

Challenges and Coping Strategies of Women in Educational Leadership Positions in Senior High Schools in Cape Coast Metropolis

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Abstract

The role and contribution of women in modern organisations have been remarkable. However, societal norms and other patriarchal values continue to stifle the progress of women leaders. The purpose of this study was to examine the challenges women in leadership positions face and coping mechanisms adopted in managing the challenges in the Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The Phenomenological design was used for this study. The population of the study comprised all female headmistresses and female assistant headmistresses in the Senior High Schools within the Cape Coast Metropolis in the Central Region of Ghana. Purposive sampling technique was used to select all the fourteen (14) Headmistresses and Assistant Headmistresses in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The main instrument used for data collection for the study was semi-structured interview guide. The qualitative data was analysed by the use of the interpretative technique based on the themes related to the research questions. The study concluded that women in leadership positions are fiercely resisted by men, and the women in authority who are married are frustrated by their husbands also to compound their woes. The findings of study also concluded that the coping mechanism adopted by most women in leadership position, especially in SHS in Cape Coast was the epistemological stance of ethnography and thus, find solace in God to intervene. It is recommended that the Ghana education service should package special incentives for women who aspire and achieve the outmost leadership role of becoming heads of Senior High Schools as it will serve as a motivation for the young women generation. It is also recommended that women in leadership position in the Ghana Education Service are advised to learn by updating their skills and competencies to grow in confidence.

Keywords

Challenges, Strategies, Women, Educational Leadership, Cape Coast Metropolis

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1. Introduction and Background

In human development, women have been as vital in the history making as men have been. In fact, higher status for

women vis-a-vis employment and work performed by them in a society is a significant indicator of a nation's overall progress. Undoubtedly, without the active participation of women in national activities, the social, economic or political progress of a country will deteriorate and become stagnant

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In Africa and for that matter Ghana, where the status of women and their public participation has significantly improved over the last two decades, the problem of not breaking through the glass ceiling and the gender-based challenges the few women in top positions face remains a topical issue [2]. In spite of efforts at transforming both the country and the public service to embrace national priorities of development and economic growth, challenges persist for women across the public and private sectors. For example, while women have the potential and ability to be leaders, they often lack opportunities, resources and support for realizing their potential. The greatest challenge is in the educational sector, which is dominated by males who most often aspire and compete fervently with their female counterparts as equals [3].

Gender stereotypes have descriptive components, or beliefs about how males and females typically act, as well as prescriptive components, or beliefs about how males and females should act. For example, women are supposed to be nurturing and avoid dominance, and men are supposed to be agentic and avoid weakness. However, it is not clear whether people hold prescriptive gender stereotypes about children of different age groups. [4]. In view of this, applicability of prescriptive stereotypes to different age groups, from toddlers to the elderly, and presented their content and magnitude. All age groups had prescriptive stereotypes, although the content and magnitude of those stereotypes varied across age groups. Prescriptive stereotypes for toddlers contained elements of play and appearance, whereas trait stereotypes appeared starting for elementary-aged children. Prescriptive stereotypes for the elderly were minimized, suggesting less pressure to conform to expectations. Prescriptions for males focused on negative proscriptive stereotypes (NPS) that admonish what not to do, whereas females' stronger positive prescriptive stereotypes (PPS) focused on what girls and women are supposed to do. Thus, overall, males' behaviour was more restrictive based on these stereotypes [4].

Basically, society reinforces stereotypical gender roles for men and women through many unwritten societal rules that participants are obliged to follow. Religious and traditional practices (such as Confucianism, Islam and Hinduism) are used to rationalise and enforce the perpetuation of patriarchy and gender discrimination [5]. This is very common in contemporary Ghanaian society, for instance some Ghanaian women through marriage are forcibly made to join their husbands in their places of worship. Women experienced oppression within their society, namely in education and career opportunities. This was because Asian women are expected to prioritise marriage and family, but if they choose to remain single to pursue their education and career

ambitions, they risk facing stigmatization [5]. Due to these factors most women find difficult to get marriage partners. The perception of women's oppression in Asian society is often subjective to how women perceive their world. Thus, by remaining in a submissive position, they believe that they benefit from the shelter of patriarchy. Asian women's subjugation to gender stereotypes is often due to the fear that they will be ostracised from their society, hence women are compelled to maintain the status quo, even at the price of individual autonomy [5]. This has result into the marginalisation of women in the global scene. For instance, women in the mobile telephony sector indeed contend with a host of challenges which, if not interrogated and addressed would militate against the attainment of organizational goals [6]. This implies that, gender discrimination is a serious impediment to the career progression of women, in general, and national development, in particular. This needs to be done away with by having a high assessment of women's values and mainstreaming gender issues into organizational policies so as to reform some aspects of organizational culture. This can be inferred that, equal opportunities for both women and men at all levels of decision making, more importantly in the upper levels of organizations [6]. Human resource management policies at the Bank promote a balanced employee work life as well as affect female employees' career progression to a great extent. bank does not encourage a balance between work and family responsibilities on employees lives and consequently as it is felt that this doesn't allow enough room for female employees to attend to their office duties. this implies that, family-friendly policies should be designed to support female employees faced with balancing the competing demands of work and family [7, 8]. To achieve equal status, the requirement level for women to achieve in the workplace, is set at a much higher standard, they are required to work harder, be more qualified, more ambitious and competent than their male counterparts [9].

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) survey, 60 percent of employed women cited stress as their most serious problem at work [10]. Even though men may face more immediate life threatening occupational hazards, women appear to be more vulnerable to stress-induced illnesses, which can lead to cardiovascular conditions (heart attacks are the number one killer of women), hypertension and stroke.

There are many reasons for this dilemma. One is that women are socialized to be caretakers and take on responsibilities that men may not consider. The National Institute for Occupational safety and Health article entitled "Stress at Work" found that gender specific work stress factors, such as sex discrimination and balancing work and family demands,

may have an effect on women workers above and beyond the impact of general job stressors [11]. Working outside the home and balancing a family create conflicts between work and family obligations, which become a leading cause of stress for women [12].

While constant stress may be a problem among women in general, it seems highly probable that women who function in leadership positions within education and other governmental agencies may experience additional stressors. It is imperative that people in these public places understand and generate an awareness of the elements of stress affecting women in leadership. In order to implement preventive measures, they must develop and further enhance existing policies and practices concerning stress related issues. As more women gain work experience and the education necessary for them to be qualified as leaders, organisations have been subsequently called upon to re-establish and expand their notions of what constitutes effective leadership as it relates to gender, stereotyping, and role expectations. A study on "Ways women lead" published in *Harvard Business Review journal* advocated for those reconsiderations and added that they should include -a- valuing of diversity of leadership styles, if an organisation hopes to be successful in its mission [13].

Furthermore, leaders must collaborate and cooperate with others on a daily basis. Leaders communicate high expectations and provide acquired information to foster understanding and to maintain trust and confidence. Every organisation depends on capable leadership to guide it through its activities. The three attributes and strategies contributed to the successes of women leaders in Ghana are determination to succeed, perseverance and planning. The emergence and determined survival of women in high flying jobs today in corporations and organizations depends on their own willingness to confront and fight strong barriers and hurdles that stand their way, some too grave to confront and others less weighty. Given this background, especially for women in the educational sector, this quest to interpret the challenges women face and the coping processes that would ensure efficiency and effectiveness of women in leadership positions in these sectors is very needful [14]. The main purpose of this research was to examine the challenges that women in leadership positions in Senior High Schools (SHS) in Cape Coast Metropolis face and coping mechanism they adopt in managing these challenges. The study sought to answer these research questions – (1) What are the challenges of women in leadership positions in SHS in Cape Coast Metropolis? (2) What are the coping strategies adopted by women in leadership positions in SHS the Cape Coast Metropolis?

2. Review of the Literature

2.1. Challenges Facing Women in Leadership

This study adopted the liberal feminists' theory. Liberal feminism is an individualistic form of feminists' theory, which focuses on women's ability to maintain their equality through their own actions and choices. Its emphasis is on making the legal and political rights of women equal to men. Liberal feminists hold that the exercise of personal autonomy depend on certain enabling conditions that are insufficiently present in women's lives, or that social arrangements often fail to respect women's personal autonomy and other elements of women's flourishing [15]. They hold also that women's needs and interests are insufficiently reflected in the basic conditions under which they live, and that those conditions lack legitimacy because women are inadequately represented in the processes of democratic self-determination. Liberal feminists hold that autonomy deficits are due to the gender system or the patriarchal nature of inherited traditions and institutions, and that the women's movement should work to identify and remedy them. As the protection and promotion of citizens' autonomy is the appropriate role of the state on the liberal view, liberal feminists hold that the state can and should be the women's movement's ally in promoting women's autonomy.

Liberal feminists hold that autonomy deficits are due to the gender system or the patriarchal nature of inherited traditions and institutions, and that the women's movement should work to identify and remedy them [16]. In Ghana, the patriarchal nature of various institutions projects traditions that to limit advancement of women. The information as presented truly is a canker in almost all institutions for which women in leadership roles in the Ghana Education Service (GES) cannot be exempted. This poses a greater challenge in the execution of their duties and sometimes affects their overall performance within the position that they occupy. The consistent neglect in providing for the basic necessities that they need in the performance of their duties sometimes discourages them in their leadership role. Moreover, the unfair treatment of meddling in the affairs of women leaders which take away their autonomy is also a serious problem that damp their spirit.

The liberal feminist theory further maintains that women should enjoy personal autonomy. That is, they hold that women should live lives of their own choice. Some offer procedural accounts of personal autonomy [17, 18]. These accounts suggest to say that women should enjoy personal autonomy because they are entitled to a broad range of autonomy-enabling conditions. On this view, the women in leadership roles should work to identify and promote these conditions. Identifying these enabling conditions require

careful attention to the particular ways in which autonomy deficits are produced in different women's lives. Procedural accounts avoid judging directly the substance of women's choices or the arrangements that ensue liberal feminist theory.

One important aspect of the theory which gives women a strategic coping mechanism and the absence of which poses challenges to their position is being free of the limits set by patriarchal paternalistic and moralistic laws. Patriarchal paternalistic laws restrict women's options on the grounds that such limits are in women's interest [17, 18]. Think for example of laws that limit women's employment options on the grounds that taking certain jobs is not in women's interest [19]. Patriarchal moralistic laws restrict women's options on the grounds that certain options should not be available to women because morality forbids women from choosing them. Think for example of laws that prohibit or restrict prostitution or abortion, or laws that favour certain kinds of sexual expression or family forms [16, 19-20]. Together, patriarchal paternalistic and moralistic laws steer women into socially preferred ways of life. These are unfair restrictions on women's choices based on the liberal feminist view, because women's choices should be guided by their own sense of self-interest and values [21, 22].

The free limit from the paternalistic restriction as explained from the theory sets grounds for women leaders to duly make serious decisions devoid of fear and intimidation from their male counterpart especially when these males work under the women leaders. This goes to reason that for women leaders in the GES, the presence of such patriarchal moralistic laws would make it cumbersome to exercise their authority and hence if there is going to be any strategic decision, such decision would be shielded. For instance, most men in Ghana see themselves superior to women and hence tend to look down upon women in leadership position. This leads to disobedience to the rules set out by the women in leadership. Within the various challenges that women leaders face, one important thing the liberal feminist theory propose to put them on a higher pedestal is having access to options [23, 24]. Women's access to options is frequently and unfairly restricted due to economic deprivation, in particular due to the feminization of poverty [25]. Other sources of unfairly reduced options for women are stereotyping and sex discrimination in education and employment [21, 22]. Such stereotyping and discrimination affect some racial, ethnic and cultural groups in particularly pernicious ways. Liberal feminists also point to the way cultural homogeneity unfairly limits women's options, for example when culture assigns identities and social roles according to sex [19, 23-26].

Globally, one distinctive feature of the liberal theory is what is termed or described as comprehensive liberal feminism [21, 22]. The assertions of this part of the liberal propositions are

grounded in moral doctrines. It typically gives account of how state power should be used to some particular feminist ends because some moral doctrines require comprehensive account of how part of associational life- beyond what is traditionally understood as "the political"- should be arranged, for example that the family should foster women's and girls' personal autonomy, or that domestic associations should distribute benefits and burdens fairly [23, 24]. Some comprehensive liberal feminists focus primarily on associational life and only peripherally on the role of the state.

Comprehensive liberal feminists' account of how associational life generally should be arranged to include the claim that the state ought to enforce such arrangements. There is no moral doctrine that forces a comprehensive liberal feminism to include the claim that the state should enforce liberal feminists' values outside of what is traditionally understood as the political [23]. To be sure, comprehensive liberal feminisms typically reject the traditional public/private distinction, and hold that the political justice liberalism promises for women can be realized only when associational life- the family, for example- does not undermine girls' and women's personal autonomy, or distribute benefits and burdens unfairly [17, 19]. The overall motive is that to really help women leaders to excel in their endeavours, the state or the political system in general should give maximum protection to them.

Many times, women are characterized as weak, and the role faith plays can help change this perception. A biblical example can be found in the Book of Judges. Deborah was a judge and a prophetess—a valuable figure in the Old Testament who delivered Israel from its oppressors. Therefore, the perceptions of these characteristics need to change to those of strength, and a balanced view of gender is necessary. Male and female characteristics are balanced when both are held together in harmony. One is not better than the other; rather, they are complementary. It is essential to understand the spectrum of gender characteristics [26]. If women are elevated in the workplace, indicating the importance of their role in society, social changes will occur [26].

In this context, traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes concerning the role and status of women in society are still common and many women who are part of this system are finding it difficult to diverge from this culture and tradition because they may be ostracized. Regardless of woman's education and access to the job market, the role of homemaker is assigned to her. The man on the other hand is the bread-winner, head of household, and has the right to public life. Confining women's identity to the domestic sphere is one of the barriers to their entry into politics, even though politics

by its nature catapults one into public life. Common cultural attitudes are antagonistic to women's involvement in politics. Some women were capable of transcending cultural barriers and climbing to positions of leadership in politics and other spheres of public life, but more often than not it meant having to cope with cultural expectations of their leadership roles. Some African governments have adopted a policy framework which outlines Africa's vision for gender equality and how it intends to realize this ideal. The Office on the Status of Women developed the policy framework, namely South Africa's National Policy Framework for women's Empowerment and Gender Equality [27]. The Gender Policy Framework attempts to achieve the integration of gender consideration into the transformation process. In other African countries including Ghana, there are measures in place to address the Sustainable Goal 5 which is on gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.

Leadership positions entail hard work and long hours of work. For women this stress is additional to their childcare, home and family responsibilities, a phenomenon referred to as the dual shift [26]. These considerations are also accurate of women in higher education. In addition to issues of family responsibility that stifle women's progress, cultural beliefs concerning the roles of men and women inhibit women's progression to top echelon of leadership as much as it does in politics, women at senior level positions are not always helpful to other women who tend to want to sustain the status quo [28]. For many women, the time demands of such positions clash with the demands of the family, and this is an obstacle. Most of the household labour, up to 80 percent is done by adult women, these include preparing meals, cleaning the house and laundering [29]. There are also other structural obstacles beyond culture and religion. Facts from the Danish sample of the Comparative Leadership Study indicate that certain admission situations and conditions of gender positioning appear to encode admittance of men to top leadership positions, in business, and in political and public leadership.

In the African perspective the work and family dichotomy is filled with many inconsistencies for women that incite pressure. African women have certain conventional roles to play. They are expected to tolerate and look after children as well as manage the home. Today's African woman is likely to earn a living and contribute to the management of society at the same time. It is in light of this that Blumberg, (2008) referred to current African women as walking a political/gender tightrope and, leadership/ gender tightrope. Tsitsi Dangarembga from Zimbabwe in her interview with BBC News said that "one of the reasons there are few women in positions of power is a lack of unity among women themselves". She said that "since women were vying for

limited resources, they have a tendency to see other women as a menace and are envious of one another". She further went on to say that women have the potential to bring about transformation, but they lack organization due to lack of time, given their multiple roles as bread winners, wives and mothers. African women also fear to raise their voices and speak out for fear of victimization, allegedly by fellow women, and also by men, given the cultural expectations of what a woman should or should not do [30].

Frankly, regardless of the political progress made by women in the 1990s their efforts did not pay off in terms of women being allotted to public office [3]. Women lack the essential financial support or resources often mobilized individually and publicly and this is another strategic measure applied to include women from politics. In addition, they are said to lack too much political familiarity, coolness, education and connections to run for office [30]. The lack of time due to women's reproductive roles is also mentioned as a limitation to women's involvement in leadership [31]. These obstacles are not distinctive to African women. Analogous matters have been raised concerning educated Chinese women.

The wage gap is a harsh reality for women [32]. They are paid less than men, and it gets worse as a woman's career progress. fair remuneration act will bring the needed change, and these women will move on to perform with ease and satisfaction. there should be a way to mitigate this wage gap disadvantage associated with women [32]. These wage disparities have affected the promotion of women in their places of endeavours. lack of promotions keeps Ghanaian women leaders from advancing into senior leadership. This posit that promotions for women in organizations are undoubtedly processes that can improve women's desire and boost their excitement for reaching or achieving their goals, and organizational objectives. However, most women endured a lack of promotion but are still optimistic about performing their leadership duties. Concerning promotions that are obstacles for women leaders in organizations [32].

Satisfaction with work-family balance was crucial to women's success at work. This pattern of women, creative labour and economic marginalisation is challenged in the context of emerging social media platforms such as Instagram. women are under-represented in leadership roles in technology-driven companies [33]. Lack of opportunities disfavour Ghanaian women leaders and hinders their ability to prove useful in their leadership roles. Ghanaian women have limited or lack career advancement opportunities to senior leadership positions in organizations. men advance faster in organizations than women despite their high education. They are seen as incompetent leaders when they have not been allowed to prove themselves in leadership roles due to organizational culture and gender [32].

leadership aptitude or curiosity in leadership positions. Advocacy in the higher education arena has tended to rely upon and react to government legislation on equity rather than being something that women in the sector actively struggle for [34]. A crucial step that enhances a woman's agency relative to her partner and provides a degree of tangible capital assets and future security, is when she gains access to enforceable legal and social rights. All women who achieved an increased formalisation of their partnership through marriage thought that their individual lives had improved substantially by taking this life route. Some sounded almost evangelical when recounting how they had achieved their individual aspirations, as well as providing for their families, and gaining status in Thai society. This contrasted starkly with the case of the woman unmarried after many years, who lives in a situation of precarity, poverty and abuse, and has no future access to tangible assets for her or her children. [35].

2.2. Coping Strategies

In the light of the challenges that women face in leadership positions which sometimes thwart their performance, the review of literature from both the theoretical and empirical perspective have given some coping strategies and mechanisms to deal with the persistent challenges facing women in leadership positions.

2.2.1. Participative Leadership Style

This is a leadership style where the leader consults with the subordinates and embodies their suggestions in decision making [36]. Female head teachers are effective in regard to time management in the management of secondary schools since they are able to follow the laid down policies hence achieve the goals of their institutions. Cultural and social barriers interfere with the management of school affairs [37]. Women are evaluated negatively when they adopt a directive leadership style which is stereotypically male. Women principals should thus involve their deputies and other subordinates in the decision-making process. Delegation of some duties goes a long way to break subordinates' stereotypes of women leadership [38].

2.2.2. Transformational Leadership Style

This type of leadership style involves changing the institution (School) to become a better place. It involves creating a vision, communicating the vision and building commitment to the vision. Through this type of leadership style, women leaders can remain afloat in a masculine leadership world. Research by various scholars points out that, women tend to be more transformational in leadership than their male counterparts. Using their intuitive power, women principals can transform secondary school into centres of academic excellence. Female principals are becoming transformational leaders and this can

be tested by the top 100 categories of schools in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) results of 2010. Several girls' schools were in the top 10 categories (*The Daily Nation*, 5th March 2011). They are indeed becoming strategic managers of their schools and they are as competent as their male counterparts. Transformational leadership style helps them to cope with the subordinates' stereotypes.

2.2.3. Task Oriented Leadership Style

According to research, males tend to be task oriented than female while women tend to be more relationship oriented. There are real differences in leadership style between male and female managers. Women tend to negotiate, mediate, facilitate and communicate tasks to their subordinates clearly. Research shows that this feminine style reduces hierarchy, satisfies subordinates and achieves results. Female principals would indeed succeed if they clearly set the task to be accomplished within certain time frames [39].

2.2.4. Mentorship

Mentorship is a close-long term work relationship between a senior manager and a subordinate. It implies coaching' a junior staff to acquire job competence required in a given profession. Women principals should therefore be mentors to young graduates entering the teaching profession. Similarly, they look up to other successful women leaders for mentorship [40].

2.2.5. Assertive Leadership

A greater understanding of how social identities can be threatening in the domain of leadership can help encourage and enable women and other underrepresented individuals to participate fully in and contribute to the prosperity of the political, civil, social, economic, and cultural lives of society [41]. Female leaders are more likely to attend to followers' personal needs, be open to new ideas and others' opinions, and reward the satisfactory performance of followers in a consistent manner. On the other hand, male leaders are statistically more likely to only stress meeting the standards, wait until problems become severe before attending to them, and/or withdraw or be absent during critical junctures [42]. Faced with the minor assaults of daily administration, female administrators may choose to be assertive or outright very authoritative [41]. It is worth noting that women the world over are still grappling with leadership both in education and the corporate world even in the 21st century. Since independence, there has been gross under representation of women in Kenya in both political and other leadership spheres [43]. There is indeed a 'glass ceiling' standing between women and leadership positions. Women tend to be barred from full participation in education management by male dominance, unfriendly policy guidelines, dearth of mentors,

limited in-service training, and resistance from male colleagues, cultural stereotypes, gender violence, and negative media portrayal among others. Teamwork, participative leadership, more assertiveness and furthering education may be worthy remedies to crash through this 'glass ceiling'. Women really need an attitude change to overcome barriers of their own making and avoid more lamentations on under representation. [43].

3. Methodology

Qualitative research approach was adopted for the study. The Phenomenological design was used to examine the challenges and coping strategies of female leaders. The population of the study comprised all female headmistresses and female assistant headmistresses in the senior high schools within the Cape Coast Metropolis in the Central Region of Ghana. Purposive sampling technique was used to select all the fourteen (14) Headmistresses and Assistant Headmistresses in the Cape Coast Metropolis. In all, six (6) headmistresses and eight (8) assistant headmistresses were drawn from six Senior High Schools within the Cape Coast Metropolis of Central Region, Ghana. These schools are as follows: Holy Child Senior High School, Wesley Girls' Senior High School, Ghana National SHS, Oguaa SHS, University Practice SHS, Christ Academy SHS. The main instrument used for data collection for the study was semi-structured interview guide. The qualitative data was analysed by the use of the interpretative technique based on the themes arrived at during the semi-structured interview of the participants. The themes were related to the research questions.

4. Findings and Discussions

This research question: *What are the challenges confronting women in leadership positions within Senior High School?* investigated the challenges that female leaders face in their positions in the schools. The participants revealed that most of the challenges come from the males in the schools, and sometimes from other females in various departments. Others also expressed the view that pressure from the house and most especially from their spouses makes it difficult to fully discharge their assigned duties. Studies have revealed that most of the household labour, up to 80 percent is done by adult women [29]. It also emerged that conflict among teaching staff and other employee and how to control such conflicts sometimes become a hurdle to jump. These and many other challenges were cited by the respondents. This was looked at in relation to the challenges with regards to leadership in the school, anticipation of challenges and measures of curtailing the challenges.

4.1. Some of the Challenges with Regards to Leadership in the School

Since all the participants have been in their positions for more than five years, many of the challenges were seen as problems that they have been dealing with over and over again. It emerged that, the women leaders affected by the African male dominance rule (i.e. the unwritten rule where males turn to dominate with regards to leadership. and the social threat against women in leadership. Therefore, in a bid to draw age and marital status in the discussion of the challenges women face in leadership position, the idea can be conceived that no woman is to be treated differently whether older or younger; married or not married, there seems to similar measure of challenge as captured in the extracts that follow:

"We always find it challenging dealing with males who think we as women need not to control them. Sometimes, they come very strongly opposing virtually all decisions that we bring on board. In an attempt to make sure that you do not control them, they will sabotage your effort so that you would not succeed....it is always difficult dealing with men egoism..."

"When someone is sabotaging you, every thought, action and deed are always against you and it becomes very difficult to handle such problems... the pull him/her down syndrome is everywhere"

-Sometimes when I tell my husband that I am going for workshop that last for three days or more outside of the home, various concerns would be raised with regards to who would keep the house and perform other responsibilities"

"I remember a male teacher telling me one day that there is no way a woman could control him and that he would not sit down for me to be pushing him here and there. In issues like this, it becomes intimidating when there is the need to assign such a person some duty to perform"

It was also identified that most of the women do not get the necessary support from the SHS to help them execute their duties in the midst of such hostilities from the males. From the information as revealed in the extracts, it appears age does not matter as well as marital status, only that marital status informs the challenges of women in leadership position from the point that the challenges do not only emerge from the egoism of men at the work place but also from home, specifically the husband.

Another leader talked about facing sabotage from even females within her institution and this does not resonate with age or marital status:

"Even some of our females are of the view that for a fellow woman to control or lead her it would be better for a male to lead... you see such a thought...So they would display all sort of in-ward hatred and jealousy towards everything you do"

It further emerged that the female educational leaders were not usually accorded the necessary respect they deserve because of the pompous nature of men. Meanwhile, these men form majority of direct employees that need direction from the female leaders. Sharing her experience, one headmistress said: *"Some of the men are not respectful at all especially in the way they talk and respond to assignments". Though I have been calling for this mentorship for quite some time now, I have not received any positive feedback from the authorities. It is very disappointing..."*

Participants revealed that, most of the challenges are anticipated before they occur while others occur randomly. Challenges like the ones faced from male teachers and other male employees within the institution with regards to men's egoism are always anticipated. However, much as these challenges are anticipated, the way and manner that they would occur are not usually expected. Moreover, conflicts among workers are not anticipated. It was revealed that most of the workers within the institutions practice the habit of backbiting. This conduct always lands at the offices of the female leaders, and the constancy and the consistency of having to use different approach in resolving these conflicts become a challenge. From the responses, it was clearly seen that the greatest challenge confronting all women in authority whether old or young, married or single is the issue of men challenging their authority as women.

4.2. Measures to Curtailing the Challenges

This sub-section presents findings on the research question - *What are the coping strategies adopted by women in leadership positions in SHS in the Cape Coast Metropolis?* Findings from the interview posit that, in order to solve some of the challenges in the house, the participants gave prior notice to their spouses of upcoming conferences. This makes it easier for the entire family to prepare towards it to reassign family duties to other people in the house. It also emerged that from the interview that some of the participants do not pay serious attention to all conflicts that arise among the employees of the various schools. Some participants postulate that:

"Sometimes I leave issues to be settled by those involved without interference so I can concentrate on matters that have serious concern".

"For me, I try to be firm and resolute in my decision so that my gender does not set limit for me in the performance of my duties as a leader. This I do through proper sanctioning procedures".

Another respondent said:

As for the men, they usually think that we cannot live up to expectation, so I always prove my worth through hard work

and determination. Thus, when my decisions give the needed results to the school, all the criticisms are quashed"

In order to understand the methods aimed at curtailing the challenges in relation to the participants, the study revealed that women who are single seem to be more autocratic or assertive than those who are married. This is reflected in the methods used in curtailing the challenges they face in leadership position. Unmarried headmistresses try to prove their worth to the men and thereby suggesting their authority. This therefore explains why such women leaders try to be autocratic and assertive. However, with women leaders who falls within category of married, it becomes clear that once they use the participatory and transformative leadership styles, in managing the challenges they face, they allow things to happen by themselves without interfering.

The study found that most of the challenges that they face were coming from societal and cultural discrimination against women in leadership. Moreover, the women leaders suffer from male subordinates who sometimes refused to listen to instructions and directives given by the female leaders. This is because many of the males do not want to be controlled by women. Additionally, it was revealed that, training programmes and other helps in terms of encouragement is not offered by the GES to boost the morale and the capacity of women in leadership positions. The study also found that women leaders face sabotage from female colleagues because of jealousy and hatred. Moreover, they also face problems with their spouses as they had to travel for training and workshops which require that they spend some number of days outside of the house. These challenges sometimes leave the women leaders no option than to abide by the directions and duties of their matrimonial homes.

These findings are consistent with the previous study that men tend to believe and identify with - transactional leadership and view subordinate job performance as a series of transactions, which exchange rewards for services rendered or punishment for inadequate performance. Men, more often than women, tend to use power that comes from formal authority and their position within the organization [39]. The foregoing challenges have various theoretical and empirical significance. The liberal feminist theory by Garland Thompson indicates that patriarchal, paternalistic, and moralistic laws steer women into societal expected ways of life [15]. These are unfair restrictions on women's choices according to the liberal feminist view because women's choices should be guided by their own sense of self-interest and by their own values [21, 22].

The free limit from the paternalistic restriction as explained from the theory set grounds for women leaders to duly make serious decision devoid of fear and intimidation from their

male counterparts especially when these males work under the women leaders. This goes to suggest that for women leaders in the GES, the presence of such patriarchal moralistic laws would make it cumbersome for them to exercise their duties and hence if there is going to be any strategic decision, such decision would be shielded. For instance, as indicated from the findings, most men in the schools see themselves as superior to women and hence tend to look down upon women in leadership position. This leads to disobedience to the rules set out by the women in leadership [44].

Empirically, the findings are also consistent with a similar study which concluded that, most of the time women join mostly low level work conditions [45]. Today, women are under-represented in leadership position in almost all sectors because relatively, they have less freedom because of their family responsibility and lack of necessary qualifications and skills to fill position of responsibility. Major challenges influencing women have been cultural issues which were common in female headed institutions. The challenges of sabotage are also consistent with stereotyping which is one of the larger hurdles for women in leadership positions [37]. When a person is perceived by a negative stereotype, it is very hard to change because one would have to change the co-workers' attitude [46].

The challenge of sabotage and hatred from fellow women is in line with the views expressed by Tsitsi in Zimbabwe. Tsitsi Dangarembga in her interview with BBC News said few women are in positions of power because women lack unity among themselves. She said that since women were vying for limited resources, they have a tendency to see other women as a menace and are envious of one another. She went on to say that women have the potential to bring about transformation, but they lack organization due to lack of time, given their multiple roles as bread winners, wives and mothers [47].

4.2.1. Coping Mechanism for Leadership

One interesting thing that appeared from the interview is that, due to their religious affiliation, all the participants indicated they heavily rely on their God for help, guidance and assistance through prayers. Among the many comments were: "God is my ultimate strength and has been my comfort all through these years". "What can one do without the help of God?" she continued to say "I could not have achieved much in a society dominated by men; if God had not been my support" Another participant also said: "*When confronted with issues, I always seek the face of my God because His book says in Matthew Chapter 7:7 ask, seek and knock and He will come to our aid* " A participant said: "*As part of my education, I went to missionary school and have learnt to lean on God at all times and this has been my source of strength in my day to day activities*"

It further emerged that participants adopt the culture of "let go". This is the situation where people glossed over issues instead of being overwhelmed with anxiety and pressure. With references to specific coping strategies, it was revealed that most often than not participatory leadership style helps in dealing with the problems. It was realised that, to a larger extent, the use of the leadership style as a coping mechanism contributes significantly towards achieving set goals. In furtherance of this issue of coping mechanisms, all the women interviewed are certain on one thing and that is their faith in God to guide them through. This really is not informed by their age or marital status. This is so because all of them have or encounter challenges in one way or the other and by virtue of the society we live in, there is nothing they can possibly do as human beings except God changes the situation. This brings to the fore the ideology of ethnography in the consideration of the coping mechanisms towards the challenges women in leadership position face.

4.2.2. Success Rate of Such Coping Mechanisms

The participants revealed that the choice of leadership styles is what allows them to judiciously deal with challenges. Moreover, it was revealed that the participatory leadership style and the democratic styles were some of the main coping mechanisms that the women leaders adopted in their various positions. It was further revealed that to a larger extent, these coping mechanisms have helped calm things down within the institutions. It was also revealed that the participants employed opened-door leadership strategies more than autocratic style of leading their colleagues and subordinates. It was further revealed that participants try to build good relationship with subordinates and hence create a congenial atmosphere where people could freely air their grievances and resentment. The findings suggest that largely, the coping strategies depended on the choice of leadership style adopted. The findings indicated that the use of participative and transformational leadership style makes it less cumbersome to deal with the challenges. The findings also revealed that hard work and determination play pivotal role in coping with challenges. Many of the female leaders' work hand-in-hand with their subordinates and involve them in decision-making.

These findings are consistent with coping strategies in the literature that when the female head teacher employs participative leadership style, it will help her to cope with the subordinates stereotypes [36]. Additionally, the view that if a female manager tries to be more autocratic, subordinates are more likely to complain because they expect women to be participative [37]. Women are evaluated negatively when they adopt a directive leadership style which is stereotypically male [48]. Besides the participative style, Booyen and Nkomo indicated that transformational type of

leadership style involves changing the institution (School) to become a better place. It involves creating a vision, communicating the vision and building commitment to the vision. Through this type of leadership style, women leaders can remain afloat in a masculine leadership world [37]. Women leaders are more assertive and persuasive, have a stronger need to get things done and are more willing to take risks than male leaders. Women leaders were also found to be more empathetic and flexible, as well as stronger in interpersonal skills than their male counterparts. These leadership skills also help women leadership to easily cope with challenges in their workplace.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concluded that women in leadership positions in Cape Coast Metropolis are fiercely resisted by men, and what is even worse are those women in authority who are married as their husbands also compound their challenges. The ramifications drawn from the findings of this study indicated varied forms of conflicts and insubordinations from males and sometimes from females in different institutions as more and more women continue to assume leadership role. The intensity of the conflict heightened, as women in leadership, particularly those that are single try to resist all forms of insubordination from men, and their fellow female.

The findings of study also concluded that the coping mechanism or strategy adopted by most women in leadership position, especially in SHS in Cape Coast Metropolis was the epistemological stance of ethnography and thus, find solace in God to intervene. It is therefore apt to conclude that, the women seem to understand the societal influences or norms (ethnographic stance) of gender related issues and so such women will in turn educate young and incoming women leaders to understand and appreciate some of the issues that confront women in authority. The anticipation from this is that in years to come, women in leadership position will understand and accept the challenges of their position and as such adopt a more accommodating measure, more importantly those who try to prove their worth to the men by resisting the egoism of men at all cost. They will possibly bring a closure the internal rift that normally ensue between some women in leadership position and their subordinates.

It is recommended that the Ghana Education Service should package special incentives for women who aspire and achieve the outmost leadership role of becoming heads of Senior High Schools as it will serve as a motivation for the young women generation. It is also recommended that, women in leadership position in the Ghana Education Service should learn by updating their skills and competencies to

grow in confidence and also share ideas with colleagues in the same field to adopt and adapt leadership styles that have worked in other institutions to handle institutional challenges. Again, they can take up mentoring programmes to equip female teachers and educationist who aspire to such height.

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