

Abstract

Not only globally, but also in Austria, there are far fewer women in leadership positions than men. This occurs despite the fact that the distribution between working women and men in Austria is almost equal. Moreover, the share of women and men holding university degrees is equivalent. In the Austrian society, the phenomenon of men dominating leadership positions has become ingrained to such an extent that it is widely accepted. One result of this underrepresentation of women for instance is the gender pay gap. Women are struggling much more climbing the career ladder due to barriers that prevent them from entering management boards. This can also be described as a glass ceiling.

The aim of this thesis is to identify the barriers women face when climbing the career ladder and, in the workplace, as well as how those can be overcome. In the first place, the literature provides a better comprehension of the problem. Subsequently, 10 qualitative interviews with female executives were conducted in order to gain a deeper understanding as well as to explore possible approaches on how to overcome this problem.

This paper successfully examines the barriers and gives advice for overcoming them. The interviews demonstrate that women still have difficulties in being taken seriously in the workforce and face obstacles in achieving a management position. Moreover, the results show that there are several barriers existing such as work-family barriers, those that women create in their own minds or those that are caused by a lack of networks, social pressure, or the organizational climate. Support from home and external help are the best ways to overcome these barriers due to the interviewees and the literature. There are still potential areas for further improvement, such as childcare systems mothers need or assistance from the corporate side, such as mentoring or seminars.