



Book Review: Glass Half Broken: Shattering the Barriers that Still Hold Women Back at Work, Colleen Ammerman and Boris Groysberg (Harvard Business Review Press, 1st Edition (2021), Pages: 294).

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Sustainable development focuses on the cessation of gender inequalities and providing equal access to education and employment opportunities for women without being summarily barred from certain positions of power. The hard-fought battles of activists who raised their voices and the leaders who understood women's talents helped women become more and more represented in positions of leadership across businesses and societal spheres compared to the past. However, gender imbalance in leadership is still pervasive. Despite long-existing corporate policies, and procedures that emphasize equity and equality, the persistence of inequalities poses the question 'why progress is slow in achieving gender balance in positions of power?'. Also, without understanding the nature of today's gender gaps, they cannot be filled.

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In a time when society and organizations seek an understanding and solutions for gender disparities, this book comes out to provide a comprehensive analysis of how and why gender parity remains elusive in contemporary organizations and to provide guidelines to dismantle the mindsets and structures that perpetuate gender inequality. Similar to Gamage (2021) and Peiris et al. (2020), the reviewer adopted the academic approach in reviewing this book.

Contents in Brief

The book entitled *Glass half broken: Shattering the barriers that still hold women back at work*, (hereinafter referred to as *glass half broken*) is authored by two renowned scholars from Harvard Business School whose interests span on Organizational Behaviour and Human Resources Management. The book is written in simple language yet through a combination of insightful research and compelling case studies. The book consisting of 294 pages and six chapters is divided into two parts. Part I of the book provides a detailed analysis of how gender biases and gender-based inequalities continue to discriminate against women's career success and their representation of top tier in organizations. Part II provides practical guides and insights on how organizations can make progress on gender parity through day today practices at individual and organizational levels. A related case study has been presented at the end of each chapter. The research-based approach with a sound methodological approach enriches the reliability of the contents of the chapters. The book ends with an inspiring epilogue that presents Harvard Business School's unending marathon towards true equity and inclusion.

Chapter 1 titled, 'AIMING HIGH AND FALLING TO EARTH' endeavored to explain the barriers to advancement that begin early in women's careers and leadership drawing evidence from in-depth interviews and previous research. The chapter flows nicely elaborating on the existence of gender discrimination, experienced promotional disadvantages, lack of role models for females who share their cohort, perceived discrimination in international assignments, experienced motherhood penalties, stereotypes associated with female leadership, and unexpected career decline as a result of flexibility and work-life balance initiatives. Among various other factors, the chapter shows how gender becomes a more salient obstacle as women climb up the ladder. The chapter

ends with the story of Honorable Barbara Hackman Franklin who reveals her journey toward success through obstacles.

Chapter 2 of the book titled, ‘SCARCE, SCRUTINIZED AND STILL CLIMBING’ elaborates on females’ experiences and strategies deployed to navigate the obstacles. This chapters’ content is mainly built on seventy-five in-depth interviews with female survivors from 26 countries all of whom were partners, vice presidents, division heads, or C-suite leaders at multinational and other large companies. The chapter shows how the survivors reached the top of the hierarchy through their willingness, support from males and females who were in the positions of power who opened the doors to success. The chapter ends with the story of Ana Paula Pessoa who illustrates how her determination and the role of senior colleges (mainly men’s) helped in opening up the gates.

Chapter 3 titled, ‘CRACKS IN THE CEILING’ explores how women are agitating and strategizing for seats in the boardroom which is the highest level of power in organizations. The chapter highlights despite the capabilities of women in serving on the boards, and initiatives that support females entering the boards, still a paradigm shift is needed to get the women on board. The chapter also shows that with the discourse of gender diversity the situation has changed to the positive side but still the companies remain insular as women appointed to the board remain extremely underrepresented. The chapter emphasizes the exclusion of females on the boards as a waste of female talents that surely calls for a competitive disadvantage. It ends with Michele Hooper’s arduous journey to the board and her role there to make others confident in women’s ability to lead.

Chapter 4 titled, ‘ALLIES ON THE SIDELINES’ insightfully explains the role that men can play inside and outside the board room in advancing gender equality. The chapter presents examples of men who have been advocates for women’s advancement. It also highlights how men’s participation in combatting gender-based disparities, can bring benefits for both men and women in organizations. Most importantly, the chapter provides guidelines on what men can do and should do in transforming norms at organizations that continue to reinforce gender bias and make it harder for women to reach their potential. Ros Atkin’s story appears at the end of the chapter and illustrates a contribution of a male in pursuing the gender equality goal.

Chapter 5 named, ‘BECOMING A GLASS-SHATTERING ORGANIZATION’ describes the need for organizational-level involvement in eliminating gender disparity at work. It shows the structures and systems that create unequal outcomes and how they might be transformed. The chapter based on research evidence shows that although some companies across the globe have policies and plans to advance gender equality, many companies have not translated those into actions. The chapter provides insights on what managers can do in attracting, hiring, integrating, developing, performance assessment, compensating, and retaining to create and sustain the change. The chapter also presents evidence to show how female discrimination happens in the functions mentioned above. The chapter ends with a case study – settling for equality- that shows a company’s redressing toward gender-balanced culture.

The book’s final chapter titled, ‘DAY TODAY PARITY’ discusses the role of individual-level managers in taking actions to break down common barriers to develop opportunities for women. In practicing inclusive management it explains exclusionary behaviors of male counterparts that hold women back at workplaces with evidence. It also explains the role of an inclusive culture and how managers can foster inclusive management in their organizations. This chapter ends with a case study –bringing inclusive management to Wall Street- that conveys the importance of leadership at all levels to carry out equitable and inclusive systems on a day-to-day basis.

Evaluation and Conclusion

This book as one of the recent few books that focus on the glass ceiling in the present era delves deep into the issues that impede the progress of many talented women. It undoubtedly provides illuminating insights for managers, leaders, educators, women, and male allies with a specific set of actions to shatter the glass ceiling and make real progress on gender parity. Although the book could not uncover the glass ceiling realities all over the countries, it reasonably captures many countries to show the prevalence of the glass ceiling and disparities in gender equality. The real and raw stories at the end of the chapters make the book so lively and it enhances the reading appetite. The book is a nice blend of research-based evidence, life stories, and practical guides which only great writers would undertake with much-needed discipline and mindfulness.

As the book shows through its chapters, the world has come to a better place concerning gender parity compared to the past but still could not completely shatter the glass ceiling. Glass half broken undoubtedly would be an authoritative resource that managers and leaders can use as a clear guide to break the glass ceiling from half to fully. For scholars and practitioners, the book poses an important question about the underutilization of female talents and stereotypical judgments and myths of female leaders that is still held in the twenty-first century. Finally, the glass half broken is not just a book that talks about concepts and issues but it is a toolkit that provides specific guidelines and actions for those who either lead or aspire to lead organizations capable of winning the contemporary business challenges.

Acknowledgement

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