

**Breaking the glass ceiling: experiences of women leaders in private
corporate organisations in Ghana**

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Fall 2019

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of women leaders in private corporate organisations in Ghana. To achieve this objective, three research questions were asked. What are the experiences of women in private corporate leadership positions? How do women leaders' understanding, and perceptions of leadership shape their own leadership style? How do women leaders navigate work and non-work settings, and what are the opportunities and limitations they face in doing so? To appropriately tackle these questions a qualitative phenomenological research design was adopted as the methodology. In-depth interviews, observations and informal conversations were used as data collection methods. Seventeen informants comprising ten women leaders and seven subordinates were identified and recruited as informants for this study. Interviews were conducted with each of these informants. The data was analysed through condensation analysis. The role congruity theory of prejudice towards female leaders, the triple role theory and the concepts of transformational and transactional leadership were used as a theoretical framework to guide the study.

Key findings from the study include the role of traditions and religious beliefs as a hindrance for women advancement to leadership, discrimination and prejudice against women in leadership. Other findings include the dominance of transformational leadership styles in the enactment of leadership by women leaders, the importance of self-discipline, family members and domestic workers as facilitative strategies to manoeuvre through the triple role of production, reproduction and community engagements.

Keywords: leadership, underrepresentation, women, corporate organisations, prejudice

Acknowledgements

I thank the Lord almighty God for the life and strength given to me to finish this study. His goodness indeed endured forever.

Further, I would like to extend my profound gratitude to my supervisor Dr Victor Chimhutu for his advice, guidance and encouragement he gave to me right from the inception of the thesis to the last day of submission. Again, my sincere gratitude goes to all the professors on the Global Development Theory and Practice master's programme, especially Dr Siri Lange and Dr Ernest Darkwah, for their valuable inputs and suggestions during our group discussions. To my classmates and colleagues, I say thank you for your constructive criticism and suggestions during our group meetings.

My heartfelt gratitude also goes to my informants, both subordinates and women leaders who despite their busy schedules, accepted to be part of this study. Without you, this thesis would not have been completed. May God bless you.

Finally, my love and gratitude go to my wife, Mrs Bernice Amakye Boateng for your patience, encouragement and support throughout the challenges of combining studies, work and family issues. To my mother, Grace Awuah and my dear sisters Lydia, Akua, Faustina, Jane and Rose, I appreciate your support, love and encouragement. God bless you all.

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List of Abbreviations

UG – University of Ghana

GSS – Ghana Statistical Service

GLSS6- Ghana Living Standard Survey Six

CEDAW- Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

MDG- Millennium Development Goals

SDG- Sustainable Development Goals

Chapter One

1.0 Background

Despite the increasing advocacy for women's participation in leadership in society, the actual progress of women in context, such as corporate organisations, have been slow (Boateng, 2018; Catalyst, 2018). Many women continuously face obstacles in their quest to attain leadership positions (Boateng, 2018; Bruckmüller & Branscombe, 2010; Carbajal, 2018). Those who defied the odds and achieve such feat yet continue to face challenges as they execute their duties as leaders (Boateng, 2018; Carbajal, 2018). From a gender role socialisation position, women who defy the odds and manage to scale barriers to obtain leadership positions may yet continue to face even more challenges as they execute their duties as leaders (Bruckmüller & Branscombe, 2010). This is often because, traditionally, leadership has been constructed, defined and described as a male role (Glass & Cook, 2016). The study aims to explore the experiences of women in leadership positions in private corporate organisations in Ghana to have a better understanding of the challenges and possible opportunities that comes with these positions. By leadership position, I refer to the position in organisations that require their holders to make decisions for and on behalf of others and which allows them some influence on people who work under them. Such a position may include chief executive officer, senior partner, department or unit head or a director of a company. In other words, the study is interested in women who have already managed to 'break the glass ceiling'. The glass ceiling in terms of women leadership is described as an invisible impediment that prevents women from attaining higher leadership positions in corporate organisations (Haslam & Ryan, 2008). As more women are gaining relevant leadership experiences and attaining needed qualifications, there is a likelihood that more women would rightfully aim to attain top corporate positions in Ghana. Given this context and background, this study on women leaders' experiences is timely as it may provide a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities this avenue can provide to the aspirants.

1.1 The concept of leadership defined

The concept of leadership is used in various aspects of human endeavour, such as sports, politics, business, academics, and family relations. This has made the concept a focal point for researchers, policymakers, as well as the general populace as increasing interests, have developed over the years regarding the complex roles that leadership plays in social organisations. Like many other social science concepts, leadership has been defined by different scholars in diverse ways depending on the context and the intended usage. House,

Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, and Gupta (2004, p. 13) for instance, defined leadership as “*the ability of an individual to influence, motivate and enable others to contribute towards the effectiveness and success of the organisation of which they are members*” To Jolson, Dubinsky, Yammarino, and Comer (1993), leadership is “*the ability of superiors to influence the behaviour of subordinates and persuade them to willingly follow a desired course of action*”. To be classified as a leader, one must display characteristic such as courage, assertiveness, integrity, honesty, and compassion (Appelbaum, Audet, & Miller, 2003; Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Bark, Escartín, & van Dick, 2014; Carli & Eagly, 2001; Alice H Eagly, 2007; Fitzsimmons, Callan, & Paulsen, 2014). Traditionally, leadership has been constructed, defined and described as vigorous activity, hence incongruity with a female gender role (De La Rey, 2005; Glass & Cook, 2016). Based on this notion, women's leadership capabilities have always been negatively scrutinised and questioned (Carless, 1998; Glass & Cook, 2016; Haslam & Ryan, 2008). This has contributed to a few numbers of women in senior leadership positions in corporate organisations worldwide despite them possessing the right qualification (Bawa & Sanyare, 2013; Brett & Stroh, 1999; Bruckmüller & Branscombe, 2010; O. Catalyst, 2005).

1.2 Fewer numbers of women in corporate leadership positions: a global overview

Although in recent times, there have been reported advancements of women in the labour market, few have been able to attain leadership positions in this market (Catalyst, 2018). For example, although the number of women in leadership positions in corporate organisations in the world increased from 19 per cent in 2004 to 25 per cent in 2017, in the same period, the number of corporate organisations without women in their senior leadership positions increased slightly from 33 per cent to 34 per cent (Thornton, 2017). Data produced by The Catalyst, a non-profit organisation which focuses on women's issues indicate that women constitute just 5.2 per cent in leadership positions of S & P¹ 500 companies in the United States of America and 37.1 per cent in Canada. In India and Japan, the figures are 16 and 7 per cent respectively (Catalyst, 2018). For the whole of Europe, it was reported that women constitute just about 1.8 per cent of CEOs and 10 per cent of board seats of Financial times’ 500 Companies (Catalyst, 2018). Thus, while arguably there is an advancement with regards to women in corporate leadership organisations, the phenomenon is still characterised by underrepresentation, and this is a topic involved in heavy and continual debate (Michelle K Ryan & Haslam, 2005, 2007; Michelle K. Ryan et al., 2016).

¹ S & P is an initial for Standard and Poor, the names of the two financial companies. S & P 500 is a stock market index that tracks the stocks of 500 large-cap U.S companies.

1.3 Challenges faced by women

Studies have revealed that women face several challenges in their quest to attain a higher leadership position (Alvesson & Billing, 2009; Haslam & Ryan, 2008; Hoobler, Lemmon, & Wayne, 2011). The glass ceiling, defined above, has always been mentioned as one of the key factors that hinder women from attaining top leadership positions in corporate organisations (Bruckmüller & Branscombe, 2010; Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002). Other studies also attributed the dearth of women in leadership positions to women's own decision not to seek for promotion in corporate organisations for many different reasons varying from personal, cultural or organisational factors, that is lack of necessary aspirations, cultural beliefs, and or organisational structure and culture (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011; Oplatka, 2006).

As women are faced with those barriers, men are believed to have relatively more comfortable pathways to top organisational ranks. Males are said to be able to attain organisational leadership positions through what is termed as the 'glass escalator' which is the opposite side of the ceiling, where men find it easy to move in leadership positions even in female-dominated occupations (Haslam & Ryan, 2008). Michelle K Ryan and Haslam (2005), cited several examples in their work to put forward the concept of 'Glass Cliff' which is described as a subtle barrier that women face, such that they are more likely than men to be appointed to precarious leadership positions. Michelle K. Ryan et al. (2016) confirm the existence of the 'Glass Cliff' by concluding that women in leadership positions often experience shorter term of office since they are mostly promoted to high-risk leadership positions, with sometimes lack of support or authority to implement their strategic goals. Thus, the observed increases in female access to leadership positions may, after all, still have a negative twist to it.

1.4 Gender in the Ghanaian social context

Women constitute 51 per cent of Ghana's estimated 26 million population (Ghana Statistical service, 2010). They also represent 53.7 per cent of the economically active population in Ghana (GSS, 2010). Among the economically active² female population, 41.4 per cent work in the agriculture sector, 48.3 per cent in the service sector and its related activities, while the industrial sector employs 10.3 per cent. The unemployment rate for economically active women is estimated to be 5.4 per cent. This is higher than that of the men which stands at 4.8 per cent (Ghana Living Standard Survey, GLSS6). Regarding literacy, it is estimated that a

² Economically active here refers to females who are 15 years and over and form part of the labour force for production.

whopping 34.2 per cent of Ghanaian women are literate. Out of the number of illiterates' women, an estimated 14 per cent have never been to school (GLSS6). This is often attributed to the historical and socio-cultural antecedents practices where less emphasis was placed on girl child education as compared to boy child education in the country (Amu, 2005; Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013; Baah-Ennumh, Owusu, & Kokor, 2005).

Traditions and customs have played and continue to play significant roles in the Ghanaian Traditional beliefs, and customs prescribe what men and women must and ought to do (Adusah-Karikari, 2008; Boateng, 2018). Such gender roles and expectations are believed to have created a social context where males dominate (Amos-Wilson, 1999; Sackey, 2005). For example beliefs that women should not engage in arguments with men in the public are popular in the Ghanaian society and gives men an upper hand in assertiveness as compared to women (Allah-Mensah, 2005; Apusigah, 2004) Also, for several tribes, especially the north of Ghana, it is considered inappropriate for women to take decisions without consulting male figures in the families such as their husband, their brothers, or elderly male relative (Apusigah, 2004; Bawa & Sanyare, 2013). Men are considered as family heads, providers of resources and custodians of final decision making while women are positioned as homemakers, mothers, bearers and carers of children (Amu, 2005; Boateng, 2018). Such gender ideologies and expectations are believed to have contributed to creating a gender gap between men and women with regard to what they do in the public sphere (Sackey, 2005). For instance, among the Frafra³ people in Ghana, it has been noted that women are mostly side-lined even on issues concerning their own lives, and health such as their marriage and reproductive duties. They only get to know about such issues concerning them after the elders [mainly male] have taken the final decision (Apusigah, 2004).

Historical accounts of population education trends in Ghana have revealed that most parents hitherto gave preference to male education than females education (Bukari, Apusigah, & Abagre, 2017). Young girls were used as the sources of income and were therefore engaged early in informal work that earned them money to support their family while boys were placed in schools to obtain formal education (Apusigah, 2004; Overå, 2007). Other tribes in Ghana saw the girl child socialisation as a process to instil a sense of responsibility of providing support to their husbands after marriage (Allah-Mensah, 2005). Bista (2004) observes that such negative social and cultural beliefs and attitudes have affected girl's education and contributed to their slow rise in the formal labour market in the long run. The consequences of such gender

³ Frafra is one of the tribal groups in Ghana

beliefs have been the subordination roles many women play both in domestic and public domains in Ghana (Baah-Ennumh et al., 2005; Bawa & Sanyare, 2013).

Further, scholars have observed that women who were lucky to be enrolled in schools were still faced with courses and subject's discrimination. That is, men were trained and encouraged to pursue courses like the sciences, mathematics, business administration and engineering (Amos-Wilson, 1999). Such courses were seen as crucial to social and economic development, and individuals who trained in these areas would become the leaders of the future. Women, however, were mostly enrolled in courses such as secretarial studies, home economics and home management (Amos-Wilson, 1999). Such biases practically ensured that males had training and skill necessary for organisational leadership while females lacked such required skills and therefore had little to no chance of assuming leadership positions (Baah-Ennumh et al., 2005; Sackey, 2005).

Such discriminatory beliefs that have negatively impacted women's leadership chances in Ghana began to change slowly not long ago. The slow change has nevertheless ensured that women have contributed significantly to the development of Ghana on Ghanaian women, they have contributed significantly to the development of the country (Allah-Mensah, 2005; Bawa & Sanyare, 2013). In 1950, Ghanaian women were given equal rights as the men to vote to select their representative to the National Assembly by the British colonial government. After the 1957 independence, the first republic constitution of Ghana gave backing to this right. Further, the government of Ghana is noted as one of the few governments to have introduced a quota system for women in the 1960s (Allah-Mensah, 2005). The quota system then was initiated to ensure that women are represented in the National Assembly. Apparently, ten women were nominated to the National Assembly (Allah-Mensah, 2005). This paved the way for women to begin to participate in the national discourse (Bawa & Sanyare, 2013).

Since then, the number of women holding top-level positions in public institutions has witnessed steady progress in recent years. Since the year 2008, the Chief Justice position of Ghana has been held by women. Also, both the former and current electoral commissioners, the Attorney General as well as the head of the Commission for Civic Education are all women. The 5th parliament of the 4th republic⁴ also had a woman as its speaker. The number of female parliamentarians has also increased from 16 in 1993 to 37 in 2018. Although the progress made has been recommended by many, it still falls short of the United Nations recommended

⁴ The 4th republic is beginning of the 4th constitutional government after independence. It started in 1992 after the military government gave power back to the civilian government.

threshold of 30 per cent of women in the legislative assembly. Regarding the corporate business sector, women are increasingly gaining access to organisational positions which hitherto were reserved for men. Although most of these women are positioned in the lower and middle management levels of their respective organisations, (Baah-Ennumh et al., 2005; Boateng, 2018), their access to these positions is seen as gains in the gender-inclusive campaigns that have been going on in the country for years. Considering the improvement in girl-child education and the number of women accessing higher education qualifications, it is presumed that more women would be attaining leadership position in corporate organisations in Ghana. It is therefore important for a study like this that explore deeper into the issues surrounding leadership from the perspective of women who have already attained such positions to serve as a motivation and guide to those with the desire to serve as leaders.

1.5 Problem Statement

The patriarchal nature of the Ghanaian society makes it difficult for women to be accepted as leaders (Apusigah, 2004; Bawa & Sanyare, 2013). Right from the household level, men are positioned as the heads of families with women as subordinates (Apusigah, 2004). Conventionally, women are considered as caretakers of home and therefore need only to know how to perform household chores right from childhood (Brenya, Mensah, & Nyarko, 2018). The same convention required from girl child to be respectful and submissive to their male counterpart (Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013; Bawa & Sanyare, 2013; Kwadzo Agezo, 2010). Such stereotypes in the Ghanaian society seem to have stifled most women progress towards attaining societal leadership for centuries. However, trends over the years seem to be changing as an increasing number of Ghanaian women are attaining higher education which is paving way for them to ascend to leadership position both in public and institutions and private corporate institutions. Although research into women's inclusion in the Ghanaian formal workspace is often little, the focuses of such researches have often been on such issues as women participation in the local governance (Baah-Ennumh et al., 2005), female participation in the labour market (Sackey, 2005), female leadership and school effectiveness (Kwadzo Agezo, 2010) and the like. Much has not been done on women leaders in private corporate institutions in Ghana in general, and even less attention has been paid to investigating how the experience has been for women who have dared to step into traditionally male domains of leadership. My observations and experience while working in a male-dominated institution headed by a female revealed to me that female leaders may face extra difficulties while in leadership positions. For instance, in some cases I observed that communique that came from

my female boss's office were often met with quite harsh criticism and sometimes seeming character assassination. She was sometimes described as "lion", "disrespectful", "dictatorial" and so forth. Again, observing the public discourse on other female leaders in public organisations and institutions in Ghana further affirmed the experience and perception with regard to how people view women in leadership. These observations have inspired me to try to delve more in-depth and explore the lived experiences of women leaders in Ghana's corporate business environment. This study, therefore, focused on telling the stories of corporate women leaders regarding the enactment of leadership in their organisations and how they navigate the challenging environments within which they work and live.

1.6 Research Questions

The study explores how women leaders in corporate organisations in Ghana experience, negotiate and enact leadership and how they navigate space in the work and non-work settings. To answer this main question, the following specific research questions are defined

The specific research questions are as follows:

1. What are the experiences of women in private corporate leadership positions?
2. How do women leaders' understanding, and perceptions of leadership shape their leadership style?
3. How do women leaders navigate work and non-work settings and what are the opportunities and limitations they face in doing so?

1.7 The organisation of the study

The study is organised into nine chapters. It comprises the introduction, literature review & theoretical framework, methodology, findings and discussion, conclusion and recommendations.

- ❖ Chapter one provides the background to the study. It also presents the problem statement and research questions the study sought to explore.
- ❖ Chapter two provides a review of relevant literature on the general concept of leadership, leadership styles, women leaders in corporate leadership in the developed countries and women leaders in corporate organisations in developing countries.
- ❖ Chapter three presents the conceptual framework of the study. It gives a detailed explanation of the role congruity theory of prejudice, triple role theory and transactional and transformational leadership concepts. It also presents some leadership concept necessary for this study.

- ❖ Chapter four is the methodological chapter. It provides a detailed explanation of the research design, selection of participants, methods used for data collection, data analysis procedure, researchers position vis a vis the ethical consideration.
- ❖ Chapter five, chapter six, and chapter seven, present the findings of the study.
- ❖ Chapter eight is the discussion chapter. It encompasses the discussion of the findings presented in chapter five, six and seven.
- ❖ Chapter nine presents the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

Summary

The chapter has provided the background of the study. That is, an overview of the general experiences of women, how far women have progressed in the corporate world. The chapter also presented issues relating to women situation within the socio-culture context of Ghana.

Also, the chapter presented the problem statement, which highlighted the reasons behind this study. This chapter again presented the research questions drawn from the problem statement and answered in this study as well as the significance of the study and the expected contribution I sought to add to knowledge production.

Besides, the chapter gave a breakdown of the various chapters in the study.

The next chapter presents a review of literature relating to leadership.

Chapter Two Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The chapter provides an overview of the literature on women in corporate leadership across the globe. First, leadership as a social science concept and its relative definitions is being presented. Other issues relating to gender and leadership style, the representation of women in the higher echelons of corporate organisations are also presented here. Again, the socio-cultural context within where Ghanaian women operate has also been presented.

2.1 The concept of leadership

There are multiple definitions and usage of the concept of leadership. Bass and Stogdill (1990) noted that there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept. The type of definition adopted depends on the context and the decision of the researcher. According to Veliu, Manxhari, Demiri, and Jahaj (2017, p. 59), *“Leadership is the ability to influence people to perform a task”*. To Malik (2013, pp. 209-210) is the *“process of influencing the activities of individuals or organised groups towards the achievement of certain goals and objectives”*. G. Yukl (1989, p. 253), described leadership as *“include(s) influencing task objectives and strategies, influencing commitment and compliance in task behaviour to achieve these objectives, influencing group maintenance and identification, and influencing the culture of an organization”*. An occurring theme in all these definitions is the act of influencing individuals to achieving a desirable task. That is, every leader must have the skill needed to achieve the goals of the organisation.

2.2 Discourse on gender and leadership style

Gender is described as the psychological meaning ascribed to sexes (Abele, 2003). It is a socially constructed phenomenon ascribed to women as a result of their sexes (Shakeshaft, 1993; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Sex is a biological characteristic used to differentiate between men and women (Abele, 2003; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Associated with gender is gender roles that are ascribed to persons because of their gender (Abele, 2003). Males are said to be agentic and are therefore expected to display characteristics such as assertiveness, ambitious, analytical and decisiveness. Females, on the other hand, are said to be communal and are therefore expected to be caring, emotional and very intuitive (Abele, 2003). Based on these differences, it is assumed that men and women would employ different leadership styles when in position to enact leadership. Leadership style is described as a relatively stable pattern of behaviour that is manifested by leaders to fulfil their role (Cuadrado, Navas, Molero, Ferrer, & Morales, 2012; Alice H Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003). To others,

leadership style encapsulates how leaders behave in the line of duty (Alice H Eagly et al., 2003). Taylor (2007) argue that leadership styles are affected by situational constraints as well as the type of followers with whom the interacts.

Two strong discursive positions have so far emerged in the literature about the difference in leadership styles as exhibit by men and women. The first discursive position contends that there are differences in the leadership style exhibits by men and women. Simply put, the way women lead is different from that of a man (Appelbaum et al., 2003; Dean, Bracken, & Allen, 2009). The second discursive position argued that there are no differences in leadership style between males and females (Kolb, 1999). The differences in leadership style school of thought appear to be the most dominant. It claims that women are less hierarchical, more cooperative and collaborative due to their communal characteristics (Alice H Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Appelbaum et al. (2003) claim that there is a difference in the leadership style of female and male corporate leaders with female leaders considered as more participative and people-oriented. They, however, claimed that female leadership styles are as effective as male leadership styles. Furthermore, it claims that the argument that women leaders are less effective is not based on fact but instead driven by socialisation that already exists (Appelbaum et al., 2003). In the same vein, Carless (1998) found differences in leadership styles in the Banking sector in Australia. The study concluded that female managers are more transformational to the extent that they pay more attention to the welfare and development of their subordinates. In support, Oakley (2000) describe women leadership styles as more transformational in both traditional and non-traditional organisational context. The study further asserts that women tend to adopt transformational and participative leadership styles. Alice H Eagly and Johnson (1990) who carried a meta-analysis of gender differences in leadership also supported this argument by reporting that women adopt a more participative and inclusive style of leadership whereas men adopt directive and controlling style of leadership. Alice H Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) reveal in their study that female leaders display characteristics that motivate their subordinates, and this makes feel respected. More so, women leaders show optimism and excitement about future goals as well as willingness to develop, mentor, and attend the needs of their subordinates.

Alice H Eagly et al. (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of 45 studies that compare transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles. It was established that female leaders turn to be more transformational. Aside, female leaders engaged more in contingent reward behaviour that is a component of transactional leadership. Male leaders, on the other hand, were found to exhibit transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles. From the

perspective of openness and truthful, Ferrario (1991) reported that female managers were more open and sincere with their colleagues than male managers. Trinidad and Normore (2005), further established that findings from other research indicate that women adopt a participative leadership style. In brief, one could conclude from this perspective that gender has an impact on leadership styles due to the social roles ascribed to women which eventually make them act in a way that is aligned to their gender and accepted by the society.

Contrary to the views and evidence to those that proffer that leadership styles are gendered, there is another group that opposes this view that leadership styles are gendered. This group of scholars advance that men and women have the same leadership styles and if there are any noted differences, these are purely individual and not gendered (Davis & Johansson, 2005). For instance, Oshagbemi and Gill (2003) study on leadership style and behaviour of managers in the United Kingdom concluded that there is no significant leadership style between male and female managers. In addition, Cuadrado et al. (2012) and Van Engen, Van der Leeden, and Willemsen (2001) argued that there are no gender differences in either leadership style or leadership behaviour between men and women. However, a study by Alvesson and Billing (2009) on men and women public administrators found that leadership styles are a mixed bag, that is both women and men leaders adopted convenient and leadership styles of their preference as not informed by gender. The study found out that some women leaders prefer the control leadership styles. In a similar vein, some men also favoured the participatory and open type of leadership as opposed to the controlling type. The study, however, reported that women leaders take their work more seriously and less concern on monetary rewards. In this regard, female leaders are more intrinsically motivated than male leaders. Given mixed evidence on leadership and gendered perspective, Coleman (2003), concluded that men and women could not be regarded as two coherent groups with two distinctly different ways of leading and managing. Weyer (2007) further advanced as an institution, has that leadership its norms and expectation that guide its occupants, and these expectations and norms erode any gendered differences.

2.3 Women in leadership: What do we know?

Women leaders in the corporate organisation have been extensively researched in the developed world. Researchers from the United States has been pivotal to such studies. Other researchers across the globe, specifically the United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden, have also pursued this trend of leadership research (Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006). The majority of these studies have concentrated on the barriers and the challenges women face as they seek

to move to the apex of corporate leadership (Alice Hendrickson Eagly, Eagly, Carli, & Carli, 2007; Oakley, 2000). This is rightly so because most of these researchers are feminists who began their studies from the standpoint that men have dominated the leadership position in corporate leadership and therefore prevent women from attaining such positions (Cocchio, 2009). According to Alice H Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001), women face more barriers to attain leadership positions than men, especially in a male-dominated corporate organisation.

Leadership has historically been depicted primarily in masculine terms, and many theories of leadership have focused mainly on stereotypically masculine qualities (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Alice H Eagly, 2007). As a result, many women found themselves in the middle management level of organisations because most of them do not possess the masculine traits such as assertiveness and dominance that have seem to be accepted to denote leadership (Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006). Women who do not possess these traits and characteristics expected from the masculine definition of leadership are therefore seen as unfit to occupy such positions, yet, those with such qualities are assessed negatively because of the perceived deviation from their expected gender roles (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002). Christman and McClellan (2008), argued that the choice to move too far within or outside feminine social constructions could be detrimental to the perceived competence of the women's leadership. Concisely, these studies suggest that the concept of leadership and leadership roles are in tandem with the descriptive and prescriptive masculine stereotype.

Several studies have shown that women have increased in numbers in the labour market, but few have attained leadership positions (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Oakley, 2000) with majority occupying the middle management positions (Cuadrado et al., 2012). Other studies suggest that women are over-represented in industries such as hospitality, healthcare and education, whereas men dominate in the manufacturing, technological and financial industries (Boateng, 2018; O. Catalyst, 2005). In the study, Ridgeway (2011) reported that women are unlikely to be selected as leaders in a gendered corporate organisation. Further, it has been revealed that women are also negatively evaluated and faces the challenge of the acceptance of their authority (Alice H Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Ritter & Yoder, 2004). Moreover, Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, and Tamkins (2004) in their experimental study which investigated the reactions to women succeeding in a male gender-typed job reported that women suffer in success in leadership roles, as such success is conversely viewed as a breach of prescriptive feminine roles or stereotype.

Holvino and Blake-Beard (2004) in their article titled 'Women discussing their differences: A promising trend' reported that all women leaders faced challenges, but women of colour face

additional challenges based on discrimination in the workplace. They asserted that women of colour receive lower pay than both white women and men of colour. They are also less likely to be promoted. Furthermore, it is expected from them to maintain good self-image even if they experience aggression. In reviewing the archival records from the 100 companies on the London stock exchange Michelle K Ryan and Haslam (2005) established that women were mostly selected to the top hierarchy of failing companies, whereas men were more likely to be appointed to the board of succeeding companies. In the same vein, Bruckmüller and Branscombe (2010) concluded that women are more likely to rise to positions of organisational leadership in times of crisis than in successful situations.

2.4 Women in corporate leadership: The African context

The phenomena of women leaders in the developing world have been scantily researched (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). This situation could be as a result of the few women in leadership positions (Titi Amayah & Haque, 2017). For instance, Titi Amayah and Haque (2017) reported that only 24 out of 912 articles they reviewed focused on the issues of women leaders in Africa. This relates to findings of Nkomo and Ngambi (2009) which claim that only 43 articles reported on female leadership after reviewing journal articles, book chapters, books, monographs and conference proceedings published between 1990 and 2000. Although these two studies differ in scope, they all reported a significant gap in studies that focus on women's issues. Other studies, further reported that the few studies on the women leaders in the African continent mostly focused on the differences between female and male leaders, women leaders perception the on the issues of pay gap, promotions and organisational preferences (Titi Amayah & Haque, 2017). Most of these studies established that the domination of patriarchal culture in the African societies has contributed significantly to the underrepresentation of women in corporate leadership positions, especially, in a situation where the decision-making powers are in the hands of men (Sadie, 2005). Grove and Montgomery (1999), asserted that the patriarchal societal culture on people's attitude continues to serve as a detriment for women who seek a leadership role in the public domain. Other studies also claimed that African women suffer a lot of discrimination and culture segregation in their quest to attain leadership positions (Amos-Wilson, 1999).

Erasmus (1998) study on South African career women found that the misconception about women and stereotyping deter well-educated and talented women from attaining leadership positions in their respective organisations. In a study conducted by Amine and Staub (2009) on women leaders in sub-Saharan Africa, they reported that women leaders face several challenges

varying from socio-culture, economic to the political. The study also reported that Ghanaian women managers are stereotyped as emotional, too soft and evaluated on the appropriateness of their gender roles than performance. Given the above research findings, it could be argued that the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, especially in Africa, is severe and needs a multi-stakeholder engagement in the quest to improve the situation.

2.5 Ghanaian women in leadership

Ghanaian women have participated in the economic activities of the country since time immemorial. They constitute a large part of the formal workforce sector. Participation of Ghanaian women in the civil service is dated back to the 1890s (Adusah-Karikari & Ohemeng, 2014). Although the civil service was reserved for the British colonialist, Ghanaian women have participated relatively in the public service. The number of women in the public service kept on increasing, and by 1930 they were constituting about 8% of all public workers (Adusah-Karikari & Ohemeng, 2014; Brenya et al., 2018). After Ghana gained its independence several legislations passed and the country has rectified several international conventions and treaties to promote and enhance women rights and ensure equality in representation both in public and private sphere (Brenya et al., 2018). The first republic government of Ghana under the leadership of Dr Kwame Nkrumah enacted a law to eliminate all kinds of discrimination against women informal employment. This law was enshrined in the Ghana Industrial Relations act 1965 to protect women in the formal public service from all form of discrimination. Again, the policy of equal pay for equal work was introduced in the public service act to help women in the sector to earn fair pay for their services (Adusah-Karikari & Ohemeng, 2014).

Further, the government of Ghana under Dr K.A. Busia⁵ leadership in 1971 also initiated paid maternity leave for women in the public service as an incentive to attract more women to the public service. The military government, National Liberation Movement also established the National Council for Women and Development in 1975. The Council⁶ was responsible for advising the government on women issues as well as ensuring the welfare of women (Adusah-Karikari & Ohemeng, 2014). Further, the 31st women movement was established in 1982 to champion women progress under the Provisional National Defence Council⁷ (PNDC). Women empowerment and girl child education were at the centre stages of the activities of the

⁵ Prime minister from 1969 to 1972.

⁶ National Liberation Movement (NLC) was a military government that overthrew the Busia civil government in 1972.

⁷ Provisional National Defence Council is a military government that overthrew the civil government of Dr Hilla Liman.

movement. The movement brought some relieve to young girls in school-going age who had been left in the house due to some cultural beliefs.

Moreover, the government of Ghana in 1986 rectified the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The CEDAW established the standard for the achievement of women's human right by outlining all areas in which obstacles exist and stating the norm of equality in human right advocacy (Bayefsky, 2000). Through the rectification of the CEDAW principle, the government of Ghana demonstrated its determination and willingness to strengthen women capacity to reduce inequality and increase women participation in the public sphere. With CEDAW, all forms of discrimination against women were brought into the limelight for deliberation. Governments were expected to promote and safeguard the principles of CEDAW as they are bound on them as signatories to it. In order to strengthen these rights and eliminate discrimination against women, the 1992 constitution of Ghana, Article 17 emphasised the need for equality and freedom of all citizens (Constitution of Ghana, 1992). In the constitution, discrimination was defined as the "*different*" (Ghana constitution, 1992). Besides, Article 27 (1) (2) (3) also reemphasised the need for women to be paid during their maternity leave. The 27 (1) states, "*Special care shall be accorded to mothers during a reasonable period before and after childbirth and during those periods working mothers shall be accorded paid leave*". Clause (2) added, "*Facilities shall be provided for the care of children below school-going age to enable women, who have the traditional care for children, realised their full potential*". Clause 3 also added, "*Women shall be guaranteed equal rights to training and promotion without any impediments from any person*" (Ghana Constitution, 1992)⁸. Such provisions were adopted to enhance the capacity of Ghanaian women to move above the socially constructed and traditional roles ascribed to them by given them equal right as their male counterpart. Besides, Ghana adopted and implemented the principles of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), the millennium development goals (2000-2015) and sustainable development goals (2015-2030) that sought to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

Despite all the intensions from the successive government to achieve equality for women in all aspect of the public sphere, women still lag behind men in many areas (Boateng, 2018). For example, it was only in 2004 that the first woman was appointed as manager of a bank in the country (GSS, 2014). This act was hailed as a breakthrough for women in Ghana, but the

⁸ The 1992 constitution of Ghana was crafted prior to the transition from military Government to civilian government to kick-start the fourth Republic that has been existed for twenty-seven years now.

change has been slow since then as the number marginally increased to four after ten years. Nevertheless, there has been some progress at the board level representation. Ghana Statistical Service report (2016) revealed that at least there is one female in all the Boards of the Banks in Ghana. For instance, Standard Chartered Bank and the United Bank for Africa has 25 per cent and 38 per cent of women in their Boards, respectively.

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented a literature review on leadership and gender. Leadership, like any other social science concept, has a different definition. However, an essential theme in all these definitions is the importance of followers and the ability of the leader to influence them to achieve the goals of the organisation.

Again, the two-dominant discourse on gender and leadership has also been presented. The first perspective as I presented, argued that men and women differ in the way they lead. The second perspective, on the other hand, argued that there is no difference in leadership styles of male and females and even if there is any it is very insignificant for a conclusion to be drawn on a different style of leadership.

Further, the review of the literature indicated that there are a plethora of studies on women and leadership in advanced countries. All these studies point to the fact that women are underrepresented in the top leadership position in the public domain. However, different reasons were attributed to this phenomenon. Almost similar findings were also reported in the studies in Africa as a whole and Ghana to be specific. However, in Ghana, it came out that cultural norms and conventions, as well as historical antecedents emanating from colonialism, had contributed immensely to fewer numbers of women in leadership.

I present the theories used to guide the study in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

Theoretical Perspective

3.0 Introduction

The role congruity theory of prejudice towards female leaders by Alice H Eagly and Karau (2002) and triple role theory were used to gain insight the complex experiences of women who have attained leadership positions in private corporate organisations in Ghana. While the role congruity theory focused on work-related experiences, the triple role theory was used to get a deeper understanding of the experiences relating to the balance of leadership role and the expected gender role from the non-work settings, for example, family roles. Besides, leadership concepts such as transactional and transformation leadership were used to understand theoretically the leadership styles used by these women leaders.

3.1 The role congruity theory of prejudice towards female leaders

Alice H Eagly and Karau (2002) postulate the role congruity theory of prejudice towards female leaders. This theory proposes that the perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles lead to two forms of prejudice: (a) perceiving women less favourably than men as potential occupants of leadership roles and (b) evaluation behaviour that fulfils the prescriptions of a leadership role are less favourable when it is enacted by a woman (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 576). The consequence of these perceptions is that attitudes are less favourable toward female than male leaders (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002).

The theory was developed based on the construct of gender roles. According to the proponents, since social roles are socially shared expectations that apply to persons who occupy a specific social position or are members of a particular social category, gender roles are consensual beliefs about the attributes of women and men (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 574). Eagly (1987, cited in Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 574), held that “*these beliefs are more than beliefs about the attributes of women and men: many of these expectations are normative in the sense that they describe qualities or behavioural tendencies believed to be desirable for each sex*”. Gender role congruity, therefore, refers to the congruity between gender and other roles, including leadership roles (Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006).

Roles could be divided into descriptive norms, which are consensual expectations about what members of a group do, and prescriptive norms, which are consensual expectations about what a group of people ought to do or ideally would do (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 574). The collection of both descriptive and injunctive norms expectations associated with women and men is then referred to as gender roles (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002). Descriptive and injunctive aspects of the gender roles often lead to at least three negative consequences for

women: 1) perceiving less favourable attitudes related to being a woman and at the same time be a leader, 2) more difficulties than men in achieving top leadership positions, 3) less favourable evaluations of their effectiveness as leaders (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Further, Alice H Eagly and Karau (2002, p. 573) asserted that prejudice could “arise from the relations that people perceive between the characteristics of members of a social group and the requirements of the social roles that group members occupy or aspire to occupy”. Prejudice could, therefore, develop when a society hold a stereotype about a social group that is perceived to be incongruent with the attributes that are thought to be required for success in certain classes of social roles (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002). Women social roles are more communal than agentic (Alice H Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). As such, women are expected to exhibit characteristics such as kindness and sensitivity (Diekmann & Goodfriend, 2006). Men, on the other hand, are perceived as the custodians of power and influence hence must exhibit agentic characteristics such as competitiveness, independence and are assumed to be task-oriented (Diekmann & Goodfriend, 2006; Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Moreover, women are regarded as actually and ideally being high in communal and low in agentic traits in contrast to both men and leadership characteristics (Ritter & Yoder, 2004, p. 187). Regarding this, Alice H Eagly and Karau (2002) argued that when the focus on leadership roles are male-dominated, participants devalued female leaders mostly than male leaders. They further indicated that this devaluation is more significant when men served as the evaluators (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 587).

In addition, it is argued that women leaders would always be at a disadvantage when they are compared to their male counterpart. In many instances, women leaders who are effective would be perceived as being masculine which is incongruent with their female gender role (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002). Such women would be evaluated unfavourably for showing agentic characteristics instead of communal characteristics that define who a woman is. From this perspective, Alice H Eagly and Karau (2002) argued that women leaders are faced with dual challenges. That is complying to their gender role would produce a failure to meet the requirements of their leadership role, and complying to their leadership role would produce a failure to meet the requirements of their gender role. Garcia-Retamero and López-Zafra (2006, p. 51) further argue that masculine characteristics are essential predictors of leadership and are ascribed to leaders in many different contexts, regardless of the leader's gender. The consequence of such perception is that people accord more authority to men, therefore, making them more influential and persuasive than women when they are in groups (Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006, p. 52).

Additionally, the perception of leadership as a masculine activity also has consequences on how women think about themselves as potential leaders (Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006). Women often feel less confident and comfortable in a leadership position than men. This trend could either be explained from the perspective of role conflict where women leaders contemplate to either maintain their communal characteristics to suit the female gender roles or adopt agentic characteristics that are congruent with the leadership role. Nevertheless, their superiors, as well as their subordinates, would always assess them from the perspective of their gender (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002; Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006).

The role congruity theory of prejudice towards women leaders, however, asserts that women would not always be at the receiving end of prejudice when they take a leadership position. The theory posits that some conditions could moderate the prejudices against women (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002). That is *'because the first form of prejudice toward female leaders follows from incongruity between the descriptive content of the female gender role and leadership role, prejudice would be lessened or absent to the extent this incongruity is weak or absent'* (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 576). Men who hold leadership positions that have both prescriptive and descriptive feminine content could also be open to prejudice. Notwithstanding this claim, women are more prone to role incongruity prejudice in relation to leadership, since leadership is always constructed in a masculine image (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002; Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006). Additionally, Alice H Eagly and Karau (2002, p. 576) posit that leaders' situation and characteristics of the perceivers could be the underlying factors of prejudice.

Moreover, the variation in the definition of leadership roles had a significant difference in the level of incongruity between gender roles and leadership roles (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002). For example, when leadership roles are described in feminine terms, it happens to be more congruent with the female gender role. As a result, the tendency to view women as less qualified than men would be weakened or even disappear (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002).

In summary, the role congruity theory was developed on the assumptions that social roles, as well as gender roles, have an impact on how people perceived and evaluate the behaviour of women leaders. What women leaders do or not do are influenced by their gender roles. These gender roles are part of the traditional norms and beliefs, where women and men are stereotypically cast in particular form and are therefore expected to act and behave in such a manner. Women are generally expected to be communal, whereas men should be agentic. When women turn to be agentic, the society views such behaviour as a deviation from their

gender roles hence negative evaluation. As argued by Skelly and Johnson (2011), individuals are penalised when they do not perform according to societal expectations.

This theory is used in this study to get a more in-depth understanding of the experiences of women leaders after they have attained leadership positions in private corporate organisations.

3.2 The Concept of Transformational and Translational leadership

While there seems to be contesting discourse on the difference in leadership styles between female and male leaders, there are some aspects of leadership characters that seem to be associated with one gender or the other (Eisner, 2013). Different leadership styles range from democratic to undemocratic, task-oriented and interpersonal oriented have been used by different leadership scholars in the quest to explain the leadership styles display by those in leadership (Dubinsky, Yammarino, Jolson, & Spangler, 1995; Alice H Eagly et al., 2003; Eisner, 2013). Concerning this study, insight was drawn from leadership styles such as transformation and transaction concepts to guide some aspect of the study.

James MacGregor Burns used the concept of transformational leadership in 1978 and further developed by Bernard M, Abass in 1985 (Gregory Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004). According to Bass (1997, p. 21), transformational leadership occurs “*when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their self-interest for the good of the group*”. To Tracey and Hinkin (1998) transformational leadership is a process of motivating people by appealing to their higher ideals and moral values, defining and articulating a vision of the future, and forming a base of credibility.

Transformational leadership style has four core elements; thus, charisma or idealised influence, powerful motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration (Bass & Steidlmeier, 2006). An idealised influence depicts behaviour that results in subordinate’s admiration, respect and trust. It encompasses risk-sharing by the leader and expression of concern of the needs of the subordinates other than self-seeking. The influential motivation of transformational leadership is based on the leaders’ ability to inspire and motivate subordinates. The effectiveness of the inspiration and motivation on the subordinates could emerge through relationship building between the leader and the subordinates (Gregory Stone et al., 2004). The intellectual stimulation aspect of transformational leadership focuses on the stimulation of the followers to be creative and innovative as well as the exhibition of a high level of skills and new ideas to be able to solve critical problems (Gregory Stone et al., 2004; Tracey & Hinkin, 1998).

The final component of transformational leadership is the individualised consideration element. Under this element, leaders exhibit a high sense of corporation by listening carefully and being considerate to their subordinates. A significant aspect of this element is the leaders' passion to mentor and have confidence in their subordinates by delegating tasks and monitor what they do without unnecessary obstruction (Gregory Stone et al., 2004). In transformational leadership style, leaders stimulate the passion of subordinates towards the organisations' objectives and inspire them to work to achieve such objective (Bromley & Kirschner-Bromley, 2007; Gregory Stone et al., 2004). Transformational leaders, therefore, focus on improvement and development of subordinates, explains with clarity how to achieve the vision of the organisation, exhibit a high level of confidence and lead by example to achieve the target of the organisation (Gregory Stone et al., 2004; Tracey & Hinkin, 1998; G. A. Yukl, 2013)

Transactional leadership, on the other hand, is based on bureaucratic and organisational standard, focus on the results and are confined on rewards and sanctions (Tracey & Hinkin, 1998; Tucker & Russell, 2004). It is a leading established on leader-follower relationships based on a series of exchanges between leaders and followers. According to Avolio, Bass, and Jung (1999) transactional leadership have three components, thus, contingent reward, management by exception-active and management by exception-passive. The contingent reward is the degree to which the leader sets up constructive transactions or exchange with subordinates. Under the contingent reward, leaders clarify the expectations and the rewards for achieving targets (Avolio et al., 1999). The second component is management by exception-active, which defines the extent to which the leaders take punitive action based on the outcome of leader-subordinate transactions. Leaders who exhibit management by exception-passive are lackadaisical about their reaction to the flaws of their subordinates. The difference between management by exception-passive and management by exception-active is the timing of leaders' intervention. Active leaders take key interest in monitoring subordinates' behaviour; foresee problems and take corrective actions before such behaviour produce unintended consequence. Passive leaders on the other hand stay aloof until the problem has already occurred (Avolio et al., 1999).

Bass (1998), argued that transformational leadership styles build on transactional base in contributing to the extra effort and performance of followers. By extension, transformational leadership complements transactional leadership and that effective leaders often supplement transaction leadership with transformational leadership (Howell & Avolio, 1993). Bass (1997) further added that most leaders exhibit both transformational and transaction leadership styles when they lead. However, those who are considered as transformational leaders exhibit more

of transformational characteristics than that of transactional characteristics. Similarly, those referred to as transactional leaders display more transaction leadership components than that of transformational components.

Based on the objective of this study, thus, to explore the experiences of women leaders in private corporate organisations in Ghana, I found it relevant to adopt these established leadership concepts to guide the findings emanated from the in-depth interviews and the observations. The characteristics of leadership approaches as expressed by informants were analysed in the light of the characteristics of these concepts, and this was useful in illuminating and understanding why and how such leadership styles are adopted or preferred.

3.3 Triple role theory

Moser (1993) conceptualised the triple role framework. According to the framework, women triple role, involve productive, reproductive and community management. The productive female role encompasses the production of goods and services for consumption. Besides working for informal organisations, that is private and public organisations, are part of the production role of women. These productive roles played by the female generate income for them and their families. Notwithstanding the significant contribution of the women productive role, some of them find it difficult to access resources, support and opportunity in the jobs that pay well. Those who are lucky to get access to work at the top corporate organisations are sometimes discriminated on pay difference (O'Reilly, Smith, Deakin, & Burchell, 2015).

Another role discussed by the triple role theory is women reproductive role. This role encompasses childbearing, child-caring and other domestic activities. For example, in the context of Ghana, some of the reproductive roles play by women encompass cooking, sweeping, taking care of the elderly, childbearing and child-caring responsibilities (Apusigah, 2004). According to Moser (1993), not all these activities are treated as actual work, although it involves a high level of energy and time to be accomplished. This role is embedded in gender roles, which are constructed by society based on the bodies of the individuals. Women are stereotyped to be communal and feel more comfortable in less competitive activities (Lyness & Heilman, 2006; Madalozzo, 2010). A key element of the reproductive role is that they are unpaid activities. Although the women reproductive role is going through many changes in some advanced countries, the same could not be told about most of the developing countries. Women still dominate and responsible for the majority of household activities (Brown, 1996; Overå, 2007). In the context of women leaders, it is true that most of these women, despite

working and having greater responsibilities at work, they are still expected to perform most of the caring duties at home.

The third role played by women is community engagement. The community role involves community activities, which include the participation in social events, taking part in communal labour such as cleaning as well as being responsible for protecting the natural resources of the community. Besides, women are also expected to participate in functions such as naming ceremonies, puberty rites, festivals, funeral rites and marriage ceremonies (Moser, 2012). They are also expected to participate in the decision-making process of the communities by representing the community, serving on boards and committees, contributing to projects development as well as serving as a role model for the young in the community. Women leaders in the Ghanaian context partake in all these three roles, that is, productive, reproductive and community roles. This undoubtedly increases their responsibilities, and at times overburdening, regardless of the society and families expect these women to partake in these all activities. It is from this background where the triple roles theory becomes relevant for this study, precisely to see how women leaders' manoeuvre and negotiate in a myriad of all these responsibilities.

Summary

The chapter has presented different theories and concepts used to guide this study. These theories are role congruity theory of prejudice towards women leaders, triple role theory and the concepts of transactional and transformational leadership. These theories are used in the study to get a deeper insight into the experiences of women leaders. The role congruity theory of prejudice toward women leaders and the concept of transformational and transactional leadership styles focused on the issues relating to the work-related experiences while the triple role theory focused on the issues both at the work and non-work settings.

The study's methodology is presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology employed in this study. It comprises the study design, data collection methods and procedure, selection of informants, data analysis, trustworthiness in research, role and position of the researcher and ethical consideration.

4.1 Design and approach

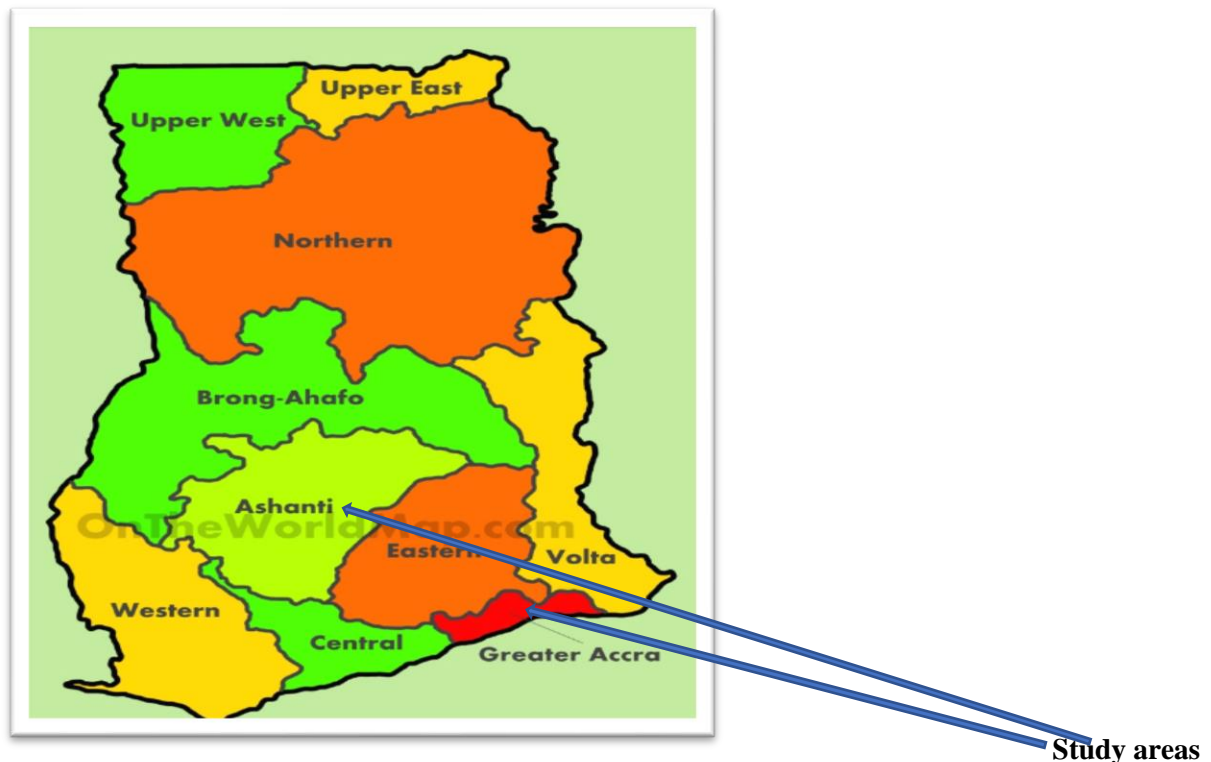
The aim of the study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of female corporate leaders, and qualitative phenomenological research design was adopted. A Qualitative phenomenological research design describes the meanings, and the importance of individual or groups ascribe to their lived experiences of a phenomenon (Silverman, 2013). It is a research design that focuses on the understanding of individual or group experiences from their own perspective (Silverman, 2013; Van Manen, 2016). According to Krasemann (2014), phenomenological studies presume that meanings ascribed to a specific phenomenon are shared and mutually understood by all informants. In this study, a purposefully selected women leaders in corporate organisations shared their lived experiences and the meanings they attached to these experiences. Likewise, some subordinates under these female leaders and those who have ever worked under women as their immediate supervisors also shared their experiences of working under women and the meanings they attached to such experiences. With the adoption of the qualitative phenomenological research design, I was able to get an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of these informants. Again, qualitative phenomenological research design made it possible for me to combine methods such as observation, informal conversation and in-depth interviews to elicit informants lived experiences and perceptions about what it means to be a female corporate leader in a patriarchal society such as Ghana.

4.2 Study site selection

The fieldwork was conducted in the two biggest cities in Ghana- Accra and Kumasi, which are situated 270 km apart. Accra is the capital of Ghana, with a population of about two million according to the 2010 national census data (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). It is located on the south-eastern part of the country. Kumasi is the capital of the Ashanti Region, and it is located at the middle-belt of Ghana with a population of about 1.5 million. As business hubs for the country, most of the corporate organisations have their head offices located there. It was, therefore, justifiable for me to select corporations within these areas.

4.2.1 The study area

Map of Ghana showing study areas



Source: google maps

4.3 Selection of Informants

Two groups of informants were selected for this study. The first group were female leaders who worked in private corporate organisations. The second group of informants were subordinates who work or have ever worked under female leaders. In all, seventeen informants, consist of ten female leaders and seven subordinates under female leaders were selected. The next section gives further details of the selection processes of the informants.

4.4 Selection of women leaders

The collection process started with an online search for private corporate organisations in Ghana with women among their senior leadership. Senior leadership position in this context refers to all women who are part of the top hierarchy of their respective companies. The online search through the google search engine revealed more than a hundred corporate organisations in Ghana with female leaders. The search was further narrowed down to private organisations

that featured in Ghana Club Hundred Companies⁹ for 2017. After identifying the companies with female leaders, I went through their profiles by visiting the organisations' websites to ascertain how long they have held such positions.

Phenomenological research design demands that informants must have a lived experienced in the phenomenon under investigation in order to be able to provide rich and detailed information about it (Creswell, 2012). Subsequently, twenty female leaders who have been in leadership for at least three years were purposefully selected. Afterwards, e-mails were sent to them to establish initial contact. However, none of them replied to the emails. I then followed up with calls, but most of the calls ended up with the organisations' receptionists who took my details and promised to come back to me after informing the leaders, but this too had limited success. Few of the calls went through with two indicating their unavailability, whereas one requested for the details of the study. The person who requested further information later confirmed her willingness to participate in the study after I sent her the full study proposal.

The fieldwork started in July 2018 when I arrived in Ghana, and it ended 20th August 2018. During the initial stages of this phase, I visited the offices of the selected informants to meet them in person. I initially thought I could enter the offices and ask for the person I am searching for but to my surprise, that was not how it works. I had to follow a strict laid-down procedure by first writing an introductory letter and my contact details for any possible feedback. After I waited for a week with no feedbacks, I went back to make enquires about the requests. Six of the female leaders I got the permission to meet accepted to be part of the study and interview schedule was set. Although most of these schedules were rescheduled due to their very busy schedules.

Due to the initial challenges I faced in getting access to the informants, I adopted the snowball technique along the process to get to the others who were interested in participating in the study. Snowballing is a recruitment technique through which an informant provides the researcher with information to the second informant who shares some characteristics that are of interest for the study (Noy, 2008, p. 330). The adoption of the snowballing technique inadvertently expanded the selection criteria from the Ghana Club Hundred Companies to organisations outside of it but with female leaders. However, this did not affect the data collected since those women selected have held the leadership position for more than three years and are working for private corporate organisations. In this way, the snowballing

⁹ Ghana club hundred companies are the top 100 companies in Ghana. These companies are recognised and rewarded annually by the Ghana Investment promotion based on their contribution to the development of the country. (Informants were selected from the 2017 list).

technique was useful in accessing informants with the right experience and information I was after. Four informants were recruited with the use of the snowball selection procedure.

The selected informants spread across different sectors. The organisations include the banking institutions (2), the food processing industry (1), the advertising industry (1), the auditing industry (2), the oil and gas industry (1), Sanitation (1) and insurance industry (2). Their job titles include Senior Partner, Country Manager, Executive Director, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer. The experiences in the leadership of the selected female leaders range from 3-18 years. Eight out of the ten informants have master’s degrees, and one has a PhD and the other a bachelor’s degree. Seven of informants were married, two were divorced, and one was not married. Out of the seven married informants, three had three children, the other three had two children each, and one had no child. Of the two who have divorced, one had two children, and the other has no child. The minimum age of the women informants was 32 years, whereas the maximum age was 55 years. Refer to table 1 for detailed information.

4.4.1 Selection of subordinates

Subordinates who worked under women leaders were purposively selected from the organisations headed by female leaders. All the workers selected had worked or was working directly under female leaders. The subordinates who were selected had worked for at least one year under a female leader. The female leaders became the gatekeepers for me to get access to their subordinates. It must be emphasized that consent was regardless sought from each subordinate. Out of the seven, four were males, and three were females. The educational background of these subordinates includes post-graduate (2), bachelor (2), HND (1), Diploma (1) and SHS certificate (1). Refer to table 2 for details.

Table 1. women leaders:

<i>Informants</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>No. of children</i>	<i>Years in leadership</i>	<i>Type of organisation</i>
<i>Linda</i>	45	PhD	Married	3	5	Auditing firm
<i>Liose</i>	32	Postgraduate	Married	0	4	Auditing firm
<i>Antione</i>	52	Postgraduate	Married	3	18	Sanitation
<i>Lena</i>	50	Postgraduate	Married	2	15	Advertising
<i>Getty</i>	49	Postgraduate	Divorced	2	15	Banking institution
<i>Christine</i>	38	Postgraduate	Married	3	10	Food Processing
<i>Abena</i>	38	Bachelor	single	0	6	Insurance company

<i>Dina</i>	55	Postgraduate	Married	2	25	Insurance company
<i>Vera</i>	35	Postgraduate	Divorced	0	4	Oil and gas company
<i>Percy</i>	38	Postgraduate	Married	2	3	Banking Institution

Table 2. *subordinates*

<i>Informants</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Years under female leader</i>	<i>Organisation</i>
<i>Daniel</i>	25	Male	SHS ¹⁰	single	1	Insurance company
<i>John</i>	30	Male	Diploma	single	5	Advertising
<i>Mat</i>	35	Male	Postgraduate	married	4	Auditing Firm
<i>Emelia</i>	28	Female	Bachelor	single	3	Oil and gas
<i>Mena</i>	40	Female	Bachelor	married	9	Sanitation
<i>Sampson</i>	32	Male	HND ¹¹	single	8	Food Processing
<i>Nanson</i>	37	Female	Postgraduate	married	5	Insurance

Source fieldwork: 2018

4.4.2 Data collection methods

The data for this study were collected using in-depth interviews, observations and informal conversations. These qualitative data collection methods were employed to explore in detail the informant's experiences regarding the phenomenon under study. This method triangulation is important in improving the credibility and overall trustworthiness of the study (Silverman, 2013).

4.4.3 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with the informants to explore their experiences of being female leaders and working under female leaders to get more in-depth insight into women leadership experiences. An interview is a conversation between an interviewer and the interviewee (Morten Skovdal & Flora Cornish, 2015). As suggested by some qualitative scholars (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Morten Skovdal & Flora Cornish, 2015), I led the interview by guiding the conversation to get answers to the questions being asked. Using interviews guide, I started the interviews by asking questions related to the research objective. The responses from the informants were further probed for clarity and to get that more profound meaning and understanding of the issues raised. See appendix for the interview guide with women leaders

¹⁰ Senior High School

¹¹ Higher National Diploma

As noted earlier, seventeen in-depth interviews were conducted, ten with female leaders and seven with subordinates who work with female leaders. The in-depth interviews with the female leaders were conducted in their offices at their time schedule. Out of the ten female leaders interviewed, two requested for the interview guide beforehand, so in this regard day of the interview. So, they were privy to the interview questions before the interview date. The average time for each interview with a woman leader was forty-five minutes. Regarding the subordinates, the average time for each interview was one hour. Two of the interviews were conducted at the canteen of the respective companies. The other five interviews were conducted in their offices. It must be noted that the questions guide for the subordinates were very few as they were not the primary informants in the study. The major part of the interviews focused on probing the responses of these subordinates. Refer to the appendix for the interview guide with subordinates.

All interviews were conducted in English, with occasional usage of Twi (one of the local Ghanaian languages), especially in cases when referring to a locally conceptualised phenomenon. As Patton (2002) cautioned “*no matter what style of interviewing technique you use, and no matter how carefully you word questions, it all comes to nought if you fail to capture the actual words of the person being interviewed*” (p.380). With this caution, I used an audio recorder to record all the interviews to avoid losing vital information. In each interview, I sought the consent of the informants before using the audio recorder. That notwithstanding, one informant requested for a copy of the recorded audio of the interview of which I sent to her through WhatsApp messenger right after the interview. Two others demanded that the audio recording must be deleted within twenty-four hours for which I had to transcribe the interviews overnight and deleted the audio as we agreed. Field notes were taken alongside the audio recording. The salient points raised were written down and used as a rough guide during the coding and analysis processes.

The interviews with the women leaders were centred on the experiences of the women leaders after they accessed the top leadership positions. Also, the perception of women leaders before they became one, the experience relating to their gender roles and leadership responsibilities and the perception of why there are few female leaders in corporate organisations, the challenges they face before attaining leadership positions and their experiences in balancing the work and family life. On the other hand, subordinates were asked to share their experiences working under female leaders and their general perception of female leaders. *See appendices 1 and 2?*

4.4.4 Observations

Non-participant observation is one of the techniques I used for data collection in this study. With this technique of data collection, the researcher learns about how the researched behave and interact in their natural social settings through observations (M Skovdal & F Cornish, 2015). Observations provide a chance for researchers to adapt and build rapport with research participants and their environment (Dewalt & DeWalt, 2002). In this study, observation data were collected during my visits to the office premises of the informants. While I waited for the informants to be interviewed, I observed some actions at the premises. For instance, I observed some workers moved away from their working desk to others for conversation but rushed back when they saw that their boss was coming. Right after she passed to her office, they regrouped again to continue with the conversation.

Observations also happened during interviews with the leaders. In one instance, I observed a worker showing what seems to be fear as he was asked about a task he ought to have executed. Although the conversation seemed to be friendly in my perspective, the worker was a little bit jittery. Not surprising my interview with the said subordinates confirmed what I observed as she said, “...*I don't know, but fear always grabs me anytime I see this woman*”. When I probed further, she indicated that she had been insulted several times by her boss over minor issues. Again, observations at some other offices seemed to portray a good relationship between the leaders and their subordinates. These observations gave me first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon of women leadership. All the observations were recorded in the field notebook for further reflections right after the interviews to make sure I do not lose vital information. Even though the longevity of stay with the researched as prescribe by M Skovdal and F Cornish (2015, p. 78) was not achieved, I believe that the information I gathered during the short stay with the informants was of great importance for the study.

4.4.5 Informal Conversation

The informal conversation happened simultaneously with the participant observation. That is, I observed while still engaging in conversation. The conversations were mostly centred on issues of women in general. The general perception of women leaders was discussed. Also, the issue of the #MeToo movement, why the media in the country are not interested, and why the women in the country are not embracing the movement was also discussed. Likewise, issues of gender pay gap and discrimination against women came up during the conversation. Additionally, the victimisation of female leaders holding public office was also raised during

conversation. Although the conversations were not structured, I obtain very good information useful for this study.

4.5 Data Analysis

The information gathered during the interviews were transcribed into a word document and analysed using meaning condensation framework developed by Giorgi (1975). Meaning condensation is reducing lengthy statements expressed by informants into a shorter format without changing the meaning (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Giorgi (1975) developed this analytical technique from the phenomenological philosophy perspective. This analysis procedure involves five steps.

The analysis of the data started with the familiarisation of the interview data transcript and the observation notes taken during the fieldwork. So at the first stage, I read the transcript thoroughly several times to identify statements and information that relate to the research questions as proposed by Graneheim and Lundman (2004). Mainly, I was interested in information that relates to women experience with the expectation from their superiors, experience in executing their task, experience concerning their workers, challenges experienced throughout their career, experience relating to combining the work and family responsibilities, subordinates' perceptions and experience about female leaders. Aside, I also searched for information that relates to what motivates women leaders to push for high-level positions as well as the perceptions about the reason why there are few females at senior leadership positions in corporate organisations.

After the familiarisation stage, I used the Nvivo 12, a software developed by QSR International for organising and management of data. To do this, I first uploaded the transcript into the Nvivo 12 software. After, meaning units of the text as expressed by the informants were decided. The meaning units is the constellation of words or statements that relate to the same central meaning (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

Afterwards, the entire meaning units were coded. In order not to distort the informants' thoughts, I made sure that codes are much closed to the informants shared experience. I generated sub-themes from these codes. The closely related codes were categorised under one sub-theme.

The fourth stage of the analysis involves the cross-examination of the meaning units in relation to the objective of the study. This was to make sure that the themes are presented in order and clarity.

Finally, stand out, themes were identified and used to present the outcome of the study. Three themes emerged from the analysis 1. Women advancement to corporate leadership and women leadership approach 2. Opportunities and challenges of women leaders 3. Strategies in balancing work, family, community responsibilities. *Refer to Table 3 for an exemplification of the coding process and movement from text to themes.*

Table 3: Sample analysis: from meaning unit to theme in meaning condensation: women leaders work and non-work setting experiences

Meaning Unit	codes	Sub-theme	Theme
You know in our society, under normal circumstances older people always lead and not young ones. But here in the workplace, I am managing people who are older than me. It is important for me to be very careful in dealing with such people to avoid any reprisal.	Young female leaders find it challenging to manage people older than them	Age matters in the enactment of leadership	Work settings related experiences
All the workers here call me mom because of my age. So, if I need help, I just asked, can you help your mother to do this? This makes things easy for me. You know, even though I am older than them and I can be the mother of majority of them I make sure that the respect giving to me by these young ones are not taking for granted.	The 'older' female leaders find it easy to control the subordinates		
When I joined, they had brought three subsidiary companies together, so the general managers became managers and they were all reporting to me. This caused a lot of dissatisfaction and resistance. Just because I was not part of them and maybe I am a woman managing three big men who were already in the company	Women leaders find it difficult to exert authority in a new environment	Difficulty in managing long-serving staff	
I think it took me a long time to be promoted. Almost all the men that I came here with were promoted before me. I mean at a point some men were not even qualified, but they were all promoted ahead of me	Some women leaders' experiences promotion discrimination	Discrimination, Stereotypes and sexism towards women leaders	
One time the workers were agitating about their incentives and I spoke with them that we will meet and discuss about it at the board level in our next meeting. That didn't stop them but when a colleague male came and spoke with them saying the same things, I had said they were ok with it	Expression of negative attitudes towards women leaders		
...sometimes you hear comments from people in suit and you ask yourself, did he really mean what he said. I mean you will go for a meeting and someone will just look at you and make comments like 'is all this dressing for this meeting' 'miss Ghana I like your hairstyle and so on and so forth'	Women leaders experience sexism		
[...] Like I said earlier, you need to go an extra mile to prove yourself, because people are doubtful if women could be able to handle the pressure and deliver the agenda. So, you must be more organized, work extra during the day and sometimes at night in the house after everyone is gone to bed to achieve your target. It is very stressful, but you cannot relax because of the high expectation	women leaders must prove themselves to be accepted by their colleagues	High expectation for women leaders	

<p>...I always have to call my children to find out what they are doing at home to ensure that all is well. Right from here, I have to get home as a mother to prepare dinner for my kids and husband. I have to know what happened to the kids at school and helped them to do their school assignments. These are the things I cannot leave in the hands' of other people.</p>	<p>women leaders perform motherhood roles directly and indirectly during the day</p>		<p>Non-work settings related challengers</p>
<p>Our culture is not like the developed countries where today a man will cook and tomorrow a woman will cook. Here in Ghana, it is the sole responsibility of the woman in the house to cook for the family, not the man. When we return from work, my husband will not go to the kitchen. I have to go to the kitchen and prepare food for the family, even if I am tired. I have to also to wash husband's dirty clothes, pack his things for him anytime he is travelling and many more.</p>	<p>women wifely role include preparing breakfast and dinner for the family as well as washing dirty clothes of their husbands</p>	<p>Women roles as mothers and wives</p>	
<p>Before my appointment, I was very active when it comes to attending funerals and wedding ceremonies, but I have reduced it drastically. I only attend those that are close to my family. There is always complain from those I could not attend, but I do not care about what they say...</p>	<p>Some women leaders found it difficult to participate in some community functions</p>	<p>women leaders reduce their community engagement</p>	

4.6 Trustworthiness in qualitative research

In qualitative studies, the concepts of credibility, dependability and Transferability are used to describe trustworthiness (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). These concepts are adopted to give a detailed explanation of the procedures used to ensure the trustworthiness of this study.

4.6.1 Credibility

In qualitative research, the concept of credibility refers to the confidence in the data been produced and the effectiveness of the analysis process in answering the research objectives. (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). To ensure credibility, it is important to be critical on the study focus, selection of the research context, the selection of research informants and the approach to data collection, analysis, interpretation and presentation of the results. In this study, triangulation at two-level employed to ensure the quality of data and therefore improve the trustworthiness of the study. Triangulation one was at informant level where both women leaders and subordinates were interviewed. This enabled the collection of quality data and also, more importantly, improve trustworthiness in the narratives of women leaders. Later in the results section, we see that many experiences and work practices as expressed by female leaders were also confirmed by their subordinates regardless they were perceived to be positive or negative. The second level of triangulation was using different methods for data collection,

although interviews were the main method, this study benefitted from observations and informal conversations. This too improved the credibility of the study. Additionally, with regards to informants, men were also included to try in balancing the gender perspective in the study. It was important in a study of this nature to see if experiences of male and female subordinates substantially differ under women leaders. The data analysis also followed a rigour procedure of meaning condensation as guided by (Giorgi, 1975) where codes were generated from meaning unit, then sub-themes emerged from the codes and subsequently the final themes were developed. This process was done throughout the analysis to increase the trustworthiness of the study outcome. In addition, a table was generated from this analysis for the reader to see how the process went of moving from the interview text to themes. All this helped in improving transparency and trustworthiness of the study.

4.6.2 Dependability

Dependability addresses the issues of consistency of the data collection process (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). In this study, I used a two separate interview guide, one for the female leaders and the other for the subordinates who work under female leaders. With the female leaders' questions that address their experiences of being a female leader were asked. On the other hand, the question guide for subordinates related to their general perceptions and experiences of working under female leaders. Informants in each category were asked the same questions to ensure consistency. Aside, all the interviews and the transcription were conducted by me these transcripts, coding and the analysis process were checked by my academic supervisor.

4.6.3 Transferability

Another aspect of trustworthiness is transferability. Transferability hint on the extent to which findings of the study could be transferred to other settings and groups (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Regarding this study, the intention is not to transfer the findings but to provide a specific-based-knowledge on the experience of women in higher echelons of private corporate organisations in Ghana. However, a thick description of the study procedure, social settings, informants' characteristics, data collection and analysis procedure, data source and methods used during the study has been given. This could facilitate the transferability of the study findings to another context. Notwithstanding this, such decision lies solely with the reader (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 110).

4.7 The role of the researcher and Reflexivity

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher vis a' vis the research participants is very important. This is because the decisions of the researcher regarding the behaviour exhibit

during the data collection procedure and analysis could have a potential effect on the outcome of the study. It is therefore important for the researcher to be critically reflexive at any point of the study process. Reflexivity is commonly viewed as “*the process of continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researcher’s positionality as well as active acknowledgement and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome*” (Berger, 2015, p. 220). It means turning off the researcher's lens back onto oneself to recognise and take responsibility for one’s situatedness within the research and the effect that it may have on the setting and people being studied, questions being asked, data being collected and its interpretation processes (Berger, 2015). Continuous reflexivity could reduce subjectivity and biases that could have arisen from the informant’s participation as a research instrument (Kvale 1996). I exhibited a high sense of awareness right from the selection of the informants to data analysis to increase the trustworthiness of the study.

As a Ghanaian, I saw myself as an insider in the study setting. Here, I referred to an insider as a researcher who studies group or individuals to whom they relate to (Mullings, 1999). As an insider, you have the advantage to use the experiences and knowledge of the group to acquire an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being researched. As I was growing up in Ghana one crucial thing, I learnt was that young males are addressed and respected based on their appearance. Those who dress well, that is. tuck in their shirt, cut down their hair without any design and those who do not pull down their trousers were considered as ethical and respectful. Moreover, I was aware of the Ghana corporate environment and the kind of dressing that is acceptable. As a result, I became conscious of the type of outfits I wore while visiting the office premises of the informants. This was not done to impress my informants but to gain acceptance and respect from my informants. Indeed, this worked to my advantage because most people I met in the work settings of the informants were very corporative and helpful.

Being aware of the issues of the power imbalance between the researcher and the researched in qualitative studies, where the researcher mostly assumed stronger influence, I decided to be mindful in moderating the interviews so that I would not be the one dominating the discussion. Besides, I was aware that the unequal power relations could be reduced or tilted to favour the informants, especially the women leaders, since they are elite individuals with vast experiences in their leadership portfolios. I noted this type of scenario in some of the interviews I had. That notwithstanding I moderated the interviews very well by probing the answers from the informants without showing any sign of jittery.

Again, I pre-empted that there is a likelihood I would be underestimated in relation to organisational leadership and for that matter, women in leadership. More so, I foresaw that

gaining trust from such people could be difficult because of the recent happening in the country where people have been unknowingly recorded during a private conversation without been informed. Not surprisingly, some of the things I thought of occurred when I met some of my informants. Indeed, when I met my first informant and introduced myself with an introductory letter from my supervisor, she was not convinced enough so I had to give her my student identification card as additional evidence, that, indeed I am from the University of Bergen. Not only her, but a similar situation also occurred with some other informants.

Nonetheless, I remained focused and showed more excellent composure and understanding of what I was doing by asking questions and probing the issues raised by the informants. Showing a deeper understand of the case being study is what Mullings (1999, p. 340) refers to as positional spaces. Thus, areas where the situated knowledge of both parties in interview encounter engender a level of trust and co-operation. As I asked the relevant questions and probed the answers given informants begun to elaborate more on the issues.

On the other hand, I saw myself as an outsider, thus someone studying a group to whom I am not related to; thus, a male studying about female leaders in corporate organisations. Not surprisingly, some of the informants asked me questions such as, *why you are interested in women's issues. Why is it that you want to study women leaders, but not men leaders?* Providing answers to such questions set the pace for the interviews. My role as an outsider from this perspective provided me with a more in-depth insight into the case as informants shared their experiences. However, I observed that some informants held on to some information because I am a male. For instance, Linda, one of the informants, told me, “... *You know I cannot share everything that happens with you, you are not a woman*”, and she laughed. Being an outsider was a disadvantage to me because informants held onto some information which I thought it could be vital for the study. As a male, I was advised that since I am interested in women issues, I should speak up to defend women's interest. The justification was that Ghanaians listen to males more when they speak on women issues than women themselves. Others were more interested in my marital status. The responses I gave triggered different conversation, as I was encouraged to get married and take good care of my spouse, for example, Abena said, “*you should not be like the other men who think that the place of women is in the kitchen*”. Such diversion disrupted the interview to some extent; however, I was always focused to bring them back to the issues relating to the study.

4.8 Ethical consideration

Researchers need to carry out their studies in an ethical way so that it would not bring any adverse effect to their informants. To ensure that the study is ethical and meets the standard required, ethical clearance was obtained from the Norwegian Social Sciences Statistics Data Service (NSD). Although informants first consented to be part of the study, in some instance, I had to seek permission from the informants' organisation before I could continue with the informant. All the study informants were informed about the purpose of the study and the information I required of them. Besides, the informants were given an informed consent form that outlined their right to participate, their right to refuse or withdraw participation at any point without being penalised.

Moreover, informants were informed about the confidentiality, the risk involved in the study, ensuring of anonymity, as well as how long the data would be kept and after the study what would happen to the data. Also, subordinates were informed that the consent of their leaders did not bind on them and they have the same right whether to be part of the study or not. I further informed the informants that all the interviews would be recorded with audio recorder before I started every interview. Informants were asked to sign the informed consent form after they have agreed to be part of the study. All the data collected was stored in my personal computer with a face recognition password. The names and any other data that could be used to identify my informants were anonymised. Pseudonyms were used to represent the informants to ensure anonymity.

4.9 Limitations and challenges of the study

The paucity of statistics on women in leadership positions for that matter, private corporate organisations was a hindrance to the study. Ghana, like many other developing countries, data on employment, and unemployment, as well as gender differences in the labour market, are had to come by. Due to this, I was not able to acquire the needed secondary data in the context of Ghana to support the study. However, this did not affect the study as I supported the study findings with other literature from another context.

A major challenge was getting access to the informants during the fieldwork. The busy schedule of the corporate leaders made it difficult for me to get access to them. Although there was an initial contact with some of my informants, I still had to go through a rigorous process before I could meet them in person. After gaining access to the informants, time also became an issue as the informants always had something else on their tables to do. This, to some extent,

affected the shape of the interview as I was given a limited time. This notwithstanding, I was able to ask the important questions and probe the issues for clarification.

Resource constraint was another challenge while I was on the field. As a self-financed student, I had to finance the fieldwork from my account. Moving between and within the study cities, Accra and Kumasi was a difficult task, but I did manage to get the job done with the meagre resources.

I present the research findings in the next three chapters.

Chapter Five

Women advancement to corporate leadership and women leadership approach

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the findings of the study relating to informants' perception of the factors that shape the advancement of women in private corporate organisations in Ghana, the informants' leadership styles and subordinates perception about women leaders.

5.1 Factors that hinder women's advancement to corporate organisations leadership positions

The study findings revealed several factors that hinder women's advancement in private corporate organisations in Ghana. These factors are classified under three broad sub-themes. These include traditional norms and religious beliefs, individual factors and organisational culture.

5.1.1 Traditional norms and religious beliefs

Many of the informants believed that some social norms of the Ghanaian society have contributed to male dominance in top corporate organisations. They claimed that certain traditions had positioned women as subordinates to men. As a result, from an early age, girls are taught to perform household chores, whereas boys are thought to be outgoing and more masculine in their actions. Under such circumstance, girls develop a mindset of being followers, or of being confined to the private sphere, which is not congruent to precepts of corporate leaders, who are in the public sphere. Linda shared her thought on this:

What I will first talk about is the culture of our society. As you are aware in our culture, men are always positioned as leaders. Women are always relegated to the background right from childhood; they say our [women] place is in the kitchen. As girls, we were taught how to cook, sweep and take care of children. I remember my mother always advised me not to follow my brothers out but stay home and learn how to cook because I will marry and if I do not know how to cook it will be a disgrace for me and the family. I mean culturally, we [women] are at a disadvantage, so if you do not push yourself, it will be difficult for you to get to the top.

In agreement, Percy was of the view that the historical discrimination against the girl child education has also contributed to the dominance of men in leadership.

I believe that the cultural preference for male children has contributed to this situation. Young girls were left at home while their brothers were studying because of the cultural belief that girls would eventually get married and their husband will take care of them.

It is only recently that we have taken measures to promote girl child education. For some of us, we were lucky because we grew out of cities and a relatively wealthy family.

Some informants also claimed that the traditional belief of women being dependents also goes against the advancement of women. Getty shared her thought on this:

I feel that some people think women cannot be relied on; they do not believe that we are independent thinkers. Some do not believe that women can think critically and take tough decisions in times of difficulties. That is why you could see the majority of women at the receptions of companies. It is a pity at this age people still hold on to such perception. Many people still underestimate the abilities of women.

Christine shared the same viewpoint but then linked the situation to the patriarchal nature of the Ghanaian society.

I think the patriarchal nature of society makes it difficult for some women to show what they can do. I believed that the position of men as household heads makes more women dormant both at home and eventually at the workplace. Personally, I believe that most women are dormant...I mean when we go for meetings, and we asked to give suggestions, most women do not talk unless you call their names. I believe it is because of how some women are being treated in the house. Any woman who tries to be outspoken is perceived as either disrespectful or arrogant...in our local language they will say you are "obaa akokonin"¹²...hahaha [She laughed].

The informants appear to perceive some traditional and cultural norms of the Ghanaian society as a hindrance for most women who may have the desire to acquire leadership positions.

5.1.2 Perception that God gave man authority over women

Some of the informants believed that some religious beliefs and practices partly cause the absence of more women at the top leadership position. According to these informants, the perception and misinterpretation of some religious scriptures that God created men to have dominion over women have contributed to the few numbers of women in top leadership positions. The informants argued that such perception had been extended from the household to the corporate environment, where the male colleagues consider themselves as the rightful leaders and therefore decide not to be submissive to women who are at the top of the organisational hierarchy. Percy shared her thought on this:

I think some of the religious beliefs have contributed to the submissiveness of women. The church has made us believe that God created man to have authority over woman.

¹² Masculine woman

So, as a woman, you are expected to 'worship' the men in the household even if you are the breadwinner. I mean the church makes you feel that your husband own because he is the head of the family and I honestly think that such teachings have negatively affected most women, especially those who are married to religious fanatics'.

In agreement with Percy, Antione was of the view that some bible verses have been misinterpreted to support male's dominant over females in all aspect of life. *She said:*

Some bible verses make it look like women cannot lead whenever there are men. This is problematic because such an assertion has gotten into the heads of some men who always think that it is their birthright to lead no matter the circumstance. For instance, bible verse 1 Timothy 2:11-12 says 'Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or have authority over a man; rather, she is to remain silent'. Reading such verse could make you dormant wherever you go, especially when you are a conservative Christian woman, but then, the context and the reason behind such verse could be different from what you think.

5.2 Individual factors

5.2.1 The fear of exercising multiple responsibilities

The informants further claimed that most women lack the commitment to push for leadership positions due to the perceived difficulty of being a leader and at the same time being a mother. It emerged that some women lack the courage to take up leadership role when the opportunity even presents itself with the fear that they could not combine the different responsibilities. Abena shared her thought on this:

I will say fear. Fear has been one of the primary reason why some women are not able to get to the top-level position. Some fear they could not combine the female roles as mothers, wives and being leaders. For instance, as a manager, you are expected to stay here for long hours, and at the same time, you must also be at home in the evening to take care of your family. I guess some women look at this and then choose to stay at the middle-level position in order to have time for both family and work.

In agreement, Percy added that most women do not trust themselves that they could be good leaders.

We sometimes do not trust ourselves that we can do it. We make the corporate environment, and the perceived responsibilities of leaders scared us. We are sometimes not sure if we could succeed. Such perceptions have been a stumbling block for some women to move up the corporate ladder. I mean if you do not trust yourself no one will

trust you. You need to be courageous and organised if you want to succeed, but I think most women lack this.

5.2.2 Women unwillingness to upgrade educational status

One other reason cited for the reason behind a few women leaders is that some women feel comfortable at middle-level management positions such that they are not ready to upgrade themselves academically to acquire the needed qualification for top-level leadership. Vera had this to say concerning women under-qualified.

My brother [referring to me] some of the women are lazy. They do not want to upgrade themselves. They feel comfortable where they are. When I came here, I realised that some of the women have been here for too long and therefore need to be promoted, but then, when I went through their certificates, I found that most of them do not have the requisite qualification. When I asked them why they have not upgraded themselves for such a long time, the type of things they told me was mind-boggling... I have to force some of them to take some specialisation courses to upgrade themselves. I mean the corporate world is very competitive, so if you do not upgrade yourself, you will be left behind.

Christine recounted how most of her colleagues got married after graduation, whereas the male counterparts were furthering their education. She said:

After our first degree, most of my girlfriends got married and went ahead to give birth. However, the majority of the boys continued to upgrade themselves at graduate school. In the end, most of them came out with better qualification that positions them better than us. I can attest to the fact that most women feel satisfied after their first degree and this is very worrying. We need to acquire a qualification that could position us above our male counterparts for us to be even considered. And even after, you have become a leader you still need to learn more.

5.3 The unfriendly organisational culture

5.3.1 The organisations' promotion and recruitment process

The issues of recruitment process of organisations were raised as another concern. Informants were of the view that the process of recruitment sometimes deters women from applying. They opined that the attachment that sometimes comes alongside the positions being advertised mostly favours men than women. Getty expresses her thought in the citation below.

I cannot point to one specific reason but what I will want to talk about is the information we give out when we want to recruit. If you check at the job advertising pages of all the

newspapers, you realised that almost all the companies want people who could work extra and ready to go anywhere they will be posted or sent to. This is a masculine advertisement. Obviously, such adverts appear to exclude women, especially those who have children. I believe if we want to see women advance, then we have to change our way of doing things.

In agreement, Dina expressed that promotion to top leadership positions of corporate organisations is mostly favour men. She said:

I think we have not done much as a country when it comes to women taking leadership roles. I sincerely believe that we have not done enough to ensure that women are given the same opportunities as men with regard to promotion to the top leadership position in corporate organisations. Women are mostly overlooked when it comes to promotion, and since the men already occupy the top, they always favour their fellow men instead of women.

5.3.2 The role of childbirth

The issue of childbirth came out as one of the factors that affect women advancement to leadership. All the informants expressed this thought. Lena had this to say:

We [women] have a particular challenge relating to childbirth. As a woman, you may take more extended maternity leave which may not be in the interest of the company. I think this is one of the reasons why most of the companies do not hire women, especially young women. They mostly prefer women who are forty years and over with the perception that they had finished giving births. I am a woman but I think some women sometimes make too many excuses, especially during pregnancy. And as a profit-seeking organisation, no director will sit down for you to absent yourself now and then because of pregnancy.

Abena shared the experiences of her friend to explain how women sometimes missed promotion because of childbirth.

[...] I would add that childbirth is another reason while most women are not getting the chance to lead. Mostly, whenever there is a time for recruitment, the organisation considers a whole lot of conditions before they select. For instance, a friend of mine lost the chance to lead her organization because when the manager left and the company wanted to appoint new leader she was the obvious choice, but then she was in the last month of her pregnancy so they thought it would not be suitable for the company, so they gave it to her male colleague.

Antoine used herself as an example to explain the issue of childbirth

Childbirth is another challenge for women to move up to the corporate ladder. I mean childbirth sometimes delays even the academic upgrade of many women which eventually reduce their chances of attaining leadership positions. I experienced this when I was doing my masters. I would have finished my masters in 1999, but I deferred to go and give birth and eventually finished in 2001. This stalled my promotion in the company until 2004.

The above narrations indicate that informants believe that the reproductive roles of women hinder their advancement in leadership positions.

5.4 Factors that Facilitate women's advancement to top corporate organisations leadership positions

The study found out that some factors facilitate women access to leadership. These factors have been presented under three sub-themes; individual factors, Networking and mentoring and family support.

5.4.1 Individuals effort

The study findings show that the majority of the informants accessed their leadership positions through hard work and self-determination. According to the informants, these qualities are essential for any woman who wants to be in leadership. Antione shared her experiences on this:

...It was all about hard work. I came here right from the university, and I was serving as a secretary to one of the managers. As a secretary, I made sure that my superiors would not have any complaint about me. So, I worked very hard to accomplish the day's task before I leave for my house [...]. And this helped me to build a stronger relationship with my boss. He used to call 'madam express' because of my excellent work ethics. And through this hard work, I was rewarded and promoted to human resources manager and later manager. Hopefully, I will get to the general manager before I retire.

In support, Dina revealed her position she attained her position through hard work and self-determination. She said:

It all bows down to self-determination. When I was first told about this position, I asked myself several questions; Can I do this? What if something goes wrong? Will my subordinates accept me as their leader since most of them were here before I came...but I told myself, you can do it so go for it. And by the grace of God, I have never turned

back. Obviously, I was afraid, but with determination, I have managed to steer the affairs of this company amidst all the challenges.

5.4.2 Networking and mentoring

Social network and mentoring were identified as one of the ways through which women leaders in this study attained leadership. The findings of the study indicated that some informants attained leadership position through a recommendation from people they know or have worked with before. Abena shared her experience on how she attained her position.

I was contacted by a very close friend of mine about this job. In fact, I hesitated a bit. I thought I could not get the chance because my own company had bypassed me for promotion several times. But she convinced me to try my hands on it. So, I placed in the application, and since she was an integral part of the management, she gave me some details about what exactly they want and the expectation of her colleagues. By God's grace, I was hired after the interview, and I am here now. I think such a network is vital for anyone who wants to move up the ladder in the corporate environment.

In agreement, Lena revealed that her social group was very instrumental in her quest to attain leadership.

I was working as a marketing manager at one of our branches before I came here [the headquarters]. So I already knew some people at the top-level management, and because of the excellent relationship I had with them, I was handpicked to take this position. Sometimes when there is an opportunity like this, you will not even hear about it. But this time, someone at the top informed me about it, and I contacted those who matter to express my interest. Lo and behold I was given the nod to steer the affairs of the company. I mean sometimes we all need some of the 'big men' to support us and lucky for me I had that in abundance at that crucial moment.

Vera received a mentorship program after her bachelor to prepare her for leadership roles. She had this to say:

I had my bachelor in the United Kingdom and lucky for me I was selected for a programme called 'The Fortune-U.S. State Department Global Women's Mentoring Partnership'. I was among the 26 emerging women leaders that were selected to receive mentorship from women leaders at Fortune 500 companies. And Looking at the women, I was placed under; I told myself I will be also become one of them and thank God when I returned home, I got this opportunity. I think such mentorship programs is very important. I mean it gives you the confidence and strengthened yourself believe.

Given the above experiences, it is clear that networking and mentorship are essential for women seeking to attain leadership positions.

5.3 Family support

The study's findings further indicated that parents, grandparents and spouses were instrumental in the life of women leaders in this study. While personal effort, networking and mentorship were viewed as important facilitators for women leaders, family support was also seen as very essential. Some informants believed that their leadership instincts were instilled in them by their family members. Dina's experiences were not only related to self-determination but also the guidance she received from her parents.

I was fortunate to come from a wealthy family. Both my parents were into business, so right from childhood, I was taught how to manage a business and the type of courses I should pursue. With this guidance, I was able to build strong leadership skills, and after my graduation, my parents linked me to one of their friends who had just started his business. So, I became part of the management, and since, I have progressed from one level to another, and now I am the chief executive officer for the company.

In the same vein, Percy was grateful to her husband for the role he played in helping her to attain her position. She said:

I must say that my husband was very supportive in my quest to attain this leadership position. He is a managing director for the parent company, and when they decided to hire a manager for this branch, he recommended me. Not only that he also lobbied for me to make sure that I got this job. And because of his influence and my own experience, I was hired to head this branch...of course, he did his best, but my records were very promising to be overlooked... [she laughed].

Clearly, the informant's narration above pointed to the importance of family in accessing leadership position.

5.5 Women leaders approach to leadership

The study findings indicated that women leaders use different leadership approaches. However, It emerged from the analysis that the majority of the informants adopt a leadership approach that is more involving, collaborative and human-centred. The informants noted that it is to exercise leadership in a way that make informants feel important. Below are some of the extracts from the interviews with the informants concerning their approach to leadership. Vera described her approach to leadership as:

I am more of a team player, very collaborative; these are my qualities as a leader I believe that every member of the staff is very important when it comes to working towards the goals and targets of the company. I believe that they all have a unique contribution, as a result, I always ask for their input before making any decision...Not only that I make sure that I reward them after achieving the expected target. I am also very passionate about their welfare and also share their concerns because if a worker does not have a sound mind, it automatically affects the output being produced.

Vera's description of her leadership approach appeared to be influenced by her general understanding of leadership. In her view

Leadership is the ability of a leader to get influence people to execute a given task without being forced. To be a good leader, you must learn how to trust and respect your colleagues so that they could support you to achieve your goals...if there is no cohesion between you and your subordinates, then you are not leading.

Dina, a thirty-five-year-old leader, on the other hand, described leadership as not being bossy but an act of welcoming people and understanding subordinates and appreciate the different contributions they bring to the organisation. She described her leadership style in this way:

When you are a leader you are supposed to make sure that you meet the target that is at stake and you are doing that with people so being able to bring them along with you is very important [...]. Getting the people to come to you for discussion is another way to show respect to your subordinates. You cannot do it all; you always have to work and share information with your team, encourage them and give them the confidence to excel in their role.

Loise believed that leadership is about instilling good work ethics in subordinates through the use of encouraging words and rewards to entice them to work for the organisation. She, therefore, approaches her leadership from such a perspective.

I always try to invoke the passion of my subordinates by challenging them to meet a target for a reward. That does not mean that I do not reward them when they do not meet the target; far from that but then I like it when we share ideas and challenge ourselves while pursuing the goal of the organisation. For instance, I may say that if we finish this work, I will take all of you to lunch [...] this is just to make them happy that I appreciate the work that they are doing. What I do not allow is too many excuses...today I am sick, tomorrow my child is sick and those things...no, no, no, [she laughed]. If you are like that then you may not like me because I like working with people who are committed and ready to go the extra mile to what they have being

assigned to do. I have a pregnant woman among my workers, and I always advise her that she should not use her pregnancy as an excuse because pregnancy is not a sickness.

Some informants, including Antione 50 years, and Abena 55 years indicated that they use different approaches when dealing with their subordinates. This was a way to ensure collaboration and discipline among their workers. Antoine narrated her approach like this:

I am very open and but also strict when it comes to working... my colleagues think that I am strict when dealing with them [...]. I believe that they have been here [the organisation] for so long and they should know what to do at any point in time. So, if you are not doing what is expected of you, I cannot pamper you. Of course, with the new employers, I have to correct and coach them to develop their skills and competence.

Abena in agreement with Antione indicated that she uses a more authoritative approach to make sure she is not taking for granted.

Sometimes you need to stamp on your authority so that you would not be undermined. Yes, to the young ones you must treat them as a kid and teach them but the senior partners especially the men, you need to be stricter or you lose your authority. That does not mean you shout on them, but you have to be firm sometimes. No one wants to be shouted at and these are grown-ups so if you do not take care, it will lead to something else. I am not the dominant type, but sometimes the behaviour of some of the staff makes me act in such manner.

The adoption of more dominant approaches appears to make some women leaders unpopular in their organisations. For instance, Abena and Antione reported on perceived name-calling practices by some subordinates and colleagues during the interview. But then, they still adopt such an approach to ensure discipline and cooperation among subordinates.

5.6 Subordinates perception of women leaders

There were contrary views from the subordinates about the self-reported leadership approaches by the women leaders. Some of the subordinates interviewed seemed to agree with some of the leaders' description of being collaborative, caring and calm in performing their leadership roles. Some others, however, see their leaders' leadership approach as being dominant, self-centred and very aggressive. Daniel, who has been working with his female boss for four years, had this to say:

She is a disciplinarian, open and respectful. She is somebody who will ask for your input before making any decision. Even if she will not take the advice, she makes you feel that your input is necessary. I think her approach has commanded a lot of respect

for her. Hardly will you hear any worker saying a bad thing about her. I mean she is everybody's mom.

Emelia, a personal assistant to Vera, believed that her boss always sought for an improved working condition for the other workers.

The welfare of the team is paramount to her. She always fights for our interest. Aside, she is very consultative and persuasive when it comes to decision making...But then she is too emotional, of course, everybody is emotional, but her own is sometimes excessive. I think she is very passionate about the job so if you are not serious with the work you will perhaps see her as a problematic person. Nevertheless, if you show more commitment, you will be her best friend. I am not saying that to please her, but that is how she is.

Contrariwise, some subordinates opined that their leaders' leadership approaches are dominant and self-centred. They perceived their leaders as too authoritative, disrespectful or challenging to work with. Mat had this to say about her boss:

She is a hardworking person, but her human relation is questionable. She does not respect anybody, not even the men. She is the boss to herself, whatever she says is final. I mean she acts as if she knows everything.

In agreement, Nanson also described her boss as somebody who is less interested in the welfare of the subordinates.

I must say that Abena [her boss] is difficult person to work with. My brother [referring to me] this woman does not care about the other workers. She always wants to put pressure on you. Sometimes I do not feel like even coming to work because of the attitude she displays when things are not going as expected...even sometimes when you greet her, she does not respond.

Also, subordinates who have had the opportunity to work under both female and male leaders shared their experiences. Mena had this to say:

I have work under both male and female bosses but what I have observed is that the male bosses are very open and always ready to support you to fix problems. They are straight to tell you their feelings when they do not like what you are doing. The female bosses will not tell you anything even if they hear something about you from the directors. They will sit there until the thing come and hit you at your face. Aside what a man will see as normal situation, the woman will get angry at it. I mean working under my formal boss [male] was very interesting. I would not hesitate if the opportunity comes for me to work with my former male boss again.

Sampson complained that his current female boss is insensitive to the pride of her fellow women.

If you have a woman as a leader and she could go to the directors and tell them that they should not employ women again because those who have been employed are getting pregnant too much would you like such person...Even her predecessor who was a man did not do that. We have told ourselves that never again would we support the idea of female coming to lead us.

Contrary to Mena and Sampson, John preferred working under women than men.

I personally like working with women. When a woman is at the helm of affairs you see that everybody is doing his or her work and they are mostly interested in whatever that you are doing but a man will not show such concern [...] I think women are very cautious and involving when in leadership.

Daniel and Mike were somehow indifferent on this issue. This could be as a result of the good experiences they have had from working with both males and females.

I enjoy working with everybody, I do not have any preference as to who I want to work with. My formal boss was a male and I must say that I enjoyed working with him to the extent that when I got this job, although with better working conditions I did not want to leave...Again I am also enjoying here. Liose [his boss] has taking me as her own son and I am proud of that...I mean it is not about a man or a woman is about who are you comfortable to be with. If the person displays bad attitude towards you it is not because it is a man or a woman, it is purely based on the individual characters.

Mike added that he is only interested in helping whoever leading to achieve the target of the organization.

I personally do not have interest about who leads. I am only interested in seeing the progress of the company. So, whoever can lead us to achieve that goal is what I want. I do not need a man or woman who will come in and sit in his or her office and direct us 'do this and do that' without taking part or making sure that we have what we need to perform our duty. If it is a man or a woman leading, and I do not perform my duty she or he will not be pleased with me...I just have to do my task as worker of this company.

In summary, the section has revealed the various approaches through which the women leaders performed their leadership responsibilities. It also highlighted the perception of subordinates with regard to women's leadership approaches. Further, it emerged that with the exception of

two leaders who sometimes use dominant approaches, majority of the informants prefer the use participation and collaborative leadership styles. One possible explanation could be the generational differences between the informants, the ones preferring a more collaborative approach being younger while those preferring an authoritarian approach being old

The next chapter presents the findings relating to the women experiences with regard to executing their responsibilities within the work and non-work settings.

Chapter six

Women leadership; challenges and opportunities

6.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I presented the challenges and opportunities women leaders' experiences with regard to the work and non-work settings (home & community). The first section is focused on the challenges, whereas the second dealt with the opportunities experience as women leaders. The challenges at the work settings include the issue of age, the difficulties in managing long-serving staff, discrimination, stereotype, prejudice, subtle sexism and high expectation for women leaders. The non-work settings challenges are presented under the sub-themes; women roles as mothers and wives, and women community engagement role. Opportunities include networking and mentoring as well as improvement in financial status.

6.1 Work settings related challenges

Informants' of the study shared their experiences concerning the challenges faced in the workplace. These challenges are presented below.

6.1.1 Age matters in leadership

The majority of the informants reported that their age was problematic in the initial stages of their leadership career. According to these informants, the staff members who were older thought that they were too young to lead. Linda shared her experiences of leading some staff members older than her. She said

As you know in our society, older people are leaders in the house, not young ones. But here in the workplace, the situation is entirely different. It is about qualification and competence, not age. That is why I am the leader here. But then I have not found it easy dealing with the older ones among the staff. They consider me to be too young to be their boss. I nearly quit because when I started because I felt that I do not belong to here. If I talk, there is a problem, and if I decided not to talk too, there is a problem. It was a whole lot, but by God's grace, things have improved.

Vera, 32 years of age, the youngest informant had similar experiences like Linda with regard to her age. She said

I have three managers who are all older than me, and when they go wrong, and I try to correct them it becomes a problem...they always felt that I do not respect them. And as you know this is an African setting, whenever there is an issue of any sort between a younger person and someone older than him or her, the younger is mostly accused of wrongdoing. I was once asked to apologise to some colleagues who are older than me

because they did not like how I spoke with them. My crime was that I ordered them to execute a particular task, but they felt I was too harsh on them.

Contrary to the difficulties the younger informants reportedly faced, the older informants (*in this context, those above 50 years*) viewed age as a resource to command respect. They reported that their ages granted them the authority and power needed to control subordinates and as well as respect from their superiors. Abena, indicated that all the subordinates call her mom because she is older than them. She said:

All the workers here call me mom because of my age. So, if I need help, I just asked, can you support your mother to do this or that? Sometimes this makes things easy for me. They always see me more like a mother than a manager. Of course, sometimes I am very strict, but I think they take it lightly and in good faith whenever I put pressure on them due to the rapport I have with them.

Liose also sees her age as an essential resource when dealing with the board of her company. She claimed that the directors mostly deal with her differently. She recounted

I have never felt undermined or disrespect at the board meetings. Even when I did not meet the expected targets, the way they will talk to me is different from the other leaders. If you manage yourself well, your age can be a shield for you in the midst of male colleagues.

From the observation at the office premises of some informants, it became clear that there is some sought of mother-child relationship where absolute respect giving to the mother was in display. The conversation between some of these informants and their bosses were very admirable. For instance, I observe workers welcoming their boss as “*mommy you are welcome*” *Mommy how are the kids and so forth.*

The issue of age as both incentive and a disincentive to women leaders is evidently reflected in the narrations presented above. Closely linked to the issue of age is the challenge of dealing with long-serving staff which is presented in the next section.

6.1.2 Difficulty in managing long-serving workers

Some informants, especially the young ones, expressed the challenge they faced in working with long-serving staff members. It emerged through the interviews that some informants were faced with resistance in the beginning stages of their leadership career. Percy who was recruited to leader three merged companies, shared her experience regarding working with long-serving staff:

When I joined this company, they had brought three subsidiary companies together, so the general managers of all three companies became managers, and they were all reporting to me as a general manager. This caused a lot of dissatisfaction and resistance. Just because I was not part of them and maybe I am a woman managing three big men who were already in the company. Anything I proposed was met with some resistance...I mean they were not ready to comply with the changes I wanted to bring. It took us a while before we could solve our differences. And even after that, they would always want to remind me that I am a woman, but that does not shake me at all. I always try to do what is best for this company and the stakeholders.

In sharing the same sentiment, Abena recounted how her effort to change some things in her organisation after taking over as a leader was fearlessly resisted by some of her colleagues who thought that she did not deserve to be their manager.

This is the second company I am working with as a leader. When I came here, I noticed that some staffs who have been in the company for a long time were not ready for the change I wanted to introduce. I felt they were uncomfortable to be led by a woman. Surprisingly sometimes, I could hear some of the women yelling and lambasting that why should the board hire a woman as a leader while they have long-serving staff who are men. It was a whole lot, but then I was not worried because I had enough experience to deal with such an attitude. I got over it as time goes on, and now we have created a conducive environment for everyone here.

Contrary, Getty believed that she got things smooth because of her longevity with the company.

I was brought in from one of our branches where I was serving as a sales manager. Before that, I had served in many other positions here at the headquarters. I mean my records were there for everybody to see. This is a company I have worked with for more than two decades now. I think in general people were very cooperative when I took over as a leader maybe because we have been together for such a long time. Besides, I am the long-serving staff member now; everybody here came to meet in the company.

Nevertheless, some of the informants who went through the ranks of their organisations to attain their positions also complained about lack of respect and cooperation from some colleagues for a reason being that they were with them before they were promoted. Lena shared her experience regarding this.

Some of my colleagues felt that I had been part of them, and therefore, there is no difference between us. In fact, I had to employ stricter methods to get them to work on my orders. Although that was not my style, but I felt that things were getting out of hand

and that some of them were taking me for granted. I detected that people were very envious of me and even saying unfounded things as to how I accessed the position. They forgot that some of us worked extra to meet our targets when we started.

This finding confirms the well-known phenomenon in the Ghanaian society where long serving members in an organisation sometimes think that they are experienced enough to perform their task without directions. This phenomenon is what referred to in Ghanaian parlance as ‘me ba ha akye¹³’. Clearly, these women who felt that there was some resistance to their authority could adopt leadership styles that are more dominant and authoritative.

6.1.3 Discrimination, stereotypes, prejudice and sexism

Some informants raised the issue of discrimination, stereotypes, prejudices and sexism within the work settings. Such issues were pronounced as a negative experience that affects the working capacity of these informants. Some of the informants reported that they were discriminated against during their promotion. Others also reported some reactions they considered to be prejudiced and stereotypes against them. Loise, who had worked with her company for 25 years, shared her experience.

I think it took me a long time to be promoted. Almost all the men that I came here with were promoted before me. I mean at a point some men were not even qualified, but they were all promoted ahead of me. I believed it was due to the perception that women cannot lead in companies like this. It was very worrying, but I could not do anything about it but wait and hope because I was the only senior women at the top hierarchy.

To some other stereotypes and prejudices were the significant challenges for them. The prejudice that women are not fit for leadership positions were demonstrated through disrespect and lack of cooperation from subordinates, colleagues and sometimes superiors. Dina shared her experience on this:

When you give a directive to subordinates, you could read from their body language that they are not taking it kindly. They acted in a manner that they would not if it is a man who is given the same instructions. Aside, you also have people who are your colleagues and find it a bit challenging to take directives from you because you are a woman.

In support, Vera also recounted how in her attempt to settle a dispute between the junior workers and the company ended in futile, but a colleague male gave the same message and the junior workers accepted it.

¹³ I am a Long serving staff

One time the workers were agitating about their incentives, and I spoke with them that we will meet and discuss it at the board level in our next meeting. That did not stop them, but when a colleague male came and spoke with them saying the same things, I said they were ok with it. Nevertheless, we all said the same thing. So, you see how we react to women. Sometimes I do not know whether it is the person carrying the message or the message itself is a problem.

Some informants also experienced stereotyped based on the perceived assumption that the work they are doing is not for women. Linda shared her experience on this

I have personally suffered for the perception that the work I am doing is not for women. Some of the workers think that our work is engineering and therefore I must step down for a male engineer to come and lead the company. As you know, there seem to a general perception in this country that engineering is not for women. Of course, such perception is gradually weakening because of the global campaign that women can also do everything.

Christian added that there was an uproar when she was appointed as a leader.

I believed that some people are not ready to change from the adage that women are not fit to lead. When I was appointed, the workers union went on a demonstration that the work is not for women and that I cannot manage it. However, since I took over as the leader, the company has expanded in five-fold and now when they see me, they cannot even look at my face.

All the informants reveal that they continuously experience sexism comments. According to the informants, they mostly feel bad about it, but for them not to be considered as emotional, they tried to ignore such comments subtly. That notwithstanding it emerged from the interview that the majority of them are very conscious about their appearance. Linda shared her experience on this.

...sometimes you hear comments from people in suit, and you ask yourself, did he meant what he said. I mean you will go for a meeting, and someone will look at you and make comments like 'is all this dressing for this meeting' 'miss Ghana I like your hairstyle and so on'. I mostly find it confusing as to what dress I should wear to work because there is someone who is there and always want to comment about your dress. I don't like such comments, but if you react negatively, then you will be tagged as not friendly.

In agreement, Dina recounted how she sometimes feels uncomfortable at the board room.

To be honest, I mostly feel intimidated at the board meetings. Sometimes the type of comments that comes after your presentation makes you feel that you are not good

enough to be at where you are. I mean I have a board member saying that what I presented in a meeting is all rubbish in front of other board members. I asked myself if he could have done that if I was to be a man. You have to encourage yourself and make sure you do your best because you have entered their territory.

Two of the informants indicated that they had not experienced any form of stereotype or prejudice. They were of the view that the number of women in the leadership position of their respective companies is enough to give them confidence in the before their men. This gives them the impetus to express themselves without any fear or favour at the board level as well as the management level. Percy, whose company have more women in leadership had this to say

I must admit that I have not felt intimidated any way in what I do. I think the colleagues I have worked with have been so helpful and respectful. I think it is because we have several women in the senior management team. At meetings, you always feel comfortable to express yourself without any fear. When you are alone within male-dominated management, there is a likelihood that you would experience prejudice.

Antione added that although the number of women in the management level serves as a protector for her against any form of prejudice, she also jokingly perceived that her physical appearance (6 ft. 5 in) put fear in the people who may want to undermine her. *She stood up and said: Look at my height. I am a very tall woman, and I am big; I want to believe that my structure commands much respect...hahaha [she laughed].*

6.1.4 High expectation for women leaders

The majority of the informants believed that there is a high expectation from them as leaders. They claimed that the demands of the quality of work and targets set for them by their superiors are very high. Under such expectation, women leaders do not have any option than to work hard to meet targets. Linda shared her thought on this issue.

[...] As I said earlier, you need to go an extra mile to prove yourself, because people are doubtful if women could be able to handle the pressure and deliver the agenda. So, you must be more organised, work extra during the day and sometimes at night in the house after everyone is gone to bed to achieve your target. It is very stressful, but you cannot relax because of the high expectation.

Liose shares the same sentiment but added that women are expected to exhibit high professionalism while leading.

I think societal expectations are positively tilted towards male leaders than female leaders. They always want women to exhibit a high level of professionalism than men. So whatever men do is seen as usual, yet when women do the same thing, there is a

problem. You must be focused on what you are doing and exercise your task with care and diligent. You have to make sure that you signed the right documents because excuses are not entertained at the top level especially when you are a woman. Sometimes it is mentally draining, but you do not have an excuse, you have done it.

Christine believed that men still dominate corporate space; hence, women have to prove themselves beyond doubt.

I think women need to do more because men still dominate the corporate environment. Thus, women in leadership must show that they know their stuff. Women in leadership need to show competence in whatever they do because any sign of inadequacy will be viewed as incompetence by the people around [...]. So, you must take details of everything that you do and make sure that you are always on top of issues.

In agreement, Abena added that when a woman attained leadership positions, she represents all women and it is, therefore, important to work hard to show that women are also capable. She said:

For me working hard is not more about proving to the men that I am capable but it's more about the fear of failing the other women. If I do not prove myself as a woman, I may leave a negative impression that would hinder other women from attaining such positions.

Thus, some informants held the view that there is a higher expectation for women leaders to perform in order to be accepted as leaders.

6.2 Non-work settings challenges

The study's findings reveal that women leaders are faced with two broads 'non-work settings' related challenges. Thus, women role as mothers and wives and community engagement roles.

6.2.1 Women role as mothers and wives

Concerning women leader's role as mothers and wives, differences arose in narration between women leaders who are marriage, those with children and those without children. All informants with children claimed that their responsibilities as mothers' present additional difficulty to the stress emanated from their role as leaders. They claimed that they are responsible for nurturing their children to be responsible adults. My observation during the interviews revealed that some women continually manage and monitor the activities of their children during working hours. This observation happened when calls from children to their mothers [*my informants*] interrupted some of the interviews I had. After receiving a call from her children at home, Liose made this remark:

...this is how it is my brother [referring to me]. You see, thus what I was talking about just now. I do not stop to be a mother when I left home for work. My children will not allow me to have my peace of mind to concentrate on my work. I always have to call them to find out what they are doing at home to make sure that all is well. Right from here, I have to get home as a mother to prepare dinner for my kids and husband. I have to know what happened to them at school and helped them to do their homework. These are the things I cannot leave in the hands of other people.

Antione also explained that her children always called her to discuss things; she felt it was irrelevant.

Sometimes when I am here, my children will call me, and you would realise that what they want to discuss is very flimsy. They will not call their father but always me. At times I would be in a meeting, and they will call to ask about either to go and braid their hair or not, and I mean [...]. In fact, I sometimes have to come out from meetings to call and check if they have eaten or done their homework, knowing that I will be late to get home. It is always a difficult, stressful and sometimes mental draining.

Lena shared the same sentiment with Liose and Antoine, but she added that her major worry is her inability to have a good time with her children.

As a mother, you are responsible for the children upbringing. So, if you are not careful and they become indisciplined, you would be held responsible, not their father. But the pressure here does not give me enough time to be with my children. I could go for three to four days without seeing my children. Sometimes I asked myself, is this what I want to continue doing? I get worried when my children asking me 'mummy where are you going today' 'mummy which time are you coming back' 'ah there she goes again'. When I think of all these things it develops some mental stress on me, but what can I do, I need to work...I sometimes tell them that you know what I manage to buy you these things and also send you out for holidays because of this work. Nevertheless, I mostly feel worried about my situation now.

Linda spoke about her responsibility as a mother and wife and what it means to be cooking for her family notwithstanding the work-related pressure

Our culture [Ghanaian culture] is not like the developed countries where today a man will cook and tomorrow a woman will cook. Here in Ghana, it is the sole responsibility of the woman in the house to cook not the man. When we return from work, my husband will not go to the kitchen. I have to go to the kitchen and prepare food for the family, even if I am tired. In the morning I have to wake up early and prepare breakfast for him

and the children before we all leave home for work. Not only cooking I have also to wash husband's dirty clothes, pack his things for him anytime he is travelling and many more.

Contrary to the acclaimed challenges that women leaders with children seem to face, those without children had different experiences. They indicated that there had not been any difficulty concerning childcaring. Christine shared her experience with this:

I do not have any difficulty from my home because I live alone, no kids, or husband [...]. So, when I come here, it is all about work, and when I go home, I just watch the news and go to bed. When I wake up in the morning, I do not think of how the children will go to school or what they will eat after returning from school. I just prepare and then leave for work.

Vera, who had married but not yet given birth added that her situation is not all that rosy

I think my situation is better as compared to some of my friends who are having children. When I am here, I do not think of anything apart from work. I do not think whether my kids have closed from school, I do not think what the kids are doing at home. But I know it will not last forever but for now I am on the smooth ride.

It appears from the above presentation that women leaders with children have more challenges with regard to performing of leadership duties and children caring. Clearly, these women may have divided attention while at office.

6.2.3 Community responsibilities

The Ghanaian society is built on collectivity where individuals and families work and support each other. Conventionally it is expected that every matured individual [normally above 18 years] to participate in community activities and functions which include funerals, marriage ceremonies, naming ceremony¹⁴, and religious groups' activities. It emerged from the findings that the difficulties associated with performing leadership and family responsibilities restrict some informants to attend these community functions. For some informants, this has created hostility between them and some of their family members and friends. Antoine shared her experiences on this.

Before my appointment, I was very active when it comes to attending funerals and wedding ceremonies, but I have reduced it drastically. I only attend those that are closely to my family. There is always complain from those I could not attend, but I do

¹⁴ Social gathering for naming a newborn child. It mostly happened three months after the birth of the child.

not care about what they say... 'Me na me nim de3 me ko mu'¹⁵ [she screamed]. It has become complicated for me to attend funerals and other community functions. Every weekend there is at least one function for me to attend, but with this workload, I cannot do that often. Yea, of course, there are events I would like to participate, but I do not get to due to time constraints.

Abena added that she finds it difficult to attend community functions but do well to participate in church activities.

When it comes to church activities, I do not play with it. Even today I have choir practice to attend after I finished my work. I can miss everything but not my church service, unless when I am not here. I attend funerals ones a while because of my busy schedules during the weekend. Most at times I have to choose between attending a funeral or wedding. And obviously, I mostly attend weddings because of my kids. Instead of me taking them to the shopping mall or the beach, we all go to the wedding together. This helps me to make up with them for the time we have not been together.

Getty shared how she was victimized because she was not able to attend a funeral of somebody close to her family.

I have been labelled as disrespectful by some of my family members because I had absented myself from the funeral of a friend. But, that was not the case. In our work, there is so much to do especially in the last quarter of the year. I have to send a report to the mother company and do all sort of things. I heard that someone sarcastically said "is she the only manager in the country" even the president himself attend funeral...so you see how people think, they will not consider anything when accusing or criticising. It is always challenging to combine the leadership, family and community responsibilities.

These women seem to be affected by their roles as leaders in attending some community functions. The section has presented the findings regarding the work and non-work settings which include family and community engagement. It came out that the numerous responsibilities on the heads of women leaders in this study. That notwithstanding, some do not experience much stress from the non-work settings.

¹⁵ I know what I am going through

6.3 Opportunity as a woman leader

Informants were of the view that obtaining leadership position as a woman although appeared to be challenging. It also presents several opportunities. These include the opportunity to network, mentoring as well as financial benefit and improve gender relations.

6.3.1 Networking

It emerged from the findings that the majority of women leaders in this study get the chance to create a network with other corporate leaders. For many of the informants, they have been able to create a significant network since attaining the position as leaders. Getty shared her experience on this issue.

Attending meetings with big men in the industry has allowed me to know more people. I think it is a good experience given how I started and where I have been able to come and the network I have created. The fact that I lead and the fact that I am still in the business makes me proud of myself. For me, it has been challenging but rewarding. We have a social media platform that we mostly discuss the challenges and the opportunities of our respective companies. As you know, information flow is very key in this type of work, and with all these networks, I feel a bit safer than when I started because I now got people at my back.

In agreement, Dina added that she now has people to support her when things are not moving as expected.

It is all good; now I have been connected to many people whom I could rely on in terms of difficulties. It is not like I always depend on them, but when you hold a position like this, you need to work hand in hand with the most experienced who could advise you and also give you vital information about the market system.

Christine, however, reported a lack of strategic network which she believed to be attributed to dominant of men in her organisation. She was of the view that she sometimes feels isolated. Christine shared her experience:

You know what, the old boy network work still exists in the cooperate space. Sometimes you will go to a meeting, and you see the men are chatting and discussing issues among themselves. After meetings, they move to the bars to have drinks. I mean we even sometimes have to close a meeting early because they want to go and watch football. But as a woman, I am expected to be home right after work to engage in other things, and this makes things a bit difficult because I do have anyone to rely on in times of difficulties.

Clearly, these women leaders felt that networking is very important in the corporate world. But then it is only when you get the chance to lead that you could enjoy such benefit. That notwithstanding Christine is yet to benefit from such network because of her isolation in the midst of men.

6.3.2 Mentoring and recruitment

The study findings further revealed that women leaders invest great effort to mentor their subordinates. According to the informants, it is refreshing to attain a leadership position as a woman because of the opportunity they get for mentoring others. In this sense informants believed that mentoring young women is necessary if women are to close the gap and increase their numbers at top leadership positions. Antoine shared her experience of mentoring as a result of her position as a leader:

For me, it is crucial to get to the top if you have the intention to change others. I see it as an opportunity to mentor others who look up to me. It is always great for me to see people I have mentored climbing to the top of the ladder. That is what makes me happy. If you are not at the position where you can influence decision making, I do not think you can mentor others. My subordinates are the right people to attest to this, I teach them new things any time I get the chance. I am training them so that when I am no longer in this position, one of them could have the courage to take it.

Abena was proud of the mentoring role she has been given to her subordinates. She revealed that her position as a leader had allowed her to mentor young women in her organisation.

I started mentoring the young ones even before I became a leader, but since then, I have been a source of inspiration for my subordinates. I am giving them a lot to prepare them for the near future. I want to see most of them holding positions of influence either here or other places.

For Lena, attaining leadership position is very important since it gives the chance to initiate policies that present an equal opportunity to women in terms of recruitment. She recounted how she came in as the only woman at the top echelons of the organisation but had been able to change some of the policies that restrict women recruitment in the organisation.

When I came here, I was the only women amongst the men. So often I had to lobby some of the men before we even get to meetings so that I could receive some support when I am pushing for something. But I realised that such strategy was not working so I became the general manager I tried to mentor and recruit more women at the top of the management, So as we are talking now, the human resource manager, the accountant

and the project manager are all women. Not only that, out of the ten regional managers, we have six women and four men. The management of the company is now balance because when I got the chance to lead, I decided to give equal opportunities to other women.

The above extracts revealed that informants view mentorship as a way to help build the capacity of women who would want to be leaders in the corporate organization. The section has presented the opportunities that women leaders in this study experience after attaining leadership positions. The opportunity to create a network with the experience in the industry as well as the chance to mentor and recruit other women seeking leaders were also highlighted.

6.3.3 Financial benefits and command of respect

An aspect of the opportunities shared by the informants is the financial benefits that come with attaining leadership. It was noted that in as much as there are difficulties with regard to combining family and work responsibilities, the financial benefit that comes out as a result of their position also served as a motivation for them to hold on to their positions. Thus most women felt empowered within their family and community at large. Dina shared her experience with regard to this:

[...] yea it is not all that rosy because after all, you get what you have worked for. Even though it is very stressful but then the salary is better than the peanut I used to receive. To be honest my income has improved more than four times of what I was receiving. I have reduced the financial stress that my husband used to experience. Of course, now he is contributing more in taking care of the children at home because of my long working hours, but he does not think much about meeting all our financial needs since I am now contributing significantly to it.

Getty added that she had gained much respect from friends, family and the community members because of her position.

I was interviewed by one of the Television stations, and after it was aired, I received several calls from my friends and family members and some respected personnel from my area. Since then I have been receiving an invitation after invitation. I mean from my church, my community and even organisations and association I do not have any direct link to. Everybody wants me to share my experiences and also mentor and encourage their members to aim high. I think I am enjoying all this recognition because of my position.

Liose added that she had been nominated to many corporate boards and church and community committees as a result of her position.

All though I have not worked for any public sector before, but because of my exploit, I have been appointed into two different boards. I think this is a success I must be proud of. God has been good to me right from the beginning of my career. Also, I serve on some committees in church and community. I will add that since I came to the limelight [became leader] three children have been named after me... hahaha [she laughed]. I am not surprised because the Akans will say 'nipa papa na yeto no ba din'¹⁶. These are some of the good things that come with you being in leadership as a woman. Now I see myself as a role model, a motivator and an inspiration for young females.

Christine was of the view her views are now considered significantly during the decision-making process both within and outside her family.

What I can say is that I have progressed a lot in my life. Now I am considered a very important person within my family and the community as a whole. I mean no decision is taking in my family without my input. I am not saying that I have taken the position of my father or brothers, of course not, but since I attained this position my father considered me as a matured person and therefore always want to seek my opinion on any decision he wants to take.

Given the above extracts, it is clear that attaining a leadership position is a good omen for women leaders in this study.

Summary

The chapter has described the experiences of women leaders regarding roles execution. These experiences have been presented under the headings of work and non-work setting challenges as well as opportunities associated with leadership.

One of the key finding is the issues of age. Age seems to be a significant indicator in attaining leadership positions in corporate Ghana. In view of the above presentation, age was seen as either an incentive or disincentive depending on the age of the leader in relation to the other co-workers. Majority of the informants who were younger appeared to find.

¹⁶ Children are named after good people.

Chapter Six

Strategies for balancing 'work' and 'non-work' responsibilities

7.0 Introduction

Balancing work, family and community responsibilities were mentioned several times by the informants during the interviews. The chapter is, therefore focused on the informants' experiences regarding balancing work and non-work responsibilities as well as the strategies employed by informants in their quest to reduce work and non-work settings responsibilities to reduce stress.

7.1 Balancing work, family and community responsibilities

The informants described balancing work and non-work life as the ability to negotiate between work settings responsibilities and non-work settings responsibilities in order not to be carried away by the other.

7.2 Informants thought on balancing work and non-work life

The informants emphasised the need for every leader to ensure a proper balance between work, family and community roles. They argued that the over-concentration either at work, family or community activities could create a problem for any woman who is in leadership. The majority of women leaders expressed their displeasure of not being able to effectively balance work and family responsibilities, though they try to put measures down to achieve such balance. Linda expressed the difficulty concerning this situation:

[...] the situation is difficult one to manage because if you are not careful, you will focus too much on your work and leave other things to go astray. As a woman you need to get this balance right or else you will suffer for it later. I am trying my best to achieve that, but I must confess that it has not been easy.

In agreement, Lena added that both work and family are important, but made emphasis on the importance of the family.

It is important to get these things right. Yes, the work is important...it is where you get your daily bread. But the family is more important because when you retire from your work it is your family that will take care of you. So, it is very important to ensure that your time is fairly shared between work and non-work responsibilities.

In agreement, Percy noted that it is important to balance work and non-work life to ensure a good social network at the community level.

I think it is important to strive for such balance while you are in positions like this. Sometimes if you are not careful you will not have time for social events and yourself...this would not order well because there are at times that you will need people

to help you...but if you do not work on it, it will not work for you. In Akan¹⁷ parlance they have a say that “nsa ko na nsa aba”¹⁸, so if you do not attend other people’s events no one will attend yours.

It appears from these extracts that women leaders in this study are faced with the challenge of balancing family, work and community responsibilities. Nevertheless, it emerged that women leaders implement different strategies to tackle these challenges. I have presented these strategies under the sub-themes of individual level strategies, support from family members, and support from subordinates and colleagues at work as well as organizational policies.

7.3 Work settings strategies

The study findings show that the responsibilities of women leaders in the office include, but not limited to managing and coordinating the activities of the organization, implement the strategies of the organizations, organized quarterly meetings to update the boards of directors about the status of the company, write reports, circulate memos from the board of directors to all other branches and providing training for subordinates. Informants reported that there is difficulty in executing all these tasks. As Percy put it: *The work is very difficult one. There is always something new on the table to do. As a leader, I have to make sure that the monthly reports are ready before the deadline. It looks easy on the surface but when you are at helm of affairs the experience is quite different.* In view of all these challenges informants in this study revealed how they try to manage this.

7.3.0 Individual-level strategies at work settings

These are strategies that the individual leaders themselves practice while trying to ensure work and family balance.

7.3.1 Prioritizing what is important

The study findings show that informants prioritise most important things to do at the office in their quest to cope with the demands of the work. Antione shared her strategy about this.

Before I even come to the office on Monday, I have planned whatever I want to do for the week. Within the “to-do list” are priorities, what I have to do and what I have to put aside for the next day. So, at every point in time, I know what to do. It is sometimes difficult for me to change my schedules...if not important and urgent then it can wait. As you could attest to, it has taken us almost one month to get this interview happened.

¹⁷ Akan is group of tribes in Ghana speak the Twi language.

¹⁸ Hand go hand come (it simply means do unto others as you want others to do for you)

Almost similar, Linda made emphasis to the importance of time management while sharing her experiences. She said:

As you are aware, we do not value time in this country. When you set meetings at 10:00 am you will see people coming in at 11 am. But in this work, you cannot do that. Every minute counts so I make sure that I follow my time no matter the circumstances. Everybody here will tell you that Linda is too conscious about time... I think my time management has helped me a lot to come this far. As we sit here, I know that I have meeting at 3 pm, but looking at the traffic situation in the area I will leave by an hour to time so that I will not be late. When you do that, things will not be too difficult for you.

From these extracts, it appears that prioritising work and efficient use of time is essential for women leaders with the desire to balance both work and non-work responsibilities. Nevertheless, one needs to exhibit a high commitment and discipline.

7.3.2 Support from subordinates and colleagues

The study findings show that some women leaders get support from both their subordinates and colleagues. It emerged that at least every informant had one personal assistant who helps them to execute their task. The phenomenon of personal assistant appears a new thing in the corporate organisations in Ghana as claimed by the informants with more than ten years in leadership. According to them, there was no such thing when they started as leaders. They, however, noted that the emergent of the phenomenon of personal assistants has come at the right time to make things relatively easy for current women leaders. Lena, who has been in leadership for the past fifteen years, recounted the importance of personal assistant to her:

Now I am lucky to have personal assistance. When I started, there was nothing like personal assistants. I had to do a whole lot of things myself, but now my assistant takes control of some of these things I used to do. For instance, she is the one who organises meetings for me, shares memos, collates the monthly reports from all the managers, makes sure that I have all my meetings on the google calendar and also remind me when it is due. She has been very supportive.

Abena added that she had developed her assistant to the level that she could represent her in several capacities.

I have built the capacity of my assistant to the level that she could perform other functions that I do not necessarily need to be present. I mean she is virtually the de facto manager... when I travel out of the country, she makes sure that everything is in order

before I even come in. Although all the other workers perform their duties, she always goes the extra mile to make things work in my absence.

Vera described some of her subordinates as amazing people concerning the support they render to her.

Some of my subordinates have been excellent since I took over. In fact, I must confess that I hesitated a bit when I was approached to take this leadership role. But with the help and encouragement from some of my subordinates, I have been able to adapt well as a leader. Of course, some were not happy about my appointment, but even in that, you could still see that they are committed to the work.

Dina recounted how colleagues had been part of her success as a leader and as a mother.

To be honest, my colleagues have helped me to achieve a balance between work and non-work activities. I mean they have always been there for me whenever I come under pressure. For instance, when we have a deadline to meet, they all stay with me until we are done before we all leave. I appreciate their support because it is not everybody who get this type of support.

Some informants, however, reported that some colleagues have not been supportive. Percy shared her experience:

I do not want to point to either the women or men here... what I have noticed is that some of my colleagues are not helpful. I cannot tell whether it is their attitude or just that they are not ready to support me to succeed because I am a woman and maybe too young for them to take orders from me. There is a lot ego among the staff here but I still have to manage it.

Christine complained that her colleagues always try to find fault in whatever she does.

Whatever you do will not please them... I mean you could see from their actions that they are not with you. They always want to find fault about what you are doing. What baffles me is that they will never suggest an alternative but always in the mood to criticise. When you react, then they would say you are this, you are that and so on.

7.3.3 The organisational policies

Some of the informants also raised the issues of organizational policies. Apart from the national policy of three months of mandatory maternity leave for women, all the organisations seem to have internal policies for their staff. Some of the informants indicated that their organisations have at least two weeks of mandatory leave within the year for every worker. However, it

appears that some informants could not explore this mandatory leave because of the reported workload. Lena, who mostly uses her leave to travel, shared her experience.

I make good use of my vacation holidays. I am somebody who likes exploring new places. So, I have decided to travel out of the country with my children every year to help build a family bond. For instance, last year we went to South Africa, and this year we are planning to go to Europe.

Contrary, Percy was very emotional in her narrative due to the workload that makes it difficult for her to exercise her mandatory leave.

[...] it has been difficult. The only time I went for leave was when I gave birth to my daughter. Even that I was always working from the house, checking what is going on in my absence. The competition is so high that even when you are on leave have to be working. The only difference is that you will not come to the office. That notwithstanding you still have to work from the house. I know that it is not good for my health, but I cannot do anything about it unless I quit.

7.4 The 'non-work' settings strategies

To meet the demands of being a leader and a mother or wife, informants employ different strategies to ensure a balance in executing all the responsibilities. It must be emphasized that some of the strategies the informants describe the overlap between the work and non-work settings.

7.4.1 Individual strategies under non-work settings

The informants narrated how they negotiate between work and non-work responsibilities concerning individual strategies. However, differences arose in the narration of informants with children and those without children. The informants with children reveal that they sometimes leave the office early to go home to take care of their children. Dina who has two children shared her experience concerning this.

I sometimes leave here [referring to the office] at 5 pm to go home and take care of my children, especially if we do not have a late hour meeting. I have two children at school-going age, and as a mother, it is my responsibility to take care of them. I believe that if I am no more a mother, nobody will take care of my children, but when I am no more the manger, somebody would be appointed as a manager. So, I have decided that after 5 pm is for my children and husband because sometimes, I could go for two to three weeks without seeing them...moving up and down to attend meetings and conferences

within and outside the country. So I work during the day and concentrate on my family after work.

Getty shared a similar experience to that of Dina but added that she tries to complete the task she did not finish at the office after her children had gone to bed.

I mostly stay with my children after work and make use of the night. I sometimes work after they had gone to bed. Of course, when I see that I am exhausted, I go to bed with them and then wake up in the night to finish up what I could not finish at the office. You know what, when I get home from the office, I cannot just ignore my family and move straight to my laptop, my husband can do that, but I have to get to the kitchen and prepare food for the family.

Contrary, Vera, who has no child, indicated that she does not do anything that relates to work after leaving the office.

[...] I make sure I finish with whatever I have to do for the day before I leave the office. So, I mostly leave here very late when I have a lot to do. I do not work after I leave the office or during the weekends. That is my personal decision, I feel like I have to relax after the stressful day.

With regard to participation in community functions, some informants indicated that they have been selective with regard to the type of community events they participate. Lena, for instances, shared her strategy:

I always have more than three invitations on my table every week; if it is not a funeral, it is a wedding or naming ceremony. Everybody wants you to attend his or her event. But I am one person I cannot attend all. I mostly attend those that are close to my area and sometimes send my gift or contribution to the family if it is funeral or even send my personal assistant or my mother to go and represent me.

The above individual strategies indicate that women leaders do all that they can to ensure a balance of work and non-work life. However, it is clear from the narration that it is not an easy task to achieve.

7.4.2 Support from the family members

The findings revealed that family members play a significant role in the life of the Informants. Women leaders in this study revealed that their families have been very supportive in their career. Indeed, parents, children and husbands were mentioned as the key family members that provide support for these women. The support comes in the form of running errands as well as sharing other responsibilities, especially taking care of their children after they return from

school. For instance, Liose eulogised her husband in sharing her experience in relation to family support:

I must say that God has blessed me with a very supportive husband. Ooh my goodness...he is being fantastic, he wakes up early and irons my dress with his while I do other things. In the evening, he could go to the kitchen and prepare food for himself if I am not at home. When I have a late-night meeting at work, I could message him, and he will go and pick up the children from school. His support has brought me to this far and I really appreciate that.

Percy was proud of the support she received from her husband but was worried that it might not last forever due to some complaints from him. She said:

My husband has always been the “woman” in the house when it comes to taking care of the children. He finishes work early, so he is the one who picks up the kids from school, cook for them and take care of them before I come home...but my worry is that he sometimes complains about performing such duties in my absence. My fear is that he would be fed up so I am doing my best to convince him so that we can bring in domestic helper to support us on that even though he does not like such idea.

Lena, a single mother with two children, expressed her appreciation to her mother for being kind and supportive to her and her kids. She said:

My mother has been very supportive right from the start of my career, ...she has been my anchor. She takes care of my house and my kids whenever I am not in the country. At least I do not get worry too much because I know that there is someone behind me taking good care of my children.

Vera agreed with Lena concerning the support from the mother; however, her situation was somehow different since she does not have children. That notwithstanding her mother played a crucial role in preparing dinner for her and her husband before she returns from work.

My mother has always been there for me. She is my source of encouragement and inspiration any time I am down, she covers my back for me...you know, it is always good to feel that by the time you get home there would be food on the table for you and your husband.

Linda reserved special praise for her first child for taking good care of her younger brothers and sister

I am very thankful to my first daughter. She has been taking care of her younger ones for me. In fact, she is being superb. She just completed senior high school, but her commitment to run errands in my absence is so marvellous. For instance, the last two

days she lost her phone so we could not communicate, but to my surprise when I got home, she had prepared food for the whole family...I am very proud of her.

Clearly, these extracts have indicated that family members play a significant role in the life of women leaders.

7.4.3 Support from the domestic workers

The majority of the informants reported that they had employed the services of the domestic workers to help out in the household chores. Abena who has two house helps had this to say:

My domestic worker has been very helpful in supporting my mother to take care of children and my house. I sometimes go home late and come to work early in the morning. My mother is old and could not do certain things, so it is my domestic worker who makes sure that everything is in place before I return home. Her role includes sweeping the house and performs other necessary things that I could not have time to do.

Dina, whose children were at her office on the day of the interview, had employed the service of a driver to help her pick her children from school.

...my driver is a good man. He is the one who picks up my children from school and brings them to me here. We do not have anybody in the house, so I keep them here until I finish my work and we all go home together. However, when I have a late hour meeting, he sends them to their father who by that time, would be in the house.

However, some informants underscored the importance of domestic workers. They argued that the house helps could only play a limited role in the house. Getty was vocal in expressing her experience on this:

The domestic helper cannot do everything for you...as a wife you must lay your matrimonial bed, clean your husband clothes and cook for him. You cannot leave all these tasks in the care of your mother or domestic helper. If you do that you will have problem marriages. I do not allow my domestic helper to enter my matrimonial room, I take care of the work over there.

In agreement, Christine reported that she had no domestic worker. According to her, there is no need for that since she does not have many things to do while in the house.

I do not have any domestic helper. I do whatever I have to do during the weekends. For instance, I prepared my food and put it in the fridge for the week. So anytime I get home there is food to eat. I mean, for now, I do not think that I need a domestic helper.

Similarly, Antione indicated that her children are matured enough to take care of themselves in her absence.

I do not have house helper in my house. My children are grown up, and they can do anything in my absence. Aside, I do not want to spoil them; they have to learn how to do household chores so that they can stay alone when I am not with them. I am training them now for them to be good adults.

The presentation above seems to suggest that domestic helpers play a significant contribution to women leaders' quest to balance work and non-work responsibilities. This support helps the informants to reduce stress emanating from performing domestic responsibilities.

Summary

This chapter is focused on women leaders' experiences and perception of balancing work settings responsibilities and non-work settings responsibilities. As noted above, having a 'perfect' balance was seen as paramount for the majority of the women in the study. However, the demands from these two settings appear to pose a challenge to the majority of the informants, especially those who are married and those who have children at school-going age.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the informants revealed the ways through which they managed to negotiate their way through the difficulties of meeting these competing interests. The first of these strategies is individual-level strategies. It was noted that individual leaders instituted personal strategies that helped them to negotiate between the various responsibilities emanating from both work and non-work settings. These include but not limited to finishing work early in normal days, delegating responsibilities to subordinates, bringing their children to work and working late in the night at home. Not only that they also rely on their close relatives and hired domestic helpers for support.

The next chapter is the discussion chapter.

Chapter Eight

Discussion

8.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings presented in the above chapters. Four themes that emerged and discussed were: complexities of underrepresentation and prejudice against women leaders, leadership styles ‘people-oriented’ versus ‘results-oriented’, benefits, successes and prospects of being in leadership and negotiating between work and non-work settings responsibilities.

8.1 Complexities of underrepresentation and prejudices against women leaders

Despite the perceived improvement in the number of women leaders in corporate organisations in Ghana, informants in this study were still concerned by these numbers, which they consider very low. They felt that the low number of women in leadership positions is caused by complex and varied factors, with culture and religion being the most influential forces behind this phenomenon. The study’s findings appear to suggest that the traditional societal norms of the Ghanaian society have been the bedrock upon which the subordination of women and for that matter, the prejudice against women in leadership positions emerged. Informants believe that cultural norms have contributed to the biased gender power relations against women. In that, it reinforces the patriarchal values such as men superiority over women (Adasi, 2012). For example, we heard Linda (*see page 37*) suggesting that the fewer numbers of women in leadership are as a result of the culture of the Ghanaian society where men are always positioned to lead. Amid all these cultural and social barriers, Gupton and Slick (1996) cautioned women against reinforcing these barriers by underestimating their capabilities of executing leadership.

Alice H Eagly and Karau (2002) role congruity theory of prejudice towards women leaders suggest that the perceived incongruity between the female and male gender roles leads to two forms of prejudice: first, perceiving women as less favourably than men as potential occupants of leadership roles. Second is evaluation behaviour that fulfils the prescriptions of a leader role less favourable when it is enacted by a woman (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002). The incongruency stem from the perception that women possess communal instead of agentic characteristics. This perceived incongruity appears to have a negative effect on women who found themselves in leadership. In that they find themselves in situation termed as ‘double bind’, thus, either to uphold their gender role characteristics or adopt the agentic characteristics that perceived to be congruent with leadership roles (Hoyt & Burnette, 2013; Kubu, 2018).

In the study of the reasons behind few women leaders in the management of Universities in Kenya, Kamau (2001) found that the unsupportive societal culture has been the major reason

for few women in top corporate leadership positions. Similarly, Mary Wentling (2003) in her study of working women in Delhi, reported that the traditional authoritarianism of men embedded in the Hindu societal culture had contributed significantly to the fewer number of women in leadership positions. This relates to the findings by Jamali, Sidani, and Safieddine (2005) study that evaluated the constraints facing working women in Lebanon. The authors found that cultural norms and high demands from society prevent women from seeking top leadership positions in corporate organisations (Jamali et al., 2005). Again in the study of women faculty and administrators in selected public universities in Ghana, Adusah-Karikari (2008) found that the patriarchal culture of the universities serves to undermine women's authority and frames their identity in subordinated paradigm. This current study and many cited above suggest that culture is a major contributing factor that hinders most women in progressing to the top leadership positions of the organizational hierarchies. In all these studies, it appears that cultural norms protect and institutionalize the negative gender power relations where men are seen as leaders with women as followers. The likelihood implication is that women who are even qualified to serve as leaders may decide to stay at the lower level or even opted out in order to avoid all these victimisations.

Further, the majority of the informants perceive certain religious practices and beliefs as a contributing factor to the suppression of women in society. The informants argued that these religious beliefs have contributed to the oppression of women who are qualified to access top leadership positions. Interestingly, some of the informants cited some bible scriptures to justify their claims regarding how these religious beliefs affect deter women from pursuing higher authority in their respective organisations. For example, Percy (*see page 37*) citing some bible verse to support her argument that certain religious beliefs negatively affect women progress. Like culture, these religious beliefs seem to reinforce the patriarchal values that create a bias against women in both the public and private sphere. The implication with such beliefs is that most women, especially those who are religiously inclined, may negatively be affected, thereby reducing their ability to work towards attaining a leadership position.

In analysing the practices of some religious faiths; Christianity, Islam and Hinduism, Emmett (2001) revealed that religious bodies generally empower men to have authority over women in all facet of life. She further argued that all the religious faiths have stereotypical roles for men and women. She concluded by indicating that women are perceived as subordinates to men, and this is manifested in the way's roles are assigned in these religions. Similar, in the study 'women and leadership: challenges and opportunities in Saudi higher

education' Abalkhail (2017) found that the concept of 'qiwama'¹⁹ in Islam is interpreted to mean that God privileged man with superior intellectual capacity and higher abilities than women. Therefore, man is responsible to cater and serve as a guardian over women. According to the study's findings, this makes it difficult for women leaders to deal with men who think that they are superior to women.

The study's findings further indicate that women's reproductive roles had contributed significantly to the underrepresentation of women in top leadership positions in corporate Ghana. The triple role theory (Moser, 1993), argues that women are not only burdened with multiple reproductive roles but also productive and community engagement roles. Indeed, in the Ghanaian social-cultural context, the socialisation of girl child makes an emphasis on the reproductive roles than any other role (Apusigah, 2004; Bawa & Sanyare, 2013). In that, while boy child is nurtured to be outspoken, tough, outgoing and assertive to be able to head his household in the future, the girl child is nurtured to be a submissive, supportive and a good homemaker in order to be a good wife. Consequently, boys become the heads of the family while girls become subordinates (Apusigah, 2004; Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013; Baah-Ennumh et al., 2005). The majority of the informants in this study revealed that their reproductive roles such as childbearing and caring responsibilities have been an impediment to their advancement in their productive roles, that is in their leadership roles. For instance, we heard Antione (page number), revealing that her education and promotion at work delayed because of childbirth.

The findings further reveal that organisational culture which is partly manifested in the recruitment and promotion processes also contribute to fewer numbers of women in top corporate leadership positions. Selection of people for a top leadership position is believed to be always in favour of men. A key factor that enforces such a barrier is the dominance of men in the higher echelon of the public sphere (Amos-Wilson, 1999; Amu, 2005; Kiamba, 2008). Kiamba (2008) argue that since men are many in leadership, they intend to appoint other men that could protect them and their interest. Precisely, the first form of the role congruity theory posits that women are perceived to be less favourable than men as potential occupants of leadership roles (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002). Indeed, it appears that the traditional prejudices that disadvantage women in the household level have found its way into the corporate system, thereby making it difficult for women to progress to leadership. Getty (*see page 38*) one of the informants argues that several practices deter women from applying for

¹⁹ Qiwama; male authority over female.

leadership positions. One of which is what she referred to as ‘masculine’ type of advertisement. She argued that recruiting adverts that explicitly require people who could work for long hours are all gendered and discriminatory against women knowing that the reproductive role of women, especially mothers and wives conflict with time spent at work.

Livingston (2019) in the study exploring factors that contribute or hinder women advancement to leadership in New Zealand, found that organisational culture is the most significant factor that deters women from climbing to the leadership positions in the corporate organisation. The study pointed out that masculine organisational roles have prevented most women from attaining leadership. This relates to the findings by Hejase, Haddad, Hamdar, Massoud, and Farha (2013) study that explore female leadership in Lebanon. The study reveals that discrimination against women in the corporate organisation is one of the reasons for a few women in corporate leadership. It could be argued that the organisational culture differs in state and form for different organisations. However, some commonalities are required from every leader irrespective of the organization they head and one of which is the ability to work for longer hours. Apparently, women, especially with families and perform some reproductive roles may stay out of any process that could lead them to become leaders because these positions come with demands that are incongruent with the productive roles at home, that is working longer hours, travelling among many duties.

Further, the study findings reveal the existence of prejudices and stereotyping against women leaders in the corporate system. Again, this was attributed to the cultural dominance of men in the Ghanaian society as well as the top corporate hierarchy (Amos-Wilson, 1999; Amu, 2005; Apusigah, 2004). Premised on these cultural beliefs, the corporate world which is dominated by males appears to be hostile to women who had successfully reverted the societal perception of leader-follower relationship to their advantage by becoming leaders. As claimed by Hoyt (2010), prejudices and stereotypes towards women leaders come in different forms. In this light, a prejudice statements such as women are not fit to be in leadership positions for a certain kind of work as well as adverse reactions to instructions from either subordinates, superiors or colleagues were experienced by some of these women. For instance, we heard Linda (*see page 54*) claiming that some of her colleagues felt that the work she is leading is not for women so she should vacate her position as the manageress for a man to take over. This confirms findings from Boateng (2018) in her study of female academicians in Ghana Universities. Among other findings, the researcher reported that prejudices and stereotypes towards women are very pervasive in universities. This suggests that it is not only women in the corporate environment that suffer stereotypes and prejudices, but others in different professional domains are also

vulnerable to stereotyping and prejudice. As discussed above, Alice H Eagly and Karau (2002) predicted that given the perceived incongruence between the female gender roles and the leadership roles, the chances of women to be selected as leaders are very slim and even when they attain such position, there is high possibility of them being negatively evaluated whilst enacting their leadership roles.

Indeed, there is existing evidence indicating that it is not only official discrimination that hinders the career of female leaders but then more subtle signs of exclusion such as alignment to activities and roles that are stereotypically male (Greguletz, Diehl, & Kreutzer, 2019). Relating to this, Davies, Spencer, and Steele (2005) argued that, exposure to stereotype threat undermined women aspiration on subsequent leadership task. Clarke and Braun (2009) reiterated this by arguing that there is a gendered ideology of femininity around emotionality and submissiveness that continues to reinforce the idea that women are unfit for high paying positions. The evidence and the argument of these authors on prejudice and stereotype mimic biased against women in general within the broader Ghanaian society (Oduro & Macbeath, 2003). The empirical evidence, as well as the findings of this study, have shed more light on some of the reasons why there are fewer women in corporate leadership positions in Ghana. The perceived incongruent between female gender roles and leadership roles has resulted in gendered responsibilities in the corporate world, thereby placing excessive pressure on women who attain leadership (Ayman & Korabik, 2010).

The study's findings suggest that there is a high-performance expectation from women leaders due to the perceived incongruent between their gender roles and leadership roles. Hence, women leaders have to work and produce better results than their male colleagues in order to be considered as competent for their leadership roles. For example, we heard Loise (*see page 57*) saying that women leaders need to go the extra mile to receive an acceptance from the people around them. The display of lack of trust from subordinates and superiors is consistent with the second form of prejudiced (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002) which posits that the evaluation behaviour that fulfils the prescriptions of a leadership role is less favourable when it is enacted by women. Forsyth, Heiney, and Wright (1997) found that group members favour men over women when selecting and evaluating leaders even when actual leadership behaviours are held constant in a variety of group settings. Lyness and Heilman (2006) in their study 'evaluating the performance of upper-level managers and the relationship of performance evaluations to promotion' found out that women in leadership positions are evaluated more negatively than men managers which support Eagly and Karau's theory. Ibarra, Ely, and Kolb (2013) noted that women in a top leadership position are critically examined because of high

visibility among male dominated institutions. These findings imply that women who against all the odds access leadership positions could experience more job-related stresses than their male colleagues due to several factors with high expectation from colleagues and superiors. Consequently, most women could truncate their leadership career if the burden becomes too much to bear.

The study findings reveal contradictions in informants ages and how it moderates or aggravate prejudices and discrimination against them. The findings suggest that age could either be an incentive or disincentive depending on the ages of the subordinates and colleagues. Women leaders, especially those in their 50s, acknowledge that their ages' have been an incentive in their enactment of leadership. This could be explained from the perspective of the Ghanaian culture context where age forms part in the construction of leadership (Adusah-Karikari & Ohemeng, 2014; Apusigah, 2004). Given the fact that Ghanaian customs invest authority in older people (Adusah-Karikari & Ohemeng, 2014; Allah-Mensah, 2005), being old was beneficial for some of these informants. For instance, Abena, a 55 years old woman with 15 years' experience as a leader (*see page 51*) argues that her age has accorded her the needed respect from her subordinates and superiors alike. She indicated she has been able to build a 'mother-children' relationship with her subordinates which have given her the authority to enact leadership freely. Eagly and Karau's congruity role theory predicts that some conditionalities could moderate the level of prejudice against women leaders. This study's findings partially confirm this proposition, in that the age of some of these informants results in mutual respect between them and the other staff. Essentially, in this context age of these women have reduce the prejudice they could have been experienced due to the perceived incongruity between the female gender roles and the leadership roles.

Age, on the other hand, was seen as a disincentive for 'younger' women leaders. On the same premises of the Ghanaian culture, it is seen as deviant behaviour from the societal perspective if a younger person in the position of influence appears to exercise authority over people older than them, especially in a manner perceived as inappropriate (Allah-Mensah, 2005; Apusigah, 2004). The study's results suggest that 'younger' women leaders have a herculean task in dealing with the staff members who are older than them. For example, Vera, a 32-year-old female leader (*see page 50*) recounted how she was made to apologise to some subordinates who are older than her because they were offended by the way she had instructed them to execute a task. This finding is consistent with the finding of Carbajal (2018) in the study "women and work: Ascending to leadership". The study found that discrimination against women leaders is more tied to their age than that of their gender. This relates to the findings by

Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) study, 'unseen forces: The impact of social culture on school leadership' in Thailand. The women principals in the study revealed that the status norms of seniority in terms of age remain stronger than institutional authority. The study concluded that culture norms find it inappropriate for younger leaders to make critical comments about subordinates who are older than them. The study's findings suggest that the majority of women leaders might experience discrimination, stereotypes and prejudices; however, the degree to which it is experienced may differ. As stated above, younger women leaders in this study appeared to experience a high rate of prejudice and discrimination as compared to older women leaders. This implies that younger women leaders have to deal with the perception that women are 'unfit' to lead and at the same time, deals with the issue that young people cannot be in the position of authority. The implication of such cultural norms on women leaders is numerous. For instance, younger women are likely to be ignored for leadership positions, even if they qualify, not only on the grounds of perceived prescriptive and descriptive' gender roles (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002) but also based on their age. This might have contributed to the small number of women leaders in the private corporate leadership organisations.

8.2 Leadership styles 'people-oriented' versus 'results-oriented.'

The popular perception that women possess 'communal' characteristics appears to have influenced the majority of the informants to adapt leadership styles that are congruent to their communal gender characteristics. Generally, women are perceived as being interpersonally sensitive, nurturing and caring while men being assertive and dominant (Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002). The accounts of informants in this study seem to suggest that informants show more concern to the plight, welfare and development of their subordinates by inspiring them, mentoring as well as giving them directions and pieces of training that increase their confidence so that they to realise their potential while working for their organisations. These type of leadership characteristics are more related to the transformational leadership styles as described by some scholars (see Bass & Avolio, 1994; Alice H Eagly et al., 2003; Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rohmann & Rowold, 2009).

Transformational leadership style established that leaders prioritised on innovation, mentoring and welfare of subordinates (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Apparently, leaders that adopt the transformational style are known to be inspiring and motivators. Besides transformational leaders place more emphasis on empowering their subordinates as well as giving them the confidence to work efficiently for the benefit of the organisation (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). The four constituents of this leadership style as posited by Bass and Avolio (1994) are the idealised

influence, intellectual stimulation, individualised consideration and inspirational motivation. The study's findings show a reflection of these four characteristics of transformational leadership styles. The emphasis made concerning subordinates' welfare, encourage innovation, collaboration, as well as the need to communicate the goals of the organisation to subordinates, are characteristics inherent the four dimensions of transformational leadership approaches. For example, we heard Vera (*page 45*) saying that she is more interested in the welfare of her subordinates. In additionally, Emelia (*page 46*) a subordinate of Vera confirmed the transformational leadership characteristics display by her boss by reiterating that the welfare of the subordinates is of great paramount to her.

In a meta-analysis of 45 studies on transformational, transactional and laissez fair leadership styles, Alice H Eagly et al. (2003) reported that women score higher in all aspect of transformational leadership styles. This was attributed to the communal characteristics(Alice H Eagly & Karau, 2002) associated with womanhood which, when adequately utilised could influence subordinates to exhibit a high level of commitment towards the goals of the organisation. This relates to findings by Carless (1998) study of Australian employees in large international banks that superiors evaluate female leaders as more transformational than male leaders. The same study reported that female leaders rate themselves to be more transformational than male leaders. Notwithstanding the argument that transformational leaders inspired and imposed confidence in the workers' Bass (1985) caution that the excessive display of transformational leadership style could be interpreted as an overzealous, ambition, arrogance and meekness which could dwindle the positivity of the leadership approach if not checked. Indeed, some of the female leaders in this study complained that they were sometimes accused of either being too emotional or arrogant when sticking to what they believe in by both their subordinates and superiors.

Despite the dominance of transformational leadership characteristics in the narration of the informants, it also came out from the narratives that some preferred or practised transactional leadership styles. Transactional leadership style involves the determination and defining the goals and work that subordinates need to achieve and also suggest how to execute their tasks and provide feedback (Dubinsky et al., 1995). Several studies (Alice H Eagly et al., 2003) have shown that male leaders mostly adopt transaction leadership because of their agentic characteristics. However, in this study, some female leaders displayed traits of transactional leadership in executing their duties, and their subordinates also confirmed it. The description of some informants that they transact rewards with work efficiency is a typical display of transactional leadership styles.

Even more, other characteristics of transactional leadership approach, such as being dominant and authoritative, which is a typical agentic characteristic were also adopted and used by some of the women leaders in this study. For instance, we heard Abena (*page 45*) saying that she adopts an authoritative approach to ensure discipline and control over the subordinates. A possible explanation for the adoption of this autocratic and dominant leadership approach could stem from the generational difference between the informants. Thus, the women leaders who adopt dominant leadership approaches are in their fifties. This may be so because those in their fifties might have experienced corporate environmental hostilities and prejudices against women leaders more than the young leaders who are arguably in a slightly more accommodative corporate environment than before.

8.4 Benefits, successes and prospects of being in leadership

The study's findings revealed that women leaders in this study enjoy some benefits as a result of their position. Informants expressed that one of the benefits of leadership is the opportunity to network. Analysis of the informants' narration revealed that networking provides them with the opportunity to learn from the more experienced and also develop their leadership skills. This networking also helps them to accrue favour and potential support in times of difficulties. As revealed by Getty (*page 62*) she had been able to expand her corporate network because of the opportunities to meet other top corporate leaders. This finding suggests that corporate networking is very essential to women leaders to develop their professional career by learning from people with experience in the corporate world.

The Catalyst (1999) study of women corporate network in the USA found that women create a network with each other to be able to share career development experiences and strategies as well as learning from one another. Broadbridge, Singh, Vinnicombe, and Kumra (2006) reported in their study that women network activities are motivated by the opportunities for their enhanced visibility which stipulate improved career, influence or leadership. In most instances, women leaders improve themselves by serving different committees in their network. By so doing, they improve on their managerial skills and also position themselves well for future opportunities. Also, Durbin and Tomlinson (2010) found among other findings that women leaders attribute their career progression to networking which they believe has allowed them to receive the support needed at any given time in enacting their leadership. The findings of these studies and the current study imply that corporate networking is essential for the leaders' success; hence, women leaders must and should strive for such networks if they want to succeed.

Further informants expressed that their position as leaders has allowed them to mentor others. Indeed, the analysis pointed to the fact that women leaders in this study facilitate the mentoring of other women in their respective organisations. All the informants explained that it was their responsibility to use their position to mentor other young women who desire to be in leadership positions. As demonstrated by Darwin and Palmer (2009), mentorship benefits and advance an individual's development. Indeed, some women leaders were very expressive to the mentorship they have provided to their subordinates since they attained leadership positions. For instance, Antione (*page 63*) indicated that her position as a leader had allowed her to mentor and support other women in her organisation. In her work, mentoring experiences of high-achieving women, Tolar (2012) reported that mentors provide opportunities and also remove an obstacle for the career advancement of their mentees. Informants in this study were of the view that mentoring is both important for networking and career development of young ones they mentor.

Perhaps, one of the most important things for being in leadership is the financial benefits that come with it. Each of the informants recounted how being in leadership has improved the financial status of their families. This is not to suggest that they were experiencing hardships before they attained the leadership positions. However, the improved financial benefits in the form of wages and incentives enhance the economic status of these women leaders. For instance, we heard Dina (*page 64*) recounting how her income has come as a relief for her husband who used to have substantial financial responsibility on his head. One possible implication of this finding is that women leaders may experience positive power relation within their family and other social groups.

8.5 Creating and Negotiating between 'work' and 'non-work' settings responsibilities: facilitative strategies

Women dominance in domestic responsibilities has been identified as one of the main reasons for female underrepresentation in top leadership positions of corporate organisations (Boateng, 2018; Moser, 2012; Rehman & Azam Roomi, 2012). Consistent with the content of these studies, the Triple role theory (Moser, 1993) argues that women are burden with the triple roles they perform in society. These roles are reproductive, productive and community engagement. Roebuck and Smith (2013, p. 59) suggested in their study of executive-level females' leaders that the "*most critical problem a female leader faces is the balancing of family, career and community services*". It is argued that performing all these roles do not only exposes women to stressors that affect their health and general wellbeing, it also slows down

their progress and participation in the labour market (Boateng, 2018; Moser, 1993, 2012). In the context of African and Ghana to be specific, it is being argued that what used to be the norm of gender role stereotyping with women focusing on reproductive roles has been changing (Oduro & Macbeath, 2003). In that, women are now being expected to earn income to support their families (Oduro & Macbeath, 2003; Ramaite, 2013). Nevertheless, the perception that women are responsible for domestic activities have not changed (Oduro & Macbeath, 2003). The triple role theory (Moser, 1993) posits that women are still expected to perform and be successful in all these roles to maintain their respect among their colleagues, family and the larger society. The informants in this study noted that combining leadership responsibilities with home and community responsibilities is very difficult. For instance, Linda (pagenumber) expressed the difficulties she had encountered why trying to balance her productive, reproductive and community responsibilities. That notwithstanding, this study found that women leaders have adopted some strategies to cope with these challenges.

Numerous strategies were used by informants to balance productive, reproductive and community roles. Chief among them was the prioritising of work responsibilities and efficient time management. Women leaders in this study were able to manoeuvre their way out these triple responsibilities by ensuring that 'work' responsibilities that are urgent are executed at the right time. The informants felt that they could not have been in their positions if not for effective time management. For instance, Antione (*page 60*) indicated that she mostly plans what she wanted to do even before she starts the week. Similar results were reported by Cho et al. (2016) in a collaborative qualitative study of women leaders work-life imbalance in South Korea. The study reported that most women leaders prioritised their responsibilities in order to make efficient use of time in their quest to balance work and family and community responsibilities. In another study of South African female individuals' perception and experiences of their gender and leadership roles, Ramaite (2013) found that success of the informants was partly based on their ability to plan, prioritised and organised their work. The author argues that being able to prioritize gives the informants the opportunity to attend to other responsibilities outside their work environment.

Again, in order to balance the triple burden, some women leaders revealed that they mostly delegate responsibilities to their subordinates and other colleagues whilst trying to reduce the workload. In order not to accommodate the notion that women are 'multitask master' and that they could do it all for themselves, the women leaders in this study revealed that they had built the capacity of their subordinates to execute specific tasks. This implies that in the absence of

these female leaders, some people are capable and could act on their behalf. In this regard, these women leaders are in a position to lessen their burden from the triple roles. For example, Abena (*page 63*) indicated that her personal assistant is capable to execute some of her responsibilities in her absence because of the training and confidence she has instilled in her. It could be argued that the dominance of the transformational leadership styles, as described by the informants, has contributed to this phenomenon. As argued by Judge and Piccolo (2004), transformational leaders inspire, innovate, mentor and empower their subordinates to be able to work independently. In several instances, this leadership style strengthened the position of women leaders because of the collaboration they get from their subordinates (Bass & Steidlmeier, 2006; Alice H Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

With regards to ‘non-work settings’ related strategies, it emerged that informants relied on different strategies depending on their marital and motherhood status. As claimed by the triple role theory (Moser, 1993), women are expected to play other roles in addition to the traditionally ascribed reproductive roles. In the case of the women leaders in this study, almost all of them made an emphasis on the contribution of their close family relatives, especially their spouses and parents. Relying on their parents and spouses to be able to cope with the demands of ‘work’ related responsibilities were very crucial. Not only do these people support the women leaders in the sharing of household chores and community engagement roles, but they also support and encourage them morally to sustain their gains. In the study of gender and leadership in South African educational Administrators, Chisholm (2001), found that women administrators depend on their families, close friends and spouses to manage their family and child-caring responsibilities. Again in the study of female principals careers paths, Moorosi (2010) also found that women principals relied on their mothers, sisters and sibling but not their spouses to perform their roles as traditional wives and the role of mothers in addition to their productive roles as school principals. Although these studies scopes were different from the current study which focuses on corporate leadership, it, however, shed light on what appears to be a common difficulty experienced by the majority of women in professional leadership. These findings appear to confirm the propositions of the triple role theory (Moser, 1993, 2012) that women are burden with productive, reproductive and community engagement. This finding suggests that an effective support mechanism could propel most women to strive for top corporate leadership positions.

The study’s findings also revealed the importance of domestic workers to the informants. The findings suggest that women leaders who have school-going age children have acquired the services of domestic workers who support them in household chores. That notwithstanding,

some informants indicated that since they are the women in the house and responsible for the management and the child-caring responsibilities, they still monitor the activities of these domestic workers to ensure that everything is in order which conversely can be another added responsibility. Blair-Loy (2001) concept of 'new motherhood' posits that women who engage in productive (formal work) activities-maintained career and mothering roles, while partly subcontract domestic responsibility. Not surprisingly, the majority of the informants in this study emphasised the need for woman leaders to ensure that their children are nurtured in a way that could glorify their family amidst the difficulties in exercising leadership. The triple role theory (Moser, 1993) argues that although women participation in the labour market is essential for the economic status of families, their home-maker role as women, mothers and wives are still being held onto by the society.

The study findings further indicated also that some women leaders combine both work and family responsibilities in both environments, that is reproductive roles while at work and productive roles at home. During my fieldwork, I observed that some leaders would be on phones giving instructions to their children or domestic workers. In this way, the women were using the workplace for caring roles. On the other hand, some informants reported taking works tasks home working long into the nights after performing the reproductive roles, which is, utilising the private home space for work activities. Additionally, due to the insufficiency of time, some of my informants also used community engagements, that is weddings, church services, naming ceremonies, among many to engage more and spend more time with their families and children. Indeed, this study confirms the proposition of the triple role theory that emphasised that contemporary women are overburden with triple responsibilities. In that, they have to be productive by earning for the family through participation in the labour market, be reproductive by performing domestic gender role as a woman, wife and mother and also engage in community activities to create a social network (Moser, 1993, 2012) .

Chapter Nine

Summary and Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of women at the top leadership positions of private corporate organisations in Ghana. By exploring lived experiences through these women, shared experiences emerged. This chapter presents a summary of the major findings and conclusion with some recommendations for further research.

The study adopted a qualitative phenomenology research design to address three research questions based on the broader objective of the thesis. These are:

- What are the experiences of women in private corporate leadership positions?
- How do women leaders understanding, and perceptions of leadership shape their leadership styles?
- How do women leaders navigate work and non-workspace settings, and what are the opportunities and limitation they face in doing so?

The role congruity theory of prejudice towards women leaders was used to guide the work-related experiences shared by the women leaders. The transformational and transactional leadership concepts also used to understand the leadership approaches of the informants. The triple role theory was used to explore how women leaders manoeuvre between the work and non-work-related responsibilities and to further illuminate on this conundrum faced by professional women.

What are the experiences of women in private corporate leadership positions?

The study findings show that the majority of the informants' experiences different challenges and opportunities emerging from both work and non-work settings. The work-related challenges as narrated by informants include the issue of age, the difficulty in managing long-serving staff, the existence of discrimination, stereotypes, prejudice and sexism as well as high expectations from women leaders. The findings show that age can either be an incentive or disincentive to the person enacting the leadership. The findings reveal that women leaders who are older [in their 50s] found the 'age' as an incentive as it grants them the authority and respect among their subordinates, colleagues and superiors. The study further reveals that long-serving staff members make the enactment of leadership difficult for the majority of the informants.

Prejudices, discrimination and stereotypes were also experienced by women leaders in different shape and form. The majority of informants experienced a subtle form of prejudices exhibited in body language, reactions to issues and unfair statements about their leadership styles. Others also experienced discrimination during promotions, even when their qualifications were better than the male counterparts that received promotion. Stereotypes were prevalent in the narration of the majority of informants as colleagues and subordinates sometimes confronted them to opt-out their leadership positions with the assertion that the work is not feminine and hence it is incongruent with their gender role. On the same premises of the perception that women are unfit to lead, all the informants expressed that they are always under high pressure to produce exceptional results to meet the higher expectations from colleagues and seniors. The role congruity theory of prejudice towards women leaders explains why women in top corporate leadership positions experience biases and stereotypes. In the discussion chapter, it was discovered that the societal perception that female gender roles are incongruent with that of leadership roles result in dislike and negative evaluation of women leaders.

Regarding the non-work setting challenges, the study findings show that the majority of informants, role as mothers and wives were some of the challenges women leaders face. The majority of informants perform different roles outside work settings as mothers and wives. Among other things, the study findings showed that women leaders are responsible for caring for their children, cooking and helping the children to perform school assignments after they have returned from school. Other responsibilities include washing the dirty clothes of their husbands every weakened and engagement in community functions as social responsibilities. It must, however, be emphasised that all the informants complained about the difficulties in engaging in these community functions due to work and family responsibilities. The triple role theory highlighted these challenges by revealing that women are burden with the triple roles of production, reproduction and community roles.

Further, the majority of the informants shared the benefits accrued as a result of their position as leaders. Among these benefits, are networking, mentoring and financial status improvement. The study findings show that the majority of informants are part of a more extensive corporate network that provides them with essential support and information concerning their work. Their positions as leaders also provide them with the opportunity to mentor other female leaders in the lower ranks of their perspective organisations. The financial improvements of informants were the other aspects of the opportunity to be in leadership. It was found that with

such financial improvement, informants are able to influence decision-making within their families and communities at large and therefore act as an empowerment factor.

How do women leaders' understanding, and perceptions of leadership shape their leadership styles?

The findings show that the majority of informants in the study exhibit transformational leadership styles. It was found that the leadership style of the majority of women leaders in the study is more collaborative and that they prefer to work in teams, to mentor their subordinates and to lead in innovations. Many of the informants noted that being collaborative is essential for the success of their respective organisations. Indeed, the majority of the subordinates interviewed confirmed this leadership style as revealed by their bosses. Nevertheless, the findings show that very few of the informants adopt and preferred transactional leadership styles. It was further revealed that informants that use transactional leadership styles are more dominant and sometimes autocratic in the decision-making process in their organisations. The finding indicates that there was a generational difference in either using transactional or transformational leadership styles. It was found that women leaders who exhibit transactional leadership styles are all in their 50s while those that exhibit transactional leadership styles are in their 40s and 30s. A possible explanation is that those in their 50s might have experienced corporate environment hostilities when they started their leadership career. Contrary, those in their 40s and 30s may have experienced a more conducive corporate environment due to the new world order that is arguably a bit more involving compared to the past.

How do women leaders navigate work and non-work settings responsibilities, and what are the opportunities and limitation they face in doing so?

The study findings show that the majority of women leaders find it challenging to navigate and to juggle between the work and non-work settings responsibilities. As stated above the triple role theory posits that women are burdened with triple roles of productive, reproductive and community roles. It was found that women leaders could not single-handedly perform in all these three roles and therefore resolve to rely on strategies, such as family and domestic workers at home or innovative working strategies at work. The findings indicate that planning and prioritising work activities is one of the key strategies used by all the informants while trying to balance the competing interest of the triple roles. The informants revealed that prioritising their work responsibilities grant them the flexibility to easily switch from work to home to take care of their families. That notwithstanding the majority of informants who have

children complained about the short time they have with their children. The study also found subordinates, personal assistance and colleagues at work settings as very instrumental for informants to navigate through the different roles they perform. It was found that the support of these individuals reduces the work-related stress of the majority of informants in the study. Few of the informants, however, complained of not having such support at work settings. The findings further show that spouses and family support was very important to the success of women leaders in this study. The majority of the informants who are married revealed that their parents and spouses, in general, support them by sharing specific household chores. The findings further indicate that the majority of informants hired the services of domestic workers to support in some household chores.

Conclusion

I have presented a sophisticated lived experience of women leaders in private corporate organisations in this study. Besides the performance of their leadership roles, other responsibilities from the non-work settings present a challenge to women leaders. However, women leaders in the study appeared to show great agency by adopting different strategies to help them sustain their position as leaders in a patriarchal and highly masculinised society like Ghana, especially the corporate leadership environment. The financial and social status improvement of these women could be viewed as motivating factors that keep the majority of the women in their position amid the challenges. Given these findings, I recommend further study on the experiences of family members of women leaders since the current study did not factor in the family members of the women leaders. However, the majority of them felt that their family contribute significantly to their success. In addition, a comparative study on the experiences of women leaders in other sectors, for example, the public sector could shed more light on what needs to be done for more women to *BREAK THE GLASS CEILING*.

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APPENDICES

Interview guide for women leaders

Background information relating to education, Age, experience (years in leadership)

How would you describe a successful leader?

Could you please share with me your experience as a leader in this organisation?

Based on your experience could you please tell me some of the challenges you face as a leader?

Could you please share with me your perception of women leaders in organization before you became one?

Has your perception changed, or you still maintain that perception?

Could you share with me if your role as a leader have any effect on the expected gender roles from you?

Could you please describe to me any biases or stereotype you have experienced as a female leader?

What type of leadership style do you think you exhibit?

What perception do you think people have about you as a female leader?

What perception do you have about yourself as a leader?

What do you think is the reason behind few women in corporate leadership positions?

Do you think the gender of a leader has an impact on the performance of an organisations?

Interview guide for subordinates

Gender of respondent

Would you please describe who a leader is?

Could you please describe how you perceive your current female leader?

If you have worked under male leader before, could you describe your experience?

Whom do you prefer, a female leader or male leader?

Thank you for your time. Please, would you like to add anything else?

CONSENT FORM

EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERINCES OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITION: CASE STUDY OF WOMEN LEADERS IN PRIVATE CORPORATE ORGANISATIONS IN GHANA

Background Information

I am a master's student from university of Bergen. I am doing research on the experiences of women in leadership position in private corporate organisations in Ghana. I would like to ask for your consent to participate in this study. The data produced from this study would only be used for academic purpose. No other person, except my supervisor could get access to the information you would give. You would be interviewed by the researcher if you accept to be part of the study. Consenting to take part in this study is not binding and you would not suffer any punishment if you decided not to continue.

Benefit & risk of participation

By participating in this study, you would not have any benefit in monetary terms. However, you would be contributing to knowledge on women leaders' experiences in corporate organisations. The outcome of the study would be made available for the public to access. There is no risk in participating in this study.

Confidentiality

All interviews would be recorded with audio-recorder. The recording will later be transcribed into word format for coding and analysis. Both the recorded voice and the transcribed would be kept in a personal computer with a password. Any information that could be used to identify you would be anonymised in the final report. In addition, the information you give will be destroyed three months after my study. The study is scheduled to end on the 1st July 2019 if all things being equal. As stated earlier you have every right to end the interview without any

explanation to the researcher. You are not obliged to answer any question that you think it's sensitive to you.

For further clarification and assurance, you can contact the researcher or his supervisor on the email below

Researcher: Samuel Amakye (samakyen@gmail.com)

Supervisor: Chimhutu Victor PhD (victor.chimhutu@hemil.uib.no)

By Signing this, I understood that I can withdraw anytime from participation in this study without giving any reasons. I therefore agree to participate.

Signature of interviewee

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Participant Signature

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