

Glass Ceiling in Global Leadership: How Production Networks Foster Inclusion and Opportunity

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Abstract

The glass ceiling is often perceived as an invisible barrier that restricts the advancement of individuals, particularly women and marginalized groups, to the top leadership positions and this is considered to be the one of the significant challenges in the global business environment. Simultaneously, globalized production networks that is comprising interconnected suppliers, manufacturers, and firms play a crucial role in shaping organizational structures, decision-making processes, and the distribution of leadership opportunities. The article argues that while production networks not only promote growth and innovation for organizations, but also reinforce existing hierarchies and create barriers for underrepresented groups in leadership roles. These networks, characterized by complex power dynamics, often favour established leaders, limiting access to key decision-making roles for those on the periphery. Moreover, cultural and regional biases ingrained in global production systems can disproportionately hinder the advancement of women and other marginalized leaders, inadvertently reinforcing the glass ceiling. Based on secondary sources, this article examines how leadership opportunities are influenced by production networks, with a focus on the structural and systemic factors that impede diversity in leadership. Also, it explores how the increasing globalization of production has created more interconnected yet unequal business environments, where leadership opportunities are often determined by access to global networks rather than merit alone. This article further discusses strategies for organizations to

dismantle the glass ceiling by rethinking their engagement with production networks. This includes fostering more inclusive leadership development programs, promoting diversity within global supply chains, and creating transparent systems for leadership selection that reflect the global nature of production networks. By recognizing the challenges and opportunities at the intersection of production networks and leadership diversity, organizations can better equip themselves to create more equitable pathways to global leadership.

Keywords: Global Production, Glass ceiling, Leadership, Sustainable Development