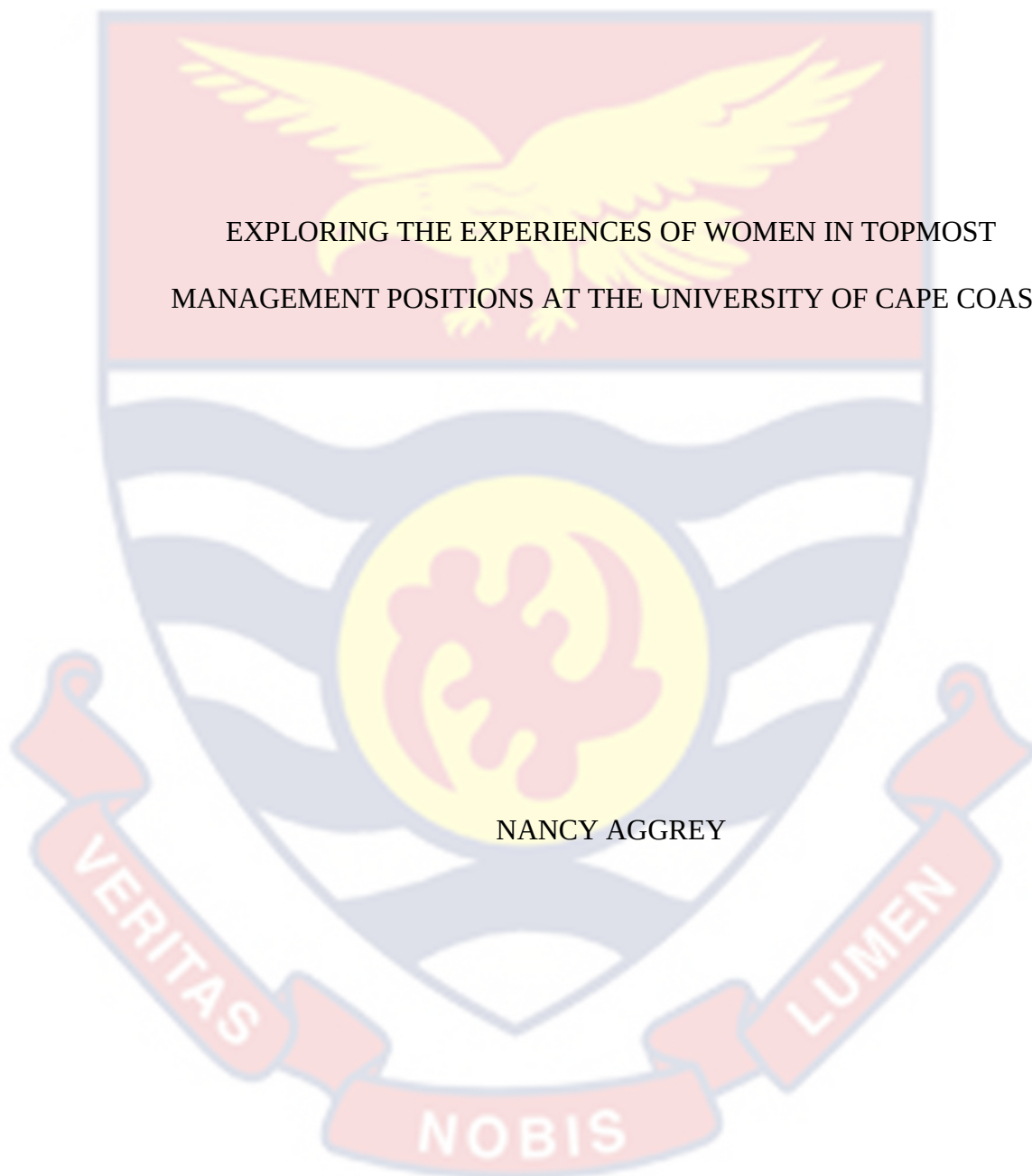


UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN TOPMOST
MANAGEMENT POSITIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

NANCY AGGREY



2025

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MANAGEMENT POSITIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

BY
NANCY AGGREY

Thesis submitted to the Institute of Educational Planning and Administration,
University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
award of Master of Philosophy in Administration in Higher Education.

APRIL 2025

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

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

Candidate's Signature Date

Name: Nancy Aggrey

Supervisor's Declaration

I 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.

Supervisor's Signature Date

Name: Dr. Gloria Nyame

ABSTRACT

At present, most organizations do not have a majority of women in top managerial positions even though the proportion of women in managerial roles has steadily increased over time. This research was conducted against the backdrop of the continued disparity in gender at the top executive leadership positions in Ghana's educational institutions. Investigating the reasons for this, and how the small percentage of women in these roles were able to reach the topmost positions was the goal of the present study. The study explored the unique experiences of women in topmost management positions at the University of Cape Coast, focusing on the distinct characteristics they possess, their interactions with their colleagues, causes of their underrepresentation, and their success stories. The research used a case-study design with participants sampled purposively. In all, 4 participants (respondents) were interviewed. Also, through interviews and qualitative analysis, the researcher aimed to uncover the strategies they employed to navigate the multifaceted challenges they faced. The study revealed that women occupying topmost management positions possessed traits like emotional intelligence, good communication and interpersonal skills. They also adopted leadership styles such as the democratic or blended approach. The study also revealed that the women had a good relationship with their colleagues and direct reports, and faced some challenges along their career paths. These challenges included combining work and family responsibilities. While they found ways to overcome challenges they encountered, they believed such factors as stereotyping, tradition and education were some causes of underrepresentation. The study, therefore, recommended that as higher education institutions work towards creating an enabling and inclusive environment for both women and men to work peacefully, tailored leadership programmes should be offered to empower women the more. Finally, female peer networks should be strengthened, and male leaders should be engaged as allies to help promote gender diversity and inclusive leadership.

KEYWORDS

Career progression

Direct report

Experiences

Higher education administration

Topmost management positions

Underrepresentation

Women



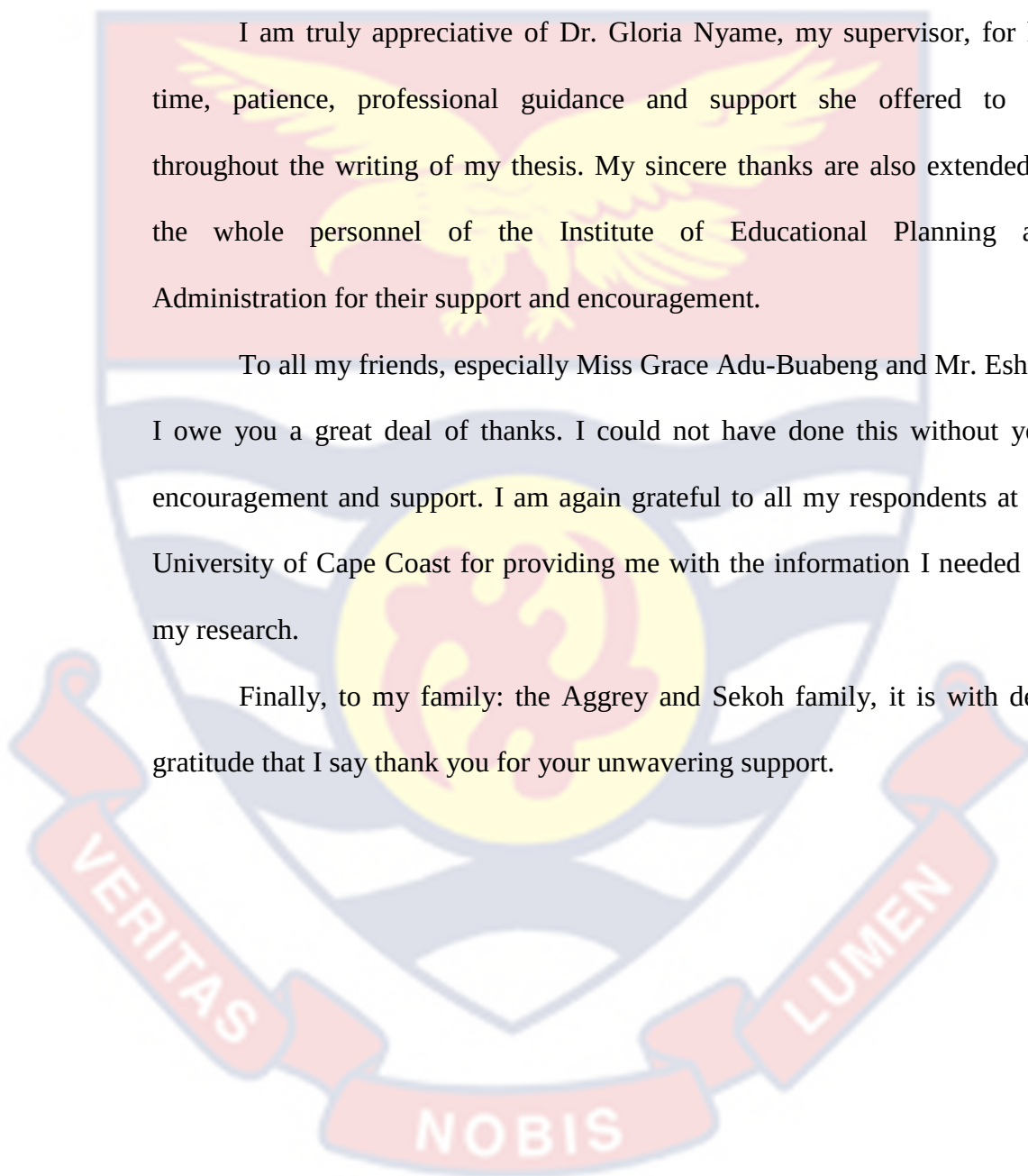
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DEDICATION

To my parents and brothers.



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

KNUST – Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and
Technology

Prof. – Professor

UCC – University of Cape Coast

UG – University of Ghana



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Gender equity, diversity and inclusion have rapidly become an aspect of the key and widely discussed concerns in contemporary higher education. As a result, more women have access to higher educational institutions. It is challenging for women to be recognized as leaders as only thirty-six percent (36%) of women hold leadership positions (World Economic Forum, 2020) despite being regarded as good managers. This might be a result of how women themselves behave, their attitudes and personality traits (Adu-Oppong, Aikins & Darko, 2017) or whether women shy away from careers in fields where men predominate because they downplay their abilities (Adusah-Karikari, 2008).

Leadership is perceived as masculine in many countries (Mascarenhas, 2007; Visser, 2011), and Ghana is no exception. Ghana is ruled by a patriarchal society with different tribes having different cultures and beliefs (Mbepera, 2015). Culture, religion, norms and values all influence women's engagement in education and decision-making (Omboko & Oyoo, 2011). Societal culture also influences organizational culture (Mbepera, 2015) which is evident in the post-secondary educational institutions of Ghana.

Background of Study

Throughout the world, most people desire to continue their education after the secondary school level. Higher education, in simple terms, means any education and training beyond secondary school (Alemu, 2018). It includes colleges and universities and post-secondary specialized educational institutions. Historically, universities had no voice or a prominent presence for

females because the European paradigm of tertiary education wherein Africa roots its present institutions,, existed mainly to train males who provide managerial support to the administrations of colonies (Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013; Assié Lumumba, 2011; Mama, 2003).

Only eighteen percent (18%) of Latin American public universities had female rectors (administrators) as at March 2020, making them the minority at the top (UNESCO-IESLAC, 2021). Fifteen percent (15%) of administrators at member universities in forty-eight (48) countries were female, compared to eighty-five percent (85%) of men, according to the European University Association (Billingsley, 2023). In twenty nations in Latin America as of 2021, there were no female rectors (Billingsley, 2023). Women held fifty-seven percent (57%) of the teaching and administrative roles at the mid-level (American Council on Education, 2012), but were less visible in senior leadership roles like Vice-Chancellor, Provost, or Registrar. Only twenty-four (24%) of tertiary academic staff members in Sub-Saharan Africa were female (Education Sub-Saharan Africa, 2023), and only 2.5% of women served as Vice-Chancellors (Education Sub-Saharan Africa (ESSA), 2021).

In Education Sub Saharan Africa's (ESSAs) State of Women Leading Report in 2021, the researchers found out that eighty-six percent (86%) of women were aspiring to develop as leaders but sadly there were only a small number of them occupied top management positions. Similar circumstances exist in Nigeria, where there were only seventeen percent (17%) female principal officers in their universities Education Sub-Saharan Africa (ESSA), 2021). The majority of women (66.22%) were also stuck in mid-level management posts in the current Indian setting, where women are barely

noticeable in top administrative positions in higher education (Banker & Banker, 2017; Ghara, 2016). Not excluding the case of Ghana where the proportion of women in administrative and managerial jobs is declining as they advance in their careers. Women held 9.5% of the positions at the very top, whereas female Vice-Chancellors have rarely, if ever, been in charge of most universities (Adu-Oppong, Aikins, & Darko, 2017). Only three of Ghana's fifteen public universities (excluding technical universities) have female Vice-Chancellors. (Anderson, Nonterah, Tayviaah, Agyeman, & Mahami, 2023).

Ghana began offering tertiary education in the early 1940s (Amoako-Gyampah, 2023). The University of Ghana (UG), once known as the University of Gold Coast, which was established in 1948 after the country's freedom in 1957, was the country's first higher education institution (Agyeman, 2023; Amoah, 2024). Towards the latter part of the 1960s, three (3) publicly funded universities in Ghana (the University of Ghana, Legon, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and the University of Cape Coast) were established (Edu-Buandoh, 2010). Over the years, the number of tertiary institutions has increased numerically (Osei-Tutu, 2021).

Ghanaian universities currently offer a place for women who make up the majority of students in most institutions (Welding, Long, & Savage, 2023). As women made up roughly sixty percent (60%) of all college students (Bryant, 2022; Causey, Kim, Ryu, Scheetz, & Shapiro, 2022). Bryant (2022) provided evidence that the historical practice of excluding women from higher education has reversed. Although this is the case, there are differences in leadership positions, pay, research and publications (Hurtado, 2021; Fowler,

2019). Alcalde & Subramaniam (2020) stated that among "higher ed administrators," women are underpaid and hold the fewest top jobs in the administration. This shows the inequities women in higher education face despite their qualifications or capabilities.

Interestingly, the recent emergence of a knowledge-driven society, as well as social, economic and information globalization, has raised the demand for universities and colleges to accept the fact that women are also gaining various positions when it comes to administration in university education. There are a handful of administrative positions women could fill at the top-level positions, even in the collegiate system, where only a woman has ever occupied the Provost position.

The University of Cape Coast since its founding in 1962, has witnessed the reign of Professor Jane Nana Opoku Agyemang who attained the position of Vice-Chancellor (from the year 2008 to 2012) in turn making her the first woman to serve as the Vice-Chancellor in this noble University and Ghana (Anderson, Nonterah, Tayviah, Agyeman, & Mahami, 2023). Also, Professor Mrs. Rosemond Boohene who was the immediate past Pro-Vice-Chancellor of UCC, and her predecessor Professor Dora Francisca Edu-Buandoh have been the only women to have occupied such high-ranking administrative positions (2021 to date and 2018 to 2021 respectively) (Anderson et al., 2023) amidst the various managerial positions occupied by males in the sixty-two (62) years of existence of the University of Cape Coast. Based on this ground, this study seeks to explore the experiences of the few women who work in senior managerial positions at the University of Cape Coast's higher education administration.

Some studies on the experiences of female administrators and/or the difficulties they face, as well as some factors that have caused the "few of them" to reach the "ceiling," have also been conducted. For example, Morley and Crossouard (2015) carried out a study and among their findings included women not identified and prepared for leadership. Moreover, the majority of the region's higher education policy documentation lacked a gender analysis category. When gender was considered, it was more relevant to the students than the personnel. In addition, Bakley and Brodersen (2018) conducted a study and concluded that community colleges' adjunct staff may be giving up on their goals to work as full-time academics because of the persistent injustices and difficulties they encounter, including the alleged lack of cooperation and support from colleagues and management. Ayentimi and Abadi (2022) investigated "why are women opting out of academic careers in higher education in Ghana". The authors showed that cultural quirks and institutional positioning cultivate social norms and certain societal expectations and demands such as the belief that there is an upper age limit for marriage, the urge for early motherhood, the perception that men ought to care for women, and the perception that highly educated women have few marital possibilities, all of which together establish the necessary conditions for individuals to choose a profession in educational administration or not (women's choices). Their study revealed that these choices directly affect the proportion of female academics at higher education institutions (Ayentimi & Abadi, 2022).

To fully comprehend the phenomenon, it is crucial to conduct this investigation into their experiences and how the underrepresentation of

women can be curtailed to not neglect the large population of females who desire to hold top administrative positions in tertiary education. It would also throw more light on the need for women to serve as role models. This inquiry will significantly aid in the professional growth of women. Having more women in the working environment makes an institution a better place for all, as it leads to greater productivity and enhanced collaboration in line with the popular adage, “Whatever a man can do, a woman can do it better.” On the other hand, when this issue is not brought up front and curtailed, there will be a waste of administrative talent and Ghanaian institutions will not see the need to innovate as gender issues are not seen to be a conversation to be brought up as top-level positions such as the Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Provost positions, as well as, occupying the Office of the Registrar. All these positions in the historical records of the University of Cape Coast have been dominated by males (Adu-Oppong et al., 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Ghana’s population in 2021 was thirty million, eight hundred and thirty-two thousand and nineteen (30,832,019 approximately 30.8 million). Overall, females make up 50.7% and 49.3% of males (Population and Housing Census, 2021). However, gender-disaggregated data have shown the gap between educated males and females is so wide (Adusah-Karikari, 2008). This gap could be based on socio-cultural factors of women’s roles and responsibilities such as childbearing and societal perceptions (Boateng, 2015). The difference could also be based on obstacles such as the climate of male dominance, the socialization of women to believe that they are inferior, and the lack of a cohesive women’s network to help women learn new strategies to

improve their knowledge (Shepherd, 2017). A lot of efforts and numerous resolutions have been made by policymakers concerning females' access to institutions of higher learning to make colleges and universities more diverse. For example, institutions of higher learning have committed to providing equal access, quality and affordable education to all (achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 by 2030). Though large steps have been taken to ensure that higher education institutions in Ghana are more inclusive and equitable, it appears that the top levels of higher education management remain male-dominated. The few women that reach managerial positions are more often than not discriminated against because they are lone voices up there (Aiston, 2016). Thus, the question remains why are there hardly any women in top management positions in higher education?

In the modern world, capable and qualified women are rising to occupy various positions even at the 'ceiling.' The underrepresentation of women in positions of top management is not just an international phenomenon but is also evident in Ghanaian universities (Idahosa, 2019). According to Johnson (2017), there is a disproportionately small number of females who have held the highest managerial roles in these institutions, even though women make up thirty-one percent (31%) of Professorial ranks at degree institutions (Fowler, 2019). Relatively few women advance to topmost management positions such as Provost, Vice-Chancellor, or Chancellor (Dadzie, 2020; Bilen-Green, Froelich, & Jacobson, 2008). In addition, Anderson, Nonterah, Tayviah, Agyeman, & Mahami, (2023) establish that there aren't many examples of women occupying diverse top management positions in Ghana, even though the country's universities require top management positions to be neutral.

Consequently, men have held the topmost management positions at UCC and decision-making roles in universities (Britwum, Oduro, & Prah, 2014).

This situation persists despite UCC's progress and growing reputation as the number one University in Ghana and West Africa, and the fourth-best university in Africa (according to the Times Higher Education World Ranking – 2023/2024). It is noteworthy to mention that UCC made history by appointing the first female Vice-Chancellor in Ghana. Yet, this milestone seems to be an exception rather than a reflection of structural change. Is this because the women are not up to the task or they do not meet the qualifications? It is ironic that the University of Cape Coast, a significant player in the education sector that is anticipated to take the initiative in advancing the objectives of social equality of opportunity, is itself facing the acute problem of gender inequity with respect to the overall representation of women, especially in top management.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to investigate women's experiences in topmost management positions at higher educational institutions and acquire insightful knowledge about their unique barriers and successes. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine characteristics and attributes common among women who have succeeded in higher education administration;
2. explore their interaction with superiors, subordinates, or co-workers in positions of authority;
3. explore factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of women in senior positions as administrators; and

4. identify the success stories of women occupying topmost management positions.

Research Questions

This study sought to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the characteristics and attributes common among women who have succeeded in higher education administration?
2. How have they interacted with superiors, subordinates, or co-workers in positions of authority?
3. What factors contribute to the underrepresentation of women (as faculty) in senior positions as administrators?
4. What are the success stories of women occupying topmost management positions?

Significance of the Study

This study would provide understanding of the causes of gender imbalances at top management positions in higher education. This would help to remove barriers and contribute to the knowledge of how women have succeeded in their current positions despite adversity. Once more, it would also try to address what these women did right as they dealt with the difficulties posed by the Ghanaian male-dominated higher education organizations that are biased against women. In addition, it would help Ghana's policymakers such as the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs and the National Council for Tertiary Education design effective and efficient reforms for integrating the gender equity dimension in the formulation of policies.

The findings of this study would not only be beneficial to Ghana's educational policymakers but also to the various higher educational institutions as it would seek to contribute in-depth and specific information on the place of women in higher education. Women in higher education would have the advantage of developing new skills and improving upon certain attributes to help them to become successful and even occupy topmost management positions.

It would also bring to light positive influences and challenges or obstacles faced by women as administrators or faculty. This study adds to the body of knowledge about women's underrepresentation in Ghanaian higher education management positions and how it affects women who want to be in those positions. Lastly, it would broaden readers' perspectives and inspire individuals who wish to pursue positions in top management.

Delimitations

The focus of this research was delimited to women in topmost management positions (such as the Vice-Chancellor, Directorate of Finance, Provost, Registrars, and Deputy Registrars) at the University of Cape Coast. This is due to the study's aim to investigate women's experiences in these leadership roles and acquire insightful knowledge about their unique barriers and successes. The findings of this study would relate to women in higher education in Ghana.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was its sample size. This is because not many women have occupied topmost management positions at UCC. Only a few participants were selected for the study. As Sandelowski (1995)

recommends, it is best to use qualitative sample sizes that are both substantial enough to allow for the development of fresh and insightful understanding of the phenomenon being studied and manageable enough to allow for in-depth case-oriented analysis of the data. Morse (2000) also proposes that the more usable data collected from each person, the fewer participants are required.

Though five participants were selected for the study, it would be informative for researchers and professionals hoping to learn more about the position of women in higher education. This means that the results cannot be generalized but can be applied to similar situations. Additionally, interviewing such women was difficult due to their busy schedules, as they needed to reschedule interviews, but I was patient with them until a suitable time was found.

Definition of Terms

For clarity in this study, the following terms are defined as used in this study:

Administrators: Higher education administrators are responsible for overseeing college or university departments, faculty, staff, programmes of study, curricula, budgets and facilities. Administrators are in charge of all aspects of an educational institution's daily operations, including providing students have the best educational experience possible, influencing the institution's offerings and growing it.

Glass ceiling: The glass ceiling is an intangible barrier within a hierarchy that prevents women or minorities from obtaining upper-level positions.

Higher Education: Higher education means any education and training beyond secondary school. It includes colleges and universities, and post-secondary specialized educational institutions.

Higher Education Administration: This refers to the management of higher educational institutions such as colleges/universities, having the responsibility of overseeing curriculum, programs, staff, students, and educational progress (IGI Global,2022).

Women: The plural form of woman, an adult female human being, one paradigm of gender and biological sex for adult human beings (Dictionary (n.d).

Top management positions: The topmost management positions in this study consist of Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Directorate of Finance, Provost, Registrars, and Deputy Registrars.

Underrepresentation: Female administrators are less represented than males in senior positions at UCC.

Organization of the Study

Chapter one focused on the introduction and that included the background of the study, the purpose of the study, research questions, the significance of the study, and the delimitation and the limitation of the study. Chapter two dealt with the literature review. Chapter three discusses the research methodology. It considers the research design, data collection procedures as well as data analysis. Also, results and discussion were presented in chapter four, and chapter five would constitute a summary of findings, conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further studies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This qualitative study aimed to explore the experiences of female administrators who occupy top management positions in higher education specifically at UCC. This chapter presents a review of existing literature related to this research. Beginning with a review of the primary literature on leadership theory, the review is organized by themes linked to the keyword searches and a critical analysis of gender and leadership, role congruity theory of prejudice toward women, women in higher education, and challenges confronting women in managerial or leadership positions.

Conceptual Framework

Gender and Leadership

A great deal of research has been done throughout the years exploring the relationship between gender and leadership. There is still a sizable gender imbalance in terms of representation and opportunities, even though women have made tremendous progress in the workforce and positions of leadership. A summary of some of the most important conclusions and thoughts on gender and leadership is given.

The leadership of every organization is important in determining its success. Understanding the factors that affect good leadership is therefore, crucial (Eklund, Barry, & Grunberg, 2017). One such factor that needs to be looked at to maximize leadership effectiveness is gender. Gender refers to socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women (Kaufman, Eschliman, &

Karver, 2023). Both men and women should and can be in positions of leadership (Eklund, et al., 2017). Leadership, as defined by Silva (2016), is the process of interactive influence in which selected individuals embrace someone as their leader to attain mutual aims. Then, to decide how each leader may achieve their full potential and effectiveness, gender must be considered (Eklund, et al., 2017).

According to some scholars, strong leadership has mostly been appreciated when they are masculine showing traits like aggressiveness, confidence and competition (De la Rey, 2005). This shows that women's aspirations for leadership and access to leadership positions have been hampered by male-centric leadership paradigms and practices (Dunn, Gerlach & Hyle, 2014) which might explain the underrepresentation of women in top leadership positions. Also, male behaviours and characteristics in leadership roles have been the standard against which female leaders are assessed (Dunn, et al., 2014). This raises the possibility that masculine behaviours and leadership expectations exclude women from top managerial leadership positions. Others were of the view that such masculine traits did not always contribute to the efficacy of leadership (Radu, Deaconu & Frasinianu, 2017). According to Radu et al. (2017), for instance, some female values and traits (like using their intuition in the decision-making process, being cautious, striking a good work-life balance, and social responsibility) are in line with the fundamental cultural hypotheses about how males and females think and act. They went on to say that women are ideally suited for motivation, communication, feedback, innovation and persuasion, as well as to be evaluated in terms of empathy (showing good people management abilities

and their needs by forging a close bond with their team) and communication. This shows that female leaders can and are capable and effective leaders, though they may still deal with some disadvantages.

In a study on gender and perceptions of leadership effectiveness by Paustian-Underdahl and his colleagues (2014), a meta-analysis was used to address the debate over the possibility of a female leadership advantage despite evidence demonstrating that men are frequently seen as more suitable and efficient than women in leadership positions while using their findings to extend the Role Congruity Theory (RCT). The Role Congruity Theory also proposes that conceptions of leadership are likely to be most masculine for higher-level, senior leadership roles as such resulting in greater role incongruity for women in these roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Based on RCT, they claimed that there would not be a difference between men's and women's perceptions of congruity and effectiveness in lower-level leadership roles, but that women would be perceived as more harmonious and effective than males in managerial positions (Paustian-Underdahl, Walker & Woehr, 2014). These opinions could serve as the foundation for how people assess their leaders. Once more, the quantitative synthesis of 95 studies over 99 independent samples reveals no differences between men and women in terms of perceived effectiveness as leaders across all leadership scenarios. The effectiveness of women is, nevertheless, evaluated as being much higher than that of males when other ratings alone are considered (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014). In contrast, when only self-ratings are considered, men regard themselves as being noticeably more effective than women do. They further argued that women who are advancing to the top levels of management and flourishing

may be regarded more favorably than men. This is evidenced by their ability to overcome double standards to achieve and flourish in a job dominated by men and thought to be, particularly 'macho'.

However, a finding from a study by Paustian-Underdahl et al. (2014) showed that in male-dominated rater groups, female leaders were much more effective than their male counterparts, notably in business and education-related organizations. This finding contrasts with Samuel and Mokoaleli's (2017) research, which suggested that men might be perceived as more effective leaders in a male-dominated environment or profession. The fact that women in top management roles were viewed as more effective is more important in Paustian-Underdahl and colleagues' (2014) findings. The two studies (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014; Samuel & Mokoaleli, 2017) used a quantitative study design and Role Congruity similarly. While participants in the Samuel & Mokoaleli (2017) study shared that managers of both genders in the organization displayed the same level of key attributes (*i.e.* managerial ability, interpersonal skills, communality assessment, agenticism & personality) that were necessary for achieving predetermined organizational goals, they also expressed some disagreement with this statement. These functional competencies, credentials, or abilities—which are claimed to be typically necessary for successful performance—indicate that men and women are equally capable of holding the top managerial positions in higher education institutions.

Gender, therefore, is relevant to consider how it relates to leadership effectiveness. Though it is so, the qualifications of these leaders either men or women is also an important factor to be taken into consideration in

considering effective or successful leadership. In addition, it is crucial to look beyond considerations of a person's biological sex and oversimplified generalizations about what makes a male leader successful versus a female leader to maximize leadership effectiveness for both men and women. Given that gender is a personal feature that affects how people perceive themselves, how others perceive them, and how they behave or act in various situations (Eklund et al., 2017).

Following a thorough analysis of the literature, a conceptual model was developed. This section below presents the conceptual model of the study of gender and leadership. It is derived from a review of empirical data which shows a relationship between gender and leadership and the belief that gender should not be the only factor when choosing select people for top leadership positions. Instead, the qualifications or attributes of the individual ought to be considered.

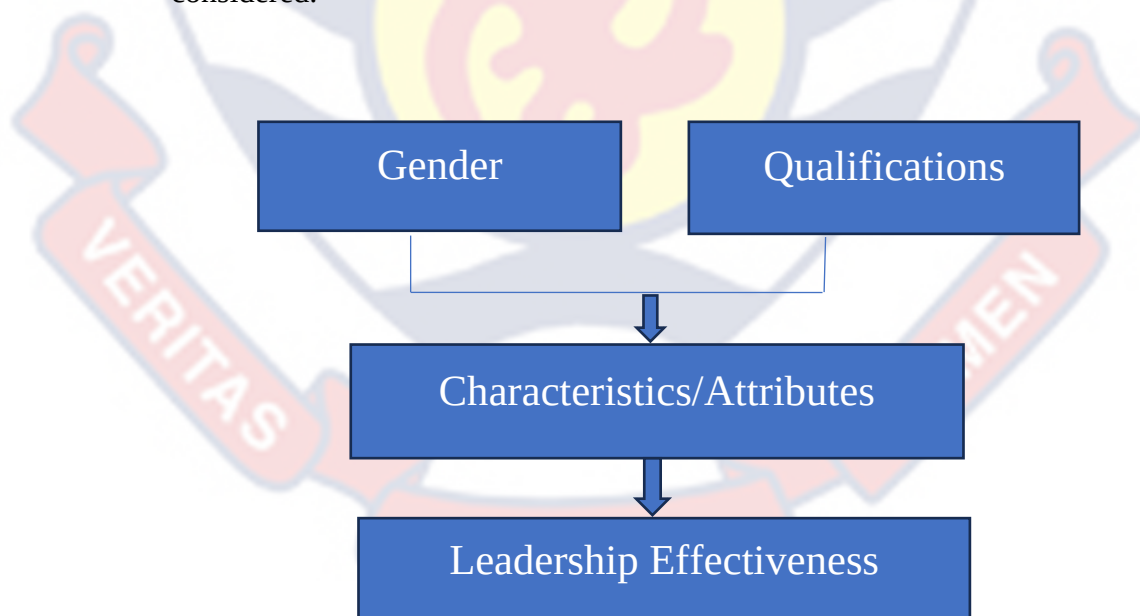


Figure 1: The conceptual model of the study

Source: Author's construct

The pictorial view in Figure 1 brings to view the relationship between gender and leadership in higher education, particularly focused on how

leadership effectiveness and selection should be based on qualifications and leadership attributes. Gender comes into being, when women and men are being evaluated for topmost management positions; their characteristics and qualifications should be major factors considered rather than looking at the person's biological sex and determining that that will make the individual a better leader. Gender and qualifications are placed at the same structural level in Figure 1 because it highlights what this study seeks to address (that in practice, they are on par in influence, and gender often influences leadership selection because of deep-rooted societal stereotypes as explained by the role congruity theory of prejudice toward women). However, qualifications and the individual's attributes/characteristics should ideally be the only criteria that influence perceptions and decisions around leadership in real-world contexts, particularly in our higher education institutions.

Also, considering the success or failure of Ghana's higher education institutions is correlated with their leadership structures, it is imperative to take the attributes or characteristics and qualifications of the individual into consideration. Again, this is because the management of an organization plays a crucial role in formulating strategic plans, connecting with various stakeholders, motivating staff, and designing a strategy to attract customers and gain a competitive edge (Hunegnaw Kebede, 2017). This framework was thus developed to provide a pictorial view of factors (specifically characteristics and qualifications) that need to be considered apart from gender in selecting individuals for topmost management positions in our higher educational institutions.

Women in Higher Education

Throughout history, scholars have stated that women had limited roles in society especially in the field of work to even talk of higher education. Only men were the ones that had access to this level of education as part of their successful integration into the public sphere and social recognition, while women were invisible in the private sphere and assigned to the tasks of reproduction, and family and home care. As UNESCO (2012) puts it, the preference for males over females in education dates back to ancient societies, a practice that has shaped today's gender disparities in this sector in virtually every country. Women were in principle excluded from higher education since the creation of the first and oldest university in the world (Itatí, 2006). In the researcher's work titled "Women's Access to Higher Education," she stated that the few women that were able to access higher education had to access it exceptionally, while others even had to disguise themselves as men.

This adds up to the fact that the status of women has been a matter of international concern, over the years. Initiatives have, thus, been taken to widen the scope of women's roles (in education and employment) bringing about changing roles of women as compared to previous generations. In the field of higher education, particularly higher education administration, more and more women are participating and entering. This is affirmed by Rouleau-Carroll (2014) in her multi-case qualitative study. She states that while studies show that women can be excluded in workplace cultures dominated by males or trapped in lower-paying, lower-echelon, and female-dominated jobs with few possibilities for development, women have made strides and cracked the

glass ceiling in fields where men predominate. This shows that women are not only positioning themselves for successful careers but also for top management positions. Kaplan and Tinsley (1989) also affirm the view that women are making significant, positive advancements in higher education administration as evidenced by the increase in access and the proportion of women working for pay since the colonial era. These developments have also led society to reevaluate conventional ideas about sex roles and cultural expectations. They explicitly express that they are skeptical about the pace of change and the amount of commitment to change (Kaplan and Tinsley, 1989) so I tend to agree with them when they query how significant the change has been and ask this question. This is because higher education management is organized in a pyramid format, where women are concentrated at the base.

Women, like men, are an important part of every country's human resource base, contributing to its competitiveness and long-term growth. Keeping women away only by unfair reasons of gender is indeed a waste of this valuable resource, especially since they make up half of the population.

The literature reviewed above offers insightful historical and modern perspectives on women's participation and access to higher education as well as higher education administration. However, it offers limited detailed analysis of current institutional barriers that women in higher education administration currently encounter, such as discrimination in selection, a lack of leadership training, and inflexible work environments. Additionally, there isn't adequate current data on women's underrepresentation in top leadership positions across various institutions and geographical areas.

Women in Top Management Positions in Ghana

The landscape of higher education leadership in Ghana has witnessed commendable strides in gender representation, with an increasing number of women ascending to top management positions such as Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor, and Registrar. This literature review synthesizes current research and recent developments concerning women's leadership in Ghanaian universities, highlighting how women are increasingly breaking through traditional barriers.

Recent years have marked historic milestones in Ghana's higher education sector (Frimpong, 2022). The administrative leadership of the University of Ghana (UG), for instance, is now predominantly women (Anderson et al., 2023) where the three Principal Officers of the UG (the Chancellor, the Council Chair and Vice-Chancellor), as defined by law, are female (Amfo, 2021). In 2013, UG swore in its first female Registrar, Mercy Hazel-Aisha, making a shift in gender representation (Anderson et al., 2023). Notably, Professor Nana Aba Appiah Amfo became the first female Vice-Chancellor of the UG in 2021 (Frimpong, 2022) after serving as Pro Vice-Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs. Similarly, Professor Rita Akosua Dickson was appointed as the first female Vice Chancellor of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in 2020 (Anderson et al., 2023; Frimpong, 2022).

At the University of Cape Coast, Her Excellency, Professor Naana Jane Opoku Agyemang became the first Vice-Chancellor of the University in 2008 (Akoto, Boateng, Akoto, Amanamah, & Boateng Newman, 2024), while Professor Dora Francisca Edu-Buandoh was appointed as the first female Pro

Vice-Chancellor in 2018 (Dennis & Monnie, 2023). These appointments mark a significant a positive shift towards gender inclusivity in higher education leadership in Ghana. Additionally, initiatives aimed at promoting gender inclusivity are gaining momentum. For instance, the University of Professional Studies, Accra (UPSA), appointed Mrs. Lorraine Buerkie Gyan as its new Registrar, a decision widely praised as a testament to increasing gender inclusiveness (Kwade, 2024).

Furthermore, efforts to promote gender inclusivity are becoming more visible through policy and programming. For instance, UG introduced a gender diversity policy in 2023, following a similar initiative by KNUST in 2018 (Anderson et al., 2023). According to Anderson et al. (2023), such developments have been significantly influenced by international commitments to gender equity, institutional policy changes and the presence of visible female role models in academia. Conferences and leadership development workshops are also being organized to empower women and address the unique challenges they face.

However, despite these advancements, gaps remain. (Adu-Oppong, Aikins, & Darko, 2017) argue that women are often appointed to leadership roles such as Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice Chancellor only when deemed necessary, which may reflect a form of tokenism rather than a systemic commitment to gender equity. Moreover, while introducing gender policies is a positive step, there is a lack of concrete implementation strategies and mechanisms to ensure these policies translate into structural change. Thus, higher education institutions in Ghana must move beyond policy formulation

to enforce actionable recruitment, promotion, and leadership development practices that consider the multifaceted challenges women face.

Characteristics of Women who have Succeeded in Higher Education Administration

Policymakers and academics have both expressed concern about the persistent underrepresentation of women in senior leadership roles in higher education. The characteristics of women who hold topmost management positions in higher education are therefore the subject of a growing body of literature. In this literature review, I examined the admirable characteristics of women who hold the topmost management positions in higher education.

One notable feature of women occupying topmost management positions in higher education is their leadership style. Research indicates that women exhibit different leadership styles from men, even though men still tend to hold the majority of leadership roles (Shanmugam, Amaratunga & Haigh, 2007). While acknowledging that men tend to adopt a transactional approach to leadership, Shanmugam, Amaratunga and Haigh (2007) also maintained that feminine leadership styles are not inherently superior or inferior but rather distinct. Nonetheless, there are certain attributes that all great leaders share that are characterized as androgynous styles – a phrase used to characterize a leader who, regardless of biological gender, is able to blend the aspects of both masculine and feminine leadership. They concluded that women are more qualified to take on the role of an androgynous leader in the construction sector. Moreover, they mentioned women in senior management roles but they did not address the underrepresentation of women in higher education administration nor the methodological approach they used

but rather examined the corporate world and how women's leadership styles differ from men's.

Also, Gobaw's (2017) mixed-method research (using questionnaires and interviews) revealed that women who hold the highest managerial roles in higher education frequently display transformational leadership styles, which are defined by an emphasis on developing people, cultivating relationships, and encouraging innovation. More so, the study that aimed to characterize the situation of women in leadership discovered that women make up a small percentage of Addis Ababa University's leadership. However, in Howard's (2023) quantitative study whose purpose was to compare leadership styles and characteristics in higher education, he made use of the students populace using a non-experimental research design and found out that both genders can acquire and employ the transformational leadership style. Thus, his findings relay the importance of transformational leadership style in the field of higher education. However, Gobaw's (2017) findings cannot be generalized over a large population as the study was limited to a case of Addis Ababa Univeristy out of thirty-three (33) public universities. On the other hand, Howard (2023) made use of the students' populace and did not consider the views of those who are actually making use of these leadership styles as compared to Gobaw (2017) who made use of six women leaders out of nine.

The fundamental tenet of transformational leadership is the leader's capacity to inspire the follower to go beyond what they had originally intended to do (Krishnan, 2005). Transformational leadership can be applied to the managerial context. These managers serve as mentors and advisors and are concerned with personal growth, education, and meeting the needs of the staff.

They operate as role models for their staff members, offering challenges, a sense of purpose, expanded viewpoints, respect, and trust (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016). As leadership in higher education is based on a more traditionally organized masculine structure (Bornstein, 2008), people perceive good leaders as those who exhibit male traits. When an individual thinks of a manager he or she thinks of a male, as stereotypical notions of a manager reflect traits associated with men (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikan, 2011). However, when females exhibit traits of masculinity, they are shunned because women are expected to be empathetic and caring (as compared to assertive men) and still retain their natural leadership style while using inspirational and motivating techniques (Reis, 2015).

In addition, female leaders in higher education also tend to be more inclusive and collaborative. This, I believe, has influenced many female managers to employ the transformational leadership style. However, some scholars are of the view that women typically alter their administrative style to suit the demands of the circumstances (Bhatti & Ali, 2021). In a study done by Silva and Mendis (2017), female leaders favor a transformational style because it gives them a way to get around barriers to their roles as leaders and shows them how they can naturally fulfill the expectations of their gender roles without being constrained by them. A further argument they made based on full range leadership development theory they employed was that, women's and men's leadership styles may differ to some extent due to the dynamics of role incongruity as well as the natural influence of gender roles on behaviour by repercussions and internalization of gender-specific norms on behaviour. Also, transformative leadership may help women avoid the overtly macho

impression they would give off by exercising hierarchical control and behaving in a strictly autocratic manner according to Yoder (2001). Moreover, the contribution of transformational leadership to organizations' fulfillment of their objectives is supported by empirical data. As stated, for instance, by Arabiun, Dehghan Najmabadi, Rezazadeh and Haji Fathali (2014), a transformational leader also alter the perspectives of managers and workers, sparking an organizational-wide change.

It is also important to note how women in higher education have developed their careers. Women who hold the highest-level positions of administration in higher education often have extensive and diversified professional backgrounds, including expertise in a range of academic jobs like teaching, research and administrative positions. In addition, a lot of women in higher education leadership roles have also held leadership positions in other fields. Yet, the higher the academic rank, the fewer women hold managerial positions, even though women are more likely than males to have a doctoral degree, which is a common need for high-level university positions (Johnson, 2017). In a cross-sectional study conducted by Mayya, Martis, Ashok and Monteiro (2021) women fit as candidates for top management positions due to an increase in the number of women pursuing doctorates. This implies that quite several women have the educational qualifications deemed necessary to occupy such high-level management positions and their areas of expertise may vary. Again, Cook (2012) contends that women occupying such positions navigate a different and distinctive political terrain to obtain managerial positions in higher education and are less likely to be considered for such

roles, even though women in topmost management positions are more likely to hold a doctorate than leaders who identify as men, a common prerequisite.

Another distinctive characteristic of women occupying the topmost managerial positions is their emotional intelligence. According to a 2013 study by Powell and Butterfield, women who hold the highest managerial positions tend to have greater levels of emotional intelligence, which gives them the ability to effectively regulate both their own and other people's emotions. This implies that women of such caliber will be able to lead and support their subordinates and coworkers in achieving the desired goals and objectives set for the institution. Additionally, they discovered that women in these roles are more likely to have empathy, which helps them to comprehend the requirements of their staff and foster a supportive workplace environment. Furthermore, (Asmamaw & Semela, 2023) claimed that because women possess a higher trait of emotional intelligence, they outperform their male counterparts in most emotional intelligence aspects and perform better in leadership roles. As such, they have an advantage in terms of self-awareness, valuing relationships, and sensitivity to employees' emotions. Asmamaw and Semela, (2023), also stated that women seeking to advance to top-level positions within their organization must demonstrate emotional competency since it allows them to cope with pressure, negotiate, motivate people, build trust, navigate workplace politics, and make sound decisions.

In addition to these characteristics, women in the topmost management positions face specific hurdles that males do not. For example, Samuel and colleagues (2023) discovered that women in leadership positions frequently face a phenomenon known as the "glass cliff," in which women are more

likely than men to be nominated to dangerous or hard leadership jobs. This can make it more difficult for women to excel in these positions, as well as subject them to additional scrutiny and criticism. This also fosters the incorrect assumption that women are not qualified or capable leaders (Manzi & Heilman, 2021). Nevertheless, their ex post facto casual comparative design which was employed was presumably limited to chief executives and did not provide quantitative support for the glass cliff phenomenon (GCP) in college or university leaders. Despite this, they believed female university leaders at lower levels saw and felt the GCP while those in higher positions did not, although this difference was not explored.

Overall, the research indicates that women occupying topmost managerial positions possess a distinct set of characteristics that enable them to effectively and successfully run their organizations. There is, however, little consideration of the actual policy implications or suggestions for higher educational institutions to support women in leadership roles.

Interaction of Women in Top Management Positions

For every organization to grow, interactions are crucial. Research shows that people still encounter difficulties and limitations when it comes to having productive interactions with their colleagues and superiors. The goal of this literature review is to look at the research on how women occupying top managerial positions interact.

Communicating is one way to interact. Communication between women in top-level management positions and their colleagues or subordinates may be perceived as difficult. This may prove problematic for women due to communication approaches that are typically seen as

"feminine." Hoobler et al. (2018) meta-analysis research claim that for women in managerial positions to be viewed as good leaders, they are frequently expected to adopt masculine communication patterns, such as aggressiveness and dominance. This can put women in a difficult position because they risk being criticized for displaying these traits, which are frequently perceived as going against established gender norms. Women may therefore find themselves in a precarious position where they must choose between being perceived as excessively assertive or too quiet. However, other evidence suggests that women in top management roles can benefit from strong communication abilities. For example, a study by Radovic Markovic, Salamzadeh and Razavi (2013) recommends that female managers and leaders understand the history of inequality in the world and the characteristics of a charismatic leader because these characteristics, such as good communication skills, may increase their desirability. Successful change agents frequently rely on their communication abilities to establish coalitions and obtain support for their projects. Women who can successfully convey their ideas and create relationships with coworkers and subordinates may be more likely to thrive in top management roles.

Again, research has shown that women in top management positions in higher education often face challenges in their interactions with colleagues and staff members. These challenges may range from a lack of gender-based stereotypes and bias to a lack of representation and support within the higher education environment. For example, a qualitative study by Cahyati, Hariri, and Karwan (2021) titled "Women's Leadership in Higher Education: Barriers and Opportunities in Indonesia" revealed that despite increasing awareness of

gender equity, women continue to face barriers that prevent them from achieving top leadership positions, including a lack of support. However, the study showed that women do not encounter institutional barriers. The study also found that women in these positions can again use their effective communication skills and leadership styles to effectively challenge these barriers.

Though interaction of women in topmost management positions dealt with communication extensively, there was little direct or narrative from women themselves about their experiences in interacting at top leadership levels. Also, the literature failed to distinguish between the ways in which interactions might differ between various institution types, such as small and large public universities or private and public higher education institutions.

Factors Contributing to the Underrepresentation of Women in Top Management Positions

Given the widespread consensus that diversity improves organizational performance, female representation in topmost management positions is a key topic in modern management research. But despite initiatives to advance gender parity at work, women are still underrepresented in top management positions. The following is a review of the literature on the factors contributing to this underrepresentation.

Women's obligations to family and caregiving are frequently mentioned as a major obstacle to their advancement to top management positions. Blau and Kahn (2017) highlights that women are more likely than males to take time off of work to care for children or elderly family members, which can hinder their professional advancement. Similarly, a qualitative

study conducted by Dear (2016) employing a case study methodology with five participants reveals that one of the primary reasons females in educational leadership experience the promotion process differently than their male counterparts is the increasing demands outside of work which may include childcare and marital responsibilities. Other researchers have shown that some women place higher importance on developing a family and caring for their physical and emotional well-being than on advancing their careers (Airini, Lindsey, McPherson, Madson & Cheryl, 2011). For example, in Reis's (2015) qualitative narrative Leadership Stories research, four female university presidents who were questioned discussed the necessity of balancing their professional lives with those of their families and other important life events. However, many organizations might have established higher expectations for employees' level of dedication. In some roles, being available around the clock could be considered essential. As women are the primary caregivers for the family and the home, their lives take on additional dimensions as a result of marriage and having kids. This suggests that it is practically hard for them to pursue career advancements, especially at the expense of their family. As one of them mentioned, I didn't even consider being a dean until my oldest kid had finished high school and left for college. Another woman leader advised younger female leaders, saying that it doesn't have to be done all at once because it takes time and that college presidents are not young for a reason. On the other hand, flexible work environments, such as telecommunicating and flexible hours, have been demonstrated to promote women's work-life balance better and may increase the number of women in top management roles.

Staying within the pipeline is again a choice that some females make that contributes to the underrepresentation of women in topmost management positions. A factor may be women choosing to forego promotion and leadership positions in anticipation of murky politics, patriarchal cultures, or unsolvable difficulties between work life and family life (Ward & Eddy, 2013). The pipeline of women leaders in higher education was studied by Kellerman and Rhode in 2014. In the chapter titled "Women at the Top: The Pipeline Reconsidered," they argued that more women qualifying for leadership positions does not guarantee that there will be an increase in the number of women in such positions. According to the pipeline idea, men and women will reach leadership positions at roughly the same pace. In addition, another (self-centered) reason why women may be underrepresented in top managerial positions is that they have the propensity to underestimate their potential and the perceived level of discrepancy about how well their profiles match the requirements of the job (Banker & Banker, 2017) and perhaps their wish to avoid competition.

Women themselves may also be a factor contributing to the underrepresentation of women in top management positions as literature demonstrates women deny support to one another (Reding, 2020). One would assume that it makes sense that women would speak out in favor of other women since they are disproportionately underrepresented in various fields and managerial roles (Cricher & Risen, 2014) unfortunately that is not the case. In Kaiser and Spalding's (2015) "climb and kick" phenomenon, individuals of underrepresented groups such as women and minorities, often prioritize their success over that of the group, to the point where it can impede

the advancement of other underrepresented groups. They further examined whether women "climb and kick" or "climb and lift" in response to underrepresentation in a group. The researchers discovered that women who work in fields where they are underrepresented "not only bypass opportunities to offer support but impede the advancement of women who attempt to follow them up the ladder," (p. 606). Women engage in cognitive and non-physical action that aims to sabotage, deceive, and undermine other women to maintain the balance of power (Mavin, Grandy & Williams, 2014). This makes me think of rumors I've heard about women who prefer to work with male coworkers or employees and who favor men over women while attempting to keep their distance from other women. Duguid (2011) investigated women's willingness to support high or somewhat qualified female candidates as possible work group mates. The study concluded that "their willingness to support" new women joining the group was influenced by the number of women in the group and the "prestige" of the workgroup. When women are the only females present in a team or workgroup and are then allowed to choose another person to join, the "token" female is much more likely to choose a male than a female (Duguid, 2011).

Access to top managerial positions is significantly influenced by men-dominated and informal social networks. Women are typically excluded from these networks, which can make it difficult for them to acquire the information, resources and mentoring necessary to advance to top managerial positions. Organizations (more specifically higher education institutions) that stress gender diversity in their hiring and promotion practices can create networks that are more inclusive and help women's professional advancement

(Kalev et al., 2006). Additionally, women in top managerial positions who did not receive support from their female colleagues frequently lacked knowledge of the most effective ways to assist other women colleagues who aspire to hold such managerial positions and frequently saw those who did as a threat to their careers (Redmond, Gutke, Galligan Howard & Newman 2017).

Also, organizational culture has a big impact on how gender diversity in top management positions is perceived. Organizations that prioritize hostility and competition as traditional attributes of male leadership are less likely to promote women to senior management positions. On the contrary, organizations that value inclusive and collaborative leadership styles are more likely to have women in these high-level management positions because it encourages gender disparity in top management positions in the organization. Furthermore, it is well known that prejudice and preconceptions pose serious barriers to women's professional advancement. Some researchers (such as Shepherd, 2017) have also criticized the idea that the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles is due to individual organizations and abilities, pointing instead to structural and cultural barriers that cannot be overcome by educating women. Women's leadership abilities in the workplace are still the subject of gender stereotypes, such as the notion that they are less capable or assertive than men, according to studies (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Society does not acknowledge their efforts and continues to judge what they are capable of (Morley & Crossouard, 2016). These beliefs can lead to unfair evaluations of women's performance and impede them from advancing to high management positions.

Finally, the lack of female role models in senior management roles has been identified as a factor contributing to the underrepresentation of women. Women who have access to female role models are more likely to aspire to and be successful in leadership positions, according to Ibarra et al. (2010). Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) discovered that having a mentor, whether formally or informally, to offer guidelines, advice, and support in becoming an educational leader was beneficial for successful female administrators in higher education. Also, mentoring has been proven to be a great resource for female managers to learn new research and leadership skills, as well as overcome self-doubts about their capabilities that are reinforced through the agency of men in academia (Bhatti & Ali, 2021). Again, in the absence of fundamental leadership, socialization and training, Bhatti and Ali (2021) believed that having mentors benefited them in adjusting to the highly competitive hierarchical environments. Since mentors can help women uplevel into leadership roles as mentoring develops their leadership skills and helps them navigate the complexities of the field, Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) advised administrators of institutions of higher learning that train women for jobs in administration to look at the possibilities of offering graduate students in education mentoring opportunities. This is because mentors can aid in both career development (hard skills) and psychological development (soft skills), ultimately helping women uplevel into leadership roles as mentoring develops their leadership skills and helps them navigate the complexities of the field (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011). With this being done there is the likelihood that several female role models will emerge and serve as mentors and sponsors for

the upcoming generation of female leaders can be increased by organizations that encourage the participation of women in top management positions.

In conclusion, tackling the issue of women's underrepresentation in top management positions necessitates a comprehensive strategy that takes into account individual, cultural and institutional obstacles. To encourage women to assume leadership roles, organizations should prioritize gender diversity initiatives, provide mentorship programs and offer supportive network environments. To achieve gender parity in top management, it is also crucial to combat gender stereotypes and promote inclusive leadership cultures. This is because subtle biases in seemingly neutral processes are often more damaging than explicit discrimination. While stereotypes are mentioned, there is little specific analysis on how women are routinely disadvantaged by unconscious bias in hiring committees, and promotion processes. Also, there is no deep dive into redefining leadership models to value feminine traits and thus expand leadership opportunities.

Successes of Women in Top Management Positions

The successes of women in top management positions are well documented, and a review of the literature identifies several important elements that support these successes.

The major indicators of success for women in senior management roles are education and experience. Women with advanced degrees, like PhDs or MBAs, are more likely to be successful in senior leadership positions. Having a higher education provides women with specialized knowledge and skills, such as financial management, strategic planning and organizational skills. As top-level managers, this expertise gives them the tools they need to handle

challenging situations and reach wise conclusions. Women who have experience in a variety of fields and jobs before reaching top management positions also tend to do better. Although the participants in this study had varying amounts of administrative experience, according to Dear (2016), they shared a lot of similar experiences throughout their leadership journeys. These experiences may not be fully positive throughout, but have made them the leaders they are today. Gaining academic and leadership experience is a requirement for the professional route to becoming a university president (Reis, 2015). The women presidents who took part in the study spoke about their professional advancement as following the conventional path, moving up the ranks, and having a majority of experiences that made them successful in their field of work.

The success of women in top management positions is greatly influenced by networking and mentoring. Women are more likely to succeed in top management positions if they have access to mentors and networks of encouraging peers and colleagues (Dadzie, 2020). Networking and mentorship give women the chance to develop their confidence while learning new skills and being exposed to novel experiences. Additionally, students learned about the fresh opportunities that help them plan their career pathways (Bhatti & Ali, 2021). Individual women have also risen to the challenge, by developing mentoring ties with younger female academics and creating networks for support and experience sharing. This is consistent with a study by Searby, Ballenger and Tripses (2015), which investigated female administrators in comprehensive research universities and their perceptions of their mentoring experiences in their careers in upper administrative positions. In their quest to

gather data using the survey method, they discovered that female higher education administrators are being mentored and that they are mentoring others. It does not, however, evaluate whether mentoring aided in their promotions. Many current female leaders in higher education especially those who have risen to the top at highly regarded international institutions, are the first women to hold top positions in their organizations, especially those who have achieved success at internationally renowned colleges (International Briefs for Higher Education Leaders, 2021). They have established themselves as leaders in largely gender-neutral environments. Some of these pioneering female presidents have networks in addition to serving as role models and ambassadors for the subsequent generation of female leaders. One illustration is the "Action for Women in Higher Education Leadership" group of the British Council, which arranges a series of discussions and workshops during the annual Going Global Conference with female vice-chancellors and pro-vice chancellors that concentrate on methods to encourage women's leadership (International Briefs for Higher Education Leaders, 2021).

Another crucial element that helps women to succeed in top management roles is work-life balance. Women who successfully balance work and life are more likely to advance to senior management roles. Women who can successfully juggle job obligations with personal and family obligations are better able to control stress and maintain focus on their objectives. For instance, Adusah-Kakari (2008) asserts that between the work-life balance, a mother has to be nurturing and concerned with relationships, whereas a female leader or academic must be productive and independent. Both of these demands place a heavy burden on one's time and effort;

regrettably, one comes at the expense of the other. Numerous participants discussed how balancing parenthood and other domestic duties with a busy academic schedule is impossible. A person must put in a lot of effort to establish their value as an administrator, often at the expense of their family. On the other hand, several of the participants in Fowler's (2019) study remarked how their families were highly supportive of them. Few participants specifically highlighted their spouses. Many other people characterized their friends as being supportive of their profession, though a few people classified them as family. Therefore, I think that these people may balance their jobs and personal lives with the support and assistance of their family and friends, especially with the support of spouses and close relatives.

The success of women in top management positions also depends on their leadership styles. Women who adopt effective leadership styles typically perform well in senior management roles. According to research, women who use transformational leadership philosophies—which place a strong emphasis on teamwork, vision, and motivation—perform better in senior leadership positions (Givens, 2008). As proved transformational leaders motivate their followers to achieve more, focusing on their followers' values and assisting them in harmonizing them with the organization's values (Givens, 2008). This not only enhances the success of women (who employ transformational leadership styles) but also contributes to the improvement of the organization. The path also widens for women who more naturally demonstrate these skills, as teamwork and collaborative thinking become more accepted as leadership styles (Bornstein, 2008). Bornstein (2008) further states that women are more likely to use interchangeable leadership skills such as transactional leadership

and transformational leadership when applying a situational approach though other scholars mostly attach transformational leadership skills to women (Silva and Mendis, 2017). This implies women who can modify their leadership styles to fit various contexts and circumstances also tend to do better and be successful.

In addition, the success of women occupying topmost management positions does not come easy. Consistent hard work and determination are important if they want to be successful leaders in their careers. As Reis (2015) concluded, the women in these positions preserved and shared no regrets though their career paths were not easy.

In conclusion, research points to a number of critical success factors for women in top management roles, including education and experience, networking and mentorship, and preserving a good work-life balance. Also, as women aspire to be successful leaders and organizations work fully to utilize their potential, the result is a win-win situation that paves the way for a brighter future for all parties involved. However, broader definitions of success could lead to more inclusive and realistic benchmarks for evaluating leadership success, as success was implicitly defined in conventional terms – achieving top management roles – without questioning whether traditional metrics (titles, status) fully capture women's aspirations or diverse definitions of success.

Challenges Women Experience as Leaders

Higher education administrators are frequently confronted with a variety of challenges in their career paths. In an attempt to explain why there are still so few women in top management positions, researchers have done

some work on barriers to women's access to and success in leadership positions in the context of higher education.

Researchers such as Gallant (2014) and Parker (2015) have noted that although women in academia have made some progress in obtaining leadership positions, women still lag behind their male colleagues. One of the major issues that women must deal with is gender bias. Women continue to experience discrimination and prejudice despite efforts to encourage diversity, which might restrict their ability to rise to leadership positions. In addition, women continue to be ostracized, undervalued, and frequently sidelined as they attempt to move into leadership positions (White, 2012).

Maintaining a good work-life balance is another difficulty faced by women administrators. It is challenging for them to strike a balance between their work and family obligations because the demands of their employment frequently affect their personal life. Gender stereotypes, and societal barriers, norms, or expectations have created the perception that males perform better than females in leadership roles. As Parker (2015) posits, women themselves are to blame for the low representation of women in top management positions. According to Parker (2015), women often choose lower-paying careers with fewer educational requirements because of their domestic responsibilities such as caring for the household and raising children. In line with this thought, women would rather occupy mid-level administrative positions that do not require continued education as they may not have higher career ambitions than men. Nguyen (2013) found that family support is an important component that can greatly hinder or facilitate female students' academic development in a study he performed in Vietnam. He also concurred

with Parker (2015) that women themselves can serve as change agents and objects for the advancement of female leadership.

Also, some challenges researchers came across as inhibitors to females attaining higher leadership positions were lack of role models, unequal pay, limited access to professional and development opportunities (as a result of what is popularly known as the 'boys club'), and discrimination and harassment, amongst others. For example, a study conducted by Gyekeye (2013) using Miles and Huberman's approach revealed that same-sex rivalry, work-family conflict, gender role socialization, and lack of initiative were some of the challenges found through in-depth interview responses of twelve women managers from four organizations in middle and senior levels. Again, Margo Hampden (2015) identified seven main challenges, namely: mentoring, networking, opportunities and assignments, work-life balance, exceeding performance expectations, salary gaps, and corporate culture. This systematic review of 35 studies focused on the barriers and challenges that many women face as they navigate a corporate world lacking in advancement opportunities for them. As a result of corporate cultures and insufficient support systems, they found that women continue to move into high-level management roles at disproportionately low rates, which limits their chances of leadership success.

Additionally, women are also not trained for leadership roles. Moreover, they have developed self-doubt about their leadership capabilities due to the traditional socialization patterns and dominant masculine leadership discourses. One can attest to the fact that there is a need for regular, appropriate, and real-world-focused leadership training in the successful management of organizational activities and overcoming leadership crises.

Besides training, mentoring, and networking act as valuable social capital for women leaders. These help women improve their administrative skills, gain tenure, and advance their leadership careers (Morley & Crossouard, 2016). However, Ballenger (2010) noted that most networks and mentors are male-centered and are unable to address the problems of women. Moreover, there is a lack of successful women leaders, who can serve as mentors for other women. However, women when strongly motivated by their mentors and networks, have learned to identify their latent abilities and utilize them effectively in their personal and professional lives. They have also become aware of the new opportunities that facilitate them in defining their career paths (Bhatti & Ali, 2021) though women face gender-specific difficulties and glaring impediments on their way to holding topmost management positions or high-level administration positions (Cook, 2012).

Pasquerella and Clauss-Ehlers (2017) also discussed the levels of barriers for women, “Even when women do break free from the sticky floor and break through the glass ceiling, the barriers to success may become even more substantial than those they had faced in the climb up the ladder” (p. 11). It is thus of essence that various remedies are brought up to solve these challenges in our higher education institutions though, there are many obstacles that women administrators must overcome to develop in their careers.

In conclusion, the challenges encountered by women in leadership positions within higher education are multifaceted and deeply embedded in societal norms and institutional frameworks. For example, since women are typically expected to take on more caregiving duties than males, maintaining a

work-life balance continues to be a major challenge for female leaders. Women are further challenged by factors such as lack of role models, unequal pay and professional development opportunities. However, there is still hope for improvement as these challenges are addressed to remove structural obstacles and create more welcoming work environments where women can flourish in leadership roles. Also, while the influence of societal norms is discussed, few studies look into how these norms are being actively challenged or renegotiated within higher education systems. Furthermore, external challenges such as gender bias, lack of mentorship and work-life imbalance have been emphasized but there was inadequate investigation into how women's coping strategies, resilience, and leadership agency evolve over time in hostile environments.

Theoretical Framework

Leadership Theory

Leadership has been discussed, analyzed, and understood from different dimensions. Thus, individuals currently acquire an efficient understanding in terms of leadership. Consequently, theoreticians and practitioners have approached the subject from their perspective resulting in several theories of leadership and their definitions (Kapur, 2020).

To begin with, the great man theory is the belief that people are either born or made with certain qualities that will make them excel in leadership roles. This theory was one of the earliest theories proposed by Thomas Carlyle in the 1800s. The great man theory postulated that only a man could have the characteristics of a great leader. The theory assumed the traits of leadership were intrinsic in men even though there was no scientific certainty that a

specific human characteristic or the combination of human characteristics was essential in identifying great leaders (Krause, 2017). What about people who possess these qualities but are not leaders? On the other hand, there are many examples of leaders who do not possess these qualities but still lead their teams well.

The trait leadership theory is a preceded version of the great man theory. The trait theory does not stipulate leadership as an inborn quality, but it clearly states that for one to be a leader, the individual must have specific skills and characteristics. Some skills and characteristics include self-confidence, intelligence, sociability, and others (Chow, Salleh & Ismail, 2017). Trait theory proponents focus on the quality of character in a leader, much like the great man theory. However, they failed to focus on followers' features in assessing leaders. The trait theory also fails to focus on followers' features in assessing leaders.

In reaction to the trait theory of leadership, the behavioural theories offered a new perspective, one that focused on the behaviours of leaders as opposed to their physical, mental, or social characteristics. This theory asserts that leaders are made rather than born and that particular behaviours can be learned to ensure effective leadership (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). On its downside, it ignores the situation and environment of the leader. In behavioural theory, there are three (3) types of leadership styles, that is, democratic, laissez-faire, and autocratic. Leaders need to know this to be able to put them in operationalization and a well-balanced manner to generate desired results (Kapur, 2020).

As the behavioural theory of leadership fail to look at the environment of the leader, the situational era as the name suggests, recognizes that the environment plays a major role (especially in the leader-follower dynamic). This implies that leaders must be able to assess the context in which they operate and then decide what style will 'fit' the situation best. Northouse (2021) suggests that leadership requires the ability to switch between leadership styles depending on the circumstances. Because the best style is dependent on the situation, this approach is known as the contingency theory of leadership (Benmira & Agboola, 2021).

In modern times, leadership theory has shifted away from definitions using general characteristics and behaviors of leadership and focused on the explicit behaviors of those in leadership. Transformational and transactional theories of leadership are the result of those studies. Transformational leadership is a theory in which leaders encourage, inspire, and motivate followers while transactional leadership, on the other hand, relies on authority to motivate employees (Flynn, 2019). Transactional leadership works best in mature organizations that already have clearly defined structures and goals, to keep them on track, and reinforce the status quo (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). Examples of transactional leaders include managers, who tend to focus on supervision, processes, and follower performance.

In the continuing thread of the many debates about leadership, a prevalent assumption exists that leadership can be taught and learned. Thus, effective leadership training can enable anyone to become a leader (De la Rey, 2005). It is also important to note that leaders in an organization are socialized and selected into their organizational role and that this overrides their gender

role. Though others such as De la Rey (2005) may say that there are distinctive leadership styles associated with women, with characteristics that include being more participatory, democratic, sensitive, nurturing, caring, excellent listeners, and showing tolerance and empathy, women are described to be also capable and effective leaders.

For an organization to be effective, it is imperative to comprehend the consequences of different leadership styles within the framework of leadership theory. Many viewpoints on the growth and efficacy of leadership are offered by the great man theory, behavioural theories, situational theories and transformational or transactional theories. The process of putting these ideas into practice entails defining leadership skills and cultivating a culture that prioritize various leadership philosophies depending on the needs of the current circumstances. For instance, through the great man and trait theory of leadership, the researcher sought to find out the characteristics or attributes of these successful women as well as traits commonly associated with women in top management positions and the impact they have had on their organization. Also, as a result of behaviourist theory, the researcher could also examine how these women interact (through ways such as communication) as well as whether they are democratic, autocratic or a laissez-faire leader. In contrast, situational theory shows situational factors such as organizational culture and gender bias influence the experiences of women in top management positions and whether they also employ transactional or transformational leadership styles.

Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice Toward Women

The issue of gender and the role it plays in leadership has been a contentious one. The role congruity theory of prejudice toward women attempts to explain the scarce number of women in top-level management, considering a perceived incongruity between the attributes of a strong leader and attributes assigned to women's gender roles (Seo & Huang, 2017). To put it another way, the role congruity theory of prejudice toward women is a social psychology theory that tries to explain the prevalent gender bias against women in leadership roles. This theory contends that women are frequently perceived as being less capable than males in leadership roles because their traditional gender roles as nurturers and caregivers are incompatible with the attributes perceived as necessary for effective leadership.

Eagly and Karau (2002) initially introduced the idea of role congruity in their meta-analytic evaluation of the literature on gender and leadership. The authors suggested that because leadership is generally linked with stereotypically male traits like assertiveness, decisiveness, and competition, gender stereotypes and expectations make it difficult for women to be recognized as capable leaders. These features are perceived as being at odds with stereotypically feminine qualities like warmth, compassion, and nurturing. As a result, women encounter a dilemma when applying for leadership roles since they are punished both for stereotypically female attributes and for not exhibiting traits associated with men. As said by Rudman and Glick (2001), even when women displayed the same leadership behaviors as males, they were less likely to be perceived as leaders than men. When the leadership position required a significant degree of authority and

power, this effect was extremely obvious. In addition, other studies assert that women who exhibit stereotypically male features are more likely than those who exhibit stereotypically feminine traits to be viewed as capable leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001). Yet, women who demonstrate excessive masculinity are frequently perceived as aloof and unapproachable, which can hurt their chances of becoming leaders (Rudman & Glick, 2001).

Though other studies have found no difference in style based on the gender of the leader, there are still implications for women seeking top management positions. Eagly and Karau (2002) proposed that women may need to demonstrate both stereotypically masculine and feminine attributes such as being strong and decisive while still exhibiting empathy and concern for others.

By considering the role congruity of prejudice toward women it would help explain the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of females in top managerial positions and how stereotypes or biases impact the experiences of these women in such positions. Also, the influence of organizational culture and individual attitudes on the perceptions and challenges faced would be explored thus aiding to understand and address these prejudices.

Summary of Related Literature Review

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of literature pertaining to gender and leadership in higher education, with a focus on women's underrepresentation in top management positions. It examines the characteristics of successful women in higher education administration, factors contributing to the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles and strategies to address this issue. Additionally, it explores leadership theory and

role congruity of theory of prejudice toward women, offering insights into societal expectations and biases that hinder women's advancement. The chapter underscores the importance of empowering women to pursue leadership roles and providing necessary support and mentorship to facilitate their career progression. Overall, it offers valuable insights for understanding and addressing gender disparities in higher education leadership.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter focuses on research methods that were employed to conduct this study. The chapter details the research design, study area, population, sampling procedure, data collection instruments and procedures, data processing and analysis.

Research Design

To explore the experiences of women in topmost management positions at the University of Cape Coast, a qualitative approach using a case-study design and an interpretivist paradigm was used. Qualitative research seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, & Guest, 2005). Yin (2014) indicated that a qualitative research approach would reveal the depths of knowledge of the lived experiences of participants, using deeper textual descriptions generated by a narrative inquiry. A case study, on the other hand, is a research approach that focuses on one instance (or a few instances) of a particular phenomenon to provide in-depth accounts of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that instance (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). In this research, the cases are women in topmost management positions in different sections of the University of Cape Coast. A case study also presents a one-of-a-kind example of real people in real situations, allowing readers to grasp concepts more clearly than just providing them with abstract theories or principles (Cohen et al. 2017). As a result, using qualitative research was the best strategy for responding to the study

questions about how women define the importance of their experiences as well as providing an understanding of the causes of gender imbalances at the top management positions in higher education. Further, it helped address what these women did right as they dealt with the difficulties posed by the Ghanaian male-dominated higher education organizations that are biased against women. An interpretivist paradigm, which emphasizes how people create their realities and how these influence their experiences, was also used since it is ideally suited to understanding the subjective experiences of women in topmost management positions (Ugwu, Ekere, & Onoh, 2021).

Study Area

This study took place on the University of Cape Coast (UCC) campus. UCC proved to be the most suitable area for conducting this study because as a prominent university that has gained a name for itself (as the number one University in Ghana and West Africa and the fourth best University in Africa) that advocates for gender parity, it only seemed appropriate that the upper echelons of management would also have women occupying such positions as women bring a lot to the table as their able men colleagues rather it is male dominated.

The University was founded as a University College and given a specific connection to the University of Ghana, Legon, in October 1962 (ucc.edu.gh). The University gained its autonomy on 1st October 1962 with the authority to award diploma and degree certificates backed by an Act of Parliament. The University's original mandate was to train graduate professional teachers for Ghana's second-cycle institutions and the MoE to meet the manpower needs of the country's accelerated education programme

at the time (UCC, 2023). The university's mandate has been revised and this led to the University expanding and diversifying its programmes in response to changing needs as well as the re-organization of the management of this noble University.

Of great notice is the university's current achievement. According to the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings (WUR) 2024, UCC was ranked as the top university in Ghana and West Africa, seventh in Africa, within the top 400 universities globally, and 24th worldwide for research influence. UCC was listed by THE WUR as being the only university in Ghana to rank among the top 1000 universities worldwide.

Population

The population involved all females occupying the top management positions at UCC. In this research, 'the top management positions' consists of the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro Vice-Chancellor, the Directorate of Finance, Registrars, Deputy Registrars, and Provosts of the various Colleges at UCC. A total of five females in such positions were identified. A research population is the focus group or collection of individuals or groups used in research from which samples are drawn (Ahmad, Alias, & Abdul Razak, 2023). As Patton (2014) indicated, a researcher must work within certain limits related to available resources. Selecting women occupying these positions was not difficult because the researcher believed they were the ones with the experience she wanted, were readily located, and could be readily accessible.

Sampling Procedure

This study employed purposive sampling to identify participants in top management positions. Purposive sampling provides rich and knowledgeable

information (Patton, 2014). Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling method. The non-probability sampling method is a method of selecting units from a population, using a subjective (non-random) method (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). With non-probability sampling not all members of the population have an equal chance of being selected.

Purposive sampling involves the researcher selecting the participants by his or her judgement while keeping in mind the goal of the study. When choosing cases, it either selects them using the expertise of an expert or with a particular goal in mind (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). Also, the costs, accessibility, and convenience of purposeful sampling according to Showkat and Parveen (2017) are somewhat lower, and it only chooses participants who are pertinent to the research design. Furthermore, a total of five females in such positions were identified and purposively selected because they possessed the data the researcher required to address the research objectives. Thus, only females from UCC occupying topmost management positions were selected for this study. In other words, the participant had to be a female occupying a topmost management position such as Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Director of Finance, Provost, and Deputy Registrar in UCC.

Data Collection Instruments

The research instrument employed in conducting this study was a semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative research technique that utilizes the ability of the interviewer to delve deeper into certain themes or responses with a predetermined set of open questions (questions that stimulate discussions) (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016). Additionally, it has been discovered that the semi-

structured interviewing technique (Galleta, 2012) is effective in fostering reciprocity between the interviewer and participant despite the fact that it might be time-consuming. In conducting a semi-structured interview, the interviewer has a defined list of topics to cover and questions to ask (Denscombe, 2017). The interviewer is willing to be flexible about the sequence in which the topics are discussed, and more importantly, to allow the interviewee to express their thoughts in greater detail and develop their views (Denscombe, 2017).

In conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher employed a detailed but not rigid interview guide. Every research question that directed the study was covered in the interview guide. The interview guide's questions were open-ended, and the interviewees were encouraged to elaborate on any points of interest in their responses. When asking open-ended questions, the interviewer may urge the participant to elaborate if they mentioned something that piques their interest. The interviewee is prompted to return to the original topic if he or she digresses from the question posed (Denscombe, 2017). Thus, a semi-structured interview guide was used to gather data from participants.

The interview guide was in 4 sections (Appendix A): the opening, the introduction, the body, and the closing. The first section began with an opening statement about the researcher and the purpose of the research. The second section sought to obtain consent from respondents before the interview began and also assured respondents about the confidentiality of their responses. The body or third section allowed respondents to speak out on characteristics or attributes they possessed, their interactions with colleagues, subordinates or co-workers, the underrepresentation of women in top

management positions, and their success stories. The final section allowed the researcher to show appreciation to respondents.

The interview guide was reviewed by my supervisor and was pilot-tested at the University of Ghana, Legon. The University of Ghana, Legon, was chosen for the pre-testing because it is a premier public university with a strong reputation and has also implemented several initiatives focused on women's leadership. Additionally, it shares similar characteristics with the study area. Three participants were used for the pilot testing and they comprised one Dean, one Director, and one Senior Assistant Registrar. This selection ensured representation from various administrative levels within the university, thereby providing a broad and insightful evaluation of the research instrument. Also, the inclusion of participants occupying different senior administrative positions ensured that the feedback obtained was diverse and comprehensive, ultimately enhancing the validity and reliability of the research instrument since pilot studies are designed to evaluate the feasibility of research protocols and the effectiveness of data collection instruments (Moore, Carter, Nietert, & Stewart, 2011). The pilot testing of the instrument led to the revision and modification of some items in the interview guide. For example, 'why do you believe your subordinates are willing to work or cooperate with you?' was reframed as 'how would you describe your relationship with your subordinates, and how do you perceive their willingness to collaborate with you?' This helped to fine-tune the instrument, provided the researcher with valuable insights, and laid the foundation before using them for the main data collection exercise at the University of Cape Coast.

Data Collection Procedures

The first contact made with participants was through their secretaries (in their respective offices). There were follow-ups through their institutional e-mails. This is because the respondents were an elite group of people, and this procedure was used as a result of going through the office protocols of the target population. An introductory letter obtained from the Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA) was sent to respondents to introduce the researcher as a student undertaking a study on the experiences of women in topmost management positions and to seek permission to undertake the data collection exercise. The researcher explained to them what the research entailed, and assured them of keeping her word to ensure the principle of anonymity and confidentiality. In addition, the consent form was explained to them. Each participant was given and asked to sign a consent form. Interview dates were, then, scheduled with participants, no more than two weeks after they had received their consent forms. All scheduling was done either via phone or in person.

To the researcher's delight, every woman she had contacted agreed to partake in the interview. However, by the time the scheduled appointment with one of the participants was due she was no longer with this noble university and could not take part in the interview. There were also reschedules due to the respondents' busy schedules and the demanding nature of their jobs. Interviews were conducted on dates that were convenient for each participant. All interviews took place at a location of the respondent's choosing. As I had established a rapport with each respondent, a 45 to 60-

minute interview session was conducted with each participant except for one that took longer than an hour because we had to take a break.

Data were collected using an audio recorder. Thus, all interviews were audio-recorded. Permission and consent were sought from participants before the interviews were recorded. However, one (1) participant declined the recording of interviews, so the discussion was manually written in a field notebook (see Appendix D). More so, the information needed was acquired without compromising the quality of the interview. All interviews were scheduled in January 2024 within a span of three (3) weeks. Three interviews took place in their offices' while one (1) interview was conducted online via Zoom. This interview took place in the evening.

During the interview session, the atmosphere was relaxed and comfortable. I enjoyed every single interview. Participants were also forthcoming and welcoming. Each one of them had gone through the interview questions I had sent before our meeting. After each interview, I felt I could build a relationship with these successful women and that I had truly learned from their experiences and achieved my goal. I was conscious of the fact that my status as a female student at UCC and a researcher based in Ghana, looking into gender issues, could pose a risk to the objectivity of the research process and results. As a result, I accounted for my positionality by remaining ethically conscious throughout the investigation. I achieved this by obtaining participants' informed consent, protecting their privacy by maintaining confidentiality, being aware of my own bias and striving for objectivity by treating each participant equally and fairly, adhering to data protection regulations and ethical guidelines, maintaining a professional and respectful

relationship with participants while giving them the opportunity to clarify any doubts they may have and being transparent about the purpose of the study.

Additionally, a standardized and systematic process was followed throughout data collection, data entry, and analysis to ensure the reliability and consistency of the study. All data entries were cross-checked and verified for accuracy twice. To enhance the credibility of the findings, member checking was employed, where participants were given access to the transcribed data and preliminary interpretations to verify the accuracy and authenticity of their responses. Furthermore, debriefing sessions were conducted with academic peers to critically assess the research process, questions and explore alternative interpretations. These strategies collectively enhanced the trustworthiness and validity of the study, ensuring that the findings authentically represented the participants' experiences and perspectives. Participants were also given access to the study's findings and asked to confirm the data's interpretation and accuracy.

Data Processing and Analysis

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. Key issues were identified by taking notes of similarities and differences in the accounts of the participants. Codes were used to identify them with the aid of NVivo version 14. Themes were developed based on the research questions. Creswell's (2013) spiral method was used. The framework (namely, data reduction, data display, conclusion, and verification) developed by Miles and Huberman (1994) was also employed during the data analysis process. In processing and analyzing data, the spiral method involved the following steps: familiarization

with data; development of themes (using a thematic approach); coding the data; charting the data; mapping and interpreting the data.

Familiarization with data is the process of getting to know the data by reading and re-reading the data to identify patterns, themes and ideas. In the development of themes, key themes that emerged from the data were identified by highlighting keywords or phrases, or by creating a list of themes that emerged from the data. Coding the data was done with the help of software by assigning labels or codes to the data to identify patterns. Charting the data involved organizing the data into a format that was easy to read and analyze. This was done by creating tables, graphs or visualizations as mapping involves identifying the relationship between different themes and patterns in the data by perhaps creating a visual map of the data. Lastly, interpreting the data involved drawing conclusions based on the analysis of the data. This involved identifying key patterns and discussing their implications. The analysis and findings were based on the objectives of this study.

Summary

A qualitative approach using a case-study design was used to examine the experiences of women in top management positions. Additionally covered in this chapter are the population, sampling method, data collection, and instrument. It further highlights the importance of qualitative interviews and case studies in capturing the experiences and perspectives of these women. It also touched on ethical considerations. Overall, the chapter provided a comprehensive overview of how the study was conducted and the methods used to uncover valuable insights into the experiences of women in topmost management positions.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of women in topmost management positions at the University of Cape Coast. The researcher employed a qualitative design using a case study approach. Hence, in-depth interviews were used in the data collection process. This chapter first presents the bio data of respondents and further discusses the results of the analysis of the data collected. Also, the findings are presented according to the study's research questions. Respondents' quotes are heavily relied on to explore the phenomenon understudy and pseudonyms were used to replace the real names of respondents.

Bio Data of Respondents

This section presents a summary of respondents' details. A total of five women were purposively sampled for this study but four participants took part in the study. A pseudonym was used to represent each participant to protect their identities and ensure confidentiality. Below is a brief description of each participant:

Ms. Eliza is a mother of two children. She always aims to make an impact and loves to write about women and leadership. She has risen through the ranks to get to the current position she occupies. She runs two offices and has been doing so for several years. She has served the university for about 12 years.

Ms. Adeola is a married woman with children. She has also risen through the ranks to get to her current position of leadership. She lost her mother at an early age and so was taken care of mainly by her uncle. She believes she has a family in the university. She joined the University right after her service. She holds a Master's degree and has served the university in an administrative capacity for roughly 24 years.

Ms. Brielle is a wife and a mother. She holds a doctoral degree which has helped her to be in the position she is in today. She has served the university for roughly 24 years.

Ms. Scarlet is a firm believer and takes her source of strength from the word of God. She is also a mother but sadly she has lost her very supportive husband. She has served the university for roughly 35 years.

Research Question 1: What are the characteristics and attributes common among women who have succeeded in higher education administration?

The first research question was designed to elicit some characteristics and attributes common to the respondents as a result of their professional success. The respondents were of the view that women occupying topmost management positions need to possess some distinct characteristics so that they can bring their unique perspectives and insights to the fore, thereby facilitating innovative solutions and a better decision-making process. Three themes emerged from Research Question 1, namely: collaboration and effective communication; emotional intelligence and motivation; and foundational traits for professional excellence. These themes make up the

characteristics common among women who have succeeded in higher education administration.

Each of these themes is now discussed.

Collaboration and Effective Communication

Collaboration and effective communication are common characteristics respondents believe successful women occupying top management positions like themselves must possess. It stands to reason that a woman's path to leadership should be characterized by these similar traits, as successful leaders in Ghana's higher education institutions should be able to promote collaboration and effective communication. Four characteristics (collaborating, good communication skills, interpersonal relationships, and teamwork) were identified under this theme however, the most prevalent characteristics among respondents were collaborating and good communication skills. The emphasis on collaborating and good communication skills were evident. For example, Ms. Eliza said:

I believe that to be able to lead you need to communicate effectively so that your subordinates or your superiors would understand, and then together you can achieve whatever. And I also like collaborating.

Some of the respondents also believed interpersonal relationship is a key characteristic one must possess to be successful in managing higher education institutions. As Ms. Adeola also said:

I have a very good interpersonal relationship. I am a very effective communicator. I interact well. As I said, I study you and know how to deal with you. And that has helped me a lot to be able to work at any

place, under any person. Even with the most difficult person, I'll find a way of living or working with the person. So that has helped me a lot.

Ms. Scarlet further confirmed that:

... human relationships are key. You need to have a very good human relationship. You have to recognize the efforts of your followers. You can't do it all by yourself. And so, if you don't really understand your staff, you can't get far. Yes, because I think there is a saying that if you want to go fast go alone, but if you want to go far, go with others. Yes, they will carry you far. So, for me, I've developed that kind of relationship with my people, I seek the welfare of them and so they also reciprocate back- working hard.

However, one respondent believed that teamwork also plays a role in the success of their career. She said:

I believe in teamwork. That is, not putting or not being the center of everything but then delegating and involving, looking at strengths so that at the end of the day everybody will bring it on board, and then we can also achieve whatever it is (Ms. Eliza).

The views expressed by the respondents indicate that it is essential for women aspiring to occupy topmost management positions to possess qualities such as good communication skills, collaboration, good interpersonal relationships and teamwork. Literature also portrays these developing skills like teamwork are important for career advancement (Tripathy, 2020). Tripathy (2020) further states that although the value of these skills is acknowledged in daily life, in preserving interpersonal relations, and in developing success strategies, the effects are mostly felt in organizations.

Emotional Intelligence and Motivation

Secondly, respondents believed emotional intelligence was vital to the success of their career path while one respondent thought motivation was also a contributing characteristic. In their varied perspectives, respondents identified the importance of emotional intelligence and motivation in their success as women occupying topmost management positions. To further substantiate this theme, Ms. Eliza sharing her view on the importance of being emotionally intelligent said:

Emotional intelligence helps me know how to manage people.

In a related view, Ms. Adeola remarked that:

If you are not emotionally balanced you cannot deal with people.

Furthermore, Ms. Eliza also mentioned that motivation has been her hallmark. She put it that way:

Motivation is also key. Motivation doesn't deal with giving money, praise, awards, etcetera. You have to be self-motivated.

The views expressed by the respondents suggest that emotional intelligence is one key characteristic every woman in a top management position must possess. It appears the views of respondents affirm that of Asmamaw and Semela (2023) claim that women who hold the highest managerial positions tend to be mostly emotionally intelligent. As respondents believed emotional intelligence was vital to the success of their career path, so was motivation. That is, having the inner drive to accomplish one's goals and pushing oneself keeps one going even when things get tougher.

Foundational Traits for Professional Excellence

Foundational traits for professional excellence were another theme that emerged from the responses to Research Question 1, as one characteristic common among women who have succeeded in higher education administration. Each participant believed that foundational traits are core to the success of women occupying topmost managerial positions. Foundational traits according to Galunic (2020), are core attributes characterized as a set of skills that guide leadership activities. Foundational traits in this research include hard work, knowledge, humility, and discipline. This means that for any woman aspiring to occupy a topmost management position to be successful, she must possess such foundational traits.

Concerning this, respondents shared their views. They believed that being knowledgeable is a prerequisite for success. For example, Ms. Eliza and Ms. Adeola said:

...you have to be knowledgeable

while Ms. Brielle and Ms. Scarlet made mention of:

understanding issues concerning higher education management and obtaining the requisite academic qualification.

However, Ms. Adeola and Ms. Brielle were of the view that one must also be hardworking to be successful. Other traits that emerged were humility and discipline as one respondent mentioned that she is:

somebody who is humble and it's about being disciplined (Ms. Adeola).

The responses of respondents revealed that foundational traits for professional excellence are essential for success in higher education

administration. It came to light that these women showed a strong commitment to hard work, discipline, and humility, which are foundational traits for professional success. Though literature never made mention of foundational traits for professional excellence as one of the characteristics women must possess, my findings showed that. This finding adds a new dimension to the academic discourse on women's leadership by demonstrating that intrinsic values play a central role in leadership success. While prior research, such as Silva and Mendis (2017), acknowledged emotional intelligence as advantageous, the direct emphasis on foundational traits as essential for career advancement has not been adequately addressed. As a result, this study provides a unique perspective by identifying these characteristics as a previously overlooked yet critical pillar for success in administrative leadership roles, particularly in the Ghanaian higher education sector.

Research Question 2: How have they interacted with superiors, subordinates, or co-workers in positions of authority?

The second research question, which looked at how these women in topmost management positions interacted with their superiors, subordinates, and co-workers, uncovered two themes: good interaction with superiors and a healthy relationship with subordinates. Due to the existence of the notion that women in leadership positions behave differently and their leadership may not be welcomed by their colleagues, this research question sought to explore these interactions to see if that was the case. More so, by exploring interactions between women in higher positions and their superiors, subordinates and colleagues the researcher sought to understand the impact of

these relationships on their career advancement and professional development. Furthermore, it revealed how these interactions influence opportunities for mentorship, networking and support, and the impact it has on their teams and overall organizational performance.

Good Interaction with Superiors

The first theme generated was good interaction with superiors. Generally, respondents believed that the interaction they had with their superiors was good. Below are some verbatim responses from the interviews, showing the good interaction they have with their superiors:

It's been wonderful relating with them. You know, because of linkages and networking and all that, there was a move to push me. But my immediate superior stood against it and said no, we can't do that. With the impact she is making here if we should take her from this office, you create a big gap and it's going to affect us (Ms. Eliza).

It is very interesting. So, it all has to do with how you perceive people and how you relate to them. You have to value the work of each individual in an organization and then you respect everybody. For instance, my superiors who have left office commended me for how I have supported them and their work (Ms. Scarlet).

We have had a good working relationship said Ms Brielle.

Ms. Adeola also added that:

it's been very cordial. There has been a very good relationship. I'm a servant. I'm here because of them. I have to ensure that they also succeed.

Consequently, every single interviewee believed they had an excellent interaction with their superiors, indicating that they work in a positive atmosphere that inspires them to meet their objectives. In every organization one needs to be held accountable therefore, it is not surprising that these women occupying leadership positions are accountable to many others including their superiors. How individuals interact with each other (specifically superiors in this case) in every organizational setting is important as shown by participants. In addition to providing guidance and inspiration, superiors set an example through their behaviour and deeds, and they must ensure that there is enough well-being at work as stated by Mäntylä (2017). Additionally, according to her, how employees and superiors interact greatly affects the well-being of their work environment.

A Healthy Relationship with Subordinates

Concerning their relationship with their subordinates, interviewees believed that they had a healthy relationship with them. The following are some of the things they had to say regarding the relationship they had with their subordinates:

I haven't had many problems with men so far even women. I must say that, I recognize everybody and so they also see me. They also give me the needed cooperation (Ms. Eliza).

I have a very good working relationship with all of them. The interpersonal relationship – it counts. How I talk to them, and how I relate to them is very important. Yes, I'm a woman and some of them are older than me, but it's how –the emphasis is how you talk to them. So that brings in respect and humility. It is very, very important. So, if

you have those qualities, they will also respect you. They will also know how to go about their work. Once they see you as their leader and you are there to support them, they will also support you (Ms. Adeola).

Ms. Scarlet added that:

It all has to do with relationships once again. You perceive people right then you learn what people want. How do you see people? I keep telling my people that everybody is important in an organization. Because before I come to the office, somebody would come here and sweep. Another person may do something else. I just worked on certain files and somebody came for them. Another person will bring them. You are not the only one doing everything so, you have to value the work of each individual in an organization. If you value their work, then you respect everybody – they also do the same. And I keep on saying that respect is not commanded, it is earned. She went on to ask: so if you don't respect somebody, how do you expect others to also respect you? If you look down on people, how do you expect that people should also relate to you? They call something fun-fool respect (whilst you are here, they will be oh yes sir/madam- you leave, and listen to what they will say about you).

Fun-fool respect according to Akoensi (2016) means pretending to respect someone.

So, it all has to do with how you perceive people and how you relate to them. So, for me I have reacted very well, that is to the best of my ability with everybody.

However, even as they all felt they had a good relationship with their subordinates, one interviewee said that though she has

I never had any issue dealing with any woman or man. There are some issues because some people think that how can a woman lead? They feel that it's men who are born to lead. So sometimes there is this kind of cold attitude but then largely, I don't have many issues leading with men (Ms. Eliza).

This illustrates the possibility that, despite having a good or healthy relationship with their subordinates, there might be instances where other subordinates or colleagues may not be cooperative because of certain perceptions or impressions they have about them.

Despite their feelings regarding their relationship with male subordinates, they referred to a good relationship based on mutual respect and cooperation. This is consistent with Adu-Oppong, Aikins, and Darko's (2017) findings, which indicated that they had a good relationship built on respect, cooperation, reciprocal confidence, and understanding. Additionally, my attention was drawn to the fact the use of the term subordinates no longer serves a useful purpose. As "HR practices demand" a more appropriate term "direct reports" should be used as found in some literature (Stoyanova-Bozhkova, Paskova & Buhalis, 2022). It can, thus, be inferred that as a leader fostering a good relationship with your direct reports is crucial for success.

Furthermore, their effective leadership style and mentorship were two other ways in which the healthy relationship they had with their subordinates was demonstrated.

Effective Leadership Style

The effective leadership style adopted by these women occupying topmost management positions was another theme that developed from our discussion. The findings from respondents' interviews revealed that, as some made use of a blended approach (demonstrating situational awareness by integrating elements from multiple leadership styles such as transformational, democratic and laissez-faire), others made use of a democratic leadership style. For example,

One respondent (Ms. Adeola) explained that her leadership style was not fixed but rather a fusion of several approaches. She stated that, depending on the situation, she adjusted her style to ensure effective management. Another participant (Ms. Brielle) echoed this view, noting that her leadership strategy was determined by the contingencies of the moment, highlighting the dynamic nature of leadership in higher education administration.

However, in a study done by Abdallah and Jibai (2020), they believed that one of the most compelling indicators of gender differences in leadership is women's preference for democratic leadership styles. In support of this, Ms. Eliza viewed her leadership approach as:

...democratic. By nature, that is how I am. I would not want to be direct and sit down and then give instructions. I come down to their level, involve them in making the decision, solicit from them as to how we can make progress, and then together we draw a plan and then we move on.

In talking about her leadership approach, Ms. Scarlet also said:

I will not say autocratic but democratic in a way because you always have to discuss issues. For instance, we expect your quarterly reports by the 6th of the following month. For one reason or another if that person delays, first and foremost, you have to find out if there may be a genuine reason for delaying. Ahaa, but if you find out and then that person is just delaying for delaying sake, then you have to bring that person to book. That one I won't spare you; I will tell it as it is.

From what Ms. Adeola and Brielle said concerning their leadership approach, it is evident they prefer to use a blended approach. This affirms the findings of Mashele and Alagidede (2022), which showed that participants highly favored a transformational leadership style because of its distinct characteristics. However, they agreed that different leadership styles may be necessary depending on the specific circumstances at hand which is also consistent with the findings of this study.

Mentoring

Another theme that emerged from the discussion was mentoring. The respondents' stories indicate that having mentors was of great benefit to them as their mentors provided them with the needed support, guidance and wisdom based on their experiences. This helped them navigate some of the challenges they faced in their career life and perhaps their personal life too. The women interviewed agreed that they had role models except for one respondent, whose motivation was to be like a female figure in a top management position whom she admired and desired to emulate. She said:

The truth is that I didn't have women role models that I was looking up to but I remember I meeting a professor. She was a former Pro-Vice Chancellor. I met her not personally. But when I saw her at church, I realized she was a Vice-Chancellor. One day, I told myself that I would also work very hard to be like her (Ms. Brielle).

Moreover, another participant, though she mentioned having a mentor, explicitly stated that the University did not give any mentors during her time “so you have to find your way”. In other words, she didn’t have any “official mentor”. Continuing, she expressed her gratitude to one of her mentors and stated that it was due to her “humility, respect and willingness” to learn that allowed her senior colleagues to teach and help her. It was apparent in their stories that they had supportive role models. For example, Ms. Eliza said:

I must say that he really did well because he would check up on me. Sometimes invite me for lunch or an outing and then have some discussions with me, encouraging me: You need to be writing, prepare yourself for higher responsibilities, and all that. And then even check on my family as to how I am managing because of the work we do. So, he’s been, he was very good. Unfortunately, he died.

She continued to talk about the impact her male mentor has made in her life saying:

He is no more. But I get inspiration from him because he kept on hammering – you need to be working hard, you don’t have to take anything for granted, make the best out of every opportunity and all that. So, I took a lot from him and I think it’s gone a long way in helping me.

One thing that was common among all participants was that they had other work colleagues who mentored them.

I count myself blessed

That was a statement from Ms. Scarlet that as she believed she had some former registrars and “a host of other colleagues” training, nurturing, and encouraging her. Also, Ms. Adeola believed so as she said:

In the university, I have my family.

I believe she sees them as “family” because of the impact they made in her life contributing to her success. However, she went on to talk about her maternal family as she mentioned that her uncles were of great influence.

Another interesting thing that almost all participants had in common was having Professor (Prof.) Jane Naana Opoku Agyemang as their mentor. According to Johnson (2015), a mentor serves as a guide, teacher, role model, and sponsor for a junior faculty member (mentee) who lacks experience. Thus, Johnson (2015) claims that mentors perform a variety of vital roles. Additionally, his research demonstrated that the presence of a mentor has been linked to enhanced achievement and individual development. As such, these women (currently occupying top management positions) either looked up to her (as a mentor) or had established some sort of relationship with her. As one participant described her relationship with Prof. said:

For me, it's Naana Opoku Agyemang. She's been a mother, a role model, and a mentor (Ms. Adeola).

On the other hand, all participants are mentoring other people. Listening to what they had to share, mentorship can be or has been a very rewarding experience (even for both parties). As mentoring helped them to

succeed in their career lives, I believe that through their experiences, they also sought to mentor others to be successful, as the importance of mentoring relationships for women who aspire to top managerial positions has been confirmed by Bhatti and Ali (2021) and Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011). Similarly, Orsini and Coers (2022) claimed mentoring can effectively facilitate women's leadership development and boost their self-efficacy. Below are some of the stories they shared about their mentoring experiences:

For now, I have only one person I'm mentoring and I have a schedule with him. He is a male. A male mentored me and I am also mentoring a male. I engage him. We schedule meetings and then we talk, look at his challenges at wherever he's working, even in his family life, and then what he intends to do. Sometimes if he wants to write a paper, we discuss the topic and I give him some direction. Unfortunately for him, his religious background is different and so you know, sometimes it makes it difficult. I thought I could handle him the way my mentor handled me but he at least gets the time for you to maybe sit somewhere. But we have been trying to engage, yeah. Apart from him, I am mentoring other people too unofficially (Ms. Eliza).

Officially I think I've mentored about, four or five ladies. I remember one time a lady said, Madam, you are our role model. We are looking up to you. I know a lot of people just look up to us. Of those that I've mentored, at least three of them are Junior Assistants Registrars, and then it's like when they need anything they will come to me. I encourage them to write because in our system if you don't write, you don't go up. If I were to do papers with you, maybe sometimes I was

tasked with something and I just give it to you so that you go and polish it. There are unofficial ones. And this is what I've put under unofficially, I've mentored a lot of people, those that I worked with – my subordinates, I make sure that I empower them to know the work. I will ensure that you know the job so that wherever you find yourself, you'll be able to do it (Ms. Adeola).

I have mentored so many in the directorate, both official and unofficial. When it comes to a senior member you must be assigned mentees. And for me, before I even got up to this position, I was a tutor. So, counseling students – these hall counseling activities. I was a hall counselor for about a decade so mentoring people is something that has been part of me since the year 2010. I can't count the number of people. You can't relate to me without furthering your education. Definitely, you will find something to do (Ms. Scarlet).

She further described the experience as “satisfying” saying:

You get that sense of satisfaction that through your efforts, and by the grace of God, people are rising because you won't remain in the position forever. So, you should be able to mentor others so that in your absence, they can also take up the leadership position. And that will be a credit to you (Ms. Scarlet).

Ms. Brielle further added that she has mentored quite a number of young ladies more specifically at the business school; not only professors, but young women who also have PhDs. She mentioned that:

Others are working in the industry; they are moving up that ladder. So, we've mentored quite a number of young people who are also moving up in their careers.

Inferences can, therefore, be made as the data suggests that mentoring is key to the success of women in leadership positions. In other words, the career success of these women in topmost management positions can be greatly attributed to mentoring. Research also indicates that formal or informal mentoring is beneficial for one's career (Fowler, 2019). They each believed it was essential to their success to have some sort of mentor and to mentor others as well.

In summary, it is critical to acknowledge the significance of the aforementioned themes and how they contribute to women's success in occupying top management positions. As a result, no matter one's current position, one should have good interaction with your superiors, develop a strong leadership style, get mentoring, mentor or teach others, and maintain a good relationship with one's direct reports.

Research Question 3: What factors contribute to the underrepresentation of women in senior positions as administrators?

The researcher's goal for Research Question 3 was to provide more insight into their perspectives on the possible causes of women's underrepresentation in top management positions. Perhaps, this would seek to explain why this issue persists and act as a roadmap for aspiring female administrators looking to move up in their careers. The themes that emerged when respondents expressed their opinions and experiences on the subject are discussed below.

Causes of Underrepresentation of Women in Top Management Positions

During the interviews, themes such as education, lack of enabling environment, tradition, combining work and family responsibilities, politics in the workplace, running two offices, and social responsibilities recurred when interviewees shared their thoughts on the underrepresentation of women in topmost management positions in our higher education institutions more specifically in UCC.

Education

Given that most participants brought up education throughout the interview, it is evident that this was a prominent theme. In discussing what may have caused the underrepresentation of women in top management positions with regard to education Ms. Adeola said:

It is not that we don't want to (Herein we referred to women). She went on asking questions: Do you have the qualification? Do you have the expertise? Recently, how many Professors do we have? Very few. Even in 2016, there was only one full professor. Now how many? I think we have two or three. Yes, we have professors. So, you see men always say, and I think it's true that when we start the women are there. And as we climb the women just fall off, then later you find one or two, so it's men dominated.

Thus, she believed aspiring female leaders need a certain level of education or qualification to be able to even hold such a top management position. Looking at what she said, the number of women who are professors at UCC is far lower than the number of men who are professors. Hence, this perhaps shows a cause of the underrepresentation of women in topmost

management positions since they may lack the educational qualification necessary to hold these positions. Another respondent in support of Ms Adeola's views said:

So, when we come to identifying a professor to occupy a top position the probability that it will be a man is very high (said Ms. Brielle).

Ms. Eliza agreed by stating that another cause of the underrepresentation of women in topmost management positions “has to do with education” as she had already mentioned other possible causes. She further commented that:

Those positions usually go with your rank; it's either full professor, associate professor, or senior lecturer. And we don't have a lot of women who are full professors or associate professors (Ms. Eliza).

She concluded by saying:

It will boil down to the fact that they don't have the requisite qualifications to head or to lead (Ms. Eliza).

Ms. Scarlet also buttressed this point by saying:

... even in the University when you count women who are full professors how many are there? They may be at my fingertips. It's only recently that we are now getting associate professors, the full professors, I don't think they are even up to 5.

Suggesting once again that, as currently seen in Ghanaian higher education institutions, there are more males than females vying for these positions when they become available.

The excerpts from the responses and findings of the study indicate that women aspiring to occupy positions like the Vice Chancellor, Pro-Vice

Chancellor, Registrars, and the like should obtain the highest possible level of education.

Lack of Enabling Environment

Another theme developed from Research Question 3 was the lack of an enabling environment. Some participants thought that the lack of an enabling environment was a contributing factor to the underrepresentation of women in topmost management positions. Ms. Eliza in an attempt to explain the lack of an enabling environment mentioned:

Women ourselves are enemies of ourselves. Women don't want to see their fellow women climbing the ladder so they would rather – they have that 'pull-you-down syndrome'. They wouldn't want their fellow women to climb up. Instead of us being supportive and encouraging, we would rather want to pull our fellow women down because we think that maybe the person is climbing. So, they don't want to give the person that kind of attitude and support for them to also move on.

She also shared her recent experience about the importance of giving women the needed recognition and the “enabling environment” for them to also “come up”. However, she mentioned that in bringing up this conversation several times she was misunderstood and asked whether someone had been “hampering her growth”? The person said she should “talk to her women to study hard”.

Answering she said:

It is not about telling them to study hard but it is about the support. Because if you provide us with that enabling environment that is when

we can study. I am talking about the cooperation that we need so that we can also excel.

To her, she felt the University was not doing its possible best because she conducted a study that confirmed that “*the women in leadership were insignificant*”.

In totality, respondents believed the lack of an enabling environment was a significant cause. This aligns with Lewis and Mayes (2012), who argue that an enabling environment is essential for individual growth and development. It is implied that these women would not be able to develop (or advance in their careers) as they believe they should in the absence of an enabling environment.

Inadequate Support

One of the themes identified under the causes of the underrepresentation of women was inadequate support. Respondents were of the view that most women do not receive the needed support they would like to have to advance or succeed in their careers. Concerning the inadequate support from other women, one respondent commented that:

Sometimes getting the needed support, and cooperation, from our fellow females is also a big challenge (Ms. Eliza).

This is because “*women don’t want to support their fellow women*”. In contrast, she mentioned that:

The males are rather solidly behind you and they think that you can make it.

She went further to share her own experiences concerning that and how she got inspiration from that. In the same vein, she said:

Even in positions where you need to vote, you would have women who have the slot to vote for a fellow female but, at the end of the day, it is the men who will win. It is a clear indication that the women will vote for the men (Ms. Eliza).

This agrees with Pike and Galinsky's (2021) conclusion that women have a lower rate of electoral victories than men. She concluded by saying some females think you may be "*competing with her for a position*".

On the other hand, one respondent talked of having a non-supportive husband. Though she received great support from her late husband, she referred to another individual who did not have a supportive husband and how that has affected the woman and her work just because her husband feels intimidated by the mere fact of the lady moving ahead of him.

This demonstrates how important support is to these women. As such, those who succeeded in achieving these topmost management positions received the needed support.

Our Tradition

Under causes of underrepresentation, tradition also emerged as a theme. Respondents believed "*our tradition*" has a role to play in the underrepresentation of women in topmost managerial positions. Concerning "*our tradition*" being one of the causes of underrepresentation of women in top managerial positions, Ms. Scarlet voiced out her opinion saying:

Some cultures wouldn't want a woman to be a leader even amongst the women among themselves.

Ms. Eliza also mentioned that:

Our tradition itself looks down on women.

She referred to the place of the woman being in the kitchen. She went on to say:

In this modern era, most individuals feel it's the men who must take education further and climb the ladder – and that is how it should be
(Ms. Eliza).

She termed that as how we perceive women in our culture.

As such, some individuals will prefer male leaders to female leaders. As Jones and Pal (2021) said, it is not uncommon for men to undervalue women as leaders in administration. This is perhaps what we see in our higher educational institutions where some people view women as unsuitable for leadership positions as a result of our tradition's influence on societal norms and expectations.

Additionally, respondents also believed stereotyping of women was one of the causes of the underrepresentation of women in topmost management positions. The first cause given by Ms. Eliza was stereotyping of women. She said:

I think I would attribute that to the stereotyping of women. From the outlook, it looks like we have the notion that women cannot lead. They think that leadership is something specifically attached to males.

This finding shows that women are stereotyped and limited to certain roles or abilities. When women are stereotyped and limited to certain roles or abilities, it can discourage them from pursuing certain positions. This can lead to fewer opportunities and underrepresentation in various industries more specifically Ghanaian higher institutions. This again stands to reason why we have fewer women occupying topmost management positions.

Combining Work and Family Responsibilities

A common theme among respondents was combining work and family responsibilities. Each woman brought up work and family life. All respondents shared the same view that having the role of a mother and combining work is not an easy task. For example, Ms. Eliza mentioned that one of the challenges she faced was:

Combining work and family responsibilities.

Of which Ms. Adeola responded to saying:

I have my family to go and take care of.

She continued by mentioning the little time she gets to spend with her family saying:

I remember there was a time my girl said, Mama when we draw a circle, you will be out, aha. When they draw a circle, their mother is out. So, the little time that I have, I make sure I spend it with them.

This shows the tedious nature of their work and how it can sometimes take a toll on their family life.

Ms. Brielle also added that:

Well, the other time I was telling someone that like I told you being a woman, combining work and management of the university, it's not easy. You know, sometimes you have to wake up in the morning to do your household chores, then you have to go to the office and work. Sometimes you come very late, you're tired, and you also have to take care of the house.

Ms. Scarlet finished off by saying:

As a woman sometimes there are certain things that go against us.

She went on to explain by narrating how marriage and pregnancy may delay the “process of leading”, saying:

I have two staff. They decided to marry. The guy went ahead and did his masters whilst the lady was pregnant. So, you see pregnancy, family life, plus studies sometimes delay the process of leading. So, the men may be ahead of us. So that is a key factor.

These excerpts from respondents are in line with research because it has been noted by numerous scholars that juggling work and family responsibilities is one of the major challenges women (occupying top management positions) face (Adu-Oppong & Darko, 2017; Fowler, 2019).

Politics in the Workplace

The process of choosing leaders seems to be integral to every organization. As such, some respondents believed politics in the workplace was one challenging factor to consider. Attempting to explain why politics in the workplace could be a factor attributing to the underrepresentation of women, one respondent said:

Sometimes you are not even affiliated with any person but they think that, so navigating your way through all that politics is not easy (Ms. Eliza).

Also, Ms. Scarlet iterated that:

... even among the staff, some are branded as so close to you and so these are your caucus.

Ms. Eliza further commented:

Some people might even tag you as a supporter of another individual but that might not be the case.

As a result, she concluded that overcoming such a challenge “*is not easy*”.

Conclusively, politics in the workplace emerged as a factor contributing to the underrepresentation of women in topmost managerial positions because they may perhaps face biases that can lead to a competitive and hostile environment. Additionally, these biases can affect how their ideas and contributions are perceived and valued.

Running Two Offices

Intriguingly, running two offices was mentioned by one respondent as a challenging factor which may perhaps contribute to the underrepresentation. Ms. Eliza explicitly stated:

In my case you know, it's like I'm running two offices”.

I found that intriguing because, to the best of my knowledge, it is not common for women occupying topmost management positions to run two offices. She particularly made mention of time constraints, saying:

Finding time to achieve those two goals makes it somehow difficult.

I believe her remarks about running two offices were quite accurate since it can be difficult to manage both offices not to talk of dividing your time and attention, and the complexities of each role.

In addition, lack of resources was mentioned in our discussion. Some respondents believed lack of resources was a challenge they faced when it came to their work life. Ms. Scarlet mentioned the “significant challenge” she has had to face

has to do with a lack of resources.

She elaborated on the point raised saying, “*as a public investment*” that is supposed to be funded by the government, “*funding has dwindled*” and it does

not cover up for “*the increasing expenditure*” of the University. She continued saying, in as much as the little they have has to be managed prudently, “*sometimes some people may not understand you*”. Thus, making “*lack of resources*” a key and challenging factor. It was also Ms. Eliza’s belief that:

not having enough resources was a challenge.

Though she was not allowed to solicit resources as the University does not permit it, she is nevertheless responsible for ensuring the needed resources are made available, especially for students to enhance an enabling environment.

Social Responsibilities

Social responsibilities were another factor that came up during one interview session. Ms. Adeola mentioned being “*a church leader*”. In her story, she described how she had to remain for long hours due to her position as a church leader and her commitment to taking care of her family as Sundays were days she got to spend more time with her family. She said:

I'm a church leader. So, one time one of the finance ministers said Ms. Adeola, madam, you have to stay for the two services before you go home. I said if I can, I will stay. But you see, I have my family to go and take off. So, if I spend my time at church, and my family collapses, what happens?

Even though the other respondents did not bring up the subject of having additional social responsibilities to attend to, I believe they may also face such a challenge. This is because another respondent brought up her involvement at the church where she fellowships as another also said:

I have other responsibilities (Ms. Eliza).

In addition to social responsibilities, having multiple roles is a theme that came up. Having multiple roles is a common theme that seems to pop up

in research concerning women's underrepresentation (Madsen & Longman, 2020). Similarly, some respondents believed having multiple roles is a challenge women occupying topmost management positions face.

It is so because I usually tell people women have multiple roles (said Ms. Brielle).

So, while you are a lecturer, you are teaching. You are also a mother, a wife, and a homemaker as well so juggling the two – “taking care of the house” while simultaneously completing “academic work and getting time for research” for example is difficult (Ms. Brielle).

Again as Ms. Brielle puts it:

being a woman – combining work and the management of a university is not an easy task.

This she believed having multiple roles was a challenge and could perhaps contribute to why we do not find a considerable number of women in topmost management positions.

Furthermore, in discussing the theme ‘combining work and family responsibilities’ respondents brought up some ways through which they overcame some challenges they faced. They indicated the following:

Writing Memos and Position Papers

The findings of the study indicate that memos and position papers were some of the most used tools they employed in overcoming some of the challenges they faced. Ms. Eliza mentioned:

I have written some memos and position papers on some of the challenges and the way forward.

Ms. Adeola also believed it was up to them to encourage other women to come up, and with that thought in mind, she recently wrote a memo. She said:

I just sat here and did a memo titled “How to Mentor Women in the University to Climb to the Top” (which she’s yet to submit).

She then went further to state practical ways in which that can be achieved as she raises a genuine concern of:

How are we going to go about it? She thus talks of “Re-creating an avenue: A mentorship programme for young female administrators at UCC”

where mentees or administrators could meet up with their mentors or top management officials to get together and share. Ms. Scarlet added that, in as much as memos have to be written, they must be written “*for the systems to be corrected*” that is when issues are identified and recommendations must be given to address those issues.

And we also have to look at systems and maybe write memos for the systems to be corrected. if you find out something has to be done in a certain manner, then you have to look at the problem, work on it, and then bring your recommendation.

She further commented on writing “*a number of proposals to business partners*” who have supported the University in diverse ways.

From the responses of respondents, memos and position papers seem to be a major way of communicating and addressing some challenges they face specifically regarding issues in the University of Cape Coast which are of concern to female administrators.

House Help

Though it was uncommon for individuals to accept the concept of house help (Deka, Bezbaruah, Yesmin, Baruah, Pathak, & Dubey, 2023), people are currently accepting it. One of the respondents believed it has been beneficial to her. Ms. Adeola referred to her house help as her “*younger sister*”. She believed it was one of the things that worked for her especially considering work and family life, as she said:

That lady did a very marvelous thing.

She also expressed gratitude to her “*younger sister*,” noting that she has been “*staying with her for more than a decade and the great support she has received from her*”.

Presentations

Presentations also came up as a theme as a few of the respondents believed that could aid solve some of the challenges they faced.

I have had the opportunity to make presentations, and I have outlined some of the challenges and the way forward, Ms. Miley said.

I believe making people aware of such challenges helps as it provides a platform for further discussions, and allows fellow women to share their perspectives on the matter. It may thus motivate them to overcome the challenges they face or overcome any self-doubt they may have as well as build professional networks.

Giving Professional Advice

Giving professional advice does not seem to be the answer to the problem of women’s underrepresentation; nevertheless, according to Ms. Scarlet, it helped deal with some of the issues that came with her job. She said:

As women, we “*see from afar and do advice*”.

And the advisory role for her by the grace of God has been great since she has been commended for the support she has been giving especially to her senior colleagues. Ms. Scarlet continued:

You have to make sure that you work around the professional advice you have to provide and pray that it will be taken as management sometimes counts on that to make decisions. In situations where her advice is not taken, she sometimes has to “write for posterity’s sake”.

Motivation to Persevere

Again, in the course of the discussion, the theme of motivation also came up as respondents discussed things that pushed them to persevere despite the challenges they faced. They all gave various reasons as to what pushed them to persevere and the most recurring theme was job satisfaction. The following are the reasons respondents gave for their perseverance in our interactions.

Some respondents believed that the satisfaction from their jobs is what kept them going despite the tough nature of their work. Also, the fact that they make sure they are contributing their quota to something is what keeps them going. For example, Ms. Adeola said:

For me, it’s about having that job satisfaction, making sure that whatever I’m doing or whatever I do contributes to something.

Ms. Scarlet added that:

It all has to do with job satisfaction.

She further commented that:

If you really have job satisfaction, you get up, you just ask God to give you the strength

to move on with your work because there will always be challenges.

Also, Ms. Eliza mentioned she has been very consistent with what she wants to achieve. Thus, she explained that:

I always move towards that direction, defying all odds and making sure that I'm able to achieve my goals. As I indicated earlier, from the onset a colleague told me this is the first time a female is heading this office, so let them know that we are capable of doing it and even doing it much better. So, you know, I knew that people were looking up to me as to what she would be able to do. So, I was also bent on making an impact. Making sure that they can really tell the difference, that what men can do women are even able to do it and do it much better. And everybody acknowledges the fact and recognizes that I have done much better. So, it's about you making up your mind that this is what you want to do – you want to make an impact; you want people to know that women can do it much better. And I think you can make it because I also have a family. I have other responsibilities but then we make sure we have time; we plan our lives and then we engage and make sure that where possible we delegate and make sure we supervise. At the end of the day, you are good to go.

Lastly, one respondent believed the mission and vision set alone was enough to keep her motivated to move on. Ms. Brielle shared her thoughts on why that was the case. She said:

When I was applying for the position, I told them that I wanted to bring certain things on board. So, I want to make sure that by the time I finish my term, I will have supported them. And I would have brought on board, what I promised them. So, every time I wake up, I'm motivated by supporting the University to achieve its vision and mission. (Ms. Brielle)

In conclusion, the respondents' perspectives on 'overcoming challenges' indicate that they had a variety of strategies to manage or address the challenges they encountered or had to confront. This ought to encourage aspiring women that, even though they may have their work cut out for them, there is always a way forward to overcome whatever challenges they may face along their career path.

Research Question 4: what are the success stories of women occupying topmost management positions?

This research question sought to highlight the achievements of women who have reached the topmost managerial positions. This would serve as an inspiration or guide for aspiring administrators or female leaders and contribute to the broader discussion on gender disparity in our higher education institutions. Discussed below are themes that were developed from interview sessions with respondents, and this includes their definitions of success, their success stories (examples or narratives that highlight their achievement), as well some advice for young women.

Defining Success

Before sharing their success stories, participants defined what success meant to them as admiration, impacting their generation, peace of mind,

satisfaction, and not money. Discussed below are these themes that evolved from respondents' definition of success.

Admiration

A few of the respondents believed that the kind of admiration people had towards them showed whether they had been successful or not. For example, Ms. Eliza said:

It's how you work, how people see you, how people admire or appreciate what you do.

She believed one is successful when you have people admire you or the work you do. This suggests that when people recognize your achievements and qualities, you can be deemed successful. Admiration can also signify that you have made a positive impact on others and inspire them to strive for success themselves.

Impacting my Generation

Many of the respondents also defined success as the impact they have had on their generation.

Well, I always tell people that when I look at success, I'm looking at being able to impact my generation (said Ms. Brielle).

She went ahead to mention ways through which she believed she was making an impact.

For instance, the establishment of the D-Hub, supporting student entrepreneurs, supporting the mobilization of resources – like getting resources for students' financial support so that most students can get financial aid. That is how I see – I measure success. I measure success

in terms of the impact, or a change you've brought into someone's life.

And that's how I see the impact (Ms. Brielle).

Another respondent described how she has impacted life and sees that to be a form of success. She said:

Last week I was telling somebody that very soon, not too long to come I will be going on retirement. I haven't done anything - no investment like maybe you have a hostel, you have a building to rent and all that. No, but I am so satisfied that I have impacted life and I continue to impact life. Yes, so that is my motivation - once I can impact life; and as for students; a number of students. Yes, today I was telling somebody I have 2 wards to pay their school fees more than 11, 000 Ghana Cedis. Where do I know them from? Ahaa. But once those people are needy and they need education and you can provide for them, that should be okay (Ms. Scarlet).

Respondents believed that impacting their generation was a powerful way to measure how successful they have been or to define success. This is because impacting their generation means they have made a lasting difference in the lives of others, positively influenced people around them, and contributed to the betterment of society.

Peace of Mind

Nowadays every individual seeks to have his or her peace of mind. Surprisingly, it pops up here as one means by which success can be defined. Ms. Scarlet defined success, saying:

Oh, for me success means having peace of mind in my soul. Success – as I sit here irrespective of the economic challenges that we are going

through as a nation, and as an institution, when I sleep, I do sleep because I have the peace of God in my heart. I take it as a success.

As shared by Ms. Scarlet, peace of mind can also be defined as success because it reflects a sense of contentment, fulfillment and inner harmony. It suggests that women who hold such topmost administrative positions have attained a condition of mental and emotional well-being when they are at 'peace of mind'. Thus, it shows they have achieved success, found balance in their lives, and are content with the decisions and outcomes they have made. I also think peace of mind is frequently taken as an indicator of one's success in life.

Satisfaction

Some respondents were also of the opinion that the satisfaction they had from the various work they did counts as success. Upon sharing their views on job satisfaction Ms. Adeola said:

For me, it's about having that job satisfaction, making sure that whatever I'm doing or whatever I do contributes to something.

Once you move on (to a higher position) you get that satisfaction, that recognition that everybody would want, added Ms. Eliza.

These women view satisfaction as a form of success due to their contentment and fulfillment with their experiences and accomplishments. The fact that they feel content and fulfilled suggests that they have achieved their objectives or expectations. In other words, they have a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment that comes from knowing they have achieved what they set out to do. Thus, when they feel satisfied with their work and results, I believe that can be a sign of success.

Success is not About Money

Most participants explicitly stated that being successful has merely nothing to do with money opposing the popular perception of the youth today.

Ms. Adeola emphasized on that saying:

Success is not about money. Yes, as I said it's not about money. If you are successful, it's not about money., It's not money that will make you successful- the job satisfaction. You wake up in the morning you feel fine to come to work, you feel okay.

Ms. Scarlet was also of the same opinion that:

Yes, success is not money.

As she said, it's about having her peace of mind and being satisfied with impacting souls.

In summary, although there were many definitions provided, the three primary definitions of success offered by respondents were impact my generation, job satisfaction, and success is not about money.

Success Stories of Women Occupying Topmost Managerial Positions

The respondents felt that their success was a result of family support, making an impact, empowering women, having the ability to facilitate, and present awards when needed, introducing innovations, improving working conditions, providing the needed resources, training staff, and writing memos or papers. What respondents had to say about their success stories is discussed below.

Family Support

All participants believed that without the support of their families, they would not have attained such higher heights. A few participants mentioned

their spouses in particular. For example, Ms. Scarlet talked about how supportive her family was saying:

For me, I have had the maximum support even beyond expectation because my husband was very supportive while he was alive. He was very supportive and helpful in everything – household chores, encouraging me. When you close late from work and you get home, he'll be waiting for you to welcome you and find out how you fared at work. He's been very supportive. My children as well.

Another respondent, then, mentioned that:

Of course, I got a husband who also supported me (Ms. Brielle).

Also, Ms. Eliza mentioned having a helping hand from her mother stating that:

I also have my mum around so sometimes she also comes in and provides me with the needed support.

Similarly, Ms. Adeola has also had great support from her family. She, however, stated that her family has also not had it easily.

"Ei", my family has suffered! They have suffered – my husband and my children. It has not been easy. During the tender stages of my career life, I sometimes had to stay late and do some work, and they were young (referring to her children). They were very young. And even when I got the opportunity to go and do my Masters, my second born was two years old. And my in-law had to come in. Yes. So, my husband's family side and my family have been of great support.

She further talked of a friend who had been of great support and described her as family.

And there is this friend. And she's more than family. She helped a lot. Whenever I'm not in the country, Mrs. Efua will make sure to go to my house, to look at my children and see how they are faring. Whatever they need she will send it to them (Ms. Adeola).

She, then, further described the support she received from her family, saying:

So as for my immediate family, my husband, and my children – my family has really been helpful. And my siblings – my siblings have also contributed financially, and emotionally. And my uncles have all helped. But my mother died early when I was 7 years old. Even though my father is there, it has been my siblings and my maternal family. They've really supported me and my nuclear family. My in-laws – they've helped me. And some friends as I said, they've been there for me all this while.

From the narratives of respondents, they all had support from their families. The opinions of respondents are in line with those of Dadzie (2020) who noted from her research that family support greatly contributed to the success of women attaining senior leadership roles in higher educational institutions.

Empowering Women

According to respondents, a key component of their success story is women's empowerment. Empowering women involves providing them with the tools, opportunities, and support to thrive and reach their full potential. Ms. Eliza begins by outlining the components of her empowerment story stating that:

The successes have to do with empowering women in the hall and even the women that I work with through talks and taking opportunities at meetings. I have had the opportunity to organize some sessions for the ideal women in the halls and even invite resource persons to come and talk to them about their bodies, their outlooks, how to relate with the opposite sex, and all that

And I have had personal issues dealing with students which I think I have been able to help them overcome and so that is it (Ms. Eliza).

She believed empowering women is an essential part of her success story from her narrative. In her view, a higher educational environment that is more equitable and fairer is produced when women are supported and uplifted. By providing opportunities, resources and a supportive environment these young women are enabled to thrive and succeed in various aspects of their lives. Their success, then, becomes a testament to the progress made in breaking down barriers and creating a more inclusive higher educational environment.

Innovation and Creativity

Innovation and creativity were a common theme among respondents. For example, Ms. Brielle believed she could not talk about how successful she had been without mentioning innovation and creativity. She said:

my area is entrepreneurship and small enterprise development. What I've done is to provide my innovation, and my creativity in that area. So, the setting up of the design thinking, promoting entrepreneurship among students, among staff, supporting the community, and also helping the university mobilize resources to be able to achieve some of

its goals and objectives. So those are the things I've also brought on board.

Ms. Scarlet also mentioned that women “*bring a lot of things – innovations on board*”. She, then, cited an example:

In our case for instance, when dealing with money you won't wait for somebody to tell you – if today I have 20,000 Ghana cedis in an account that it should be put on call and that by tomorrow I may get 2 cedis out of that. By the time the letter will go round, round, round, and come, we would have lost that money. Ahaa, so if you are given the opportunity then with your expertise you are able to turn over the little money that comes to you in addition to whatever...

This finding implies that putting money on call or investing in innovative ideas can also be viewed as successful endeavors since it demonstrates a belief in the potential of those ideas. This funding affirms the idea's worth and significance while also enabling the university to flourish in the way it must. The organization may be able to get a big return on its investment by supporting creative projects. Additionally, this is a means of contributing to the success tale and positively influencing the organization.

Positive Impact

The majority of respondents believed having a positive impact forms part of their success story. They all were of the view that they had a positive impact on the lives of those around them. For example, Ms. Eliza shared that some of her coworkers had spoken about the difference she is making in her workplace.

Even now, the one I succeeded, when he comes, he goes like - Ei, Charley you have done well o, you have done well o. Everybody acknowledges the fact and recognizes that I have done much better.

Additionally, Ms. Adeola believed her servant leadership has positively benefitted the people she works with since they see it that way. Though Ms. Brielle felt she was making a modest but meaningful difference in people's lives, it was more about innovation and creativity.

Institution of an Award Scheme

Respondents expressed views that indicated that awards can play a significant role in an individual's success story as they serve as recognition and validation of their accomplishments. Ms. Eliza believed she could not talk about being successful without mentioning those she has worked with and their contribution to her success story. An indicative quotation is below:

When necessary, we do some kind of award recognition to motivate them and then we are good to go. They are very hard working but then for them to even realize what they have in them it takes somebody to you know, motivate them, to talk to them aha. Motivation doesn't deal with giving money – praises, awards, etcetera (Ms. Eliza).

The finding suggests that when someone receives an award, it acknowledges their hard work, talent and dedication. It not only boosts their confidence but also enhances their professional reputation. Thus, respondents like Ms. Eliza recognized the efforts of her coworkers by presenting awards to show how grateful she was for their support in helping her achieve various milestones.

Effective Facilitation

Sharing some achievements that contributed to her success story, Ms. Adeola also mentioned being able to see the fruition of some projects through effective facilitation. She added up to her success story as she said:

Transport through my leadership – transport has been able to get a Lube bay. They went out to the insurance companies that we work with and they have been able to get a washing bay and lube bay which wasn't there. So through the initiative, they've gotten all those things. As I said they wrote letters, I facilitated. And then so basically, as I said, when it comes to finances, I make sure that I do some savings for the university and it's the same thing.

Her success story was aided by project facilitation, which enabled the initiatives to be completed by offering the required resources, support and direction. Through proficient project management, a collaborative, productive, and inventive atmosphere was nurtured, resulting in the accomplishment of targeted results and a comprehensive triumph.

Improved Work Conditions

Some respondents believed improving the working conditions of staff and students in the University community was a huge part of their success story. Ms. Eliza, for example, shared ways through which she has improved the working conditions of staff and students saying:

I have also improved the working conditions of the staff - buying them boots to wear; with the hall assistant lodge, I have had a total renovation and then provided them with furniture, television, monitoring machine. At least something to keep them and make their

work life much easier. I have also renovated my general office and then my first office. I have also been able to renovate a number of washrooms. I have created a conference room because my office space doesn't have a conference room but we have carved a portion of the rooftop and we have had a conference room set up. I am just waiting for the furniture which has not been delivered. I am hoping that it will be set up then I can commission it.

As outlined, improving working conditions contributes to respondents' success stories. Thus when the organization's management prioritizes and invests in better working conditions for its staff and students, it can lead to several benefits such as enhancing employee satisfaction and morale, which in turn boosts productivity and performance and a positive cycle of success where students and employees thrive.

Training

Some respondents believed training plays a crucial role in facilitating success. As such, they provide training to their colleagues as it provides them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to pursue their organizational goals and increase their chances of success. She spelled out the individuals she provides training to saying:

I provide training too for the hall assistants so that we can equip them so that they can work very hard - and that one I even do it for the whole university. I provide workshops for the hall assistants in the entire university. I provide training for the staff in their various areas
(Ms. Eliza).

She further added:

Even if you will not be able to facilitate, you can engage somebody to do that. For instance, if the strategic planner has somebody at the School of Business, I invite the person to take us through how we will be able to achieve the goals and extra, and then we follow it duly.

This demonstrates the value of training and how it helps them succeed. Additionally, training others adds to one's success narrative in several ways including showcasing their expertise and leadership skills, building relationships, enhancing their professional reputation, and leaving a positive impact on others while also strengthening their skills and accomplishments.

Providing the Needed Resources

As essential as providing training is, a few of the respondents expressed that providing the needed resources is also essential because the two go hand in hand. Thus, in addition to providing training, Ms. Eliza mentioned that:

We provide the needed resources that will enable them to achieve it because it's not by achieving it with word of mouth.

In this sense, this adds up to the success stories of these women occupying topmost management positions when they do more than simply impart knowledge – rather providing the needed resources. These resources could be anything from educational resources to financial support to physical assets. Also, in providing such resources, they are not only empowering others but also making a lasting impact on their journey's success.

Writing Memos and Giving Recommendation

Writing memos was cited by some respondents as a means of enhancing their success story because they were able to communicate effectively and through that showcase their competence, professionalism and the value they bring to the organization. In addition to writing about some challenges they faced or some issues with the systems, they suggested some solutions and/or recommendations. Ms. Scarlet thus talked of some memos she had written saying:

As for the memos, I can't count. These days because others need the memos for their promotion – I don't really need that any longer so I will rather give you the topic, give you the insights, and then help you develop it, and then I will put a cover letter on it to management to defend it. I have never sent anything to management that was rejected. You look at the issues at stake; you consult.

In brief, respondents sought to write memos mainly as a means of solving issues which led to the betterment of the institution thus adding to their success story.

In addition to their success stories respondents advised prospective female leaders. The advice given to aspiring young women and administrators from these successful women aimed to help them avoid potential pitfalls, learn from their success, and make informed decisions. Discussed below are the themes that emerged from the advice given.

Believe in Yourself

Young women were urged to have confidence in themselves if they wanted to occupy topmost management positions. Accordingly, Ms. Brielle

advised that young women who would want to occupy such positions someday should believe in themselves. She said:

Believe in yourself and work towards the achievement of that goal, because I believe that everything is possible if you put your mind to it and you work very hard.

Respondents believed having confidence in one's abilities, talents and worth allows one to take on challenges, overcome obstacles, and pursue your dreams with determination. As such prospective female leaders were encouraged to recognize their strengths, embrace their uniqueness, and trust that they have what it takes to achieve their goals.

Be Humble

Respondents believed humility is key to the success of young women who would want to take up topmost managerial positions. In response to that, Ms. Adeola said:

The young ladies coming up, be humble. Be humble, be submissive, and don't think that you know everything. You still learn. It's only when you are submissive that you can learn, that someone will teach you... So that's the advice I would give.

Ms. Scarlet added that:

We should also be humble and know that we are not the 1st people to occupy such positions. As I have said, when I came to this University it was a woman who was occupying this current position. Even though she was acting, she was a woman. And she acted for a long time before she went on retirement. And then a man came. And I also took over.

So, me too one day God willing I will end gloriously and somebody else will take over from me.

This implies that humility is an important trait to have. It means recognizing and valuing the contributions of others, being open to learning from different perspectives, and acknowledging that we do not have all the answers. It helps one build meaningful connections with others and fosters a collaborative and supportive environment. Thus, as said by respondents, it is equally important to stay humble and continue learning and growing along the way.

Be Disciplined

As respondents believed discipline was a key factor in achieving success, they advised young aspirants emphatically stating:

You have to be disciplined.

According to Sitopu, Sitinjak and Marpaung (2021) to achieve high performance, (work) discipline is essential. When individuals are disciplined, they will make every effort to complete their tasks, which will lead to improved performance (Sitopu, Sitinjak & Marpaung, 2021). They further assert that discipline is the key to every institution's success in reaching one's objectives. Thus, young women aspiring to topmost management positions are urged to practice discipline, which in turn can help them stay committed to their (long-term) goals, manage their time efficiently, and foster perseverance.

Persevere

To persevere is the ability to keep going, even when faced with difficulties or setbacks. In encouraging young women to persevere Ms. Eliza said:

We should not be content with whatever situations we find ourselves in.

This implies that young female administrators and prospective female leaders must maintain a determined and resilient mindset, refusing to give up on their goals. Rather, they should stay motivated, push through the challenges, and aim higher knowing that the setbacks are just temporary roadblocks on the path to success.

Work hard

Working hard simply means putting in the time, effort and dedication to achieve your goals by giving your best, going the extra mile, and striving for excellence. Ms. Adeola thus advised young women to be “hardworking” if they wished to hold the highest management positions. As she stated:

Be ready to go the extra mile. Yes. For example, you are supposed to close at 5 pm and 5 o'clock you get up. No. It will not help. I always tell people that there might be an opportunity where there are 3 people and then one person has to be chosen, what happens? Yes, you may have the knowledge, you may have all that but beyond that, there are other things they look at. Umm, I remember when I was an SAA, so the SAA, we were supposed to close at 4:30 – I had given birth so when you give birth, what time are you supposed to close? 12 o'clock. 4:30/5 I was at the office working and at that time the registrar came to visit my boss so at 5 I went to ask for permission to go. So, the Registrar said, ah, Ms. Adeola where are you going? Your boss is here. And my boss said no, this woman should have closed at 12. It's 5 so we have to let her go. If there's something comes up they'll consider me. When I was at my other office the same thing. I was nursing my thirdborn. I

had to bring him to work. When we are going to conferences, workshops, or retreats, I have to get somebody to go with me maybe to Busia to go and take care of the child while I go to work. So, we should be willing to go extra.

Ms. Brielle agreed with Ms. Eliza saying that, upcoming women or young administrators must:

Work very hard. Look at the requirements. That's what I did. I looked at the requirements that were needed. So, if I'm a lecturer, I have to publish to get a senior lectureship, Associate Professor, or Full Professor. So, look at the requirements, set a goal for yourself, and work towards the achievement of that goal.

Ms. Scarlet also added her voice saying:

We shouldn't slack. You don't have to be lazy. Find something else to do aside from your job. Find something – a hobby, a hobby that can even earn you an income. God rewards those who work hard. And even in Akan, they say, “nea ɔfo dua pa eno na yɔ pia no”. So, once you are climbing a very good tree then you have people to push you. Ahaa. But if you want to remain under the tree because the tree is providing you with shade then you will remain there. But if you go out of your comfort zone, work hard, and seek the face of God to bless your efforts you will move far.

Respondents believed that though it may not always be easy, the satisfaction and sense of accomplishment that comes from hard work are truly rewarding since progress is made in whatever you set out to do paving the way to success.

Be Pragmatic

Being pragmatic can mean having a realistic approach to things or focusing on what works and finding practical solutions to problems. However, being pragmatic according to Ms. Eliza means:

We should always make a move to make sure that there is some kind of improvement.

She thus advised colleagues and young women to be pragmatic in all their endeavors. She then cautioned that:

Before we can do that, you need to appreciate the situation itself. And then know what to put in place and make sure that you take pragmatic measures or efforts to make sure that you move by whatever you have decided to do and make sure that you work on it and gradually you would get there (Ms. Eliza).

She believed taking pragmatic measures allows one to navigate challenges and find practical ways to achieve their goals. Again, it helps one stay grounded and make decisions that are based on practicality and feasibility. Thus, prospective female leaders are encouraged to be pragmatic as it can certainly contribute to their success story.

Improve yourself

Some respondents advised that there is the need to cause some kind of improvement in one's life as well as in any environment we find ourselves in. For example, Ms. Eliza referenced the unique nature of mothers and stated that:

I would advise that as women a lot depends on us so although we are not all that recognized, it also depends on the attitude you sometimes

put up. You realize that if a person comes home or even you, yourself, when you get home and your mother is not there it gives you a different scenario. And when she is there, the scene is different. Aha, so wherever we find ourselves we should have it in mind that we need to cause some kind of improvement.

This implies that prospective female leaders should take intentional steps to become the best version of themselves. Hence by focusing on self-improvement, they can enhance their skills, knowledge, and personal growth and show their desire to reach their full potential making an impact on various lives.

Set a Goal for Yourself

Setting a goal for yourself means giving yourself something to strive for and work towards. Ms. Brielle thought that it is essential to “set a goal for yourself” especially as a young woman who wants to aspire to such managerial positions. She advised:

I always tell people that when you want to achieve a goal or when you set a target, you get challenges, you get discouragements. There are a lot of impediments that will come your way. I believe that while you surmount those impediments or those challenges, they also give you experience. But at the end of the day make sure that you set your eyes on the goals you want to achieve, and you work towards that.

Therefore, goal-setting is crucial but, these aspirational women will also need to put in the effort to see their goals through to completion. By setting goals they will be able to measure their progress and celebrate their achievements along the way.

Study

Some respondents again advised young female administrators and/or potential leaders to put in their maximum best when it comes to their academic work. Ms. Adeola advised that it is important for one to take her studies seriously, especially for young women aspiring to topmost management positions in higher educational institutions. She said:

For now, it's about studying because without studying you cannot move up. There are criteria that you have to meet. And as I said, taking the MPhil and others is good, but in higher education institutions you have to also know what is happening around us. You know, everything is about the internet. I mean you have to learn not only about your institution but about what is also happening around us. Now you can be here and there will be another opportunity somewhere.

Ms. Eliza also mentioned that there is the need to “study hard”.

In today's world where acquiring the right information is key (in the higher education circle) and new trends emerge every day, respondents were of the view that studying is an excellent way to gain knowledge and achieve one's goals.

Be Submissive

Another advice given to young female administrators and upcoming female leaders was for them to be submissive, that is, tending to willingly yield to authority. Ms. Adeola advised that, in addition to being humble,

they should be submissive and that will take them very far.

Submissiveness as mentioned by a few of the respondents shows that women working under others must respect authority, follow directions, and perform their duties as expected of them.

Manage Time

Referring to Ms. Scarlet, time management is critical to the success of women, especially those occupying topmost managerial positions. She said it should not always be “work, work, work or church, church, church” as she referred to the Bible saying:

Ecclesiastes says there is time for everything. So, we need to allocate our time very well.

She further went on to say:

Time management is critical to be successful. So, when you are also bringing up your children, you manage your time. The children also need your attention. Your career also needs your attention. Your husband also needs your attention. So how do you manage the three so that man will not suffer? Yes. You cannot be with your children leave your husband, and be with your husband and leave your children. Then the work too you leave it. No, gone were the days when women were just raising the children at home- housewives. These times there is no such business as called 'housewife'. You will even get tired at home and find something else to do. So, it is good that we advance in our careers....

Effective time management is a crucial skill that can significantly boost one's success, even though just one respondent offered this advice. By managing time efficiently, one can increase productivity, reduce stress, and

achieve their goals more effectively. Therefore, prospective female leaders are encouraged to find a balance and make the most of the time they have.

Trust in God

As most respondents had belief in God, almost all of them were of the view that trusting in God was the right way to go because they felt a sense of peace, guidance and comfort. They thus advised that:

the first thing is to put your trust in God as said by Ms. Brielle.

Ms. Scarlet also repeated saying:

My advice is they should seek God first.

Trusting in God was a personal belief that helped responders find strength during challenging times and have faith in the bigger picture as such, they advised prospective female leaders to do the same.

In conclusion, women who want to be in topmost managerial positions were mostly advised to be hardworking, and humble, and to put their faith in God.

Chapter Summary

The respondents, though having unique career journeys, shared common experiences and challenges, particularly regarding the underrepresentation of women in topmost management positions. A major issue highlighted was the difficulty of balancing work and family responsibilities. Despite these challenges, each woman found her own way to navigate them – often with the help of mentors, personal resilience and support systems. They credited hard work, humility and family backing as key to their success. For aspiring female leaders in higher education, the

respondents advised perseverance, self-improvement, faith in God and embracing the challenges of the field.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The concluding chapter provides a summary of the study. The chapter begins with an overview of the research focus and questions. The research methods employed, the major findings, the conclusion, and related recommendations are also discussed. The chapter concludes with an overview of suggestions for further research.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of female administrators who hold topmost management positions in higher education, with a focus on UCC. The study sought to examine the unique characteristics these women possess; including the challenges they have faced, their success stories and the reasons behind the low number of women in topmost management positions.

The questions that guided this research were:

1. What are the characteristics and attributes common among women who have succeeded in higher education administration?
2. How have they interacted with superiors, subordinates, or co-workers in positions of authority?
3. What factors contribute to the underrepresentation of women in senior positions as administrators?
4. What are the success stories of women occupying topmost management positions?

To gather data, the study employed a qualitative approach. Interviews were conducted to collect and gain insights from women occupying topmost management positions. Using the purposive sampling technique, data were collected from four participants. The analysis of this study was facilitated by the use of NVivo, a tool for thematic analysis. The framework (namely; data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification) developed by Miles and Huberman (1994) was also employed during the data analysis process in addition to Creswell's (2013) spiral method. The results presented were based on themes that emerged from the interview and the research questions for the study.

The following are the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

Summary of Key Findings

1. The study revealed three main characteristics or attributes common to successful women in top management positions associated with research question one. These were collaboration and effective communication, emotional intelligence and motivation as well as foundational traits for professional excellence.
2. Participants' reflections highlighted two key aspects in their leadership development: adaptability in leadership style and the value of interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, solid interpersonal relationships – with superiors, peers, and direct reports – were viewed as vital to achieving institutional and personal goals since they were founded on mutual respect and collaboration, maintaining a healthy work environment.

3. In addressing research question three, the study identified several interrelated factors, such as traditional gender roles and the dual burden of professional and domestic responsibilities, as factors contributing to the underrepresentation of women in topmost management positions. Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated resilience and drive in navigating their paths to leadership.
4. Concerning research question four, participants highlighted key values and support systems that contributed to their leadership success. They emphasized the importance of hard work, humility, and faith, particularly trust in God, as guiding principles. Strong family support was consistently cited as a critical enabler of their achievements. Also, in offering advice to aspiring female leaders, participants encouraged a broader definition of success – one that prioritizes meaningful impact over material wealth.

Conclusions

The results of the study cannot be generalized over a large population. Nonetheless, the findings are of benefit to aspiring female leaders in our Ghanaian higher education institutions. Based on the study's findings the following conclusions can be drawn, along with the implications of neglecting the challenges identified:

1. The study highlights the excellent leadership abilities of women in top management positions marked by resilience and the ability to manoeuvre through complex organizational dynamics. However, failing to recognize and harness these abilities may lead institutions to

overlook qualified women, ultimately limiting organizational innovation and inclusive leadership.

2. The study reveals that leadership style plays a pivotal role in shaping a female leader's effectiveness and how she is perceived within the organization. Without support for adaptable and inclusive leadership, women may struggle to establish or assert authority and build workplace relationships, which could negatively impact team performance.
3. The study identifies key factors contributing to the underrepresentation of women in leadership, such as a lack of support from their fellow women, stereotypes, and work-life balance issues. Without intentional efforts or proactive measures to address these issues, institutions may continue to reinforce gender disparities and miss the advantage of diverse, inclusive leadership.
4. Finally, while some women have managed to overcome systemic challenges and achieve notable success, their experiences serve as a cautionary tale underlining the possibility that unresolved challenges may deter many capable and qualified women from aspiring to or sustaining leadership roles. This would not only hinder gender disparity but also deprive the sector of the full range of talent and perspectives necessary for progress.

Recommendations

The findings of the study inform some recommendations (for prospective women leaders) in the field of higher education administration. The study recommended that:

1. Tailor-made leadership development programmes for women in higher education institutions should be offered to enhance their skills, confidence and visibility in management roles. These should focus on collaboration, communication, and strategic thinking, and be integrated into professional development workshops, and leadership curricula to nurture the foundational traits identified in successful female leaders.
2. Higher education institutions should encourage leadership models that allow flexibility in style, supporting both situational and democratic approaches. To strengthen interpersonal relationships, leadership teams should be trained in relational leadership practices, conflict resolution, and team dynamics to maintain a respectful and collaborative environment.
3. Policies must be implemented to reduce the dual burden of work and domestic responsibilities, such as flexible working hours, remote work options, and childcare support. Anti-bias training and institutional accountability mechanisms should be adopted to challenge stereotypes and promote equitable promotion practices. Additionally, fostering female peer networks and engaging male leaders as allies can help promote gender diversity and inclusive leadership.
4. Higher education institutions should promote leadership models that emphasize integrity, humility and social impact. Platforms such as leadership forums, alumni talks, and recognition awards can be used to celebrate female leaders who exemplify these values. This will help shift the narrative of success from material wealth to meaningful

contributions, inspiring emerging leaders to pursue purpose-driven careers.

Suggestions for Further Studies

This study sought to find out why there are few women in the topmost management positions. Although the study produced some enlightening insights, the suggestions for further studies are listed below.

1. Further research can be conducted to compare the experiences of female leaders across different higher education institutions or geographic areas in Ghana. This would provide a national perspective and explore how institutional cultures affect women's leadership trajectories.
2. Conducting a longitudinal study to track the leadership journeys of women over time would provide deeper insights into how challenges, support systems, and leadership styles evolve throughout their careers. Further studies could also examine the long-term effects of mentorship and professional networks on the advancement of women in top management positions.
3. Research is needed to understand why women would not want to support their own when it comes to career advancement. Additional Studies could be conducted to find out what those in middle management administrative roles think about their female leaders and how men perceive, support, or resist female leadership.
4. Finally, further studies could focus on the psychological and emotional well-being of women in leadership, especially regarding the demands of balancing work and family responsibilities.

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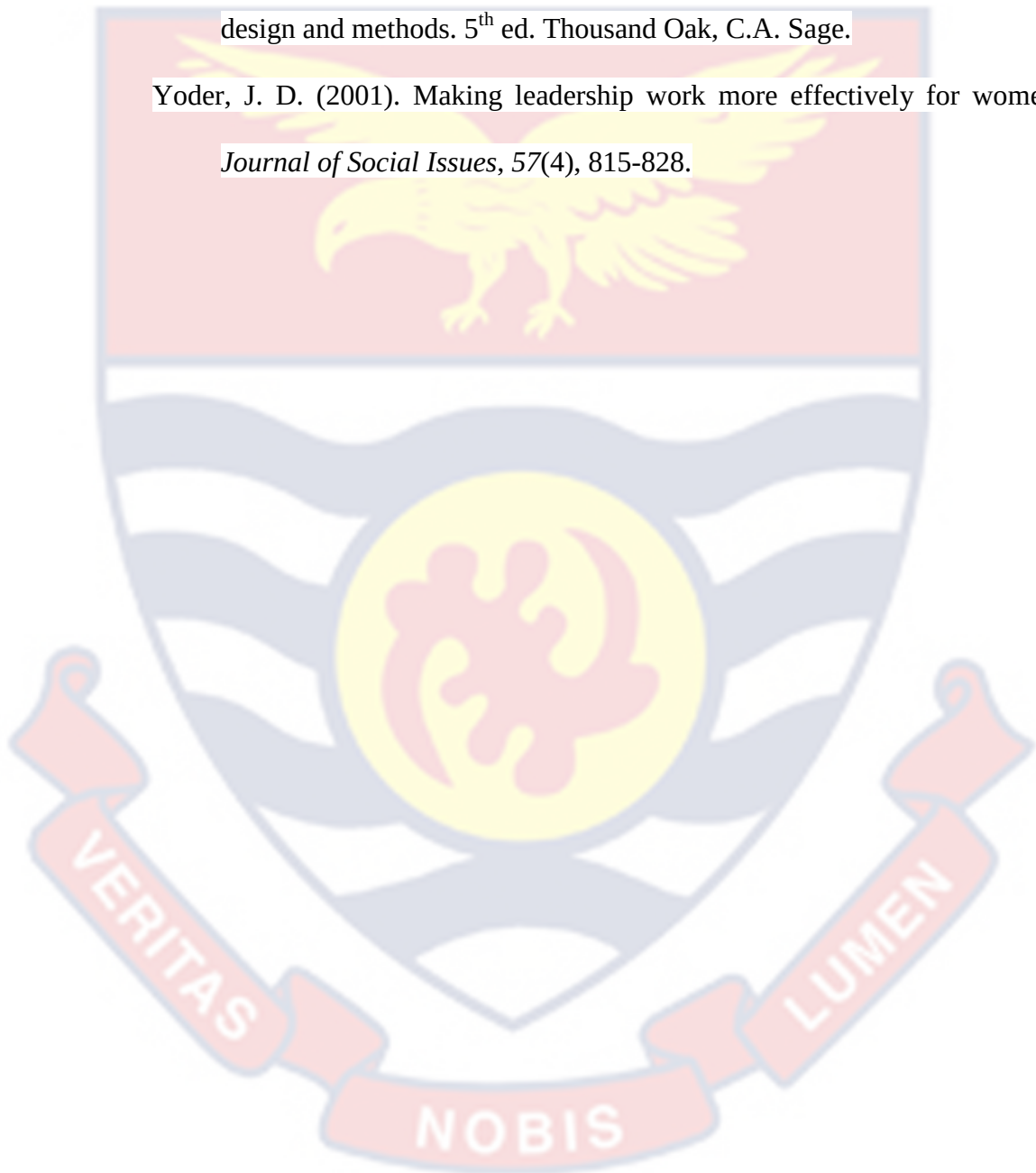
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE ON EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN TOPMOST MANAGEMENT POSITIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

Opening

I am Nancy Aggrey, an MPhil. student at the Institute of Educational Planning and Administration. I am conducting a study on the “Experiences of Women in Topmost Management Positions at the University of Cape Coast” as part of my academic work.

I would like to ask you some questions mainly about your experiences as a leader or woman occupying a top management position at the University of Cape Coast.

I hope to use this information to motivate other women who will want to aspire to such topmost management positions in our Ghanaian higher education institutions.

The interview should take about 60 minutes.

Introduction

I would like to audio-record our discussion. Just to provide you with additional information, the audio recorder will be accessible only to the researcher. You are assured that all information will be kept confidential; your participation is voluntary and you may end it at any time if you feel uncomfortable; and I have no intent to inflict harm.

Thank you for consenting to take part. Let me begin by asking a few questions about you.

Body

A. General Information

1. How are you doing?
2. How has your day been?
3. Have you done anything exciting today?
4. How would you describe yourself?

B. Common characteristics or attributes

1. What personal characteristics or attributes do you believe support women in top management positions?
- C. Interactions between colleagues, subordinates, or co-workers
 1. How would you describe your leadership approach?
 2. What has it been like for you to lead men?
 3. How have you found working with more senior colleagues?
 4. Do you think your subordinates willingly work with you?
 5. How do you cultivate professional relationships and build networks within and outside the University of Cape Coast?
 6. Can you tell me about someone who has positively impacted your life and helped you become the person you are today?
 7. Can you tell me about your experiences helping others grow and develop through mentoring or some other form of support (within the institution)?
- D. Underrepresentation of women in top management positions
 1. What factors do you believe have led to the underrepresentation of women in top management positions (in our higher education institutions)?
 2. a. What are the most significant challenges you have faced as a woman occupying top management positions at the University of Cape Coast?
b. How have you addressed these challenges?
 3. What in your opinion motivates these women (including yourself) to persevere?
- E. Success stories
 1. How do you believe that female leaders like yourself go about bringing change in your organization?
 2. What motivated you to pursue a leadership position at the University of Cape?
 3. How do you perceive the impact of your leadership on staff outcomes and staff engagement?
 4. What do you have to say about the support you have from your family?
 5. Success can be defined in a variety of ways; what does success mean to you?
 6. What advice would you give to women aspiring to higher education leadership positions?

Closing

It has been a pleasure speaking with you and finding out about your unique experiences. I appreciate the time you took out of your busy schedule for this interview. May I contact you again if I have any further questions or need further clarification(s)?

Thank you. Once again, I am grateful.

APPENDIX B: INTRODUCTORY LETTER

 Institute for Educational Planning and Administration at University of Cape Coast, Ghana.	 University of Cape Coast Ghana.	 unesco Centre Under the auspices of UNESCO
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Our Ref.: IEPA-UNESCO /I.2/VOL.2/15010th January, 2024.

To Whom It May Concern

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

The bearer of this letter Ms. Nancy Aggrey (EO/AHP/21/0004) is an M.Phil. Student studying at the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA) at the University of Cape Coast.

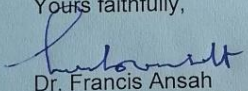
She requires some information from your outfit for the purpose of writing her thesis titled: **"Exploring the Experiences of Women in Topmost Management Positions at the University of Cape Coast"** as a requirement for her M. Phil. Programme.

Kindly give the necessary assistance that Mrs. Nancy Aggrey requires to enable her gather the information she needs.

While anticipating your co-operation, we thank you for any help that you may be able to give her.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,


Dr. Francis Ansah
HEAD, ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES
For: DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL (ACADEMIC PROGS. & PROFESSIONAL DEV'T)

cc: Ms. Nancy Aggrey, IEPA

 Address. CC 145-9167, Cape Coast Ghana, 00233	 Phone. +233 3320-91478 +233 03321-30571	 Email & Web. iepa@ucc.edu.gh www.iepa.ucc.edu.gh
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APPENDIX C: CLEARANCE LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD SECRETARIAT

TEL: 0558093143 / 0508878309
E-MAIL: irbar@ucc.edu.gh
OUR REF: IRB/C3/Vol1/0550
YOUR REF:
OMB NO: 0990-0279
IORG #: IORG0011497



18TH DECEMBER, 2023

Ms Nancy Aggrey
Institute for Educational Planning and Administration
University of Cape Coast

Dear Ms Aggrey

ETHICAL CLEARANCE – ID (UCCIRB/CES/2023/148)

The University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board (UCCIRB) has granted Provisional Approval for the implementation of your research **Exploring the Experiences of Women in Top Management Positions at the University of Cape Coast**. This approval is valid from **18th December 2023 to 17th December 2024**. You may apply for an extension of ethical approval if the study lasts for more than 12 months.

Please note that any modification to the project must first receive renewal clearance from the UCCIRB before its implementation. You are required to submit a periodic review of the protocol to the Board and a final full review to the UCCIRB on completion of the research. The UCCIRB may observe or cause to be observed procedures and records of the research during and after implementation.

You are also required to report all serious adverse events related to this study to the UCCIRB within seven days verbally and fourteen days in writing.

Always quote the protocol identification number in all future correspondence with us about this protocol.

Yours faithful

Kofi F. Amuquandoh
Ag. Administrator

ADMINISTRATOR
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW EXCERPT – FIELD NOTEBOOK

It is very interesting. But how do you see people? I keep on telling my people that everybody is important in an organisation. Because before I come to the office, somebody would come here and sweep. Another person may do something else. I just worked on certain files and somebody came for them. Another person will bring them. You are not the only one doing everything so you have to value the work of each individual in an organisation. If you value their work and you respect everybody... And I keep on saying that respect is not commanded, it is earned. So you realize that, they call something fun-fool-respect, whiles you are here they will be oh yes sir / madam - you leave, and listen to what they will say about you.