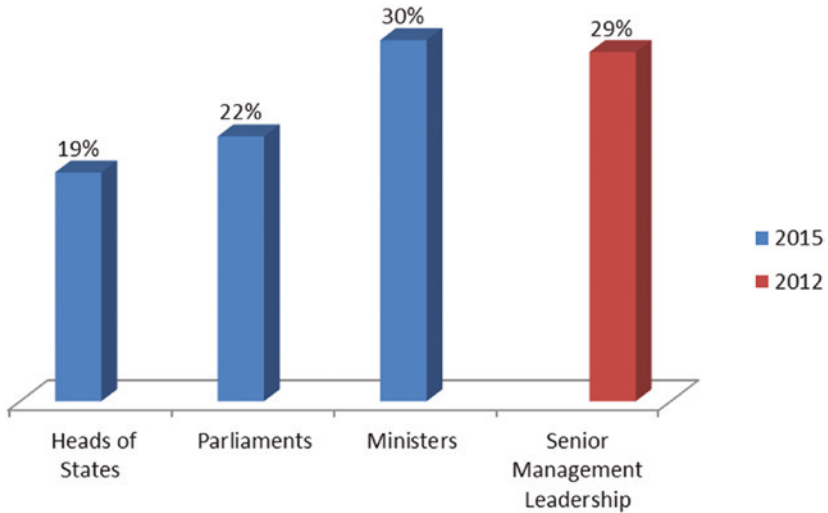


Fig. 1 Source: Ezenwayi Amaechi, *The Future of Women in Leadership* (2017)

Although the above statistics may seem troubling, more countries and organizations are beginning to realize the important role women play economically, as there are some countries where women are making strides politically. For example, DiLanzo (2016) reported that in anticipation for the 2012 election, the Senegalese adopted a legislation two year prior, that called on women to become active participants in the upcoming election. Along with the public and the United Nations Women, the government launched a campaign to bring awareness concerning the issue, in addition to training programs on the election process, the election resulted in a close balance of power in the National Assembly between women and men. More countries can emulate this process as a way to bring political awareness to women of all ages, including young women who some studies have suggested are more likely to volunteer in political work than their men counterparts.

THE 2016 STATE OF WOMEN CEO'S, BOARD DIRECTORS, AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT POSITIONS IN FOUR COUNTRIES

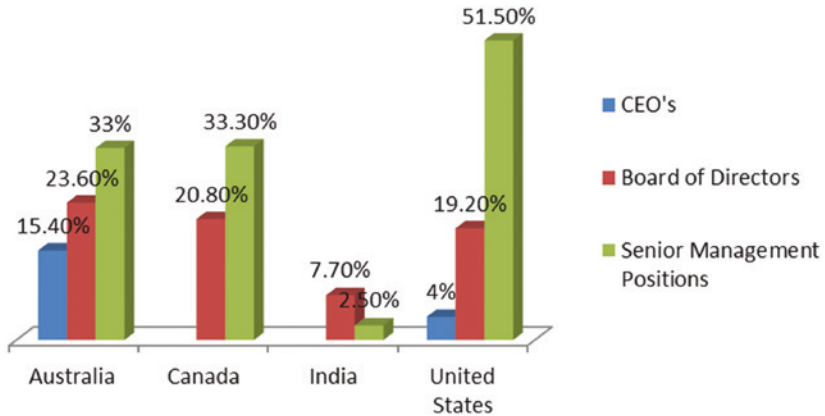


Fig. 2 Source: Ezenwayi Amaechi, *The Future of Women in Leadership* (2017)

A look at the number of women currently occupying the CEO, board directors, and senior management roles in Australia, Canada, and India as of 2016 showed that more work needs to be done by women, non-governmental agencies, businesses, advocacy organizations that are dedicated to women issues, as well as the society, to see that equality is achieved. The good news from Canada, as reported by the 2016 Catalyst report, is that the country has a national goal of having 30% women on boards by 2019, even as the employments for mothers with children who are under six years old have also continued to grow since 1976, going from 31.5 to 68.1% as of 2007. According to the most recent report from the 2017 Catalyst bottom line, organizations with at least three or more women board directors realize higher financial performance. For example, Fortune 500 companies with women board directors achieved greater financial performance on average than organizations with the lowest number of women board directors. Looking at three important financial measures such as, return on invested capital, return on equity, and return on sales, Catalyst (2017a, b) was able to

compare the performance of organizations that have more women board directors representation with organizations whose women board directors were low. In regard to the return on invested capital, on average, organizations with the highest number of women board directors performed better than those with the least number of women board directors by 66%. In regard to return on equity and sales, organizations with more women board directors outperformed those with the least number of women board directors by 53 and 42%, respectively. This means that having women board directors could improve a company's bottom line; however, for the increase in the bottom line to be realized, it would require that the board represents the constituents it serves, and a gender diversity could be a good starting point.

Although more organizations are making continuing changes toward ensuring that their female representation in leadership positions is expanded, to achieve this expansion, organizations need to work on the total eradication of the seen and unseen barriers that some women encounter on their way to senior leadership. Doing that may allow for near gender representations in all key leadership positions in the next ten years and beyond. Unfortunately, this may not be the case as the barriers that some women face are subtle and multifaceted, as a result, may be difficult to be eliminated. Continuous research on the perception of women leaders is required for organizations and the society to quickly move in the direction of freely accepting women leaders in top positions. As some research revealed that gender incorporation among managerial rank increases the chance of a woman to be hired and promoted to senior management position.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Agentic traits: Usually associated with men, in relation to assertion and control (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Schwanke, 2013).

Communal qualities: Consist of helpfulness, affection, and gentleness and are often attributed to women (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Schwanke, 2013).

Descriptive qualities: Deals with how the society feels both men and women typically act (Schwanke, 2013).

Glass ceiling phenomenon: Is an unseen barrier to advancement that is based on organizational or attitudinal biases and can be costly to an organization regarding lost productivity among women but particularly women of color (Appelbaum et al., 2013; Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

Glass cliff: Implies that some women who make it through the glass ceiling take over crises ridden or failing departments, which at times sets them up for failure (Appelbaum et al., 2013; Cook & Glass, 2014; Schwanke, 2013).

Labyrinth: Is another term that has been used to describe some of the challenges and barriers most women navigate as they make their way to senior leadership positions within their organizations (Schwanke, 2013).

Old boys network: Is a network that consists of mostly men and can be uncomfortable for women to penetrate (Schwanke, 2013).

Prescriptive qualities: Is the way the society feels both men and women should act (Schwanke, 2013).

Second-generation form of gender bias: Is a predominant but an unseen form of barriers to women's advancement that stems from cultural beliefs about gender, workplace structures, as well as practice patterns that tend to work in favor of men (Kacmar et al., 2011).

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Smith et al. (2012) believed that the glass ceiling concept is likely to continue to be an issue facing women for years to come. One of the ways to ensure the future of women's leadership lies in an increased societal participation in the form of national and international reorientation on the topic. Additionally, there needs to be a reforming of the educational system, an introduction of policies and initiatives that are more moderate and favorable to women (Thompson, 2015). Kimball (2015) reported that in 2013, for example, the California legislature passed a resolution known as the Senate Concurrent Resolution 62 (SCR-62), the first of its kind in the nation, which called on public companies to add more women to their board of directors. In addition to other studies cited as the reason for this resolution, the study from the University of Davis California was also cited as bringing more awareness to the issue of adding more women to the board of large organizations.

The SCR-62, although non-binding, set goals for the number of women, based on the size of the organization's board. For example, if an organization has nine or more directors, it should have three or more women on the board, two or more women on boards of five to eight directors, and at least one woman for boards that are smaller.

Almost 70 more organizations met the SCR-62 goals, thus showing an increase of 17.5% in 2015 from 15.8% in 2014. These types of

studies can bring greater awareness to the issue of inequality and women leadership if conducted nationally and globally. Further, leadership training within the organization, the society, and the grassroots level can help groom more women leaders, particularly when the government, businesses, and the society at large realize that inclusion is essential in growing and nourishing economic success based on the 2015 report from African Development Bank. Other recommendations include more research, which will provide needed information on this issue; it will also help to determine the measures that need to be taken to improve the amount of women leaders in different sectors. Further, there should be a public reporting obligation in regard to the composition as well as changes that took place on the organization's board during the year.

Finally, women's groups and other professional bodies can apply pressure to affect change. Women should also be bold and possess enough confidence to apply for board positions. There ought to be promotions and investments in organizations that support women initiatives in the workplaces as well as sports programs and activities that can elevate more women to leadership positions. Further, there is a need to involve more fathers and sons in this process (DiLanzo, 2016); there need to be training and awareness dedicated to ensuring that they understand the need for women's role in the decision-making process and leadership.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Although it seems like some small changes are happening when it comes to women in leadership (Smith et al., 2012) it, however, seems as though the progress has been slow. This sluggishness in progress of women in leadership roles (Schuh et al., 2014) poses a moral challenge to organizations and the society at large. Particularly, since women have proven themselves as effective leaders in soft sectors such as human resources and health care, the need for more women leaders in other industries persists.

Further, according to Appelbaum et al. (2013) and Schuh et al. (2014) the number of women who have joined the workforce continues to rise, however, the sum of women in leadership positions have not increased at the same pace, because some women are still regarded as substandard, when compared to their men counterpart. As of 2012, women comprised only 26% of all college presidents in the USA, and only 8% of them were African American women (Davis & Maldonado,

2015), meaning that not only do more women need to attain leadership positions in academia, but also, more African American women.

This also shows that the progress toward gender equality has been slow in the past ten years; hence, more research about gender parity needs to be broadened and continued.

The concept of transformational leadership which encourages participation and involvement could be a way to reduce gender discrimination. Similarly, the implementation of greater understanding of leadership may help more women to be accepted in senior leadership positions (Appelbaum et al., 2013; Schwanke, 2013). Some studies (Appelbaum et al., 2013) also suggested that transformational style leadership is usually associated with women, as some behavioral traits such as empathy, relationship building, and supportiveness are seen in female managers and are considered to be more effective when communicating with employees.

Ekpe et al. (2014) suggested that government and policy makers need to ensure that gender inequalities are eliminated by implementing initiatives and structures that would encourage more women to pursue leadership roles. More women, particularly those with personal strengths in the areas of emotional intelligence, teamwork, self-motivation, and a clear self-expectation, need to believe in their abilities to become great leaders in their various fields. Further, since women have been known to be resilient, adaptable, and are inclined to have the ability to juggle home, family, work, and social responsibilities, there is no doubt that they can be great leaders, even as they continue to fight for further progress.

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