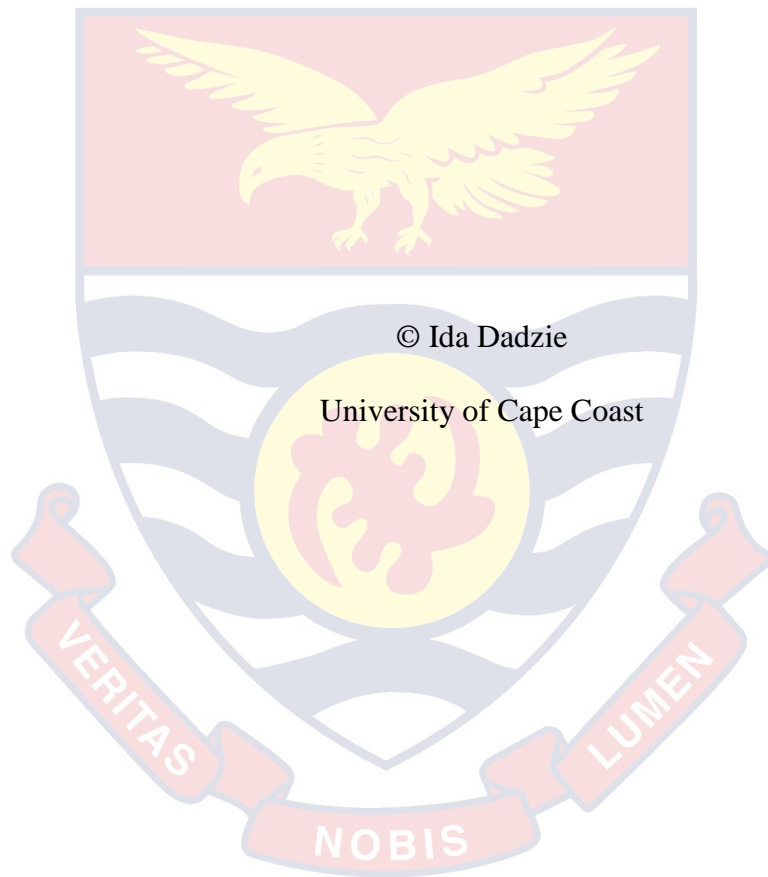UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

EXAMINING THE TRAJECTORY OF FEMALE EXECUTIVE LEADERS

IN PUBLIC GHANAIAN UNIVERSITIES

IDA DADZIE

2020

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University of Cape Coast

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

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BY

IDA DADZIE

Thesis submitted to the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration of the School of Educational Development and Outreach, College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in Administration in Higher Education

JULY 2020

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature……………………………Date……………………….

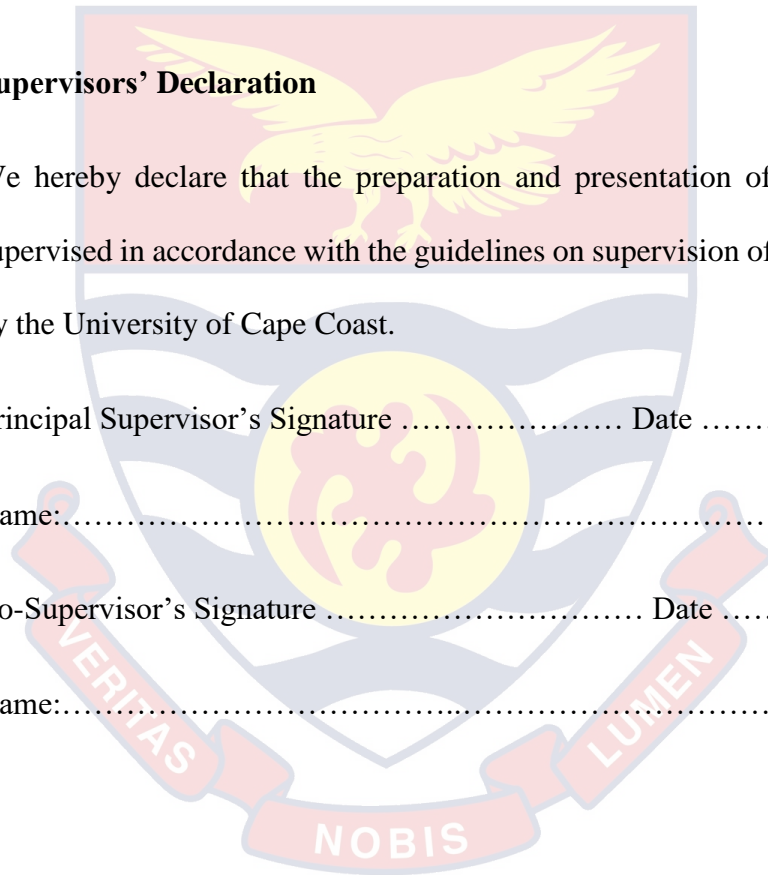Name:………………………...……………………………………………

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature ………………… Date ………………………

Name:…………………………………………………………………………

Co-Supervisor's Signature ……………….………… Date ………………………

Name:…………………………………...………………………………………..

ii

ABSTRACT

Women encounter significant barriers as it relates to their gender and leadership styles. The strong patriarchal system has made it more difficult for females to advance in higher education. Research has previously examined a number of factors, including characteristics, institutional influences, and practice efforts to increase the representation of females in leadership in higher education. However, exploring the persistence of gender inequality at the highest ranks of executive leadership is essential to understanding the underrepresentation of females in executive leadership positions in higher education (Bonebright, Cottledge & Lonnquist, 2012; White, 2012). Even though females have been a part of higher education for decades, only recently have they been highlighted in the research and literature pertaining to higher education, particularly executive leadership. This interpretive review considers gender and highlights organizational cultural barriers that further limit the advancement of females into executive leadership positions in higher education. The leadership trajectory of five females serving in executive positions in three public universities in Ghana was explored. Findings included opportunities presented to them through their hard work and dedication, the challenge of balancing personal and professional lives, understanding the importance of holding true to personal values, and the encouragement of mentors.

KEYWORDS

Culture

Higher Education

Leadership

Leadership Style
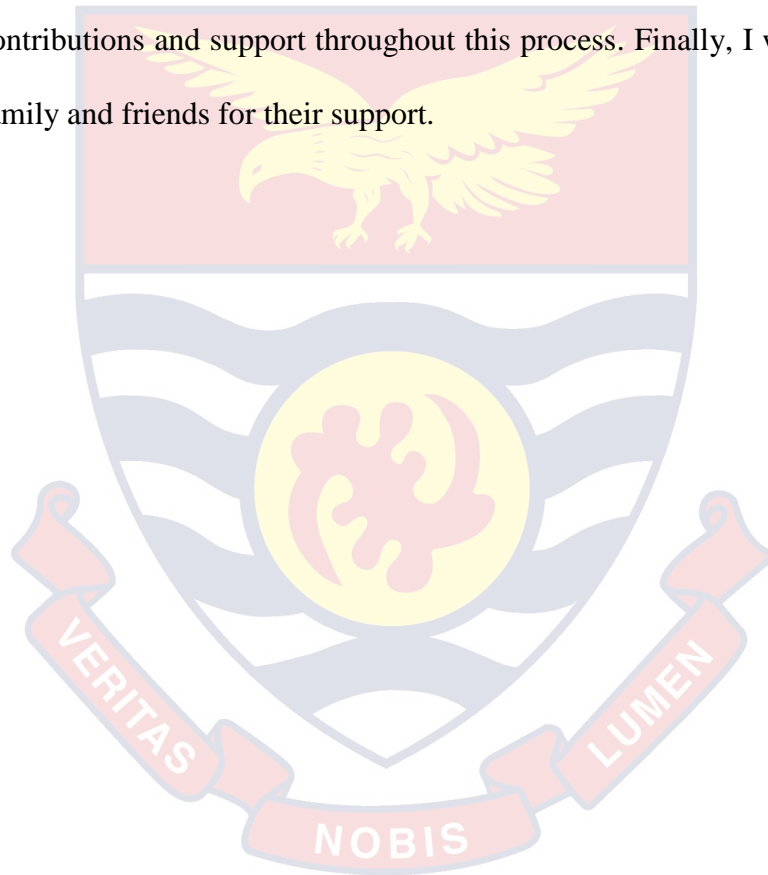
Public Universities

Trajectory

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors, Prof. Yaw Afari Ankomah and Dr. Francis Ansah, both for the Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, for their intellectual guidance and support throughout this process. I am especially grateful for their patience, constructive criticism, and careful attention to details. I am really grateful.

I am also grateful to Obed Akpalu and Esther Ayertey for their generous contributions and support throughout this process. Finally, I wish to thank my family and friends for their support.

DEDICATION

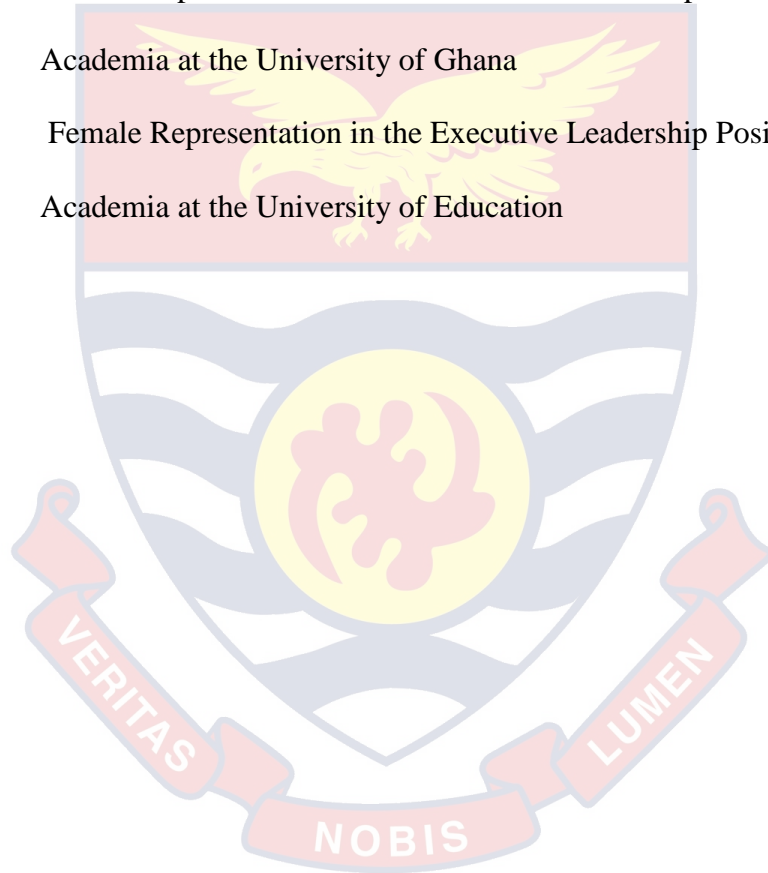To my husband, Richard Paapa Dadzie

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

x

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Ghanaian culture and traditions have promoted the advancement of males than females. Studies conducted by Morley (2013) concluded that factors including socio cultural considerations, gendered social practices within household, financial difficulties associated with females education, lack of role models for girls in schools, and hostile school environment, inadequate institutional facilities, and so on are factors that supports this phenomena. This 'Ghanaian phenomenon' affects almost every aspect of the nation even in education. These social phenomena is very rife from the basic level of education to the tertiary level. According to Daddieh (2003) "…negative parental attitudes and cultural practices have tended to devalue female educational achievement, and thereby undermine their educational performance even at the tertiary level". From Daddieh's statement above, the universities system in Ghana especially favour male's than females in respect of selecting females for top leadership positions. Bonawitz and Andel (2009) stipulated that this social phenomenon leads to the non-representativeness of the ideas and ideals of the female in the decision-making process in higher institutions. Traditionally, higher education administration has been dominated by males. As males continue to hold the power in executive leadership positions in higher education, females continue to find it difficult to achieve advancements without encountering challenges along the way. Another explanation for females falling behind males is that males are the primary distributors of academic funding, which includes both salaries and promotion. Bonawitz and Andel (2009) explained, "Males have

1

been administrators, vice-chancellors, and deans in academia for decades longer and in larger numbers than females have held these positions" (p. 23). Simply put, males continue to make decisions based on gender norms, and in turn favor hiring males for leadership positions in higher education.

Historically, females have been underrepresented in faculty and leadership positions within higher education. Even though females have made significant progress in obtaining equal rights and accesses to the privileges males have, such as the right to vote, the right to an education, and the right to equal pay at work, there are still very few females at the top. Driven by the females' movement, affirmative action, feminism, and females' strong work ethic and abilities, females have made great strides, have become more visible within the workforce, have increased their numbers at colleges, and have made some inroads to university presidencies especially in the Western world (American Council on Education, 2013). Although there are female faculty members and administrators present on college campuses, they are not readily visible in positions of high power and authority, such as Dean, Provost, Vice-Chancellors.

According to the Ghana Statistical service, the 2010 Population and Housing Census showed that the resident population of Ghana is made up of 12,024,845 males (48.8%) and 12,633,987 females (51.2%), giving an overall sex ratio of 95.2 (i.e., about 95 males to every 100 females). In numerical terms there is an excess of 609,133 females in the Ghanaian population.

Table 1: Statistics of females compared to males in the 2010 Ghana's population census.

Male population	Percentage of Males	Female population	Percentage of females
12,024,845	48.8	12,633,987	51.2

The above statistics from the Ghana Statistical Service shows clearly that there are more females in Ghana than males, and hence they should be proportionally represented in the Ghanaian economy especially in the educational sector.

In the University of Cape Coast, out a total of thirty (30) Provost, Directors, Deans and Heads of Departments (HOD) only seven (7) are females representing 23%. (University of Cape Coast [UCC], n.d.) The table below shows in details the percentage of males to females in the University.

Table 2: Female Representation in Executive Positions of Academia in the University of Cape Coast.

Position	Total number	Total number of Males	Total number of Females	Percentage of Males	Percentage of Females
Provost	5	4	1	75	25
Deans	15	15	0	100	0
HoD	10	4	6	40	60

In the University of Ghana, out of a total of fifty-two (40) Provost, Deans, Directors and Heads of Department (HOD) only twelve (8) are females. This figure is representing only 16% of the total females at executive positions of academia in the University. (University of Ghana, n.d) The situation is so precarious that the Head of Department of Centre for Gender studies and Advocacy is male though in most cases and for equity, the level of advocacy for the marginalized gender, should be a person from the feminine gender.

Table three below shows female representation in the executive leadership positions in the University of Ghana

Table 3: Female Representation in the Executive Leadership Positions of Academia at the University of Ghana

Position	Number of males	Percentage of males	Number of females	Percentage of females
Provost	4	100	0	0
Dean	17	77.3	5	22.7
Director	15	83.3	3	16.7
HoD	4	80	1	20

Table four below shows female representation in the executive leadership positions in the University of Education

Table 4: Female Representation in the Executive Leadership Positions of Academia at the University of Education

Position	Total number	Total number of Males	Total number of Females	Percentage of Males	Percentage of Females
Provost	5	4	1	75	25
Deans	15	15	0	100	0
HoD	8	4	4	50	50

In the University of Education, out of a total of twenty-eight (28) Provost, Deans, and Heads of Department (HOD) five (5) are females implying that only 18% of females occupy executive leadership positions in the University.

The enrollment trends also indicate that females are attaining educational credentials at a rate similar or greater than males, but the gender disparity continues to be prevalent in executive leadership positions in academia. Furthermore, females make up less than half of fulltime appointments in academia. Male Provost, Deans, Directors and Heads of Departments in academia want to work alongside someone like themselves. Fitzpatrick (as cited in Bonawitz and Andel, 2009) asserted:

Academic rewards… are still largely bestowed by males, who have had decades more time to become ensconced in positions of campus authority. And until more females get promoted to full professorships—the springboards to plum administrative posts—that's unlikely to change. (p. 4)

5

A quantitative study by Ballenger (2010) examined the barriers and opportunities that female leaders in higher education experienced in their progression toward promotion. Ballenger's study supported the problem that gender biases against females in higher education limit the number of females in executive leadership roles. Therefore, educational institutions must develop a leadership schema that more closely reflects the diversity of the student body that looks upon the leadership for guidance and modeling of acceptable behavior.

The primary career path for significant executive leadership positions in higher education is through the faculty tenured track leading to subsequent appointments into roles of Heads of Departments (HOD), Dean and so on (Madsen, 2012; Tomas, Lavie, Duran & Guillamon, 2010). Obtaining the rank of full professor affords females the opportunity for leadership in faculty governance, extends national influence in the disciplines, and is a traditional prerequisite for climbing the leadership ladder (O'Connor, 2015). However, as of 2012, females made up only 31% percent of executive vice presidents and only 38% percent of chief academic officers/provost positions in a survey conducted in some countries including Ghana (American Council on Higher Education, 2013). An explanation for females continuing disproportionate representation in high level administrative leadership roles starts in research on female disproportionate promotion to senior faculty ranks. King and Gomez (2008) stated, "Across institution types, females are more likely to serve in central academic affairs roles (such as Associate Provost or Deans of graduate studies) that are most typically staff rather than line positions" (p. 5).

Even females who have successfully navigated the administrative career ladder report experiencing gender bias as they progressed in their careers (Timmers, Williamsen, & Tijdens, 2010). Despite the representation of females in terms of higher education access, degree completion, and staff positions, females continue to be underrepresented in academic leadership positions. Unfortunately, females have not received the same opportunities as males when it comes to gaining access to leadership positions in academia. Contributing to the problem is the idea that females still struggle with gaining acceptance as leaders due to gender biased perceptions about leader competency (Carvalho & Santiago, 2011; Fox-Cardamone, 2012). Increasing the number of females in high level administrative leadership positions and decreasing gender disparity in higher education has become recognized as critically important (Bonebright, Cottledge & Lonnquist, 2012; Chin, 2011).

Delving deeper into specific positions in higher education, males primarily occupy the position of Provost, Deans, Directors and Heads of Departments; however, there has been a slight increase in the number of females in those positions. So not only are there very few females as Provost, but the demographic data indicate that females holding the position of Provost are primarily white females, that is, mostly in the advance western world. Unfortunately, due to this underrepresentation of females in executive leadership positions, little is known about the leadership styles and experiences of females on their journey to this role within the higher education system.

Many females who seek to achieve executive level leadership positions face visible and invisible barriers that force them to give up and/or to doubt their capabilities. Literature has shown how females have strived and gained

7

leadership ranks in government and business organizations. However, one place where female contribution has not yet been fully recognized as a significant force in decision making is in educational institutions. Several studies have clearly shown that females continue to be underrepresented in executive leadership positions in higher educational institutions (American Council on Education, 2012; Donohue Mendoza, 2012; Madsen, 2012). There is a growing interest in leadership styles in an effort to find out differences and similarities in the ways males and females lead (Aiston & Jung, 2015). The findings of these studies are remarkably contradictory and at the center of the controversy is the relationship between leadership, gender, and organizational culture.

Numerous articles have been written about the leadership styles of females and males. Some claim that there are distinct differences between how males and females lead, still others state that it is the situation that determines the best leadership style, regardless of the sex of the leader (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). There are others who suggest that both males and females lead similarly depending on their positions or situations. According to Northouse (2013), leadership is not defined by a person's gender but by their ability to influence others, to direct attention to common goals, and to promote success with groups.

However, there are some inherent traits that are indicative of all leaders regardless of gender. According to Northouse (2013), the most commonly desired traits are drive, persistence, motivation, insight, dominance, integrity, initiative, self-confidence, sociability, and influence. Studies by Airini, McPherson, and Madsen (2012) have revealed that self-awareness, which refers to understanding one's strengths and limitations, is important for leadership

success. Leadership characteristics are often explained by stereotypes about gender and societal norms or expectations and not by experience. Stereotypes are defined as unsupported beliefs people use to categorize other people. Evidence has suggested that leaders who perform contrary to the stereotypical expectations of their gender are evaluated negatively (Aiston & Jung, 2015). Societal norms expect females to "take care" and males to "take charge" (Allan, 2011). It is concluded that gender influences human behavior (Shah, 2010) and, therefore, can influence leadership styles.   According to the American Psychological Association (2012), gender refers to "the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associate with a person's biological sex" (p. 8). Gender is defined as a social structure used to view females as a group that is to be subordinate to males (Fochtman, 2011). The persistence of gender inequality in higher education has prompted an increase in the examination of the causes and effects of this type of discrimination. Additional explanations for gender related differences are societal role expectations, attributes, leadership suitability, and efficacy.   The challenge of equality regarding equal representation is critical to females. Studies by Airini, McPherson, and Madsen (2012) pointed out how academic institutions are structured based on gender, the enforcement of the patriarchal structure, and the devaluation of female faculty interest.

Females in executive leadership roles often face attitudes that consider them not as good or committed due to family obligations (Campbell, Mueller & Souza, 2010). Due to males monopolizing leadership and administrative roles, females are often viewed as less than their counterparts and are viewed as still holding traditional gender stereotyped roles (Donohue Mendoza, 2012).

Traditionally females have held roles inside the home, even though many are now holding more doctoral degrees than their male counterparts (Co'rdova, 2011).

Additionally, gender differences in career aspirations, professional assets, and various personal variables have been suggested as contributors to the gender disparity. Allan (2011) argued that gender is an institution that is embedded in all the social processes of everyday life and social organizations, and that gender difference is primarily a means to justify sexual stratification. Leadership is "a cultural phenomenon" (Gerstner & O'Day, 1994, p. 123), but research on educational leadership undertaken from a cultural perspective is relatively scarce (Green, Mallory, Melton & Lindahl, 2011; Metcalfe & Gonzalez, 2013). As Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) explained: "Few scholars in educational administration subsequently have explored culture as a contextual determinant in understanding the exercise of educational leadership both in terms of conceptual development and empirical research" (p. 132).

According to Northouse (2013), culture refers to a set of symbols, rituals, values, and beliefs that makes one group different from another. Culture is learned and shared with people who live or lived in the same social environment for a long time and, for the purpose of this study, the higher education system will be the organization in which culture will be explored further. The widely known definition of Organizational Culture was coined by Schein in 1985. Schein believed that organizational culture exists at three levels: basic assumptions, values, and artifacts/creations (1985). Beyond this basic assertion, one must also consider that within an organization are many subsets and departments each with their own culture. Schein (2004) also stated

that organizational culture is a set of "shared, taken-for-granted implicit assumptions that a group holds and that determines how it perceives, thinks about and reacts to its various environments" (p. 24). Organizational culture is transmitted to new members through socialization, their behavior at work is influenced by said culture, and the culture works at different levels (Ovidiu-Iliuta, 2014). The main element of an organization which helps or hinders good performance is a strong organizational culture.

However, culture can also represent a barrier when implementing new strategies or making changes (Ovidiu-Iliuta, 2014). Lester's (2013) examination of two institutions of higher education that achieved, or attempted to achieve, a cultural change acknowledges organizational culture as being a system of beliefs, understandings, knowledge, and meanings shared by organizational members. Schein's assertion that culture manifests through three organizational levels: artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions was prominent in the study. Lester (2013) further elaborated on this concept by identifying artifacts as visible behavior patterns resulting from behaviors including language, jargon, programs, and policies. Espoused values are organizational values and beliefs and can include philosophies, ideologies, and attitudes. Underlying assumptions are beliefs that are tacit. They represent the deepest level of culture and are used to guide behavior. The vast majority of executive leaders in large organizations are male. Since organizational culture is a function of leadership (O'Connor, 2015) and most high-level administrative leaders in universities are males, it follows that males would largely define the organization's culture. In light of this, some have found that male-determined values have enforced a system in which there are certain acceptable roles for

females (generally lower-levels) and certain acceptable roles for males (generally high-level) (O'Connor, 2015).   Typically, however, this gender discrimination is invisible to males and the practice may likely be unintentional (O'Connor, 2015). Females, however, are much more conscious of a "male club", "systematic biases" and "unsupportive culture" within their universities (O'Connor, 2015, p. 32).   When females attempt to enter male-dominated positions, they have the choice of either "performing femininity or resisting such a performance" (O'Connor, 2015, p. 34). The risk here is that females who embrace and display their unique personality may be seen as "other". In fact, some evidence suggests that no matter what females do, they may still be seen as "other". Some have suggested that unless females "mimic successful males" then they will "not look the part" required for success (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014).

Contrarily, Dahlvig (2013) contended that though a study in America conducted wrote that, "the culturally ingrained, traditional Christian beliefs of many Council for Christian Colleges and University (CCCU) member institutions may foster a campus environment that discourages female leadership" (p. 94). By exploring the narrative inquiry of five female leaders in CCCU institutions, Dahlvig (2013) sought to tell the stories of females who may have been marginalized due to the historically oppressive structures of higher education and Christian culture. Themes surrounding family-work balance, transformational and androgynous leadership, imposter syndrome, and complicated relationships emerged relative to the cultural context of the institutions. While acknowledging the limitations of the study, Dahlvig (2013) concluded that higher education professionals working within the CCCU should " be attentive to Christian culture for both positive and negative forces

impacting leaders; create and explore family-friendly policies and programs; and cultivate mentoring cultures" (p. 104).

Organizational culture also affects the way females plan their careers. Females who experience what they perceive to be less supportive workplaces are more likely to question whether they should stay in the workplace or leave (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014). Further, once a female has become a mother, if she perceives the workplace to be supportive, she is much more likely to return to the workplace quickly after giving birth (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014). Organizational culture has been shown to carry over into parenting styles (Gary, Yarandi, & Hassan, 2015). Parents tend to instill the values they find essential for successful work performance in their children. Therefore, parents who work in white-collar positions tend to encourage independence and creativity in their children (Gary, Yarandi, & Hassan, 2015). As females take the unbalanced amounts of the parenting responsibilities, one can see how organizational culture and the ensuing pressures therein may affect the way a child is reared, and therefore, how that child will perceive his or her approach to the workforce. Thus, the cycle is internalized and perpetuated.

In conclusion, organizational culture is defined and perpetuated by the leadership of an organization. Because majority of organizations are led my males, implicit or explicit rules of decorum, values, behavior, and roles are expected and are shaped by a male-centered perspective.

Statement of the Problem

Leadership is an important topic of research, especially in higher education. There has been a recent surge in the literature regarding female leaders in higher education, but it is limited in scope and quantity. Some of the

13

studies include Jorgensen and Ten (2009) which focused on how males and females perform in the 1990's and their respective attrition rate. Van Langen and Driessen (2008) also focused on how females' study in contrast to males. In a study conducted by the organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) it concluded that the percentage of female graduates has started to exceed their male counterparts. Ozga and Sukhnandan (2009) has concluded that academic performance has been found to be similar in males and females, except for situations in which females represent a minority in a course; in those courses females perform less well and drop out more than males. Within these, the emphasis is often on the levels at which females' reach, their performance without touching on females in executive leadership positions in the Public Universities. Presently, it appears no studies that sufficiently describe the experiences of females in higher education leadership positions. Meanwhile, examining the unique leadership styles indicative of female leaders assists in understanding their trajectory toward leadership in higher education. Therefore, research was needed to explore the experiences of female executive leaders' trajectory in higher education administration. Exploring the progression of female executive leaders in higher education is important to understanding what assisted them in breaking through the glass ceiling and overcoming barriers that often times limits the number of females from advancing in their careers to executive positions in higher education institutions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the leadership trajectory experiences and barriers of females in executive positions in public universities in Ghana to provide deeper insights into female perspectives of leadership in

14

academia. Executive positions in the study refers to Vice Chancellorship and Provost Positions, Heads of Departments and Directors of University colleges, institutes and centres.

This is intended to help describe strategies used by female leaders in executive positions in Ghanaian public universities to overcome the barriers on their journey to these executive positions in the various public universities in Ghana.

Also, the study helps to describe the unique leadership styles indicative of female leaders in public universities in Ghana.

Research Questions

The overarching questions that guided this study was:

1. How do females in executive leadership positions in public universities in Ghana describe their leadership journey?
2. How do female executive leaders describe their leadership styles?
3. What leadership styles help females to succeed in their leadership journey to executive positions?
4. What barriers do female leaders in Ghanaian public universities encounter on their journey to executive positions?
5. How do female leaders overcome barriers on their journey to executive positions in public universities in Ghana?

Significance of the Study

Despite the visible signs of success, many females are still finding the road to executive leadership positions rocky. There is a gap in literature in terms of what is known about the leadership experiences of female executive leaders (Provosts, Deans, Directors and Heads of Departments).

15

This study makes a distinct contribution to the gap in literature for female executive leaders in public universities in Ghana. The study serves to fill the gap found in existing research and literature about leadership styles of females in executive leadership positions in higher education, specifically Executive Leadership (Provost, Deans, Directors and Heads of Departments). Additionally, studies such as this offer benchmarks for young female professionals in terms of what to anticipate on their leadership progression, as well as how to navigate potential pitfalls.

It has been demonstrated that females approach leadership very differently than males. It is this new approach that can bring about new values that can be incorporated into a traditional patriarchal system. Advocates for closing the gap in higher education believe that the result would be institutions that are more centered on process and persons rather than tasks, outcomes and masculinized priorities, creating more inclusive, equitable and caring environment for faculty, staff and students (Fochtman, 2011). Therefore, it is crucial that research in this area be conducted so that university administration can understand the context of female leadership, barriers, and strategies experienced by females serving in executive leadership positions in public universities in Ghana.

Limitations

There were several limitations in this study. These include gender, sample size and location.

The study focuses only on females in executive leadership positions in Ghanaian Public Universities. Therefore, this study does not relate to males and have no reasonable benefit for male executive leaders.

The study also focuses on extensive data collected on a few females in top leadership positions in the university management system. The sample size is small because of the small number of female leaders in executive positions. From the literature reviewed in the introduction there is a range of 10% to 21% of females in executive leadership positions in Ghanaian Public Universities, hence, the sample for the study was taken from the few females in leadership positions.

Only Ghanaian public universities were used in the study hence the study may have very little effects on other countries. Social problems vary from place to place, therefore, certain solutions to problems at a particular place may not apply to other places. Since the study only focused on Ghanaian public universities, it applies to Ghanaian Public Universities.

Delimitations

The study focuses only on female Provost/Deans/Heads of Departments/Directors in the Public University System in Ghana; however, transferability can be drawn assuming a similar situation. The concern was that there are more males than females serving as Provost in higher education (American Council on Higher Education, 2013). The profession, gender, region, and experiences of the participants served as the delimitations to narrow the focus of the investigation (Creswell, 2014).

The study is only restricted to the public universities in Ghana hence may not have applicability to other higher institutions across Africa and beyond. This study is limited to the public university system of Ghana. Hence the finding and recommendations are only applicable to females in leadership positions in

Ghana. Other levels of education such as the basic and the high schools may not necessarily benefit from this study.

Definition of Terms

LEADERSHIP: This is an art of motivating a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal. Leadership encompasses the ability of an individual or an organization to guide other individuals, teams or entire organizations.

LEADERSHIP STYLE: This is a way of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. Examples are Autocratic, Participative, Laissez-faire and task-oriented leadership styles.

PROVOST: In the realm of higher education, Provosts have programmatic and budgetary oversight over all academic activities in a college in a university. The provost review appointment papers of new faculty members and receives reports from the promotion and tenure committees. The deans and directors of the various academic centers, institutions, and schools report to the provost for academic related matters (Madsen, 2012).

CULTURE: Culture is the pattern of shared assumptions that was learned by a group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 2004).

CRITICAL THEORY: The Critical Theory paradigm is where multiple truths exist and are influenced by power relationships among people (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Critical Theory provides the framework for understanding the experiences of females in executive leadership positions in higher education.

18

INTERSECTIONALITY: Intersectionality is an analytical tool for studying, understanding, and responding to ways in which gender intersects with other identities and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of oppression and privilege (Crenshaw, 2008).

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: This is an appointed leader in an academic institution or a school. Heads of Departments are appointed by the Pro-Vice Chancellor or the Provost of a College. They work under the supervision of a Dean and a Provost.

DIRECTOR OF CENTER'S: These are appointed officials who are responsible for heading a university center. These centers are basically into research and advocacy.

HIGHER EDUCATION: Higher education in this study basically refers to post-secondary education which is the final part or stage of formal education. It includes all universities in Ghana (Degree awarding institutions).

Organisation of the Study

The first chapter contains the introduction, problem statement, research questions, and significance of the study, limitations and delimitations, and organization of the study. Chapter Two will present a review of the literature that is relevant to the leadership experiences of female executive leaders, as well as an overview of the Critical Theory theoretical framework. Also, an overview of the intersection of leadership, gender, and culture in educational leadership will be explored. The chapter will also explore the leadership styles that are indicative of female leaders. The remainder of the chapter is divided into two sections which delve into barriers and strategies. The first section examines the barriers and challenges faced by female leaders. The second section presents

19

strategies that have proved helpful to overcome the barriers experienced by female leaders in public universities in Ghana.

The third chapter will provide information outlining the research methods, research design, sampling procedure, data collection procedure and analysis, ethical considerations and validation of findings.

Chapter Four will present findings from the research study and themes that emerge from the research.

Finally, the last chapter will summarize the findings in relation to the literature and present a critical interpretation of the findings and discuss recommendations and implications for practice.

Chapter Summary

The trajectory of females as executive leaders can be better understood by exploring the impact of gender as it relates to leadership styles, the barriers experienced, and the strategies employed by female leaders. This broadened understanding will enhance recognition of females who have achieved executive leadership positions and encourage future females to pursue positions of leadership and move towards elimination of gender biases and stereotypes.

Overall, this study will facilitate an understanding of the broad concept of female leadership and the journey that females have traveled who have achieved executive level leadership positions in higher education.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present a review of the existing literature on the impact that gender and organizational culture has on the underrepresentation of females in executive level leadership positions in public universities in Ghana. This chapter is organized as follows.

1. Overview of Critical Theory

2. Intersectionality

3. Gender and leadership in higher education

4. Leadership Style of females in Higher Education

5. Barriers to Executive Leadership

6. Strategies to overcome barriers

7. Implications

8. Summary

The following are discussed below.

Overview of the Critical Theory

An appropriate lens through which to examine issues of gender in higher education is Critical Theory. The critical Theory was originated by the Frankfurt School in the 1920's and is widely used across a number of disciplines. The theory was developed by the Frankfurt School of Political and Social theorists in response to both Marxist Communism and Western Capitalism. While the goal of most traditional theories of societal organization seek to explain society as it currently exists and has existed, Critical Theory

21

differs in that, it aims toward critiquing and ultimately altering society on a macro level (Turner, Norwood, & Noe, 2013). A theory is critical whenever it holds as its goal the emancipation and liberation of people. Critical Theory, though a specific theory, may also be used as a term employed to describe all theories which hold democratization and freedom from oppression as their focus. These Critical Theories may include Feminism, Post-Colonial Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Queer Theory (Turner, Norwood, & Noe, 2013). Critical Theory is of greatest impact when it orients all the major social sciences (anthropology, psychology, sociology, political science, economics, etc.) toward the goal of societal transformation (Turner, Norwood, & Noe, 2013). For any theory to be considered critical, it must accomplish three objectives: it must explain the issues with the current society, identify the parties responsible and those who may act to change it, and offer models for criticism and a concrete path toward the appropriate revolution (Turner, Norwood, & Noe, 2013).

When applied to academic research, Critical Theory informs and grounds the researchers in the task of reconstructing the power relationships present in the topic of study (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015). These critical studies must also aim to empower those who have been constrained toward transcendence and greater liberty. For a study to be informed by Critical Theory, the methodology is as important as the outcome and those seeking to conduct such a study are encouraged to utilize dialogic or dialectical methodologies (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015). A study by Lumby (2015) paired a Critical Theory perspective with an intersectionality framework in the exploration of the strategies adopted by South African female principals to position their identities in relation to their gender, ethnicity, and other

characteristics. Lumby (2015) noted that a variety of definitions for Critical Theory abounds and acknowledges that this variance is in part a result of the range of perspectives represented by the various groups that have adopted its use. From the multiplicity of views as to what constitutes Critical Theory, Lumby (2015) stated "a common commitment to give voice to and thereby to engage with those who are often silenced, aiming to create societies and workplaces which are free from domination where all members have an equal opportunity to contribute" (p. 29). In Lumby's (2015) study, the Critical Theory perspective was applied both to the presentation and analysis of the data obtained through interviews with 54 respondents. Lumby noted, however, that the critical approach presented a challenge in relation to the analysis of the data acquired from the respondents.

The research indicated that this approach implied a dual analytical stance, and as such, even though the analysis credits the respondents' narratives as their reality, it also takes into account socialization and contextual pressures and questions the respondents' interpretations of their experience. Lumby (2015) further noted that as a result "…alternative interpretations are sometimes offered to those given by respondents" (p. 33). Institutions of higher education themselves are not exempt from the forces of discrimination and domination as many were founded and molded by the cultural values and perspectives of the majority culture. Critical Theory as applied to matters of race and racial relations offers the perspective that the lack of racial factors contributed to the structural norms of institutes of higher education (Giles, 2010). Giles used Critical Race Theory as a starting point for a historical, biographical, and literary examination of the life of an African American leader in higher

education. Through this lens, Giles was better able to understand the context and contribution shaping the experience of individuals and through this he was able to offer suggestions applicable today. Jacobs (2014) characterized Critical Theory as being "self-conscious about historicity and the role of the social environment. It is an emancipatory approach that enables us to dig beneath the surface of social life and uncover the assumptions that keep us from fully understanding how the world works." (p. 297). Jacobs (2014) asserted that it is a theory that is concerned with solving social problems by emancipating humanity from domination. Jacobs (2014) noted that in the past Critical Theory was criticized for its failure to consider the full impact of cultural diversity on human existence and goes onto identify Craig Calhoun as being credited with broadening the tradition of Critical Theory and connecting it more closely to social and historical research.

This expansion makes Critical Theory very useful for critiquing and changing established ways of thinking and established forms of life. In light of the focus of Critical Theory and its uses and application, it seems appropriate to utilize this framework when studying higher education in general and females in executive leadership in particular. Females in executive leadership positions in higher education being underrepresented have long been understood and ample studies reflect this assertion. Some of the studies attempt to explain or elucidate the situation while others seek to offer suggestions based upon the successful navigation of the "Glass Labyrinth" of females in leadership. However, it may be difficult to categorize these studies as "Critical" in their theoretical framework as their main task is to understand or explain society, whereas a "Critical" study may be one that provides a normative base from

24

which societal critique may take place (Turner, Norwood, & Noe, 2013). Utilizing Critical Theory in order to gain a fuller picture, researcher Odhiambo (2011) observed that improving females' participation in leadership roles in higher education is a crucial part of the struggle for freedom and rights of females everywhere as institutions of higher education are where much of the thought and culture of a society germinate and grow (Odhiambo, 2011). Odhiambo suggested that policies at the national and local level be developed which would encourage female participation in higher education leadership. He called for a change of the culture of higher education toward one which recruits, promotes, and enhances female research capacity (Odhiambo, 2011). To further examine females in leadership positions in higher education, Intersectionality, a subset of Critical Theory will be explored to examine the interlocking identities of females in higher education.

Intersectionality

Parent, DeBlaere, and Moradi (2013) asserted, "The intersectionality perspective maintains that multiple identities construct novel experiences that are distinctive and not necessarily divisible into their component identities or experiences" (p. 640). According to Warner and Shields (2013): the origins of the intersectionality framework grew out of feminist and womanist scholars of colour pressing the position that most feminist scholarship at that time was about middle-class educated, white women, and that an inclusive view of women's position should substantively acknowledge the intersections of gender with other significant social identities, most notably race. (p. 303)

25

This model was additive and was based on the premise that the more marginalized statuses that were attributed to an individual, the greater the oppression. Black feminists considered this model to be limited, which helped to further spur the evolution of the framework (Warner & Shields, 2013). Currently, according to Warner and Shields (2013), "a fundamental assumption in every influential theoretical formulation of intersectionality is that intersectional identities are defined in relation to one another" (p. 303). The emphasis of the intersectional framework is on the qualitative differences among various intersectional positions. Warner and Shields (2013) acknowledged that there is wide agreement that intersections create both oppression and opportunity, in that, "being on the advantaged side offers more than avoidance of disadvantage or oppression by actually opening up access to rewards, status, and opportunities unavailable to other intersections" (p. 302). According to Warner et al. (2013), we can use "an intersectional perspective to make visible how systems of inequality function in overlapping ways, thus enabling the possibility of transforming these matrices of power" (p. 804). They further assert that when used as a framework, intersectionality reminds researchers that any consideration of a single identity must incorporate an analysis of the ways that other identities interact with, and qualitatively change, the experience of that identity.

Higher education and in particular females in higher education would benefit much from further research informed by intersectionality. The specific body of knowledge at this moment is severely lacking with little to no studies found which directly apply intersectionality toward the topic of females in executive leadership positions. Rather, as this brief review shows, peripheral yet

applicable studies have been conducted that show how Critical Theory and its subset theories may be applied to the benefit of the study and, hopefully, of society. Applying intersectionality to the study's purpose is expanded from better understanding the situation of females in executive leadership positions (a field which has been extensively examined) to a study which has the aim of constructive critiques and societal change. The broad umbrella of Critical Theory, initially formulated as a response to both Capitalism and Marxism, can breathe life into a stale academic culture as it reorients the goals of study toward progress and liberation. Intersectionality may be utilized by researchers to empower those they study and to employ their research as a tool for enlightenment and societal change.

Gender and Leadership in Higher Education

Many researchers have claimed that gender determines leadership styles, that is, males and females lead and manage differently (Carvalho & Santiago, 2011; Eagly, Gartzia, & Carli, 2014; Grant-Vallone, 2010). Traditionally, leadership studies have focused on males and the masculine perspective because females were not in leadership positions. Since the masculine style of leadership is still perceived by many as ideal, females have had difficulties in gaining and keeping leadership positions because they have to contend with the pressure to fit their leadership styles into accepted models instead of being allowed to develop their own styles (Diehl, 2014). However, the changing trend in leadership theory to more collaborative models has coincided with the increased numbers of females in leadership positions (Eagly, Gartzia, & Carli, 2014). Females have brought a new style of leadership that is more relational than hierarchical to organizations (Eagly, Gartzia, & Carli,

27

2014). Gender is part of what informs female leaders' values and priorities while also encompassing female different backgrounds and commitments are what have made a fundamental difference in leadership style used in executive positions (Morley, 2013). Researchers such as Eagly, Gartzia and Carli (2014) and Smith et al., (2012) studying female experiences in higher education have focused more on providing balanced insight on gender inequality.

More recently, male, and female leadership style differences have been categorized as transformational and transactional leadership (Antonaros, 2010). Females tend to lean more towards transformational leadership while males are more prone to transactional leadership. Females have been seen to have a more communal leadership style showing a more caring side of being a leader. Female leaders are being more collaborative, community-oriented and seek to empower others, whereas males have shown more assertiveness and control through aggressive leadership. Despite the controversy about gender and leadership, research on how females lead is growing. In this review of the literature, the variables that contribute to the gender differences in leadership will be explored, as well as the preferences that each gender has for leadership styles of professional leaders.

Leadership Styles for Females in Higher Education

Female leadership styles are seen as more transformational - more caring, nurturing, and, focusing on the betterment of those being led as well as the larger context (i.e., the organization, community, or country) (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Eagly, Gartzia, & Carli, 2014). Characteristics typically associated with nurturing characteristics include being affectionate, helpful, friendly, kind, sensitive, gentle, and soft spoken (Jackson & O'Callaghan,

28

2011). Female leaders tend to draw on personal experience and not just think of themselves, or the bottom line; their leadership style tends to have a greater impact on the people, the organization, and society (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). Female leaders are credited with a willingness to look at how an action will affect other people and to be concerned with the wider needs of the community (Ayman & Korabik, 2010).

The paradigm shift in the literature that recognizes transformational leadership, a feminine leadership style, as legitimate and effective may have prepared the way for more females to take leadership positions. Longman and Lafreniere (2012) stated that: this shift from power over followers to power with followers allows for mutual influence in the leader/follower relationship. Given this paradigm shift in leadership theory, the collaborating and empowering leadership style typical of many females prepares them well to lead effectively in modern-day organizations. (pp. 401-402)

The partnership that embodies transformational leadership encourages subordinates to accomplish the overall goals. Antonaros (2010) found that female administrators are usually concerned with creating change, building relationships, empowering others, delegating, and collaborating. According to theorist Burns (as stated in Northouse, 2013), transformational leadership involves a unique bonding among leaders and followers; emotional attachment, respect, and trust form the basis of these leadership approaches. Transformational leaders also seek to raise the thought process of followers by encouraging abstract thinking and ethical standards based on independence, integrity, and humanitarianism. Transformational leadership places a strong emphasis on social change and justice.

Female leaders are known to create an environment that strives for excellence by developing relationships with those they work directly with and other leaders. Females are also perceived to value workplace relationships more than males, insinuating that female leaders may foster closer bonds with their followers than male leaders. One way of interpreting female leaders' effectiveness is the higher standard they have to meet in attaining their leadership positions and the perception that they "have to maintain better performance to retain these roles" (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 33). Transformational leaders motivate those they are leading by penetrating individuals' desires and connecting them with their personal value system for their personal development (Poulson et al., 2011). Overall, females use language to enhance relationships while males use language to enhance social dominance and control.

These leadership style differences between males and females often create obstacles for female leaders in the workplace as they are seen as relational leaders in an organizational structure that is comprised of primarily task-oriented leaders. The accepted and distorted perception of females in leadership positions encouraged females to adopt a masculine leadership style. However, it should be noted that the adaptation of different leadership styles is only done by females as males rarely change their style to accommodate their subordinates (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2011).

Female barriers and strategies used to overcome the barriers to their career growth are subsequently reviewed.

Barriers to Executive Leadership

In an attempt to explain why females are so poorly represented in executive educational leadership positions, a growing body of research has studied the barriers female leaders face in accessing leadership and fulfilling their roles (Harris, Ravenswood, & Myers, 2013; Kim & Cook, 2012). Research conducted by Bonawitz and Andel (2009) found that females in executive level leadership believed the invisible barriers they faced were a lack of mentors, the good old boy network, gender inequalities, and slower career paths. Research on female leadership has also found that females may experience unequal employment opportunities and role conflict as well as patriarchal attitudes towards females (Aiston & Jung, 2015; Pirouznia, 2011; Shah, 2010). These factors stem from culture, whether Western or third world, and have created a "glass ceiling" (Harris, Ravenswood, & Myers, 2013) for females who want to access executive leadership positions. The glass ceiling effect, societal barriers, and institutional barriers are key identified barriers females face on their journey toward executive leadership.

Glass Ceiling Effect

To further understand the barriers identified by female leaders in higher education this literature review will define the term coined the glass ceiling effect. According to the United States Department of Labour, glass ceiling is defined as those "artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing in their organization into upper management positions" (Department of Labor, 1995, p 7). The Glass Ceiling Act of 1991 established the Glass Ceiling Commission in the United States whose goals were as follows: 1) to promote a quality, inclusive and

31

diverse workforce capable of meeting the challenge of global competition; 2) to promote good corporate conduct through an emphasis on corrective and cooperative problem solving; 3) to promote equal opportunity, not mandated results; and, 4) to establish a blueprint of procedures to guide the Department in conduction of future reviews of all management levels of the corporate workforce. (Department of Labor, 1995, p. 5)

The purpose of the goals was to identify what barriers existed, where they existed, and strategies to combat the identified barriers. Furthermore, the concept of glass ceiling is often a barrier that confronts minorities in addition to females when trying to reach executive leadership positions in higher education. In most cases, the discrimination is not blatant, but it is widely accepted as an unofficial policy.

The glass ceiling that creates unseen barriers for females to advance to executive leadership positions has been widely discussed for many years. It has been attributed to the source of stagnation in the advancement of female careers beyond a certain socially acceptable point. However, with more females beginning to advance toward executive leadership positions in higher education, such as Chancellors, Vice-Chancellors of universities, Provosts, Department heads, the glass ceiling seemed to have been penetrated. It is with this new penetration that the concept glass labyrinth emerges. Eagly and Carli (2007) defined the glass labyrinth as an obstacle course of diverse challenges experienced by females on their paths toward leadership. Eagly and Carli's (2007) work does not disregard the progress that has been made by females in the area of career advancement, but it enlightens the public to the blatant barriers on the journey for females that have ultimately negatively impacted the presence

of females not only in leadership positions, but also in positions at every level. The glass labyrinth starts at the very beginning of a female's career, and females ultimately navigate a continual set of barriers throughout their professional journey. As females continue to navigate the various barriers inherent in higher education, societal barriers create a different set of challenges for females to confront. Societal barriers, gender stereotypes and societal norms or expectations have created the perception that males perform better than females in leadership roles. According to Northouse (2013), females are often perceived first through a gender lens and then through societal stereotypes that accompany gender, which is why they experience pressure once they achieve executive level positions.

Gender stereotyping is the "consensual beliefs about character traits that describe males and females" (Harris, Ravenswood, & Myers, 2013, p. 486), which creates barriers to female career progress (Aiston & Jung, 2015). Diehl (2014) pointed out that not only males but also females frequently hold negative stereotypes about females, which may affect the appointment of a female to an executive level position. Many researchers believe socialization and gender stereotyping can explain the poor representation of females in leadership (Shah, 2010). Socialization theorists have argued that "gender identity and differences are acquired through various developmental processes associated with life stages, such as schooling and work life" (Campbell, Mueller, & Souza, 2010, p. 19).

Gender Stereotypes

Individuals develop gender schema, which include expectations for how males and females are supposed to look, feel, and behave. It is widely believed

that gender stereotypes affect the genetic code of the gender system since they constitute the cultural rules or schemas by which people perceive and enact gender difference and inequality (Smith et al., 2012). These stereotypes present an additional challenge for female leaders as the characteristics associated with leadership are historically masculine (Bonebright et al., 2012). A female in a leadership role presents incongruity to these schemata.   When a female exercises authority over others outside of the traditional feminine context, her effectiveness is questioned or undermined as being less capable than a males' effectiveness. In general, this research shows that it is easier for males to be perceived as possessing the task-relevant competence and leadership ability that are essential to emerging as a leader (Eagly, Gartzia, & Carli, 2014). The brain expects females to act one way based on the gender schemata, but there is an additional schema for a leader, which is contrary to that of the gender schema when applied to a female leader (Bonebright et al., 2012).

According to Eddy and Ward (2015), a qualitative study on female presidents provided examples of how females needed to act tough to meet the expectations of their position. All of these challenges become a hindrance to female leaders as they attempt to advance in their careers. Dahlvig and Longman (2010) indicated there has been improved acceptance of females in higher education leadership, but there are still some invisible problems forcing them to work harder to achieve rank. Based on the existing literature, the major sources of stress for female administrators included time management, workload pressures, and responsibility to and for others, others' expectations, work and family conflicts, lack of resources, financial problems, and high expectations from the constituents (Dahlvig & Longman, 2010). Eagly (as cited

in Harris, Ravenswood, & Myers, 2013) claimed that "it is societal expectations that produce and maintain inequality between genders" (p. 483).   Their argument is supported by Pirouznia (2011) who asserted that "role expectations and cultural norms are shown clearly in the reality of the existing inequity" (p. 150).

It is evident that socialization and gender stereotyping limit female access to and exercise of leadership. Female stereotypes, bias, discrimination, and social perceptions of females as inferior are also cited as possible explanations (Tomas et al., 2010). Additionally, exclusion from informal networks, gender-based stereotypes, lack of role-models in leadership positions and inhospitable corporate cultures were identified among the challenges faced by female leaders in higher education institutions in Pakistan (Malik, 2011). Malik (2011) suggested that this lack of support is a reflection of the prevailing societal belief that females are not sufficiently capable to meet the demands of leadership.

Cultural Barriers

Cultural values refer to norms or standards that are considered acceptable in a society or community (Snaebjornsson & Edvardsson, 2013). Although culture is identified as a major barrier to limiting the number of females in leadership (Shah, 2010), its impact on the way they lead has not been paid much attention. The literature suggests that leadership practice is strongly influenced by culture. Culture has a great impact on female, and the traditional roles allocated to them influence their work lives. Metcalfe and Gonzalez (2013) claimed that since 1990, "for the first time in the short history of our field, scholars have become interested in how the practice of leadership and

management in schools is influenced by culture" (p. 4). Masculine and feminine leadership styles are a reflection of cultural values and are important to understanding the potential cultural bias against females in roles of leadership. The literature has also acknowledged the influences of and interactions between culture and leadership. Schein (2004) considers culture and leadership as "two sides of the same coin" (p. 2).

According to Timmers, Willemsen, and Tijdens (2010), the cultural perspective is relevant in explaining female limited success in attaining senior-level positions in leadership in higher education. Culture resides at multiple levels, from civilizations, nations, organizations to groups (Schein, 2004), and it is generally defined as "the enduring set of beliefs, values, and ideologies underpinning structures, processes, and practices that distinguish one group of people from another. The groups of people may be at school level (organizational culture) or at the national level (societal culture)." (p.5) Research on female leadership has noted the function of patriarchal culture as a barrier to females' advancement (Kim & Cook, 2012). Harris, Ravenswood, and Myers (2013) contended that "culture itself raises barriers for female aspirations simply because of the attitudes, learned behaviors and routine practices that are practiced and reinforced" (p. 489). Not only are gender and ethnicity intertwined (Strachan, Akao, Kilavanwa, & Warsal, 2010), they are said to be influential factors in limiting the number of females in leadership positions (Shah, 2010). Oplatka and Hertz-Lazarowitz (as cited in Shah, 2010) pointed out, that "Any discussion of women in educational leadership or unique leadership styles of women that ignore important factors such as cultural differences, economic and social-political divisions...would not only be

unrealistic but may present a distorted picture" (p. 130). Reducing the barriers that hinder the advancement of women into leadership positions will take nothing less than rebuilding and rethinking the entire structure of organizations (Co'rdova, 2011).

Family/Personal Obligations

Family and personal obligations may be one of the most prominent societal barriers for the limited number of females in executive positions in higher education (Tomas, Lavie, Duran, & Guillamon, 2010). One of the primary reasons females in educational leadership experience the promotion process differently than their male faculty is the increasing demands outside of work. Stripling (2012) added the practical issues of lack of adequate childcare, inflexible tenure clock expectations for faculty, and inflexible work schedules to the list of reasons for underrepresentation. According to previous researchers, some females consider raising a family, and taking care of their physical and mental health as a priority rather than career advancement (Airini et al., 2012). Nguyen (2013) undertook an exploratory study in which she examined the experiences of female deans in selected Vietnamese universities to assess their perceptions of the barriers to female academic Deanship and the facilitators for career advancement. Nguyen (2013) conducted face-to-face interviews with six female deans, three male university leaders, and two male human resources managers from one of the Vietnamese national universities.

The study respondents identified strong family obligations, negative gender stereotypes, and an unwillingness to take leadership roles as the most common barriers to females taking academic management positions. Interestingly, none of the respondents identified university structures and

37

policies as a barrier to female academic advancement. Further, they appeared to be satisfied with the level of support extended to female leaders by the university (Nguyen, 2013). The respondents further identified the major facilitators for the career advancement of female deans as self-effort, strong family support, and a favourable promotion context (Nguyen, 2013).

Nguyen (2013) further noted that the female respondents seemed to also rely on "luck" as a factor in career advancement, as they all alluded to their selection for promotion as being related to being in the right place, at the right time (p. 135). While acknowledging the small sample size as a limitation of the study, Nguyen (2013) concluded that family support is a very important factor that can significantly impede or facilitate the academic career progress of females in Vietnam. Furthermore, females themselves can be both objects and agents of change in empowering female leadership. From these findings Nguyen (2013), posited the following implications: " i) appropriate policies and measures must be developed to lessen the time demands of female's domestic work and childcare, thereby allowing them to invest an equitable amount of time to their career progression; ii) rather than viewing work-family balance as a barrier, women should learn to take advantage of the work-family interface; and iii) female academics must take an active interest in their own career advancement" (p. 136). Overall, the above views reinforce that leadership behaviors that are effective for males are not necessarily effective for females based on societal expectations and views.

Institutional Barriers

Gender inequality is an issue that has a profound impact on higher education as more females infiltrate a male-dominated organizational system. Malik's (2011) investigation of the factors influencing the emergence of female leadership at the higher education level in Pakistan, conducted one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with ten senior female administrators. The study found that 60% of the respondents identified dissatisfaction with the level of support extended to them by their institutions. The respondents further asserted that their incompatibility with the male dominated culture of the institutional environment presented as a hurdle to their progress (Malik, 2011). However, the respondents went on to identify a number of factors they believed contributed greatly to their success in achieving senior leadership positions in their respective institutions of higher education. Among these factors were the support of their parents and extended family, the inspiration provided by their parents and/or teachers, a strong sense of personal commitment throughout their academic period and professional career, a high level of self-confidence, self-esteem and ambition and the egalitarian nature of their childhood home (Malik, 2011). Malik (2011) concluded that the major factor emerging out of the analysis of the women's narratives was "…the importance of familial support in shaping their thinking and enabling them to aspire to higher education and career development" (p. 42). That is, the females were raised in a manner and environment that "…promoted their self-confidence, assertiveness and a strong sense of identity in dealing with male dominated environments" (Malik, 2011, p. 42). From these findings Malik (2011) drew the following implications: " i) females that able to achieve leadership roles are those that have been able to

39

depend on family and socio-cultural support; ii) building self-confidence in females and boosting their self-esteem opens the door to professional and personal success; and iii) organizations have to provide a more supportive environment to enable their professional female leaders to perform to their fullest potential" (p. 43). Universities are beginning to look for ways to address this issue as it relates to retaining a diverse and highly qualified faculty and staff. Universities are specifically exploring the issue as it relates to how the glass ceiling or glass labyrinth impacts female administrators as they deal with gender pay gap, job rank progression, and family leave policies. Cahusac and Kanji (2014) argued that there is a gender gap in academia and that females are behind in tenure status and promotion to tenure status, due to their late beginning in academia as compared to males. For the purpose of this review and in order to gain a further understanding of institutional barriers, two institutional barriers were relevant and subsequently explored further: recruitment and retention, and professional development.

Recruitment and Retention

There has historically been a lack of effort to recruit, hire, and retain females into positions that will afford them the opportunity to advance into executive level positions in higher education. The Department of Labor (1995) stated that "inadequate recruitment practices are a primary institutional barrier for females and minorities" (p. 5). In Schein's (2004) view, one of the most potent ways in which culture embeds and perpetuates itself in an organization is how its members recruit, select, and promote new members. Most jobs require networking which is typically done word of mouth. Studies suggest that organizations tend to hire or promote those candidates who resemble themselves

(Aiston & Jung, 2015; Kim & Cook, 2012; Schein, 2004). This explains how females can be undervalued and deprived of employment opportunities because of biased and selection policies. Additionally, Van Tonder's (2014) research stressed the importance of the leadership/management role in the policies and procedures of recruitment to insure that the future candidates for the field or profession are the best. A strong recruitment framework could contribute to improving the retention of future professionals in higher education. Retention is viewed as equally important as recruitment because institutions should strive to retain talent that they work hard to recruit. Aiston and Jung (2015) suggested that selectors are influenced by the female stereotype which associates females with home and family, and that this pattern is difficult to break. According to Diehl (2014), "females are judged informally and subjectively on the basis of their perceived suitability for a post or for promotion" (p. 144), using, criteria such as age, relevance of experience, and ability to 'fit in'."

Snaebjornsson and Edvardsson (2013) believed that creating a climate where people believe they are recognized, and their ideas are appreciated may help institutions increase employee satisfaction. In this case, institutions should recognize female administrators' talents, knowledge, skills, ideas, and creativity as important and significant contributions to higher education development. In a study by Balakrishnan and Vijayalakshmi (2014), retention was examined in relation to teachers and faculty members at an educational institution. An integrated retention system to empower a quality staff to refute staff shortages in educational institutions was explored. In this integrated retention system, a questionnaire was provided to a convenient sample of participants to research the loyalty of employees and their job satisfaction. Employee retention

41

strategies included empowering the employees, recognizing, and appreciating achievements, trusting and respecting employees, showing employees their value to the organization, etc. The study design was a descriptive research design and yielded results that showed that better working conditions, appreciation and motivation, opportunity for advancement and improvement, better training, and work experience all contributed to employee retention (Balakrishnan & Vijayalakshmi, 2014).

Professional Development

Females are often not afforded the same opportunity as their male counterparts to attend professional development trainings or formal mentoring. Individuals with leadership potential are often groomed early on for a future position either through additional education, development programs, or formal mentoring. Mentoring has consistently been identified as a barrier and strategy for females seeking or aspiring to executive leadership positions. Educational institutions have a responsibility to train and prepare future leaders. Providing students and faculty with mentoring and professional development programs may help them address and solve some of the problems facing females today. Magrane et al. (2012) conducted a study to explore what influences the progression of females to advance in academic rankings, executive positions, and obtain informal leadership roles in academia. The Systems of Career Influences Model was used in this study to analyze these influencing factors. This model was formed from essential themes in the literature on female career development, best practices of professional development programs, and the collective experiences of authors involved in academic leadership development. In this model, questions were developed to enhance the understanding of how

42

professional development programs could be examined in further research on academic female career development. The Systems of Career Influences Model is intended to enhance female skills sets to navigate the complexities of advancing in academia. This is done through interactions of organizational, individual, and societal components (Magrane et al., 2012).

Each of these categories included aspects of the importance of leadership in the process of recruitment, retention, and professional development. These are areas that could be viewed as challenges within the already established struggle to gain leadership roles in higher education. Each of the challenges that comes with professional development, retention, and recruitment also speak to the above stated challenges that have even caused the dwindling presence of females in positions in higher education that could lead to leadership positions. With the enlightening information on the concept of the glass labyrinth from Eagly and Carli (2007), there should be direction given to navigate and overcome the blunter obstacles that serve as hindrances from females pursuing leadership positions and positions that make way for leadership in higher education.

Strategies to Overcome Barriers

In spite of challenges facing females, they are determined to improve their own lives and the lives of those who come after them (Ballenger, 2010). Pyke (2013) argued that despite the growing numbers of females earning doctorates, they are still underrepresented in executive level leadership positions. According to the percentages of male and female in higher education professions, few females are represented in executive leadership positions such as dean, provost, president, or chancellor (U.S. Census Bureau News, 2010).

However, successful female administrators have attributed their success to overcoming barriers of perceived gender difference. Further, learning how to deal with and solve problems may increase more female chances to attain and succeed in executive leadership positions. Some of the experiences that have assisted females in advancing their careers included learning from mentors, teamwork, self-awareness, and willingness to take risks, readiness to take immediate opportunities, and completion of advanced studies (Airini et al., 2012). The researchers also found that the strategies to combat barriers females encountered when they were aspiring to leadership were supportive mentors, affirmative action, and university's awareness and actions related to increasing gender and racial diversity in the workplace. Three main strategies will be examined that have been helpful for females to overcome barriers to success which are identified as professional development, mentoring, and networking.

Professional Development

Jackson and O'Callaghan (2009) interviewed 91 female college presidents to determine how many participated in professional development programs. The results showed that of the 91 female presidents interviewed, 72.5 % female presidents participated in one or more professional development programs (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009). The inference may be made that professional development can assist females to enhance professional skills, access social networking opportunities, enhance one's self-esteem, and increase female career. Institutions can also assist with professional development by identifying female candidates, and encouraging and providing them with professional experiences that will support progression in higher education. According to American Council on Education (2012), higher education has

been slow in formally developing its own internal talent in strategic ways. Female presidents stressed the importance of institutional opportunities for development of skills and demonstrated leadership (Ramachandran et al., 2011).

Professional associations are another way female can develop leadership skills that will be useful in moving up the career ladder. According to Eddy and Ward (2015), professional associations can provide opportunities to improve on interpersonal skills, be abreast about current issues impacting the industry and develop a career progression plan. The trainings or institutes offered by professional associations are an additional avenue to address any deficits or gaps in experiences not received at the university. Research on executive leaders reported that the majority cited professional development opportunities as important to their career advancement (Pyke, 2013). Serving as board members, participating in institutional staff development and attending leadership programs are just a few activities that supported the career advancement of executive leaders in higher education. Professional associations are important for the additional training and development opportunities but the instrumental people that females come in contact with are important for lifetime professional development.

Mentoring

Researchers have shown that mentoring plays a role in the advancement of females in executive level positions and across various disciplines, including business, education, and government (Maranto & Griffin, 2011). The lack of females in such leadership positions also leaves very few mentors available for females who want a mentoring relationship with other female leaders in higher education (Maranto & Griffin, 2011). Mentoring is crucial for career transition,

45

intellectual assistance, and psychological support. A study of female college presidents looked at career paths, mentorship, professional development, and barriers to career advancement and found that females who are mentored are more likely to attain higher levels of career advancement than those who had no mentors (Smith et al., 2012). Pyke (2013) believed that even females with outstanding credentials find it difficult to rise to the top of the organization without having a coach or a mentor. In addition, developing potential future leaders through mentorship is important because educational institutions cannot succeed without sustaining excellent leadership. Additionally, mentoring provides opportunities to access valuable information about the organizational culture (Buch et al., 2011). Based on the existing literature, mentoring and being mentored are critical career development opportunities.

Females who have succeeded and advanced into leadership positions often speak of mentors who were important to their development (Madsen, 2012). There are a number of benefits that have proven beneficial for those who have engaged into one. Benefits include increased self-esteem and engagement in the workplace, increased job satisfaction, higher levels of career mobility and advancement, increased compensation, and reduced turnover. Considering the continued lack of representation of females in leadership positions, mentoring is especially essential for females seeking opportunities for advancement (Fox-Cardamone, 2012).

Unfortunately, due to the lack of females in leadership positions, many of them will not experience the benefits attributed with same sex role models in leadership positions.

Networking

Odhiambo (2011) described networking as a relationship developed for the purpose of sharing information. Networking can be viewed as an art; it can be utilized to meet various needs. However, knowing who to contact and involve in a networking system is crucial to career advancement and professional development. Therefore, those aspiring to leadership positions need to set strategies and identify channels for developing their networking systems. Networking is essential for personal growth and professional development. Networking not only creates opportunities for development, but it also provides leaders a chance to build and strengthen relationships, explore new ideas, and share information and experiences with others in a form of coaching and mentoring. Maranto and Griffin (2011) found that female leaders/administrators use networks as a tool to seek information for personal support and professional development whereas males use networking as a means for making tough decisions.

Furthermore, networking may allow those aspiring to leadership to tap into the expertise of those involved in the recruiting and hiring process. Longman and Lafreniere (2012) suggested that female administrators need to find a way to find balance at work and home. He argued, "the key is not an all-out marathon, but rather a cyclical energizing" (p. 395). This implied that seeking opportunities to participate in other activities outside the official job may help to increase female administrators' energy and sustenance in administrative roles. Engaging in family activities, social events, and other celebrations were found to give leaders a break which leads to gaining energy and exploring ideas for a new direction (Longman & Lafraniere, 2012).

47

Implications

Bonawitz and Andel (2009) indicated, that "women view power as a means of achieving change through people" (p. 6). Wolfinger, Mason and Goulden (2013) indicated that, "Women see a career as personal growth, as self-fulfillment, as satisfaction, like making a contribution to others, as doing what one wants to do" (p. 14). Understanding what it takes to survive and thrive in an educational environment is important for both female faculty and students. Females are constantly striving to survive and thrive in a male-dominated leadership society. Timmers, Williamsen and Tijdens (2010) noted that to succeed in a complex environment, women must be able to adapt to change and maintain a positive attitude. The literature has shown that the gender and organizational culture are major determinants when it comes to the success of female leaders in higher education. Research is needed to assist in beginning to change a "culture" that is embedded in higher education institutions nationally and internationally. Some scholars argue that a change in the structure of higher education needs to take place before females and their style of leadership will be fully accepted. Future research is needed to assist females with breaking out of the stereotypical role that society views them. Hearing the lived experiences from current leaders who have penetrated the glass ceiling will inspire and encourage future female leaders to strive towards executive leadership positions when the odds are stacked against them. More studies need to be conducted to explore how those who have achieved success made it to the top and how have they sustained themselves in their current positions.

Chapter Summary

The glass ceiling and glass labyrinth will continue to be terms that researchers use to describe the journey for females as they seek to achieve executive leadership positions in higher education. The invisible barriers do exist as previous researchers have provided information on the relationship between leadership, gender, organizational culture in business organizations and in large numbers in higher education. Studies have just begun to look at the impact and intersection of organizational culture and gender with regard to the experiences of females as they seek promotion in a patriarchal system. In addition, socialization, gender stereotypes and, social expectations all contribute to the prevailing culture and are shown to exert influences and constraints on females even when they achieve high level leadership positions in higher education.

The debates on the relationship between gender and leadership and whether females are better leaders than males are part of increasing scholarly attention being given to the topic of females and educational leadership. Whether by choice, prejudice, discrimination, cultural expectations or some other factor that has yet to be uncovered, females are still underrepresented in roles of executive leadership in higher education. The review of the literature provides a strong rationale why future research is needed in understanding the impact of gender and organizational culture on leadership styles for females aspiring towards executive leadership positions in higher education. It is evident through research that future studies will consistently challenge traditional societal norms. This study will add to literature on females in executive leadership in public universities in Ghana, by specifically

highlighting the executive leadership role of female Provost/Deans/Heads of

Departments/Directors of institutes and Centres.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter details specific research methods that were used to complete this study with a full discussion of the research design, population and sample, data collection and analysis procedures. An overview of the qualitative design with a critical case study approach has been provided. The following section details the selection of the participants and procedures for gathering and analyzing data. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of methods that were employed for enhancing the validity of the study.

Research Design

To examine the trajectory of females in executive leadership positions in Ghanaian public universities, a qualitative approach using a critical case study design was appropriate. Qualitative research is an approach to studying individual and group constructions of reality (Merriam, 2015). Turner, Norwood and Noe (2013) maintained that the critical case study design helps to further the understanding of how people's experiences shape their beliefs and attitudes and provides in-depth insight into their actions. Qualitative researchers stress the intimate relationship between the researcher, what is studied, the situational constraints that shape the inquiry and the socially constructed nature of reality (Merriam, 2015). More importantly, qualitative researchers seek to answer questions that focus on how social experience is created and given meaning.

Additionally, qualitative researchers capitalize on the five principles of qualitative research according to Merriam (2015):

(a) to reflect an insider's perspective

(b) to use the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis

(c) to involve extensive field work

(d) to employ an inductive research strategy; and

(e) to require rich description while focusing the inquiry on a search for the essence and nature of the phenomena.

Case Study Method

Numerous researchers including Creswell (2014), Merriam (2015), Stake, (1995) and Yin (2013) have explained that qualitative case studies are common within the field of education. Selecting a qualitative case study design allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation. Insights gleaned from case study can directly influence policy, practice and future research. (Merriam, 2015, p. 19).

According to Yin, the purposes of a case study are explanatory, exploratory, and/or descriptive. Case studies explain a causal link, depict the chosen intervention, show change, and allow for meta-evaluation (Yin, 2013). Merriam (2015) asserted that the single defining characteristic about a case study is its "bounded system" that allows the researcher to "fence in" what is going to be studied (p. 27).

According to Klein and Myers (as cited in Runeson & Host, 2009, p. 135), "a critical case study aims at social critique and at being emancipatory, i.e. identifying different forms of social, cultural and political domination that may hinder human ability." A critical approach to narrative inquiry is when the story is examined to determine how the larger cultural forces within the social or structural world could have dictated which story was told and how that story was told given that particular time and place. The intent would be to identify sources of alienation, power, and domination, as well as to unearth the potential for emancipatory transformation (Pitre, Kushner, Raine, & Hegadoren, 2013).

Pitre et al. (2013) further attested that the application of a critical perspective to narrative inquiry enables "an examination of human action and interaction in dialectical relationship with social structural constraints" (p. 121). The assumption underlying this approach is that history has and continues to shape the prescribed rules, conventions, routines, and habits that allow structures of power and domination to be reproduced and perpetuated within people's symbolic world. As such, the influences of socially defined structures and ideology on patterns of human behavior, thinking, reflexive practices, personal meanings, and verbal/non-verbal communication processes are considered.

In conclusion, case studies are empirical inquiries that research contemporary issues within their real-life contexts; this type of study is of special importance when the link between phenomenon and context are not evident (Yin, 2013). By studying females in executive positions, a bounded system was formed where comparisons were made between participants'

journey to leadership, the leadership styles, the barriers they faced, and how they successfully navigated the barriers.

Study Area

The study took place on the main campuses of the three selected public universities in Ghana namely University of Ghana, Legon, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba.

The University of Ghana is the oldest and largest of the thirteen Ghanaian national public universities. It was founded in 1948 in the British colony of the Gold Coast, as the University College of the Gold Coast, and was originally an affiliate college of the University of London, which supervised its academic programs and awarded degrees for the purpose of providing for and promoting University education, learning and research.

After independence in 1957, the college was renamed the University college of Ghana. It changed its named again to the University of Ghana in 1961, when it gained full University status. The University of Ghana is situated on the west view of the Accra Legon Hills and at the north east of the center of Accra (Accra City Campus), with various schools, institutions, colleges and departments and has over 40,000 registered students.

The University of Cape Coast was established in October, 1962 as a University College and placed in a special relationship with the University of Ghana, Legon on October 1, 1971. The college attained the status of a full and independent University with the authority to confer its own degrees, diplomas and certificates by the act of Parliament. The University was established out of a dire need for highly qualified and skilled manpower in education. Its original mandate was therefore to train graduate professional teachers for Ghana's

54

second cycle institution and the Ministry of Education in order to meet the manpower needs of the country's accelerated education programme at the time. Today, with the expansion of some of its faculties, schools and the diversification of programmes, the University has the capacity to meet the manpower needs of other ministries and industries in the country, besides that of the Ministry of Education. It has a total student population of 74,720. The University has one main campus with various study centers across Ghana.

The University of Education, Winneba (UEW) was established in September, 1992 as a University College under PNDC Law 322. On the 14th May 2004 the University of Education Act, Act 672 was enacted to upgrade the status of the University College of Education of Winneba to the status of a full University. The University College of Education of Winneba brought together seven diploma awarding colleges located in different towns under one umbrella institution. These Colleges were Advanced Teacher Training College and the National Academy of Music, all at Winneba; the school of Ghana Language Ajumako; the College of special Education, Akwapim-Mampong; the Advanced Technical Training College, Kumasi; and the St. Andrews Agricultural Training College, Mampong-Ashanti. The aims of the UEW are to provide higher education and foster a systematic advancement of the science and the art of teacher education, train tutors for the colleges of education and other tertiary institutions, provide teachers with special competence for teaching pre-tertiary institutions such as pre-school, basic, senior secondary school and non-formal education institutions and foster links between the schools and the community in order to ensure the holistic training of teachers. It has a population

of over 60,000 with four campuses located at Winneba, Kumasi, Ajumako and Mampong.

These three universities are all located in the southern zone of Ghana. The southern zone was selected because, as Patton (2014) indicated, a researcher must work within certain limits related to available resources. They are three southern traditional universities which have been in existence for than twenty years. It is therefore assumed that they have enough resource personnel with requisite experience needed for the purpose of the study.

Population

The study explored the leadership styles, barriers, and strategies of females in executive positions on their journey toward executive leadership level. Therefore, the population involves females who are Provost of Colleges, Deans of Faculties, Heads of Departments and Directors of Institutes and Centers in these three Public Universities.

A total of twenty-one (21) females in such positions were identified in the three public universities selected for the study with seven from the University of Cape Coast, nine from the University of Ghana, and five from the University of Education, Winneba.

Sampling Procedure

1. The criteria for selection of participants for the study are as follows:

2. Only females from Universities were used for the study. This is necessary because the study focused on the few available females in executive positions in Ghana.

3. The participant should have served in his/her current position for at least one year. Since the respondents are going to assess their current job and

56

evaluate it with the gender role, they should have at least served in their current position for one year, completed an academic year in the position in the university and were willing to participate in an interview and furnish documents.

This study employed purposive sampling to identify five female participants in the executive leadership positions such as Directors, Head of departments, and Deans of faculties and Provost in three public Universities: University of Ghana, University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba.

According to Patton (2014), purposive sampling provides rich and knowledgeable information. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select participants based on specific criteria. From the data reviewed from different Universities, the range of female administrators in executive positions to males was around 10% to 21%. A survey conducted by the researcher revealed that only twenty –one (21) female executives are available in the three public Universities in Ghana.

Five females in executive leadership positions as deans, heads of department, and directors of institutes and centres were sampled for this study. These five females in executive leadership positions were selected as sample for the study because they were ready and willing to provide the responses needed for the purpose of the study.

Data Collection Instruments

There are several instruments which the researcher could have used to collect data for the study. However, the primary instrument used in the study was interview guide due to the kind of research and the data required. According

57

to Sage Encyclopedia an interview guide or aide memoire is a list of topics, themes, or areas to be covered in a semi-structured interview. This is normally created in advance of the interview.

In qualitative research methods, interviews emerge not only as the most common form of data collection instrument for case study research but also a high-quality data collection technique. Interviews are an essential component of successful qualitative research. Structured open-ended interview questions were developed and utilized to inform the data collection. This type of interview approach assisted with organizing the structured interview questions through the lens of gender. Questions were used to collect stories from participants concerning their position, and their leadership styles, barriers, and strategies to overcome barriers. In-person interviews were conducted to document and understand the experiences of females achieving executive leadership positions. Interview questions were developed based on the leadership styles indicative of females as identified in the literature.

Data Collection Procedure

The interviews were conducted from the 20th May, 2019 to 30th July 2019. The interview was scheduled from late morning to early afternoon on dates that were convenient to each respondent. Due to confidentiality, exact time and date with each respondent cannot be reported on.

The data was collected by the researcher. The researcher used recording devices which were strictly electronic. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. For confidentiality purposes, the participants' names and institutions were changed.

Pseudonyms indicative of "Rivers in Ghana" were assigned to maintain the confidentiality of participants. Each participant was given and asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix A). The informed consent form introduced the researcher's efforts, provided participants the researchers' contact information, and explained the intent of the study, as well as requested voluntary participation in this study. As previously stated, the researcher sought the participants' consent and permission to record the interviews. Each interview session took approximately 50 minutes.

Participants were asked to provide a copy of their curriculum vitae to the researcher as part of the interview. The participants' curriculum vitae provided detailed educational information as well as allowed the researcher to look for specific training, and to assess strengths as well as gaps or omissions of leadership positions.

Data Processing and Analysis

A digital audio recorder was used to record the interviews. To ensure accuracy and reliability the recorded interview was transcribed verbatim. The transcribed interview was compared to the questions on the interview guide. This is to ensure that misrepresentation of facts was avoided. Conducting the interviews and transcribing brought the researcher close to the data. The researcher became conversant with the stories of the females, thus identified key issues and became aware of the similarities and differences in their accounts. The researcher developed the themes manually. Working manually allowed the researcher to delve much more into the data and be familiar with the emerging themes.

Research question one required each of the respondents to describe her leadership journey as female executive leader, some of the pivotal leadership moments and any artifacts to show concerning her leadership journey if any. Research question two which was focused on the leadership styles of female executive leaders, sought the leadership styles used by the respondents. Research question three tried to elicit from the respondents the leadership styles that has or have helped them to be successful on their leadership journey.

Research question four focused on the barriers the female leaders encountered on their journey to executive leadership position with emphasis on the representation of males and females in their faculties, how gender affected their roles as administrations their relationships with other females either as colleagues or subordinates, how they balanced work and family responsibilities. The last research question which sought to determine the strategies used by the participants to overcome their barriers asked the participants to share their thoughts on how professional development, mentorship and networking have imparted on their leadership journey.

1. Qualitative case study methodology relies on qualitative data analysis guidelines. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003), data analysis is defined as a process that involves "working with data, organizing and breaking into manageable units, synthesizing and searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (p. 145).

2. Coding was done with the research questions in mind. The research questions raised the following thematic areas for analysis:

3. Leadership journey

4. Leadership styles

5. Leadership styles that helped female leaders to succeed

6. Barriers to female leaders

7. Strategies for overcoming barriers.

Reporting the Data

Narrative case profiles were presented on each of the five female executive leaders in the three public Universities selected for the study. Demographic data from the interview protocol were reported in narrative and table format in Chapter four. Findings have been presented by themes and supported by direct quotes to substantiate findings in Chapter four. Additionally, the physical artifacts and oral stories reflective of the female leaders' journey were organized by themes and supported by quotes.

Chapter Summary

The critical case study design was used to examine the journey toward leadership for five female executive leaders within public universities in Ghana. Data collection technique is the interview guide which was used to deepen the researcher's understanding of how participants experienced their journey toward the executive leadership position. Each point of data collection was analyzed using a variety of methods such as transcript analysis, peer examination, document review and artifact review. The researcher compared the data of participants, noting any common themes that emerged and analyzed the data for significant changes for individual participants as well as any common changes that all participants identify. Data were presented in a narrative profile format through the lens of intersectionality which was used to guide the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings that emerged from this study on the leadership trajectories and barriers of five females in executive positions in three public universities in Ghana. Within–case analysis (Yin, 2013), and a cross-case analysis have been employed to present and discuss the findings.

Profile of study participants. Before findings are presented and discussed, it is useful to provide brief profiles of the study participants to put their narrations in perspective.

Case 1: Dr. Offin

Dr. Offin is 43 years of age and married with 2 children. She was raised by both parents. She obtained both her undergraduate and doctoral major in Social Studies. She has worked in higher education for 22 years. She has worked at three different institutions before joining her current institution. She was the Head of Department for 8 years. She has been the head of department for four years in her current institution.

Case 2: Dr. Ankobra

Dr. Ankobra is 57 years of age and married with 2 children. She was raised by both parents. She obtained both her undergraduate and doctoral major in Geography. She has worked in higher education for 15 years and previously worked with two different institutions before joining her current institution. She is the current Head of Department. She has held her current position for a year.

62

Case 3: Dr. Densu

Dr. Densu is 49 years of age. She is married with no child and was raised by both parents. She has both her undergraduate and doctoral majors in French and Linguistics. She has spent a total of 18 years in higher education. She had worked at three different institutions before joining her current institution. She is the Dean of her Faculty.

Case 4: Dr. Oti

Dr. Oti is 55 years of age and single with 2 children. She was raised by both parents. She had her undergraduate major in English and doctoral major in Education. She has worked in higher education for 21 years. She has worked in one institution before joining her current institution.
She has been a Dean for 5 years and still counting.

Case 5: Dr. Volta

Dr. Volta is 41 years, divorced with a child. She was raised by her mother. She had her undergraduate major in Education and doctoral major in Criminal Justice. She has worked in higher education for 13 years. She has worked in 3 institutions before joining her current institution. She has been a Director of an Institute in her University for 5 years and still counting.

Within Case Analysis

This section presents and discusses the narrative accounts of each of the five females in executive leadership positions in the three public universities of this study on their leadership trajectory and barriers they encountered en route to their executive positions. The presentation and discussion are done according to the research questions of the study.

63

Research Question 1: How do females in executive leadership positions in public universities in Ghana describe their leadership journey?

The first research question of the study was designed to capture the leadership journey of females in executive positions in public universities in Ghana. To gain a better description of their leadership journey, the participants were first asked to narrate their journeys to executive leadership positions.

Dr. Offin described her leadership journey this way: "A number of my relatives have earned advanced degrees and there was this tradition of pursuing higher education". Dr. Offin indicated, "I have worked in higher education for twenty-two years and have held this current position for four years. I transitioned early into administration by juggling part-time administrative jobs along my tenure-track faculty responsibilities and have experience within both academic and student affairs. I have served as a director, acting head and head of department. I have a significant scholarly record, including approximately 50 publications as a writer or editor. I am involved in various national and international organizations focused on civic engagement and have a leadership role within various accrediting and educational associations".

Dr. Offin shared her pivotal moment in her leadership journey by first taking a deep breath. "The moment when I knew I would push without apology came fairly early for me in my career". It was while I was seeking tenure that I knew that I should consider leadership because I could not make any changes from my current viewpoint. I was frustrated with the tenure process as most faculty members were, but I was even more frustrated that everyone seemed to accept the process as being broken. I felt the need to be the lead actress; no longer could I play a supporting role". From Dr. Offin's narrative, her journey

64

was not without challenges. She got frustrated along the way and did not feel like seeking leadership again because people felt that the process had been broken. As Bonawitz and Andel (2009) explained, "Males have been administrators, vice-chancellors, and deans in academia for decades longer and in larger numbers than females have held these positions" (p.23). Simply put, males continue to make decisions based on gender norms, and in turn favor hiring males for leadership positions in higher education. That might have accounted for the reason why they felt the process was broken. According to Northouse (2013), females are often perceived first through a gender lens and then through societal stereotypes that accompany gender, which is why they experience pressure once they achieve executive level positions. Leadership characteristics are often explained by stereotypes about gender and societal norms or expectations and not by experience. Societal norms expect females to "take care" and males to "take charge" (Allan, 2011).

Gender stereotyping is the "consensual beliefs about character traits that describe males and females" (Harris, Ravenswood, & Myers, 2013, p. 486), which creates barriers to female career progress (Aiston & Jung, 2015). Diehl (2014) pointed out that not only males but also females frequently hold negative stereotypes about females, which may affect the appointment of a female to an executive level position. Many researchers believe socialization and gender stereotyping can explain the poor representation of females in leadership (Shah, 2010). An appropriate lens through which to examine issues of gender in higher education is Critical Theory. From the multiplicity of views as to what constitutes Critical Theory, Lumby (2015) started "a commitment to give voice to and thereby to engage with those who are often silenced, aiming to create

societies and workplaces which are free from domination where all members have an equal opportunity to contribute" (p.29). Dr. Offin further showed pictures of her leadership journey and plaques as proof of her journey.

Dr. Ankobra revealed, "I have been fortunate enough to get the jobs that I have gotten". I continued to volunteer for every position that provided a challenge within my department. She indicated that, "once I had been department chair for a good while, I wanted to try my chances on the university level. It is important to note that I served in a variety of leadership roles within my majored discipline where I was highly recognized for my research". Dr. Ankobra's pivotal moment on her leadership journey was when she realized that she could be a leader. Dr. Ankobra, however stated, "I never saw myself as a leader, but it wasn't that I didn't think I couldn't lead. I just never really thought about it. She also showed photographs of her leadership journey, brought out plaques and showed the departments websites with her photographs.

Dr. Ankobra was happy to say that she was fortunate enough to get jobs that she had and even served in a variety of leadership roles, yet she never saw herself as a leader. Individuals develop gender schema, which include expectations for how males and females are supposed to look, feel, and behave. It is widely believed that gender stereotypes affect the genetic code of the gender system since they constitute the cultural rules or schemas by which people perceive and enact gender difference and inequality (Smith et al., 2012). These stereotypes present an additional challenge for female leaders as the characteristics associated with leadership are historically masculine (Bonebright et al., 2012). A female in a leadership role presents incongruity to these schemata. When a female exercises authority over others outside of the

66

traditional feminine context, her effectiveness is questioned or undermined as being less capable than a males' effectiveness. It is easier for males to be perceived as possessing the task-relevant competence and leadership ability that are essential to emerging as a leader (Eagly, Gartzia, & Carli, 2014). The brain expects females to act one way based on the gender schemata, but there is an additional schema for a leader, which is contrary to that of the gender schema when applied to a female leader (Bonebright et al., 2012). Based on the existing literature, the major sources of stress for female administrators included time management, workload pressures, and responsibility to and for others, other's expectations, work and family conflicts, lack of resources, financial problems, and high expectations from the constituents (Dahlvig & Longman, 2010). Eagly (as cited in Harris, Ravenswood, & Myers, 2013) claimed that "it is societal expectations the produce and maintain inequality between genders" (p. 483). Their argument is supported by Pirouznia (2011) who asserted that "role expectations and cultural norms are shown clearly in the reality of the existing inequity" (p. 150).

Dr. Densu revealed, "I was brought up by both parents and they supported me throughout my education. She said, "I had a lot of surprise moments along the way that I just took in stride." She also stated, "Were there disappointments? Of course! Were there tears? Yes, absolutely!" Dr. Densu went on to explain, "I just continued to volunteer for more and more positions with the goal of learning more about areas where I had the least amount of experience." She continued, "balance does not exist". If you are giving 75% to your work, you are only giving 25% to something else like your kids or your family. I think as females because we juggle a lot, we think we can give 100%

67

to everything we put our hand to. We give 100% to our work when we are working, we give 100% to our kids when we are with our kids.   We communicate to our family the times when we need to work, and when we need to spend time with them.   I used to believe that there was such a thing when I first started my career but over time realized that wasn't the case".

In discussing her leadership journey, Dr. Densu revealed that both male and female mentors identified potential in her as both a graduate student and a professional. "A lot has to do with the mentoring opportunities and with people in leadership roles who provided opportunities for me throughout my journey. I am very mindful of that, which is why I work to provide opportunities for other budding young leaders." Females who have succeeded and advanced into leadership positions often speak of mentors who were important to their development (Madsen, 2012). There are several benefits that have proven beneficial for those who have engaged into one. Benefits include increased self-esteem and engagement in the workplace, increased job satisfaction, higher levels of career mobility and advancement, increased compensation, and reduced turnover. Considering the continued lack of representation of females in leadership positions, mentoring is especially essential for females seeking opportunities for advancement (Fox-Cardamone, 2012). Dr. Densu also showed pictures of her leadership journey. From Dr. Densu's narrative there were disappointments and there were times she cried but she persevered. She learnt along the journey that balance did not exist, so she had to give a full time to her work and a full time to her personal and family life in other to stay on top. Family and personal obligations may be one of the most prominent societal barriers for the limited number of females in executive positions in higher

education (Tomas, Lavie, Duran, & Guillamon, 2010). One of the primary reasons females in educational leadership experience the promotion process differently than their male faculty is the increasing demands outside of work. Stripling (2012) added the practical issues of lack of adequate childcare, inflexible tenure clock expectations for faculty, and inflexible work schedules to the list of reasons for underrepresentation.

Dr. Oti in responding to her leadership trajectory stated, "Growing up in the Southern Ghana unknowingly prepared me to practice mannerisms associated with more feminine characteristics such as being polite and non-confrontational". Dr. Oti further explained, "Girls were taught etiquette skills that emphasized on the importance of being polite at all times and in all situations. I did not have an easy road to the top. Within my family, my parents did not complete high school, and none of my siblings attended secondary school. I mainly had financial problems but was focused to reach my goal of becoming a lecturer at a top Ghanaian University".

Dr. Oti indicated, "My leadership role in higher education began with the help of my mentor who saw something in me that I did not see in myself". Dr. Oti stressed that receiving her doctorate and participating in leadership programs were equally important. Dr. Oti participated in various leadership programs offered through her current institution by saying," The University promotes various initiatives in the community to provide the linkage between the university mission and the community in which it resides."

Dr. Oti stated, "I find it extremely rewarding to work for an institution who values the community as part of its mission". Community services aspects of the position align with what Dr. Oti believes are her personal values of

service to others. Dr. Oti also shared that she had two defining moments in her career that motivated her to keep pursuing leadership. "The first was my mother's diagnosis with cancer. It was the feeling of not being able to control something that could erupt at any time that made me delve deeper in my work". Dr. Oti explained, "Male colleagues encouraged me to take leave while female colleagues said I would ruin my career so I should just do my best to adjust my schedule".

The second defining moment in her career was related to the first but gave her a different perspective. Dr. Oti shared that, "another female colleague whom I did not know very well had been observing me from afar as to how I negotiated my time while caring for a sick family member. She stated, "I was completely heartbroken that this young lady watched how I handled my mother's illness and did something similar when she was faced with a similar situation but suffered greater consequences because she did not receive tenure." Dr. Oti concluded that "I knew in that moment that I wanted to be in a position that pushed for all administrators, especially females, to be able to take leave without fear of punishment or backlash." Dr. Oti's journey was quite daunting, she had financial issues and also had to cater for her sick mother, but she was motivated to forge ahead by a mentor, and a young woman who was watching her from afar. Mentoring provides opportunities to access valuable information about the organizational culture (Buch et al., 2011). Longman and Lafreniere (2012) suggested that female administrators need to find balance at work and home. He argued, "the key is not an all-out marathon, but rather a cyclical energizing'' (p. 395). This implied that seeking opportunities to participate in other activities outside the official job may help to increase female

administrators' energy and sustenance in administrative roles. Engaging in family activities, social events, and other celebrations were found to give leaders a break which leads to gaining energy and exploring ideas for a new direction (Longman & Lafraniere, 2012). Dr. Oti showed photos of her leadership journey.

Dr. Volta stated, "college was always the only option, never a choice as to if you would go, just where." Raised by a single mother who valued education, school was extremely important in my house. I am the oldest of four siblings, all who are successful college graduates and doing well in their professional careers.

Dr. Volta said, "Upon completing my doctorate, I worked primarily in student and academic affairs positions in both public and private institutions." I have written roughly 67 articles, essays and book chapters as well as served as an editor. Dr. Volta stated, "I know I was reluctant to pursue a doctorate but having it is essential, especially for a female seeking to get into leadership." As she reflected on her leadership journey, Dr. Volta commented on the role of mentors, observing that "many are responsible for my getting to this point."

Dr. Volta credits her leadership attainment success to her mentor whom she feels helped cultivate her knowledge and skills through being able to observe and watch how they managed and modeled some of those same behaviors. Mentoring is one of the most important aspects of any female career, especially in higher education. Dr. Volta states, "Informal mentoring has served me well, and surprisingly as I reflect on this, all of my mentors are males." She further states, "While I have had only male mentors, I have observed some strong female leaders on my journey. Dr. Volta, states that "even though the

female leaders didn't serve as a mentor to me personally, I was still able to observe their behavior and pick up on things and mannerisms that served me well throughout my career journey." Therefore, Dr. Volta revealed that she remains committed to service because she believes, "that's where I can give back to the young females who want to be successful leaders."

Dr. Volta's comments on the role of mentors in her leadership journey indicates that having a mentor plays a very significant role in preparing an individual for leadership. According to Airini et al., (2012), some of the experiences that have assisted females in advancing their careers included learning from mentors, team work, self-awareness, and willingness to take risks, readiness to take immediate opportunities, and completion of advanced studies. Thus, in support of Dr. Volta's assertion on mentors, Pyke (2013) believed that even females with outstanding credentials find it difficult to rise to the top of the organization without having a coach or a mentor. In addition, developing potential future leaders through mentorship is important because educational institutions cannot succeed without sustaining excellent leadership.

Dr. Volta also shared, "the pivotal moment in my leadership journey came when I came to work with a former female colleague who was in the same faculty with me that had moved up some years earlier to an administrative role". Dr. Volta states "I admired her ability to handle the nuances that seemed to come with administration with such grace and dignity. Well, in fact I thought she made it look so easy and so I thought I would give it a try. Surprisingly my first executive administrative role was working closely with my former colleague. It was honestly one of the most disappointing experiences in my career. She was not easy to work with and

was not forthcoming with information primarily with me. It was a slap in the face to admire this woman from afar to only get up close and personal and realize that she gave all of the female deans and female administrators a tough time without reason or just cause. It was in this very moment that I decided that I would not treat other females like that and would create a positive working environment for both males and females that I managed." The object that Dr. Volta chose that was representative of her journey was Snow Globe. She explained, "Snow globes are absolutely beautiful, and people love to shake them up but the true beauty is when all the snow settles at the bottom and you are able to see the clear picture. Dr. Volta further explained, "Once the snow settles, there is a sense of calm, much like any crisis in higher education, the dust will eventually settle." Dr. Volta's journey was very exciting because she had mentors to guide her. She also had disappointments, but she took it in stride. She prepared herself adequately and was ready to learn and also be taught.

In answering the first research question of finding out how females in executive leadership positions in public universities in Ghana describe their leadership journey, responses from the participants revealed that participation in professional development programs was a major factor to push the females up the leadership ladder. It helped them to identify themselves as leaders even before they assumed leadership positions. This view held by the participants supports the study of Jackson and O'Callaghan (2009). In their study, Jackson, and O'Callaghan (2009) interviewed 91 female college presidents to determine how many participated in professional development programs. The results of the study showed that of the 91 female presidents interviewed, 72.5 % female

presidents participated in one or more professional development programs. Findings from their study revealed that professional development can assist females to enhance professional skills, access social networking opportunities, enhance one's self-esteem, and increase female career. Thus, institutions can assist with professional development by identifying female candidates and encouraging and providing them with professional experiences that will support progression in higher education.

Two of the participants (Dr. Akobra and Dr. Densu) volunteered for positions that provided a challenge whilst Dr. Offin juggled part-time administrative jobs alongside her faculty responsibilities. The views of the participants agree with the views of Longman and Lafreniere (2012) who argued, "The key is not an all-out marathon, but rather a cyclical energizing" (p. 395). This implied that seeking opportunities to participate in other activities outside the official job may help to increase female administrators' energy and sustenance in administrative roles. However, Dr. Oti and Dr. Volta mentioned that their leadership roles in higher education began with the help of mentors. Pyke (2013) believes that even females with outstanding credentials find it difficult to rise to the top of the organization without having a coach or a mentor.

Based on the existing literature, mentoring, and being mentored are critical career development opportunities. Females who have succeeded and advanced into leadership positions often speak of mentors who were important to their development (Madsen, 2012).

From the narratives all five participants had support from their families. Malik (2011) investigated the factors influencing the emergence of female leadership

at the higher education level in Pakistan, conducted one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with ten senior female administrators. The respondents identified several factors they believed contributed greatly to their success in achieving senior leadership positions in their respective institutions of higher education. Among these factors were the support of their parents and extended family, the inspiration provided by their parents and/or teachers, a strong sense of personal commitment throughout their academic period and professional career, a high level of self-confidence, self-esteem and ambition and the egalitarian nature of their childhood home.

Responses from the participants in describing their journey to executive leadership positions in public universities in Ghana revealed that to a very large extent, they (the participants) did not seek leadership positions but rather, they were very good at their jobs and were sought out. The participants in this study had similar experiences. Dr. Ankobra, and Dr. Densu explicitly stated that they originally did not see themselves as leaders while Dr. Offin, Dr. Oti and Dr. Volta stated that they were sought out for their positions because of their ambition and hard work.

Research Question 2: How do female executive leaders describe their leadership styles?

The second research question sought to find out how female executive leaders would describe their leadership styles. In discussing leadership styles that are unique to females, Dr. Offin indicated that, "I believe females bring different strengths to the leadership table". Dr. Offin further stated, "Females have a softer way of viewing the world". Dr. Offin involved all the people needed in decision when situations demanded it. She did not have a particular

75

style but conditions at stake determined how to act in other to solve the problem. In support of this view expressed by Dr. Offin, a study conducted by Jackson & O'Callaghan (2011) revealed female leaders often exhibit characteristics typically associated with nurturing including being affectionate, helpful, friendly, kind, sensitive, gentle, and soft spoken. "She goes on to say that, "females get people to come together to discuss their ideas and bring forth an openness that most male leaders don't value." According to theorist Burns (as stated in Northouse, 2013), transformational leadership involves a unique bonding among leaders and followers; emotional attachment, respect, and trust form the basis of these leadership approaches. Transformational leaders also seek to raise the thought process of followers by encouraging abstract thinking and ethical standards based on independence, integrity, and humanitarianism. Transformational leadership places a strong emphasis on social change and justice.

Dr. Ankobra on how she would describe her leadership styles mentioned that, "female leaders are known to create an environment that strives for excellence by developing relationships with those they work directly with and other leaders." Dr. Ankobra continued to say that, "Females are usually perceived to value workplace relationships more than males, insinuating that female leaders may foster closer bonds with their followers than male leaders." In support of Dr. Ankobra's view of creating an enabling environment for developing relationship, Antonaros (2010) found that female administrators are usually collaborating. Dr. Ankobra from her narrative provided a platform for the people she worked with to share views on issues under discussion and that

76

brought some form of togetherness. They saw themselves as family and strived to achieve their goals.

In reflecting on leadership styles, Dr. Densu stated that "when showcasing leadership styles that are more indicative of males, she is often perceived as cold or non-emotional." She goes on to explain that early on in her career journey this bothered her as she struggled with how to show emotion without seeming weak. Additionally, Dr. Densu stated that she was often, "perceived as demanding, hard, insensitive, unapproachable and distant." Dr. Densu's response to this question shows that she had a different leadership style from her other colleagues. Responses from her colleagues revealed that they tend to lean more towards the transformational leadership. In contrast to Dr. Densu's leadership style, theorist Burns (as stated in Northouse, 2013), indicted that transformational leadership involves a unique bonding among leaders and followers; emotional attachment, respect, and trust form the basis of these leadership approaches. However, it should be noted that the adaptation of different leadership styles is only done by females as males rarely change their style to accommodate their subordinates (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2011). People she worked with expected her to be "feminine".

Further on discussing leadership styles Dr. Oti indicated that, "Having effective communication skills has been of importance." Dr. Oti went on to state, "You have to understand and know when to use your effective communication skills, especially when you are faced with a difficult situation. You have to be able to hold your ground yet remain very calm." Dr. Volta characterized her leadership style by stating, "I would say I exhibit more of a masculine style of leadership with a hint of feminine leadership style. I am

very direct, concise, and value data. However, I am keen on listening, sharing information and connecting people to each other for a team approach". Eagly & Carli (2007) support Dr. Oti's view on her kind of leadership style by indicating that "one way of interpreting female leaders' effectiveness is the higher standard they have to meet in attaining their leadership positions and the perception that they have to maintain better performance to retain these roles" (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 33). Dr. Oti was both a transformational (a leader who seeks to motivate and inspire workers) and transactional (a leader who values order and structure) leader.

Dr. Volta characterized her leadership style by stating, "I would say I exhibit more of a masculine style of leadership with a hint of feminine leadership style. I am very direct, concise, and value data. However, I am keen on listening, sharing information and connecting people to each other for a team approach."

The responses by the participants on the leadership styles of female executive leaders revealed that they had similar leadership styles. They were transformational leaders but Dr. Densu and Dr Volta displayed more masculine characteristics. For example, Ayman & Korabik (2010)'s view of female leaders is that female leaders are credited with a willingness to look at how an action will affect other people and to be concerned with the wider needs of the community. More recently, another study by Antonaros (2010) has categorized male and female leadership style differences as transformational and transactional. According to him, females tend to lean more towards transformational leadership while males are more prone to transactional

leadership. Females have been seen to have a more communal leadership style showing a more caring side of being a leader.

Female leaders are seen as being more collaborative, community-oriented and seek to empower others, whereas males have shown more assertiveness and control through aggressive leadership. The participants revealed that females bring different strengths to the leadership table as one participant Dr. Ankobra mentioned that female leaders are known to create an environment that strives for excellence by developing relationships with those they work directly with and other leaders. Dr. Oti and Dr. Densu also indicated that having effective communication skills has been of importance.

Research Question 3: What leadership styles help females to succeed in their leadership journey to executive positions?

The third research question was to find out what leadership styles that help females to succeed in their leadership journey to executive positions. Dr. Offin in addressing this question identified, "the ability to build strong relationships" is an attribute that has supported me on my journey toward leadership. Building relationships is about your ability to identify and initiate working relationships and develop and maintain them in a way that is of mutual benefit to both yourself and the other party. Good relationships are key to getting things done and are essential when your success is dependent on others. When you trust your team and colleagues, you form a powerful bond that helps you to work and communicate more effectively. If you trust the people you work with, you can be open and honest in your thoughts and actions, and you do not have to waste time and energy watching your back. Dr. Offin found it needful to bring people she worked with together in other to achieve the goal of the

79

organization. She emphasized, the ability to work in collaboration with deans and directors across the university is another strong attribute." Female leaders are known to create an environment that strives for excellence by developing relationships with those they work directly with and other leaders. The partnership that embodies transformational leadership encourages subordinates to accomplish the overall goals.   Antonaros (2010) found that female administrators are usually concerned with creating change, building relationships, empowering others, delegating, and collaborating. According to theorist Burns (as stated in Northouse, 2013), transformational leadership involves a unique bonding among leaders and followers; emotional attachment, respect, and trust form the basis of these leadership approaches. Transformational leaders also seek to raise the thought process of followers by encouraging abstract thinking and ethical standards based on independence, integrity, and humanitarianism. Transformational leadership places a strong emphasis on social change and justice.

Transformational leaders motivate those they are leading by penetrating individuals' desires and connecting them with their personal value system for their personal development (Poulson et al., 2011).   Dr. Ankobra reflected on her leadership style by commenting, "I like being fair and firm with my decisions." She further explained," I mostly stick to my decisions. I involve everyone needed in decision making". I do not 'Lord over people'. She explained, I prefer to use the collaborative approach and that accounts for my success. In support of Dr. Ankobra's response to this question, female leaders have been seen to draw on personal experience and not just think of themselves, or the bottom line; their leadership style tends to have a greater impact on the

people, the organization, and society (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; O'Callaghan, 2011). Female leaders are credited with a willingness to look at how an action will affect other people and to be concerned with the wider needs of the community (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). Longman and Lafreniere (2012) stated that: the shift from power over followers to power with followers allows for mutual influence in the leader/follower relationship. Given this paradigm shift in leadership theory, the collaborating and empowering leadership style typical of many females prepares them well to lead effectively in modern-day organization. (pp. 401-402).

Dr. Densu indicated, "I do not have a specific style but usually uses the collaborative leadership style. I do this by involving everyone necessary in the decision-making process". With regards to her viewpoint, it means providing space for all types of communication and communicators. It means helping people improve their organization skills. It means helping people to become effective debaters, and mediating discussions with competing voices or ideas. According to theorist Burns (as stated in Northouse, 2013), transformational leaders seek to raise the thought process of followers by encouraging abstract thinking and ethical standards based on independence, integrity, and humanitarianism. In discussing her leadership style that helped her succeed, Dr. Oti stated, "My style is to be more collaborative which is why I believe this position is a perfect fit for me. I do not like confrontation, but I know how to handle it. In most confrontational issues, it is when the other person feels like they are not being heard or don't have a voice." Dr. Oti stated, "I saw my mom confront difficult people with a smile and her favorite saying of "Kill them with kindness." We all dream of a truly harmonious workplace, one where no outside

81

influences interrupt the creative thinking space, but of course, that is rarely how it works out in real life. Confrontations are an inevitable part of the working process, but with work to improve, your approach need not carry the negative connotations we expect.   A study conducted by Ayman & Korabik, (2010) support Dr. Oti's view on her leadership style as their study found female leaders to be credited with a willingness to look at how an action will affect other people and to be concerned with the wider needs of the community.

Further on this question, another participant in the study Dr. Volta maintained her position using her keen ability to cultivate relationships with people. She stated, "Even if you know that a person may not like you, you have to understand that they have skills and you have to look beyond your personal feelings to work toward the ultimate goal." Knowing how to negotiate and communicate effectively are essential in overcoming the negative issues that may try to hinder your worth as a leader. Also, knowing how to listen effectively was described as of importance in cultivating relationships with students, staff, and faculty. Dr. Volta stated, "You cannot take everything personal." In my view, sometimes, we can choose the people with whom we work, but more often than not, those decisions are made for us. No matter the situation, stepping up and choosing to approach challenging people with compassion and understanding, rather than frustration and resentment can only make you a better leader and teammate at the end of the day. In support of this assertion by Dr. Volta, a study conducted by (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p.33) found that one way of interpreting female leaders' effectiveness is the higher standard they have to meet in attaining their leadership positions and the perception that they "have to maintain better performance to retain these roles".

Transformational leaders motivate those they are leading by penetrating individuals' desires and connecting them with their personal value system for their personal development (Poulson et al., 2011). Overall, females use language to enhance relationship while males use language to enhance social dominance and control.

Responses given by the participants show that to a very large extent female leaders tend to draw on personal experience and not just think of themselves, or the bottom line; their leadership style tends to have a greater impact on the people, the organization, and society (Ayman & Korabik2010; O'Callaghan, 2011). Female leaders are credited with a willingness to look at how an action will affect other people and to be concerned with the wider needs of the community (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). This can also be seen in the views of one participant Dr. Ankobra who attested to this by saying that she involves every one needed in decision making. She does not 'Lord over people'.

Longman and Lafreniere (2012) stated that: "the shift from power over followers to power with followers allows for mutual influence in the leader/follower relationship. Given this paradigm shift in leadership theory, the collaborating and empowering leadership style typical of many females prepares them well to lead effectively in modern-day organizations" (pp. 401-402). Dr. Offin (a participant) identified her ability to "build strong relationships" as a leadership attribute supported her on her journey towards leadership. Dr. Offin further revealed that she maintained her position using her keen ability to cultivate relationships with people. Also, knowing how to listen effectively was described as of importance in cultivating relationships with students, staff, and faculty and maintaining one's posture in leadership. Ayman

& Korabik (2010) puts it, their leadership style tends to have a greater impact on the people, the organization, and society. Females who have succeeded in their leadership journey have reported that their leadership styles have been of great help. They collaborated very well with all their colleagues both in and outside. Collaborative leadership is the type of leadership required to get effective and efficient results across internal or external organisational boundaries. All five participants employed transformational leadership style, however Dr. Densu and Dr. Volta used transactional leadership style as well.

A collaborative leader invests time to build relationships, handles conflicts in a constructive manner and shares control. More recently, male and female leadership style differences have been categorized as transformational and transactional leadership (Antonaros, 2010). Females tend to lean more towards transformational leadership while males are more prone to transactional leadership. Females have been seen to have a more communal leadership style showing a more caring side of being a leader. Female leaders are seen as being more collaborative, community-oriented and seek to empower others, whereas males have shown more assertiveness and control through aggressive leadership.

Research Question 4: What barriers do female leaders in Ghanaian public universities encounter on their journey to executive positions?

The fourth research question sought to identify barriers that female leaders in Ghanaian public universities encounter on their journey to executive positions. In response to this question, Dr. Offin exclaimed, "The ride has been fun, like a roller coaster with a lot of ups and downs but enough exhilaration to keep you going for more." She said, "the culture of any organization is one in

84

which you will constantly have to negotiate, but you can make the decision to not make that the focus of your professional life." Dr. Offin went on to explain, "Striving for the "lead actress role" did not come without its share of obstacles, mainly from "female peers." Obviously when females view other females as a threat, they focus their energy on tearing other females down therefore demoralizing them from taking up a challenge. With the views expressed by Dr. Offin, it is evident that socialization (the lifelong process through which people learn the values and norms of a given society) and gender stereotyping (preconceived ideas whereby females and males are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their gender) limit female access to and exercise of leadership. Female stereotypes, bias, discrimination, and social perceptions of females as inferior are also cited as possible explanations (Tomas et al., 2010).

In discussing what barriers were encountered on her leadership journey, Dr. Ankobra commented, "I am sure that there were a significant number of barriers that kept me from being more successful than I am. However, I would be hard pressed to identify many of them. I have never focused on the barriers rather I just kept seeking opportunities that I thought were a good fit for me and my lifestyle." She also stated, "I wouldn't call those obstacles and didn't feel like I've had gender issues" other than there were times when I felt "invisible". She believed that, "Being female was an advantage for me in many instances, because I was in a field that was predominantly male, I was often just "overlooked, not intentional, I don't believe".

Dr. Ankobra shared, "my male colleagues and supervisors often proceeded in meetings for example, as if I was not present in the room". She

further explained, if I did not speak up or volunteer, I was not considered for the leadership opportunities that she held while in that department. Many of my male colleagues made incorrect assumptions that I would not be interested in leadership opportunities, because it was a hassle and because I was a female." From where I sat, I could only conclude that Dr. Ankobra was virtually ignored by her colleagues if she didn't speak up at meetings. That could be very frustrating. These views expressed by Dr. Ankobra shows that in general, it is easier for males to be perceived as possessing the task-relevant competence and leadership ability that are essential to emerging as a leader as indicated in a research conducted by Eagly, Gartzia, & Carli (2014).

With regard to the perceived organizational culture contributing to the under-representation of women in higher education, Dr. Ankobra indicated, "the organizational culture had minimal to no impact on her ability to obtain leadership positions."

In relation to Dr. Ankobra's view on organization culture, Schein (2004) indicated that organizational culture is a set of "shared, taken-for-granted implicit assumptions that a group holds and that determines how it perceives, thinks about and reacts to its various environments" (p. 24). Since organizational culture is a function of leadership (O'Connor, 2015) and most high-level administrative leaders in universities are males, some have found that male-determined values have enforced a system in which there are certain acceptable roles for females (generally lower-levels) and certain acceptable roles for males (generally high-level) (O'Connor, 2015). Perhaps the reason why Dr. Ankobra's counterparts do not consider her as a competition.

Dr. Densu reflected on the barriers experienced in higher education by stating, "the one thing that often bothered or, okay let me be honest, bothers me about working in higher education as that is the only thing I can speak from, is that the male colleagues I work with will let me know directly if they don't agree with a decision whereas the female colleagues will go out their way to undermine my authority". Dr. Densu continues by stating, "I find it disheartening that women will not support women in leadership, at least not in the environment where I have worked for many years." She continues with, "I struggle when I hear the patriarchal nature of higher education is why so few women are in leadership, I don't agree. I believe women are the reason so few women are in leadership in higher education".

Another major barrier Dr. Densu indicated was the perception from her senior counterparts that she did not have the ability to lead. Males have been administrators, vice-chancellors, and deans in academia for decades longer and in larger numbers than females have held these positions and for that matter some people still hold the view that females lack the capabilities that exhibited by their male counterparts. According to Diehl (2014), "females are judged informally and subjectively on the basis of their perceived suitability for a post or for promotion" (p. 144), using, criteria such as age, relevance of experience, and ability to 'fit in'." A review of the university cabinet information and pictures posted on Dr. Densu's institutions website revealed that the university cabinet has been made up of primarily males.

Dr. Oti remarked, "You will find that many will not believe you are capable of doing your job, or you are inadequate. She further indicated, "People buying into your ability to do the position assigned and looking beyond my

87

gender has been the biggest hurdle". It is quite evident from Dr. Oti's response shows that socialization and gender stereotyping limit female access to and exercise of leadership. In support of this, Tomas et al., (2010) cited female stereotypes, bias, discrimination, and social perceptions of females as inferior as possible explanations for this behaviour. Dr. Oti stated that she feels gender has impacted her in a positive way because she learned early on how to get along with most people. Dr. Oti explained that there is still the perception in the organization that believes leaders are supposed to be males.

Dr. Oti indicated, "This is true especially in higher education where leadership is very much male dominated and when you have males making decisions about the hiring and you have males who are going to have to work with you, a lot of them may feel a little uncomfortable working for a female". In relation to this comment, several studies suggest that organizations tend to hire or promote those candidates who resemble themselves (Aiston & Jung, 2015; Kim & Cook, 2012; Schein, 2004). This explains how females can be undervalued and deprived of employment opportunities because of biased and selection policies. Although she believes that she has noticed a change in this perception over the years, it remains a concern for females trying to move up in higher education administration.

Dr. Oti currently provides care for both of her parents who are in their mid-eighties. She explained, "Caring for your parents as they age is extremely difficult to manage on top of doing a demanding job." She shared; my mom was extremely active, but my father was battling with some illnesses that has compromised his mobility". Therefore, my father's limited mobility makes it difficult for my mom to manage doctor appointments for my father without my

assistance. The stress I felt from the lack of compassion from my colleagues about my missing work to attend my mother's doctor appointments just heightened the double standard I felt existed in higher education".   A thorough review of the university cabinet information posted on Dr. Oti's website revealed that the university cabinet was not balanced for the past three years as it relates to females in leadership positions.

On a personal reflection, Dr. Volta stated, "the real barrier is that I struggle to find balance between my personal and professional life, especially raising a young daughter. The youngest of all participants, Dr. Volta, has a young daughter in primary school. I want to be superwoman, but I often have to miss school ceremonies or field trips due to work conflicts." Dr. Volta spoke at length about the challenges of being a single mom, raising a young child while working in academia. The number of meetings and events in the evenings, along with the stress involved, takes a heavy toll on the family and outside work obligations. Family and personal obligations may be one of the most prominent societal barriers for the limited number of females in executive positions in higher education (Tomas, Lavie, Duran, & Guillamon, 2010). One of the primary reasons females in educational leadership experience the promotion process differently than their male faculty is the increasing demands outside of work.

Research on female leadership has found that females may experience unequal employment opportunities and role conflict as well as patriarchal attitudes towards females (Aiston & Jung, 2015; Pirouznia, 2011; Shah, 2010). These factors stem from culture, whether Western on third world, and have created a "glass ceiling" (Harris, Ravenswood, & Myers, 2013) for females who

want to access executive leadership positions. The glass ceiling effect, societal barriers, and institutional barriers are key identified barriers females face on their journey toward executive leadership. In discussing what barriers were encountered on their leadership journey, Dr. Offin, Dr. Densu and Dr. Oti sited that gender stereotyping was a barrier as females continue to navigate the various barriers inherent in higher education, societal barriers create a different set of challenges for females to confront. Societal barriers, gender stereotypes and societal norms or expectations have created the perception that males perform better than females in leadership roles. This assertion is supported by Diehl (2014) who pointed out that not only males but also females frequently hold negative stereotypes about females, which may affect the appointment of a female to an executive level position. This was also confirmed by Dr. Densu who found it disheartening that females will not support females in leadership, at least not in the environment where she has worked for many years; the female colleagues will go out their way to undermine her authority. These stereotypes present an additional challenge for female leaders as the characteristics associated with leadership are historically masculine (Bonebright et al., 2012). A female in a leadership role presents incongruity to these schemata. When a female exercises authority over others outside of the traditional feminine context, her effectiveness is questioned or undermined as being less capable than a males' effectiveness.

Dr. Densu stated that "when showcasing leadership styles that are more indicative of men, she is often perceived as cold or non-emotional." Even though Dahlvig and Longman (2010) indicated there has been improved acceptance of females in higher education leadership, but there are still some

invisible problems forcing them to work harder to achieve rank. For instance, Dr. Oti disclosed that the stress she felt from the lack of compassion from her colleagues about her missing work to attend her mother's doctor appointments just heightened the double standard she felt existed in higher education. Dr. Volta also stated that time and balance was a problem because she had a young daughter to care for. Based on the existing literature, the major sources of stress for female administrators included time management, workload pressures, and responsibility to and for others, others' expectations, work and family conflicts, lack of resources, financial problems and high expectations from the constituents (Dahlvig & Longman, 2010). Dr. Ankobra, Dr, Offin, Dr. Densu, Dr. Oti felt that their institutions were dominated by males which meant that they needed to go the extra mile to prove their efficiency. Gender inequality is an issue that has a profound impact on higher education as more females infiltrate a male-dominated organizational system. Malik's (2011) investigation of the factors influencing the emergence of female leadership at the higher education level in Pakistan, conducted one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with ten senior female administrators. The study found that 60% of the respondents identified dissatisfaction with the level of support extended to them by their institutions. The respondents further asserted that their incompatibility with the male dominated culture of the institutional environment presented as a hurdle to their progress (Malik, 2011).

Research Question 5: How do female leaders overcome barriers on their journey to executive positions in public universities in Ghana?

The last research question that needed to be answered by the participants in the study has to do with strategies used by female leaders to overcome barriers on their journey to executive positions in the public universities in Ghana. In response to this question, Dr. Offin stressed, "the importance of having professional connections both internal and external to your university". She stated, "Seek counsel from other professionals, both males and females outside of your university". Dr. Offin further reiterated that, "It's the people who work around me, giving me space and guidance that pushed me to keep seeking more opportunities". In support of this assertion, a study by Maranto and Griffin (2011) found that female leaders/administrators use networks as a tool to seek information for personal support and professional development whereas males use networking as a means for making tough decisions.

Dr. Offin also stated that "there were many mentors, role models and friends who believed in me and often encouraged me to take the next step at different stages of my career and life." Researchers have shown that mentoring plays a role in the advancement of females in executive level positions and across various disciplines, including business, education, and government (Maranto & Griffin, 2011). She also pointed out that her previous male supervisors were the ones that pushed her most and continued to serve as mentors, even now in her leadership position.

Dr. Offin revealed that networking within professional associations related to higher education and discipline of expertise were equally as important as having a mentor. Thus, it is important to learn how universities function if

92

you want to advance as a female in higher education. In addition, she stated that "you must take advantage of professional development workshops as a way to gain professional experience that you may not get in your current position and also as a way to not only network but learn about areas of weakness." This view of Dr. Offin supports the views of Eddy and Ward (2015) that professional associations can provide opportunities to improve on interpersonal skills, be abreast about current issues impacting the industry and develop a career progression plan.   The trainings or institutes offered by professional associations are an additional avenue to address any deficits or gaps in experiences not received at the university.   Research on executive leaders reported that the majority cited professional development opportunities as important to their career advancement (Pyke, 2013). More specifically, she (Dr. Offin) believed attending leadership training in disciplines that are focused on females becoming leaders, such as deans and chancellors, in the university is important.

Dr. Ankobra in her response revealed that, "obtaining a doctorate is essential to opening up doors to leadership obtainment through your academic preparation. "She also believed that "it was important to get as much experience outside of your area as you can". She stated, "Get on committees that provide a broad prospective, such as strategic planning on either the college or university level". This view of Dr. Ankobra supports the study of Eddy and Ward (2015). In their opinion, professional associations can provide opportunities to improve on interpersonal skills, be abreast about current issues impacting the industry and develop a career progression plan. Thus, the trainings or institutes offered by professional associations are an additional

avenue to address any deficits or gaps in experiences not received at the university.

Dr. Ankobra indicated that, "If you have prepared yourself academically, if you have a variety of experiences within an institution, if you have somebody to help move you and your career forward in the form of mentors and not just one person but it could be many different people, the opportunities of obtaining a leadership position in higher education is possible". She credited the influence of mentors in her professional development, stating that, "I had people encouraging me along the way; I had help from Professors in my faculties". "Find people who are in positions to help you and let them know of your career goals and see if they can do something to help put you out there", Dr. Ankobra stated, "Mentoring is crucial for career transition, intellectual assistance, and psychological support". A study conducted by Smith et al., (2012) on barriers to career advancement of female college presidents looked at career paths, mentorship, professional development, and found that females who are mentored are more likely to attain higher levels of career advancement than those who had no mentors.

She emphasized, "Let people looking forward for leadership positions know what you want and what you want to be when you grow up. No one is a fortune teller. People have no idea to what you are aspiring and most are willing to help if they know". Additionally, mentoring provides opportunities to access valuable information about the organizational culture. Based on the existing literature, mentoring and being mentored are critical career development opportunities. (Buch et al., 2011). Although Dr. Ankobra indicated that none of the barriers had impeded her personal success in obtaining leadership positions,

she also stated that institutions could play a more proactive role in advancing females in leadership positions.

Dr. Densu in her response also stated that her primary strategy in overcoming some of the challenges or barriers was to be persistent. Dr. Densu added, "Buying into the stereotypes and reasons why I couldn't or shouldn't do something was not an option". According to Northouse (2013), females are often perceived first through a gender lens and then through societal stereotypes that accompany gender, which is why they experience pressure once they achieve executive level positions. It is widely believed that gender stereotypes affect the genetic code of the gender system since they constitute the cultural rules or schemas by which people perceive and enact gender difference and inequality (Smith et al., 2012). These stereotypes present an additional challenge for female leaders as the characteristics associated with leadership are historically masculine (Bonebright et al., 2012).

She further commented, "You are always going to have problems, whether they be real or fictional, don't spend your time worrying, use your time wisely and search out ways to improve yourself and your organization". Females are constantly striving to survive and thrive in a male-dominated leadership society. Thus, Timmers, Williamsen and Tijdens (2010) noted that to succeed in a complex environment, females must be able to adapt to change and maintain a positive attitude. She indicated that she had to be persistent and not allow her senior counterparts' perceptions about her become her reasons to impede her advancement. Dr. Densu shared that what she has found is "compromise." She stated, "Realistic Compromise (showing awareness and acceptance of reality) replaces the old term of family/work balance". Dr. Densu

used to have to worry about missing out on special moments with her children because of work responsibilities or having to miss out on important conference or networking opportunities if her children had something that she could not disappoint. Now that her children are college students, she is still faced with a similar dilemma while taking care of her mother with Diabetes.

Dr. Densu shared, "there are doctor appointments and care giving responsibilities that I have to stay on top of and this is life or death for a loved one." Family and personal obligations may be one of the most prominent societal barriers for the limited number of females in executive positions in higher education (Tomas, Lavie, Duran, & Guillamon, 2010). Compromising on either her work or family life has always helped her to find her way out. Dr. Densu also indicated that it was important for females to state their goals and aspirations for leadership attainment to people who can help get them to their desired goals. She stated, "You must be proactive in asking to be on committees and extra assignments so that the institution will know what you can do and the value you can bring to the organization. Females cannot just sit back and wait for an opportunity to land in their lap. They must actively search for opportunities and create opportunities when the institution will not".

In line with these views expressed by Dr. Densu, a study by Ramachandran et al., (2011) on female presidents stressed the importance of institutional opportunities for development of skills and demonstrated leadership.

According to American Council on Education (2012), higher education has been slow in formally developing its own internal talent in strategic ways. Therefore, institutions can also assist with professional development by

96

identifying female candidates and encouraging and providing them with professional experiences that will support progression in higher education.

Dr. Oti was of the view that, "The constant feeling of having to do more and go beyond just to prove myself and my worth as a leader meant I have to make sure I know my stuff at all times, and stay a step ahead of the game". Dr. Oti indicated, I developed social and professional networks with people that have helped me along in my quest to obtaining a leadership position in higher education. Also, she stressed the importance of having a mentor to talk to, even if it is just once a year. If you are going into higher education leadership, she stated, "you need to understand the culture, the processes, how to put together a budget, and continuously educate yourself and sharpen your skills." In support of the views of Dr. Oti, a study by Maranto and Griffin (2011) revealed that mentoring plays a role in the advancement of females in executive level positions and across various disciplines, including business, education, and government.

Dr. Oti indicated that, balancing skills were very important as well as knowing how to manage your time well. Dr. Oti stated, "Never be afraid to take a calculated risk as that is when you truly show what your leadership skills are made of, when things get tough." Dr. Oti also stated that "knowing how to negotiate not only for yourself but for things you need to have completed on campus is crucial for success. Knowing how to negotiate and communicate effectively are essential in overcoming the negative issues that may try to hinder your worth as a female leader. Wolfinger, Mason and Goulden (2013) indicated that, "Females see a career as personal growth, as self-fulfillment, as satisfaction, like making a contribution to others, as doing what one wants to

do" (p. 14).   In discussing her interpersonal career strategy, having those credentials will not alleviate the challenges you will face but it does carry some weight for both you and them knowing that you are credible."

Dr. Volta in responding to this research question stated, "You cannot take everything personal." As she reflected on her barriers to leadership, Dr. Volta commented that "Everything is not for everybody. Just because you were turned down or heard a no, does not mean that it was because you were a female. Maybe it was because you were not the candidate for that particular position at that particular time. It is okay to hear no, and not assume it is because you are a female". In view contrast to this view by Dr. Volta, Donohue-Mendoza (2012) indicated that due to males monopolizing leadership and administrative roles, females are often viewed as less than their counterparts and are viewed as still holding traditional gender stereotyped roles.

Responses of the participants in line with this research question generally revealed that overcoming barriers is usually the most resorted approach by leaders as it helps them to build up their leadership skills and to give them a fair idea of how to handle issues as leaders. Learning how to deal with and solve problems may increase more female chances to attain and succeed in executive leadership positions. Successful female administrators have attributed their success to overcoming barriers of perceived gender differences, unequal employment opportunities and role conflict. Also, there was some indication from the respondents that networking allows those aspiring to leadership to tap into the expertise of those involved in the recruiting and hiring process. The views of the participants support the view other researchers such as; Ballenger (2010) who indicated that females, specifically,

have the attitude of making efforts to take care of situations in order to "improve their own lives and the lives of those who come after them". Also, Airini et al., (2012) revealed that some of the experiences that have assisted females in advancing their careers included learning from mentors, team work, self-awareness, willingness to take risks, readiness to take immediate opportunities, and completion of advanced studies.

Thus, despite challenges facing females, they are determined to improve their own lives and the lives of those who come after them (Ballenger, 2010). In support of this assertion, Dr. Densu reasoned, "you are always going to have problems, whether they be real or fictional, don't spend your time worrying; use your time wisely and search out ways to improve yourself and your organization". However, successful female administrators have attributed their success to overcoming barriers of perceived gender difference. Speaking on that, Dr. Volta also stated, "You cannot take everything personal." As she reflected on her barriers to leadership, she commented that "Everything is not for everybody. Just because you were turned down or heard a no, does not mean that it was because you were a female. Maybe it was because you were not the candidate for that particular position at that particular time. It is okay to hear no, and not assume it is because you are a female." Furthermore, learning how to deal with and solve problems may increase more female chances to attain and succeed in executive leadership positions. "In most confrontational issues, it is when the other person feels like they are not being heard or don't have a voice." Dr. Oti (a participant) further added, "I saw my mom confront difficult people with a smile and her favorite saying of "Kill them with

99

kindness." This strategy has helped her deal with problems that emerged along her journey.

This participant (Dr. Oti) in support of the views of Airini et al., (2012) stated, "Never be afraid to take a calculated risk as that is when you truly show what your leadership skills are made of, when things get tough." Dr. Ankobra explained how she continued to volunteer for every position that provided a challenge within her department. Once Dr. Ankobra had been department chair for a good while, she wanted to try her chances on the university level. Networking is essential for personal growth and professional development.

Networking not only creates opportunities for development, but it also provides leaders a chance to build and strengthen relationships, explore new ideas, and share information and experiences with others in a form of coaching and mentoring. Dr. Oti indicated that she developed social and professional networks with people that have helped her along in her quest to obtaining a leadership position in higher education. Also, she stressed the importance of having a mentor to talk to, even if it is just once a year. Dr. Offin observed the importance of having professional connections both internal and external to your university. She stated that "there were many mentors, role models and friends who believed in me and often encouraged me to take the next step at different stages of my career and life". These views expressed by the participants further supports the study of Maranto and Griffin (2011) who found that female leaders/administrators use networks as a tool to seek information for personal support and professional development. Based on the narratives by the participants, they all prepared themselves academically and professionally by obtaining various degrees. They sought counsel from both internal and

external professionals. They served on various committees and organisations. Dr. Offin, Dr. Ankobra and Dr. Oti were helped by mentors. Networking was also identified by all five participants as a good strategy for progression. Dr. Densu and Dr. Oti in finding solution to work and life conflict found that accepting reality is very important if you really want to succeed.

Chapter Summary

While the number of years of experience in administration varied among the participants in this study, they still had a lot in common when it came to experiences shared during their leadership journey. The results indicated that the participants shared the perception that there were certain barriers and challenges that they had to overcome in order to navigate the journey toward an executive leadership position such as negotiating family and personal obligations. In discussing additional obstacles, participants frequently shared that working with female colleagues was one of the primary challenges. Even though they acknowledged these as challenges, each of the participants found ways to cope and address these issues.

The analysis showed that there were ways to combat these challenges by identifying a mentor and building a support network both internal and external to the institution where the participants are employed. The participants identified individuals who provided them inspiration and mentoring throughout their professional journey.

In discussing their ability as it relates to gender, participants consistently identified their work ethic and hard work as one of the major reasons they were given the opportunities they received throughout their journey to executive leadership. Finally, regarding advice for aspiring female leaders in higher

education, all participants encouraged females to continue their journey and to embrace the challenges as it helps develop the skills and abilities that are required for leadership in a challenging higher education environment.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the trajectory of female executive leaders in Ghanaian public universities. The examination of the professional experiences of female executive leaders' trajectory toward leadership provided insight into the impact of leadership and gender. The study explored what female executive leaders perceived as barriers they faced as well as described strategies, they used to overcome the barriers.

The questions that guided the research were.

- How do females in executive leadership positions in public universities in Ghana describe their leadership journey?

- How do female executive leaders describe their leadership styles?

- What leadership styles help females to succeed in their leadership journey to executive positions?

- What barriers do female leaders in Ghanaian public universities encounter on their journey to executive positions?

- How do female leaders overcome barriers on their journey to executive positions in public universities in Ghana?

A qualitative design with a critical case study method was used to allow the researcher to gain in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The theoretical framework of critical theory and the subset of intersectionality were the primary lens utilized to analyze the data collected from the study and to address the research question. The theoretical frameworks of critical theory and intersectionality were utilized in this study to facilitate a deeper understanding of the leadership journey experiences for female

executive leaders in Ghanaian public universities. The theoretical frameworks were beneficial as they facilitated the stories through critical narratives of the five female executive leaders' experiences of how they were able to navigate the leadership journey toward their current position.

This chapter provides a summary of the study and discusses the findings that resulted from this study. Interpretation of the data, conclusions drawn from the information gathered and recommendations for future research are discussed in this chapter.

Summary of the Study

Clandinin and Connelly (2004) described narrative inquiry as a means toward understanding a particular experience. In this study, the stories of the participants' leadership journey were shared by themselves. Research by Clandinin and Connelly (2004) supported this as they stated: An enquirer enters into this interview matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of telling, reliving and retelling stories; the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives (p.20). Therefore, narrative inquiry was appropriate to further understand the experiences of females.

Summary of Key Findings

1.   As the participants shared insights about their leadership journey, their reflections indicated that the multiple aspects of identity that define them as being females impacts every area of their professional life. They took their role as leaders seriously and felt a great sense of responsibility to not only the institution but also to the people they managed. They were role models, both personally and professionally. They recounted different coping methods,

104

understandings of relationships, and general perceptions while discussing their trajectory. The participants put tremendous effort into balancing the demands of their professional life with the demands of their personal life. Through the lens of intersectionality, the researcher was able to examine a more complete picture of the participants and the multiple aspects of identity that defines them. Intersectionality framework enabled the study to embrace participants' performance of their gender ability status as they interact in the context of leadership in higher education.

2.   Female executive leaders are known to foster inclusion, collaboration, empathy, trust and concern for others which are all characteristics indicative of a transformational leader (Diehl, 2014). Although participants primarily embodied a collaborative, communicative, relationship oriented; seek to empower others; and address difficult situations immediately (Odhiambo, 2011). Most of the participants expressed that their leadership styles are both inclusive and collaborative. Their leadership was not just about getting things done; it was about the people, the process, and the difference they made. Most important was that they were aware that their decisions impacted everyone at the university; especially the students.

3.   It was surprising that the study revealed that one of the biggest challenges females face in educational leadership is working with other females. Findings from Jones and Palmer (2011) indicate that females often view fellow female colleagues as a threat rather than a support. The study revealed that all of the participants had a negative experience with another female on their journey toward leadership. Interestingly, four (4) of the participants stated that the negative experience was the reason why they serve as role models for other

aspiring female leaders. According to Jones and Gill (2013), outward forms of competition are unacceptable for female by societal standards. Therefore, female sabotage each other in secret or as Dr. Densu states, "Copying uninvolved parties on email exchanges is one of the most passive aggressive ways females behave at this level." The findings of this study revealed that there is a culture in higher education where females do not help other females. If females are not supportive of their own gender, it is going to be hard for others to respect them as leaders in higher education.

4.   Previous studies that have used in-depth interviews to gain a deeper understanding of women's experiences, found that, mentoring, networking and professional development were important for women aspiring toward executive leadership positions in higher education (Madsen, 2012; White, 2012). The researcher was not surprised that mentorship was a strategy that affected each of the female's perception on their leadership quest in higher education as supported by the works of Carvalho and Santiago (2011) research on women in higher education.

In addition to mentoring, networking was also an essential element to each of the participants' ability to navigate their professional journey. Networking within and outside of their institutions was considered by all participants to be the most crucial factor to reaching positions of leadership. Peer networks provided perspective and advice as well as offered support and guidance during times of crisis at the university. Building mentorships and diverse professional networks was a strong point of every interview and often considered by participants to be the key to navigating the leadership journey. As universities work to recruit and retain more female leaders, work is needed

on creating successful and sustainable mentoring programs that provide networking opportunities.

Conclusions

Given the small sample size, the interpretation of the findings cannot be generalized for a larger population. However, the findings support the critical theory and intersectionality theoretical frameworks which helped achieve the goal of gaining insights rather than generalizations. However, it was apparent that there was a sense of "detachment" from gender issues or the administrators had a different way of viewing gender.

1. Despite their straightforward understanding of the gender disparities in educational leadership positions, these females did not find their gender to have made a negative impact over the course of their leadership journey. None of the participants shared that gender was an issue in relation with salary, sexual harassment or blatant discrimination.

2. Mentoring and networking was perceived to be critical strategies for overcoming barriers on the leadership journey for female Provost/Associate Provost in the University System of Ghana. Although leadership is embodied in a role, the act of leading includes social action between multiple areas (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). The literature offers support and added context for the participants' leadership experiences as women in higher education.

3. Despite the recent reports and research indicating that diverse leadership skills provide a strong institutional performance (BalakrIshnan, 2014), academic institutions have been slow to change their executive leadership composition. The findings from this study support several aspects of

previous literature on women administrators in leadership positions in higher education. These are important to note because, too often, females are not confident in their leadership abilities and are constrained by the societal limitations that appear to be placed on females (Madsen, 2012). However, as more females are encouraged to take on advanced roles and are seen in these higher positions, this could translate to more females being confident in taking on leadership positions (Carvalho & Santiago, 2011).

4.   Studying the experiences of the five female leaders provided vital information about whether the strategies and supports suggested in the literature are effective. In agreement with the work of Keohane (2014), and Maranto and Griffin (2011), there are fewer females in higher education and finding female mentors proves to be a challenge but helpful to achieve executive leadership at a higher rate. Unfortunately, due to the lack of females in leadership positions, many females will not experience the benefits attributed with same sex role models in leadership positions. Williamsen and Tijdens (2010) noted that to succeed in a complex environment, females must be able to adapt to change and maintain a positive attitude.   The literature has shown that the gender and organizational culture are major determinants when it comes to the success of female leaders in higher education.

Recommendations

The results of this study inform several recommendations for aspiring female leaders in higher education administration. According to Sandberg

(2013), critical life events influence leadership choices, styles, and the motivation to pursue leadership roles.

1.   All participants, at some point during their interviews, acknowledged or brought up the fact that universities have yet to reach gender equity in leadership positions and that more must be done to help promote females' advancement to those positions.

2.   Issues surrounding the work-family conflict must be more thoroughly addressed, and the cultural assumptions about leadership potential or effectiveness must be further challenged.

3.   The findings of this study also warrant the need for professional development for females on interpersonal skills. According to Eddy and Ward (2015), professional associations can provide opportunities for females to improve on interpersonal skills, be abreast about current issues impacting the industry, and develop an intentional career progression plan.

Suggestions for Further Research

1.   The findings warrant a need for further research in the area of higher education administration for females. In contrast to this research, future studies may benefit from interviewing females who did not succeed at becoming leaders in education or those who chose to remain in middle management administrative positions.

2.   Furthermore, research needs to be conducted to explore the working environments and relationships between female colleagues.

3.   Also, conducting a quantitative study focused on a large sample population would be helpful so that generalizations could be made about the barriers and strategies female leaders face on their journey toward leadership.

109

4. Finally, research is needed to assist in beginning to change a "culture" that is embedded in higher education institutions nationally and internationally.

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111

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APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title: **Examining the Trajectory of Female Executive Leaders in Public**

Ghanaian Universities

Principal Investigator: Ida Dadzie

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General Information about Research

The research is to examine the experiences of females in top leadership positions

in Ghanaian public Universities.

These positions include Provost of colleges, Deans of faculties, Directors of

institutes and centers and Heads of departments.

The research aims at examining the barriers and the various ways in which they

were able to overcome the barriers. This means that data has to be collected on five

female leaders serving in the above-mentioned positions using interviews.

The interview will last between 40 to 50 minutes.

An interview guide will be used (a recorder can also be used only if the participant

agrees) to collect data. It will strictly be a question-and-answer session. Participants

are to simply answer questions and provide documents to prove if available.

Documents needed are

- Transcripts (if participant agrees)

- Academic certificates (if participants agree)

- Pictures showing leadership journey

- Citations if available

- Any publication or documents to show barriers encountered and strategies that were adopted to overcome barriers.

- Research works (published or unpublished)

Procedures

To find answers to some of these questions, I invite you to take part in this research project. If you accept, you will be required to:

Participate in an interview with the investigator.

You are being invited to take part in this discussion because we feel that your experience as a female leader can contribute much to this discussion.

The questions that will be answered in the interview are questions that are related to the barriers that hinder leadership position of females in public universities in Ghana.

If you do not wish to answer any of the questions posed during the interview, you may say so and the interviewer will move on to the next question. The interview will take place in your office or anywhere preferred by you and no one else but the interviewer will be present. The information recorded is considered confidential, and no one else except my supervisors and the researcher will have access to the information documented during your interview.

The expected duration of the interview is about 40 – 50 minutes.

Possible Risks and Discomforts

The questions on the interview guide shall pose no harm to you but due to the nature of the interview sessions, fatigue may set in. Hence, a break shall be taken in the course of the interview.

Possible Benefits

The research will enable females who aspire to be leaders in Ghanaian public Universities to anticipate the barriers and how to overcome the barriers.

The study will help females in executive positions to know which traits and leadership styles that can help them to succeed in their administrative duties.

The research will also help them to work better with other females they work with.

Confidentiality

Information gathered from you shall be protected to the best of my ability. Your anonymity is guaranteed when reporting the findings. All hardcopies of the research shall be shredded and the softcopies shall be password-protected on cloud storage.

Compensation

Refreshment shall be provided after the interview.

Voluntary Participation and Right to Leave the Research

Participation in this research is voluntary and you can decide to leave the research without any penalty.

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Activity Sheet: Examining the trajectory of females in executive leadership positions in public universities in Ghana.

Introduction

I am a researcher from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana (College of Distance Education). I am carrying a study on the trajectory of females in executive leadership positions in public universities. Findings from the study will help aspiring female leaders to be able to overcome barriers on their journey.

Your answers will be kept anonymous, but I may quote some of the things you tell me in some of my reports, without attributing them to you. Please do let me know if you want more details about the study or have any other doubts, which might not have been addressed.

Overarching themes	Questions	Possible probes (follow up questions)
Leadership journey and artifact presentation	Please how would you describe your leadership journey as a female administrator?	What were some of the pivotal leadership moments you had? Do you have any artifacts to show concerning your leadership journey?
Leadership styles	How would you describe the leadership styles	Which leadership style(s) has/have helped you on your

	you have been using so far?	journey to leadership position?
Working with people	What is the representation of males and females in your faculty? How does your gender affect your role as an administrator?	How do you balance your work and family responsibilities? Can you describe your relationship with other females either as colleagues or subordinates? What is your thought on professional development of females?
Mentoring and networking	Have you gone through any mentorship in your leadership journey? Are you in any network that support you in your leadership journey?	How has the mentorship impacted on your leadership journey? How has the network helped you in your leadership journey?
Barriers	What barriers did you encounter on your journey to this position?	What strategies did you use to overcome those barriers?

Do you have any other comments? Do you have any questions for me?

I am grateful for your time and invaluable insights. Thank you.