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CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN THE SUNYANI WEST DISTRICT

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DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

  I, Regina Agyeiwaa, declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted either in part or whole for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Signature: ………………………………………..

Date: ………………….………….……..……….

Supervisor's Declaration

  I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this dissertation was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Lucy Effeh Attom

Signature: ………………………………….

Date: ………………….……….………..…..

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family.

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on females in political leadership positions. The purpose was to examine the experiences of females in political leadership positions in the Sunyani West District. This study adopted qualitative approach. A total of 14 participants were selected using purposive sampling. The data were collected using interviews. Thematic analysis was used for the data analysis. The results showed that females in political leadership positions perceive leadership in three different ways as task-oriented, goal-oriented and people-oriented. Whatever way they perceived political leadership, they faced several challenges in their leadership roles. The challenges take various forms and come from various sources. There were challenges related to family and community. However, the main challenge facing females in political leadership positions is social misconceptions about female participation in political leadership positions. The effects of these challenges are emotional breakdown of the female in political leadership to the extent that some consider quitting. Family members and supporters of women in political leadership positions receive several emotional traumas. The study reveals that the main effect of the challenges faced by females in political leadership positions is retardation in community development. Despite their challenges, females in political leadership positions appear to encourage other females into political leadership. What they advised was that females seeking political leadership positions should not react negatively to the challenges they may face. They proposed that to be successful in political leadership positions, females need to focus on their output and achievements to show their capabilities in contributing meaningfully to society. In order to challenge social misconceptions, they suggested that females in political leadership positions should develop resilience towards stigmatization, insult and other related offences. The study recommends an urgent need to discourage the unfair, unjust and unequal treatment sometimes meted out to women when they aspire to occupy political leadership positions. Women leaders are encouraged to face squarely these realities to surmount these challenges in order to take their rightful place in political leadership arena.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the Study

Leadership like other processes is gendered and women's struggles in political leadership has been widely documented (Aluko, 2011). For over three centuries females have more often than not been prevented from seeking and assuming positions of leadership and public authority (Dopp & Sloan, 1986). The apparent limited involvement of females in political leadership positions reflects and perpetuates these societal assumptions.

In the pre-colonial era, women played important roles in top decision-making levels in African societies (Attom & Akromah, 2018). Some were princesses, chiefs, land owners, occasional warriors, farmers and traders who were very influential in their societies. Baah, Owusu and Kokor (2005), indicate that African women have played important roles in top decision-making processes in their traditional areas before colonialism. During the period of colonization in Africa, political exclusion of women started when the colonial education system placed more emphasis on educating the male child than the female (Majanja & Kiplang'at, 2003). Consequently, most females were left out of decision-making processes, especially in the public sector because education is the requirement to obtain formal sector job.

Paternalistic ideologies on gender roles particularly among traditionalist's and conservative communities such as in Ghana have produced prejudice toward female leaders. From birth, people start to recognize women with domestic responsibilities such as household duties and caring for home (Majanja & Kiplang'at, 2003) with little exposure to public sector domain. Women are therefore considered as having less leadership abilities than men and their leadership is thus perceived less favourably

(Eagly & Karau, 2002). Today, though evidence suggests that the proportion of women in management is increasing in most parts of the world, doubts about women's leadership skills still exist and some organisations still define and perceive leadership in masculine terms (Brenner, Tomkiewicz & Shchein, 1989; Schein & Mueller, 1992).

Historical analysis of constitutions, electoral laws and processes worldwide are incontrovertibly gender-insensitive (Akiyode-Afolabi, 2010; Omotola, 2010). A critical part of leadership discussions has been gender contestations, especially in terms of the limitations placed on women based on their biology, culture and social role stratifications (Bush, Bell & Middlewood, 2009). Women appear to suffer discrimination, degradation, oppression and all forms of inhuman treatment on account of biological characteristics, cultural beliefs and practices. Until the early twentieth century, sex role stereotypes, occupational stereotypes and discrimination have defined involvement in leadership positions (Dopp & Sloan, 1986).

Women's involvement in politics and political leadership has been a matter international discussion for many years (Genovese, 1993; Thomas, 2003; Curtin, 2008). Discussions of women leadership received impetus when the United Nations organized several successive world conferences on women. These conferences include the international women conferences which took place in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995. International discussions have also been supported by the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by General Assembly Resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979. An important development was the establishment of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women as the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Countries who have become party to the treaty (States parties) are obliged to submit regular reports to the Committee on how the rights of the Convention are implemented. During its sessions the Committee considers each State party report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the State party in the form of concluding observations.

In recent years, women's place in parliament has become ‗accepted' across the world. Nations have encouraged women's participation in elective positions. There has been a significant increase in the number of women political leaders around the globe. The US currently ranks 68th of 134 nations worldwide with only 16.8% of women elected to the House of Representatives and 16.0% elected to the Senate. In October 2003, Rwanda became the country closest to reaching parity between men and women of any national legislature. Currently, Rwanda has 48.8% of Lower House seats held by women and 34.6% held in the Upper House. From 1945 to 1995, the number of sovereign states with parliaments increased seven-fold but the percentage of women members in parliament worldwide increased only four-fold. From 1945 to1997, only 42 of the 186 states with a legislative institution have at one time or another selected a woman to preside over Parliament or a House of Parliament; 18 European, 19 of Americas, 3 African, 1 Asian, 1 Pacific. Women ministers remain concentrated in social areas (14%) rather than legal (9.4%), economic (4.1%), political (3.4%) and executive (3.9%) areas and there are only 13 women in the highest positions of State out of 189 governments (IWDC, 2008).

In Africa, Tripp (2005, p.57) noted that women became very vocal and active in parliamentary debates but had difficulty pushing through legislation that would provide key support to women. Burundi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa,

Tanzania and Uganda are said to have succeeded because they recognized the importance of equity between women and men in decision-making and they instituted changes in their electoral and parliamentary processes (Aluko, 2011; Nwanko, 2011).

In recent times, the situation in other African countries has improved. Despite persisting inequalities, it is common to find women in different professions and at different levels competing with their male counterparts. Women have access to education which has broadened the scope and horizons and given them many job options and opportunities. However, there is significant gap in the participation of women in political leadership positions. Writers explained that women political leadership depended on at least: selection to a safe seat to ensure incumbency over time; professional development through strategic service within party executives and caucuses; practiced performances in parliamentary committees and the debating chamber; party in government; intra-party political or factional machinations and, possibly, the (in)visibility of one's own ‗feminist' positioning (Curtin, 2008). Scholars argue that a mix of factors, individual, structural and politico-cultural constraint the opportunities for women politicians to enter the executive positions of government where there is arguably considerable potential to act for women (Curtin, 2008).

Following years of work, research on the representation of women has burgeoned in recent years, with considerable attention given to the links between the descriptive and the substantive positions. Many of these analyses focus on women's preferences and performances as legislators, and the constraints and opportunities they face in seeking to advance women-friendly positions. Gendering legislatures is a desirable end in itself but is also seen to be a means by which women's interests can become more visibly represented. While there is a body of evidence to suggest this

may occur, more tenuous is the causal link between the numbers of women elected and the substantive representation of women (Sawer, Tremblay & Trimble, 2006).

The focus of research to date has tended to be on women as legislators, rather than members of the executive (Davis, 1997; Curtin, 2008). This is justified on grounds that it takes time for any politician, male or female, to build a political career to the point where they have the capacity to influence directly the government's policy agenda, that is, to become part of the leadership group or the executive (Curtin, 2008). In the past, studying women's political leadership in ways that yielded generalisable results has been difficult because of the dearth of women who held such positions (Thomas, 2003; Curtin, 2008). The rarity of seeing women in political leadership positions has tended to lead to case study research which concentrates on individual women, highlighting the unique characteristics that led them to assume political leadership (Genovese, 1993; Curtin, 2008).

Studies globally have found that women are grossly underrepresented in leadership positions. According to Khdair (2012), women have limited ambitions, lack of confidence in themselves and their work is affected by discontinuity in the work place. Khadair argues that other schools of thought tried to justify the under-representation of females in leadership on the grounds that females do not have what it takes to assume leadership positions; females lack support of their subordinates and community; females do not want the job; females have no training and experience. Some suggest females have been apparently reluctant to peruse and contest for political leadership positions because of societal attitudes toward females in leadership position.

Some religious groups such as Christianity and Islam highlight subordination of women. For instance, societies especially in Arab states who believe in patriarchal theology, compel females to be subordinate and submissive to men. The patriarchal politics suggest that the man is the ―natural‖ head of the household and that their decision-making role naturally extends to public domain. They therefore occupy most of the leadership positions in institutions in all walks of life. Although men generally dominated traditional African societies, some females were able to play roles traditionally reserved for men. Examples of such females are Yaa Asantewaa of Ghana, Indira Ghandi of India, Hilary Clinton of U.S.A, Golda Meir of Israel, Margaret Thatcher of Great Britain, Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, Angela Merkel of Germany and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia.

In Ghana, no law bans females from participating actively in various sectors of the economy and in social life. Upon the attainment of self-government in 1957, the CPP government consciously encouraged the participation of women in politics and appointed some to high political offices as members of parliament, deputy ministers and district commissioners as recognition of their abilities, and ―not acts of tokenism‖ (Allah-Mensah, 2005, p.4). Ghana is noted as one of the first African countries to introduce a quota system for women in 1960. In that year, ―the CPP passed a law allowing for the nomination and election of ten women to the National Assembly‖ (Tamale, 1999, p.23).

However, in Ghana today, low representation of women in political life and decision making is a concern. The Roundtable Conference of the Pathways to Women‘s Empowerment (2009) revealed that women face significant negative cultural practices and religious marginalisation to the extent that they lacked the confidence to come out boldly to contest for political office. Whereas there is no

discriminatory law against women in politics, there are traditional and religious practices which hinder women's abilities to lead successful campaigns alongside male counterparts for political positions. Custom, law and even religion have been used to rationalize and perpetuate these differential roles to the extent that women themselves seem to have accepted and internalized them. The Ghana Statistical Service (2005) reported that male-dominance is a key aspect of the Ghanaian social system and the woman's role and status are recognizably inferior to those of the man in almost all aspects of social, political and economic life. This study, therefore seeks to explore experiences of female political leaders in the Sunyani West District with a view to understanding their challenges and coping strategies they adopt in political leadership positions.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

Feminists critiques highlighted the ways women have been displaced from or submerged in politics, and how much of this visibility has permeated the everyday common-sense notions of leadership (Blackmore, 1989). Leadership has generally been associated with and dominated by male stereotypes (Klenke, 1996). Over the years, there is persistent under-representation of females in both theory and practice of political leadership despite the promulgation of gender policies, laws and initiatives by women and feminist groups (Falaiyr, 2004; Asgari, Dasgupta and Stout, 2012; Anderson, Ahmed, King, Lindsey, Feyre, Ragone, Kim, 2015). Whereas there is significant literature on women leadership in developed countries in the Western world, the literature on women leaders in developing countries is sparse. In the limited literature, Strachan (2007) explained that women in developing countries face barriers to accessing leadership not experienced to the same extent or in the same way by women in developed countries. These barriers are said to be different based on the

different national contexts that women are in and the cultures that are embedded in those societies.

In Ghana, the 1992 Constitution upholds equal position and opportunities for men and women. Consequently, there are numerous discussions and women empowerment initiatives aimed at addressing gender inequality and disparity in almost all sectors of the economy (Anderson et al., 2015). The discussions centre on the processes that limit possibilities, will, intentions, ability, potentials regardless of what qualities a woman display (Asgari et al., 2012). The initiatives have included the development of national policies, gender action plans and the establishment of a Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection as well as laws that ensure gender-sensitive budgeting and policy making within institutions across the country. Efforts by non-governmental organisations and the State has resulted in increased participation of women in elections and national political activity.

Various governments have made efforts to encourage women to participate in politics. At the political party level, some political parties such as the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the New Patriotic Party (NPP), the People's National Convention (PNC), the Convention People's Party (CPP) except for the Great Consolidated People's Party (GCPP), made claims in their manifestoes emphasizing their commitment to gender issues in general and women's concerns in particular. Some political parties in Ghana waived their filling fees for women while the CPP and PNC appointed women as running mates to their presidential candidates in 2012. However, it is not very evident even in their party leadership structure and in their own internal organization (Allah-Mensah, 2005; Attom & Akromah, 2018).

Over the years, few women get elected or appointed to political leadership positions. Men still dominate as assemblymen and government appointees to the disadvantage of women. Attom and Akromah (2018) noted that national statistics from the Electoral Commission indicate that, as at 2014, only 14 per cent of all members in local government assemblies in Ghana were women. They explained that the situation of women remains significantly unchanged as there are few women who get the opportunity to be in leadership positions. Several local and international researches have focused on challenges facing women access to political leadership positions (Al-Jaradat, 2014; Jordan, Greyling & Steyn, 2015). A recent study by Attom and Akromah (2018) in Ghana focused more on factors motivating women to participate in grassroot politics. Other studies have similarly focused on the socio-cultural and political as well as institutional factors affecting the participation of women in political leadership (Abantu, 2010; Yartey, 2012). Such studies have focused on political activities such as partaking in the formulation, passage and implementation of public policies with more emphasis on representative democracy (Allah-Mensah, 2005) or enrollment in a political party, discussion, debating, canvassing for votes, registering as voters, voting, seeking information, lobbying for position and interacting with the leadership of the country (Yartey, 2012). Within such research the barriers identified are discriminatory practices against women that hinder their ability to actively participate in all processes of decision making that affect their lives (Abantu, 2010).

This study departs from the regular and common-feature of previous studies by focusing on the challenges and coping strategies of women in political leadership positions. Its main focus is to understand the challenges that women who get

appointed or elected to political leadership positions are facing and how they deal with such challenges.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of females in political leadership positions in the Sunyani West District and create awareness on the challenges and coping strategies.

1.4   Objectives of the Study

The objectives formulated to guide the study were to:

1. examine the perceptions of female political leaders on leadership in Sunyani West District.

2. examine the challenges facing women in political leadership positions.

3. assess the effects of these challenges on women in political leadership positions.

4. explore how women in political leadership positions cope with their challenges.

1.5   Research Questions

1. How do females political leadership in Sunyani West District perceive leaders?

2. What are the challenges facing women in political leadership positions in Sunyani West District?

3. What are the effects of these challenges on women in political leadership positions in Sunyani West District?

4. How do women in political leadership positions in Sunyani West District cope with their challenges?

1.6   Significance of the Study

The findings of the study would be significant to the national discussions on participation of women in politics. It will help the advocacy campaigns of women related NGOs such as the ARK Foundation. The findings shall serve as a reference document to enable them plan programmes that would help females in leadership positions to combat problems confronting them. Policy makers, opinion leaders and other institutions such as National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) would find the result useful as the data could form the basis of policies and programmes for females in political leadership positions. Also, the findings of this research will help curriculum planners to incorporate issues that would enable females to unveil their leadership potentials and coping mechanisms without fear and be well prepared for the challenges ahead of them. The study would also be useful to females aspiring to be leaders in the Ghanaian society to be adequately prepared for the challenges that await them and plan for uncertainties they may encounter.

The findings would add significantly to knowledge in social science disciplines. The would findings provide some insights that researchers in the fields of social studies, sociology and political science can build upon to conduct further research. The findings are more important for social studies professionals interested in gender and human rights issues. The findings would provide insights into the dynamics involved in the participation of women in political leadership and the consequences that have for theory and practice.

It brings to the fore challenges confronting women in political leadership positions which can inform the general public to enable them to appreciate the problems female leaders face and change their attitudes towards them.

1.7   Delimitations

The scope of this research covers the challenges and coping strategies of women in political leadership in the Sunyani West District. Whereas women face several challenges that could be the subject of academic analysis, the study is delimited to perception of women political leaders on leadership, the challenges and coping strategies adopted by these females in political leadership positions in the Sunyani West District.

1.8   Organisation of the Study

The thesis is organized into five chapters. The introductory part is Chapter One. It deals with background information on the topic, the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study and delimitation. Chapter Two is a review of the relevant literature on the topic. It looks at the theoretical framework and the relevant literature on women participation in political leadership. Chapter Three consists of the methodology, research approach and design, population, sample, and sampling techniques. The methods of data collection and analysis as well as the ethical considerations are also discussed. Chapter Four presents the findings of the study. The data obtained from the field are discussed with the theoretical framework and the literature that informed the research. Chapter Five is the final chapter. In this last chapter, the summary of findings, the main conclusions and the recommendations are presented.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0   Introduction

This chapter presents the literature review that informed the research. It reviewed relevant literature on leadership. The review first presents the theoretical framework guiding the study. It also examined ideas and debates about leadership and traces the history of women in political leadership. Further, the chapter reviews the literature on challenges to women participation in leadership. It explored both the empirical and conceptual literature that documents challenges or barriers to women political leadership. This is followed by an exploration of the challenges facing women in political leadership positions. The final part follows with an examination of women political leadership in Ghana and the gaps within the literature which this research sought to fill.

2.1   Theoretical Framework

Leadership is a complex sociological concept that has attracted attention across fields (Bennis, 2009; Wakoko & Labao, 2009). For some, it is the principal dynamic force that motivates and coordinates the organization in the accomplishment of its objective (Anderson et *al*., 2015, Heilman 2012; Wakoko & Labao, 2009). The work of Anderson et *al*. (2015) and Heilman (2012) indicates that understandings of leadership include interpersonal influence, directed through communication toward goal attainment.

The theoretical framework which was adopted to underpin the research is the liberal feminist theory because it reveals the nature of inequality, gender politics, power relations and sexuality and how women empowerment can propel women from lower level of society to the top. Popular liberal feminists such as Betty Friedan,

Hillary Clinton, Gloria Steinem, Rebecca Walker, Naomi Wolf, Martha Nussbaum and Eleanor Roosevelt believe that equality in pay, job opportunities, political structure, social security and education for women needs to be guaranteed for all to reach their full potential.

Liberal feminists insist on freedom for women on the basis of freedom for individuals (Schwartzman, 2010). Whereas there is disagreement among liberals about what freedom means, and thus liberal feminism takes more than one form, liberal feminism conceives of freedom as personal autonomy—living a life of one's own choosing—and political autonomy—being co-author of the conditions under which one lives. Classical-liberal feminism, or sometimes _libertarian feminism' conceives of freedom as freedom from coercive interference (Young, 2006).

Liberal feminists hold that the exercise of personal autonomy depends on certain enabling conditions that are insufficiently present in women's lives, or that social arrangements often fail to respect women's personal autonomy and other elements of women's flourishing (Fox-Genovese, 1990; Held, 1987). They hold also that women's needs and interests are insufficiently reflected in the basic conditions under which they live, and that those conditions lack legitimacy because women are inadequately represented in the processes of democratic self-determination (Stafford, 2004). Liberal feminists hold that autonomy deficits like these are due to the ―gender system" (Okin 1989, 89), or the patriarchal nature of inherited traditions and institutions. Proponents of this theory believe women's movement should work to identify and remedy gender inequality and injustice. As the protection and promotion of citizens' autonomy is the appropriate role of the state on the liberal view, liberal feminists hold that the state can and should be the women's movement's ally in promoting women's autonomy (Gerson, 2004; Boucher, 2003).

Liberal feminists hold that women should enjoy personal autonomy through a broad range of autonomy-enabling conditions. These conditions include a) being free of violence and the threat of violence that violates women's dignity (Cudd 2006) being free of the limits set by patriarchal paternalistic and moralistic laws that restrict women's options on the grounds that such limits are in women. (Smith 2004; Brake 2004; Chambers, 2008) having access to options as entitlements (Andersson, 2007; Alstott 2004). However, some critics argue that freedom is of limited value because even when enabling conditions like these are in place, women may choose limiting and disadvantaging social arrangements (Smith, 1998). Liberal feminists in general believe that female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that block women's entrance to and success in the so-called public. They work hard to emphasize the equality of men and women through political and legal reform (Tong, 1998). This theory was relevant in this study, because a cursory look indicate that most women do not actively take part in politics because they are impeded by socio cultural factors at the grassroots level. These are the challenges liberal feminist attempt to tackle by creating and supporting acts of legislation that remove the barriers that prevent women from having equal opportunities with men in society (Thurschwell, 2008; Smith, 2004; Spinner-Halev, 2001).

Liberal feminists believe that individuals should be free to develop their own talents and pursue their own interests irrespective of their gender, cultural or religious background. They also demand that everyone receive equal consideration without discrimination on the basis of sex, as enshrined in Article 1 and 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that states that ―all human beings are born equal in dignity and rights without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language,

religion, political or other opinion or status" (Basic Facts About United Nations, 1995, 189).

In terms of political autonomy, liberal feminists by John Rawls' contractualist liberal theory of justice (Smith, 1998), argue that the state should ensure that the basic structure of society distributes the benefits and burdens of social cooperation fairly, that is, in a manner that women as well as men could endorse (Alstott, 2004; Baehr, 2004; McKeen, 2006). They argue that the basic structure currently distributes benefits and burdens unfairly, in part due to the gender system, or the patriarchal nature of inherited traditions and institutions (Barclay, 2013; Bhandary, 2010; Gheaus and Robeyns, 2011).

A second aspect of political autonomy is that women have space in public deliberation and electoral politics. Some liberal feminists, who emphasize the importance of political autonomy—that women be co-authors of the conditions under which they live—focus in particular on participation in the processes of democratic self-determination (Barclays, 2013; Baehr 2004). These processes include both political deliberation in the many arenas of public political discourse, and electoral politics (Peters, 2006; Phillips, 2004). Authors such as Green (2006), argued for guaranteed equal representation of both sexes in parliament. However, the literature shows there is diversity of opinion among liberal feminists about the justice and efficacy of such mechanisms (Peters, 2006).

Liberal feminists believe that both sexes should have equal rights under the law and that until conditions of equality exist, no one can easily assess the natural differences between women and men. What is natural to the two sexes can only be found out by allowing both men and women develop and use their faculties freely. Liberal feminist theory was adopted for this study because, the researcher believes

that individuals should be free to develop their own talents and pursue their own interests irrespective of their gender, cultural or religious background. It should be noted that women as part of the human race need to realize the highest level of development as individuals and group but that can only be achieved if the views of liberal feminists are taken into consideration. Liberal feminists do not seek to reorganize society, but they do seek to expand the rights and opportunities of women to the same level enjoyed by their male counterparts.

2.2   The Concept of Politics

Various scholars hold different views about the concept of politics and as such have defined it differently. For Bluwey (2011, p.11), politics is ―any stable pattern of human relationships that involves power and influence". The proposition is that politics exists wherever there is persistent pattern of relationships and involves, to a significant extent, power, rule or authority." This means that politics is about policy and it encompasses the various processes through which government responds to pressures from various societies and how benefits, rewards and penalties are allocated. This implies political activity is concerned with making decisions about what concerns the state and how resources or values are to be distributed in order not to disadvantage others.

Bluwey (2011) observed that the decisions and rules made by public officials affect the life of every citizen. Similarly, members of civic organisations, religious groups, labour and student unions and various private organisations are bound by the rules and regulations made by their officials. People engage in various forms of activity at the appropriate levels to ensure that those decisions and rules satisfy their needs. These activities, according to Bluwey, regardless of where they are undertaken, are politics and they all have certain basic features in common. They take place within

an organized grouping of individuals; these activities are designed to pursue objectives and to obtain for the participants certain benefits or resources and those engaging in such activities try to attain their goals by employing tactics and deploying assets which are expected to maximize their influence and power potential. This implies that politics is an activity of the people within a geographical area.

2.3   Gendered Perspectives on Leadership

As defined by the International Labour Organization Bureau of Gender-equality (2000), genders refers to the social differences and relation between men and women which are learned, changeable overtime, and have wide variations both within and between cultures. The differences and relationship are socially constructed and learned through the socialization process and are context specific and can be modified (ILO, 2000; Williams & Sheehan, 2001). Thus, the public sphere was for the male and the private or domestic was for the female (Blackmore, 1993). Depending on this understanding, I tried to explore the role that gender plays in leadership discourse.

The examination of gender impact on leadership style is an area that has been widely researched. Eagly and Johnson (1990, p.233) explained that ―social scientists, management consultants, and other writers have addressed the topic of gender and leadership style." From the meta-analysis conducted by Eagly and Johnson, much of the research focused on the more common distinction between task-oriented styles (or initiation of structure) and interpersonally-oriented   styles (labelled consideration), and the dimensions of democratic versus autocratic (similar to the dimensions of participative and directive).

Previously, Adegun and Akomolafe (2010) identified meta-analysis of gender and leadership style that examined studies comparing men and women on task and interpersonal styles as well as democratic and autocratic styles. Evidence was found

for both the presence and absence of differences between men and women. While the authors concluded that the overall search for sex differences in leader style was not demonstrated, significant gender differences were reported in the use of democratic or participatory styles of leadership (Ifedili, 2004). The research of Adegun and Akomolafe (2010) revealed that women leaders are less directive than men.

The study of Druscat (1994) on gender and leadership styles of Roman Catholic Church shows that both women and men leaders were rated to exhibit more transformational leadership behaviours than transactional leadership behaviours. However, women leaders were rated to exhibit significantly more transformational behaviours than men leaders and men leaders were rated to exhibit significantly more transactional behaviours than women leaders. The researcher also added that, in all-female contexts, women leaders exhibit feminine styles of leadership. Smith-Gina, Matkin and Fritz (2004) show women to be more transformational that men, suggesting that stereotypes associated with transformational leadership may be less negatively biased against women leaders than stereotypes associated with other leadership styles. Additionally, women may favour a transformational leader style because it provides them with a means of overcoming the dilemma of role incongruity—that conforming to their gender role can impede their ability to meet the requirements of their leader role.

In leadership research, gender has been distinguished from sex, especially in feminism (Connell, 2009). According to Marshall (1995, p.484), "the feminists" paradigm grew from the dominant male and structural-functionalist perspective. According to Marshall (1995) when women talk, supervise or lead in ways that are not consistent with the dominant paradigm of leadership, their work is not credited as

leadership. The researcher is of the opinion that androcentric philosophy has prejudiced and disadvantaged women who endeavoured to attain leadership positions. According to Blackmore (1989), feminists' reconstruction of leadership would involve women in meaningful discourse of organizational life and values as autonomous individuals rather than as objects of patriarchal discourse, with the focus on relationships between individuals and leadership. The researcher is of the opinion that at least the view should be empowering others rather than power over others.

In West Africa, Brock, Dada and Jatta (2006) highlight that gender and religion play a major role in women political leadership. Adegun and Akomolafe (2010) advanced a view that there is a gender difference in leadership and that women bring different qualities to leadership and leadership positions, which help organizations maintain a competitive advantage. Rosener's (1990) study of female and male executives with similar backgrounds concluded that women tended to manage in different ways than men. The study found that female executives were more interested in transforming people's self-interest into organizational goals by encouraging feelings of individual self-worth, active participation, and sharing of power and information. The qualities stated above are correlated to successful achievements in students' learning, which may explain the success of most women leaders in educational organizations (Agezo, 2010).

According to Gossetti and Rusch (1995), the power of feminists' paradigm is that it focuses on the gaps and blank spaces of dominant cultures, knowledge bases and behaviours. Using those spaces, feminism can focus on women and their experiences, so that feminist theory can become part of contemporary dialogue and experiences, rather than just an add-on to the dominant culture. In the researcher's opinion, many women leaders see discrepancies between the dominant culture and

their own experiences as women leaders. They do not necessarily propose the eradication of current knowledge bases, but to challenge current theories, knowledge and assumptions about leadership, replacing them with dialogue and ideas that are more inclusive, open and democratic. Considering leadership from the foregoing perspectives provides a realistic picture of the various views held by individuals working as leaders. What is imperative is that women in leadership provide a different view and interpretation of leadership.

Male gender qualities are often perceived as aggressive, independent, objective, logical, rational, analytical, decisive, confident, assertive, ambitious, opportunistic and impersonal. These are distinguished from female gender qualities considered as emotional, sensitive, expressive, cooperative, intuitive, warm, tactful, and receptive to ideas, talkative, gentle, tactful, empathetic and submissive. The notion of male and female gender qualities facilitates the argument that male gender qualities are oriented towards more impersonal, task-oriented or transactional approach to leadership, while female gender qualities tends towards more nurturing, relationship-oriented style of leadership that underlies the transformational leadership approach.

The assertion that gender influences leadership approaches is by no means unanimous one. Rosener's (1990) survey of male and female executive with similar age, jobs and education, found that women tended to be more transformational in their leadership style than men. Using their version of transformational leadership model, found that female leaders were more likely than male leaders to practice ‗modding the way' and ‗encouraging the heart' thus identifying women as more likely to be sensitive to subordinates' needs. A cross-cultural study by Gibson (1995) involving Norway, Sweden, Australia and the USA, found that male leaders were more likely to

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emphasize goal-setting than female leaders while female leaders were more likely to focus on facilitating interaction than male leaders. These trends and character traits among women leaders were also noted in the Malaysian public sector leadership survey.

On the other hand, there are those who have argued that leadership is not necessarily influenced by gender but by personality traits (Powell & Butterfield, 1989; Ronk, 1993). Male and female leaders in organisations tended to exhibit similar amounts of task-oriented and people-oriented leadership behaviours (Powell, 1990). Kolb (1999) asserted that two decades of research indicated few, if any leadership differences in the leadership behaviours of male and female leaders noting that leadership styles have to do with how a person relates to people, tasks and challenges. A person's style is usually a very personal and distinctive feature of his or her personality and character. A style may be democratic, centralized, decentralized, emphatic, detached, extroverted, introverted, assertive, passive, engaged or remote. These different styles may work well in different situations and there is often a proper fit between the needs of an organization and the appropriate leadership style.

Although it is a general belief that women have a different leadership style to men, Blackmore (1999) reasoned that it may be problematic to lump all women together and treat them as if they were a homogenous group without considering differences, though it may not be denied that women have certain leadership qualities that are different from men, such as the propensity to care and nurture. Kaputa (2009) recognized women leaders as more like mentors or coaches favouring collaboration, involving colleagues in making decision; nurturing various members of the team; often highly intuitive and more service oriented in dealing with clients than male leaders. There is a substantial body of opinion which holds that the leadership of

modern organizations needs to be distributed, non-coercive, based on team work, and adept at building relationships (Spillane & Diamond, 2007; Harris, 2008; Bush, Bell & Middlewood, 2009), which, according to Agezo (2010), is the very style of leadership naturally employed by most women.

Nevertheless, Blackmore (1993) noted that women's entrance into the public sphere in the early 20th century, particularly at the top as leaders completely threatened this simple dichotomization of life into the public and private or male and female spheres. She argued that the values, ideologies and structures associated with dominant theories of leadership in association with cultural practice, favour certain image of masculinity at any time. Women moving into the public sphere treated based on the basic conceptions of the rational bureaucratic world. Thus, steps were taken by top male leaders to ascertain that female leaders were concentrated in the lower echelons and that the male old-boy's network was promoted (Blackmore, 1993). This implies that even when women are in leadership positions, they occupied the less influential positions.

2.4   Women in Leadership

Women leadership is generally described in terms of gender inequalities (Eagly, 2007). The works of gender specialists such as Butler (1990) and Nancy (2000) have seen gender in terms of identities that are ―contextual and relational" (Alcoff, 2006, p.92) because it is socially constructed. In leadership contexts gender is seen as promoted by structural patterns of discrimination that prevent women from ascending into the most prestigious, well-paying senior leadership positions. Some argue that women's participation in, and their access to senior leadership positions is defined by cultural and belief systems in a society (Shah & Shah, 2012). There are some broadly shared factors such as gender power relations, role stereotyping, role

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socialization, public/domestic divide and others leading to this phenomenon (Shah, 2008).

The explanation exists that the factors that work against women are not similarly constructed and enacted across cultures and societies (Shah & Shah, 2012). There are situational contexts that have consequences for how women participation in leadership. Shah and Shah explained further that situated cultural and belief systems, and social patterns of behaviour determine the discourses shaping the concepts and practices in each context. In their argumentation, they proffered that roles are socially constructed, enmeshed with religion, socio-cultural practices and linguistic codes to the extent that it disentangles and identify the discourses as problematic. From their study of women in Parkistan, Shah and Shah (2012) explained that religion has a validating effect that effectively allowed men to appropriate leadership to themselves in spite of an equal emphasis on education for both men and women. The spaces for religious interpretation and discourse formation have been male dominated as women are traditionally barred from ijtihad (religious discourse and interpretation). Gender role socialization, therefore, seems to be an important factor that limits women participation in leadership positions. The literature further highlights the influenced by socio-religious discourses, structural constraints such as segregated education system, and gendered discourses of veiling, izzat, and family honour as part of the power technologies availed to marginalize and depower women leaders (Shah, 2006; Shah & Shah, 2012). Socialization and culture influence perceptions of women's leadership qualification and effectiveness.

Leadership has generally been associated with men and male traits of behaviour. Consequently, the perception of a leader is dominated by male stereotypes (Klenke, 1996). Past theories of leadership have been dominated by one gender, the

male, and have taken the instance of the male as the norm. Public expression and writings have been a chronicle of man's experiences where their viewpoints predominate, and their needs are expressed (Marshall, 1984). In constructing a feminist critiqued of leadership, Blackmore (1989) has undertaken a critical analysis of the way women have been displaced from or submerged in both organizational and political theory, and how much of this visibility has permeated the everyday common-sense notions of leadership.

The literature on women leaders in developing countries is sparse. According to Strachan (2007), women in developing countries face barriers to accessing leadership not experienced to the same extent or in the same way by women in developed countries. This is also true especially when looking at the different contexts that women operate in and the cultures that are embedded in those societies.

2.5   Challenges to Females in Political Leadership Positions

From a gender perspective, the concept of glass ceiling and socio-cultural factors were central to the literature on females and leadership. Other notions considered included economic and administrative factors, perception related factors and organisational factors. Globalisation, work and family conflict and lack of internal motivation have also been discussed.

2.5.1   The glass ceiling

As noted, the glass ceiling is viewed as a barrier to women participation in leadership. Proponents of the glass ceiling notion argue that gender stereotypes attributed to men and women remain and are consistent across many cultures (Rudman & Phelan, 2010). Some scholars see glass ceiling as a small portion of the barriers faced by women. However, Meyerson argued that it is ‖not just the glass

ceiling that's holding women back; it's the whole structure of the organizations in which we work: the foundation, the beams, the walls, the very air" (p. 8). Yet, the glass ceiling reminds individuals that while society has undergone significant changes when it comes to gender equality, there remain barriers and constraints for the advancement of women into leadership positions.

Shaped by gender-based socialization, the term psychological glass ceiling refers to the way in which women themselves have internalized a patriarchal gender ideology which, when acted out, undermines their own chances at securing leadership positions. Unlike their male counter parts, women appear less willing to engage in self-promoting or assertive behaviours, or seem less willing to take risks that will propel their leadership roles, and have a greater fear of failure. For example, while men can use bluster to get noticed, modesty is expected even of highly accomplished women (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Further, women may be overlooked for leadership positions unless they successfully present themselves as atypical because they are perceived to be less competent, ambitious, and competitive (i.e., less agentic) than men. However, engaging in such behaviour defies the prescriptive nature of gender stereotypes, which can result in negative reactions to female agency and authority.

The impact of gender stereotypes becomes highly increased when they become internalized by the oppressed group and facilitate or perpetuate horizontal violence (Freire, 2000). These cognitive structures are highly resistant to change and contain both prescriptive and descriptive elements about how men and women should behave (Hoyt, 2005). Gender stereotypes are present in many of the aforementioned barriers and demand a great amount of focus in the discussion of women and leadership. Gender stereotypes can be very powerful obstructions to female leaders as well as their organizations. Awareness and activation of gender stereotypes begins as

early as childhood and are well developed for most children by the first grade. Stereotypes learned early in life form the basis for implicit gender stereotypes (Rudman & Phelan, 2010). Implicit gender stereotypes automatically associate men and women with various traits (e.g., men as agentic and women as nurturing) and can become internalized by the individual leading to implicit self-concepts (Rudman & Phelan, 2010). Implicit self-concepts become exacerbated when women are exposed to stereotypic ads and ideologies. This effect was demonstrated by Davies, Spencer, and Steele (2005), after priming women with stereotypic television ads focusing on female stereotypes (e.g., irrational, emotional, weak, indecisive). Priming women with these stereotypes caused a decreased desire to pursue a leadership role and influenced their ability to imagine themselves as successful in traditional male roles (Davies et al., 2005; Rudman & Phelan, 2010).

2.5.2 Social-cultural factors

There are gender differentiated effects of socio-cultural beliefs, attitudes and practices dominant in our society on boys and girls. In most cases, more prejudice is placed on girls while boys are favoured in all aspects of life. Traditionally, girls are viewed to be in lower status than boys and therefore discriminated right from birth. Studies of the situation of girls show that their disadvantaged position emanates from the parental and societal attitude which stresses the value of sons against daughters. As a result, girls' education is given little or no attention while that of boys' being very important since they are expected to be the breadwinners, heirs, professional persons and leaders of society. As articulated in the UNICEF report (2012), the girl child is socialized to be a self-sacrificing person destined for biological reproduction and service to others, especially her family. By contrast, boys are much valued, wanted

and favoured. Therefore, girls become helpers to their mothers at an early age and gradually internalize their roles and disadvantages (Deventer, 2000).

A review by Obonyo (2013) on challenges facing women in leadership presented several arguments. Obonyo cited Abagi (2000) to argue that ―our social image of the differences between women and men is a projection of our cultural environment in which we live" (Obonyo, 2013, p.18). This image is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Similarly, various writers indicated that one of the challenges impeding women from ascending to leadership positions is that they have been excluded from obtaining higher education (Abagi, 2000; Wamahiu, 2005; Obonyo, 2013). As Obonyo explained, attitudes towards girls' education tend to be negative among most parents. For example, Wamahiu (2005) explained that girls' education is curtailed because early marriages are most preferable for their numerous advantages in the sight of some parents. This includes avoidance of premarital pregnancy, preservation of chastity, and acquisition of bride wealth among others.

However, it documented that low valuation of schooling by parents, especially in the case of girls, was out of the belief that women are less capable and their place is in the kitchen (Appleton, 2005). For example, parents often worry about wasting resources on girl's education because after marriage their husbands' families are the ones to benefit (Abagi, 2000). Therefore, women became conditioned to see their future as housewives who would not need much formal education. This patriarchal structure of society discriminates against women in all aspects of social life to the extent that their potential to assume leadership roles is fundamentally impaired. Therefore, it can be argued, socio-cultural beliefs and practices dominant amongst the various communities hinder women political leadership. While there have been a number of studies on the subject of women political leadership, this study opts for a

more in-depth analysis from the perspectives of the women who are in political leadership position so that their stories can inform policy and action.

2.5.3 Economic factors

Economic status significantly determines much of social progress and for that matter political leadership. According to Obonyo (2013, p.22) it is commonly assumed that education has an important positive effect on economic growth, but to date the evidence for this assumption has been surprisingly weak. Obonyo suggests that, at the individual level, more years of schooling lead to higher income. But, at the macroeconomic level, empirical evidence relating changes in education measures to economic growth has so far been ambiguous (Kowani, 2010). Gender equality is important for both intrinsic and instrumental reasons. It affects social harmony and society's wellbeing in various dimensions. It involves policy dimensions in all areas including education, poverty, labour, financial markets, political and economic empowerment, institutions and overall economic development (Dowling, 2000).

Obonyo (2013) puts forward the idea that gender equality enhances prospects of achieving both international and national commitments such as Convention on the Education of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Sustainable Development Goals. Gender inequality on the other hand undermines economic growth and social development. This is particularly true among less developed economies where women are often constrained from having equal access to social and economic capital such as employment, political, financial and social services. Consequently, empowering women and enabling them to actively participate and contribute to social, economic and political activities is important for sustainable development (Deventer, 2000).

A central argument in the analysis of economic factors is that men and women tend to have different socio-economic profiles within an economy in terms of the positions they occupy, the activities they engage in and their overall economic status (Logan, 2010; Kowani, 2010; Latigo, 2009). Building on the arguments discussed under the social-cultural factors, gender inequality acts as a constraint to growth and poverty reduction as evidenced by emerging macroeconomic analysis on Africa (Latigo, 2009). According to Obonyo (20013, p.29), gender inequality ―is especially in access to a wide range of economic, human and social capital assets that comprises key poverty dimensions in Africa.‖ Specific issues of concern relate to the unequal or disadvantaged position of women as compared to men and by extension girls as compared to boys in education and economic activities including employment and access to financial assets. Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) goals, underscore importance of achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with specific focus on ensuring girls‗ full and equal access to, and achievement in basic education of good quality (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization– UNESCO, 2003). These targets have not been achieved and some have been recaptured in the sustainable development goals. It is my contestation that countries have to develop feasible and informed strategies to improve participation of both male and female citizens in various socio-economic activities including education if these targets are to be achieved. As Obonyo (2013) stated, gender equality, implying more active participation of women in political leadership, will only be achieved when all types of discrimination against women and girls are eliminated, and when equal conditions, treatment and opportunities are provided to girls and boys, and women and men.

In Ghana, despite some progress towards gender parity in primary school enrolment, and a substantial reduction since 1999, disparity persists. Notably, women's representation and participation in decision-making continues to be low. Of the 275 members of the Ghanaian Parliament sitting at the end of 2015, only 29 were women. This ranks Ghana 111th on the global Inter-Parliamentary Union's ranking, far below Rwanda (1st), Seychelles (4th) and Senegal (6th). In general, Ghana has however made significant progress towards MDG 3 since its adoption in 2000, and in recent times working towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals which focuses on Promoting Gender Equality and Empower Women.

2.5.4 Perception related factors

One of the factors that underlie a particular form of sex-based discrimination involves the concept of perception. In organizational behaviour theory, perception is defined as the way in which people observe, view, and interpret others and events around them to create a sense of order for their environment (Robak, Ward & Ostolaza, 2005). Perception greatly affects the attitudes employees have of other workers, their leaders and themselves, as well as the decisions they make within an organization. Perceptions are often seen as affecting or affected by reality and are therefore seen in most cases as inextricably interlinked with reality.

A female employee's perceptions, for example, may be influenced by the extent to which she identifies with a female social identity, and ultimately her perceptions of other women. Her established identity may in turn influence her perceptions about a female leader, such as perceived competency, inter-personality, hostility and communality and her level of satisfaction working under a female leader. These perceptive behaviours may potentially affect the future success of female subordinates in an organization. Where there is gender rarity, a female is more likely

to identify less with the female identity because of her male dominated surroundings. Such distancing may cause the few females more likely to perceive a female leader negatively. However, women in situations of gender equality would largely self-identify with the female identity, thereby reducing negative perceptions towards a woman leader (Heilman, 2001).

2.5.5 Organizational barriers

Work place relationship refers to the relationships many women have with their mentors, bosses, and female co-workers. The core issues are the prevalence of systemic discrimination and a lack of sufficient mentoring. The literature cites subjective promotional policies and lack of mentoring for women since there tend to be few women in leadership positions (Laff, 2006). The presence of male dominated leadership structures impaired many women from being able to find a female mentor, occasioning the disadvantage faced by women as a result of not being part of the ‒old boys' club" (Searby & Tripses, 2006). Research from Western contexts highlight that male dominated key leadership positions will likely recruit new principals ‒who resemble their sponsors in philosophy, deeds, appearances, and hobbies" (Oplatka & Hertz-Lararowitz, 2006, p. 19).

Workplace relationships in terms of social capital negatively affect women leadership. Women's access to resources, or lack thereof in some cases primarily affects career advice, mentoring, and socialization of women in academic leadership positions. The formation, utilization, and access to social capital for women is identified as problematic (Brown, 2005; Timberlake, 2005; Pichler et *al.*, 2008; Searby & Tripses (2006); Hoyt, 2005). Further, much of the literature suggests that women are excluded from social networks, which is one of the most significant aspects of organizational power (Timberlake, 2005). Women's lack of access to

workplace 31 social capital, as well as its associated benefits, can have detrimental effects on career advancement, such as: a lack of knowledge sharing, higher turnover rates, fewer resources, fewer contacts that lead to power and advancement, and lower levels of trust and cooperative spirit amongst co-workers (Timberlake, 2005).

The importance of access to resources has also been supported by other researchers (Brown, 2005; Laff, 2006; Searby & Tripses, 2006). Women are inhibited in the workplace because of their limited access to capable mentors (Laff, 2006). Many people prefer to have mentors of the same gender because they tend to understand the challenges most commonly faced (Searby & Tripses, 2006). Men not likely to face the same barriers, have the same family issues, and many times simply do not want to mentor a woman. The needs of women from their mentors also tend to differ from the needs of men. Many women claim to need more encouragement, an example to follow, and simply more tasks to complete (Brown, 2005). Male mentors tend to be resistant to mentor a woman because they perceive women as more emotional, not as skilled at problem-solving, and because of the risk of workplace sexual harassment issues. These issues were explored in this study.

Overall, it may be argued that there are several challenges facing women participation in political leadership. These challenges include discriminatory socio-cultural and religious practices; lack of finance; under-representation of women in governance; unhealthy political environment; political party discrimination; wrong perception of women in politics; lack of family, fellow women and media support; indigenization of women political aspirants; among others.

2.5.6 Effects of challenges facing women in political leadership

Poor participation of women in politics and governance has been a major concern at global level (Nwabunkeonye, 2014) because it essential excludes women from political decision making. However, literature has focused on discussing the challenges than the effects. This creates a dearth of literature on the subject.

One thing that is clear, however, is that past perceptions of leadership skills, competence, and assertiveness may hinder the ability of women to succeed in leadership. Many people associate masculine characteristics with success and achievement. These include assertiveness, aggressiveness, and task-oriented leadership abilities (Wakoko & Labao, 2009). Other stereotypes of women include the expectation of being modest, quiet, selfless, and nurturing (Eagly & Carl, 2003). These simple characteristics may be seen as non- executive material. Entities desire a leader who will execute, take criticism, and do what is best for the company at all cost (Nelson & Levesque, 2007). In early 1990 studies found that men emerged as task-oriented leaders more frequently than women who emerged as social leaders more frequently than men (Marrujo & Kliender, 1992).

Due to the demands of leadership positions, it became a socially accepted tendency for men to assume leadership because their task-oriented style was more widely accepted (Ryan & Haslam, 2007). As time moved on, the social leadership style of women was more accepted and valued in some circumstances (Jogulu & Wood, 2006). The study of leadership topics has been fascinated to historians and social scientists for centuries, and more recently resulted in enormous amounts of research on the subject. Nevertheless, one cannot find a generally acceptable universal-comprehensive theory of leadership. Instead, one finds competing theories emerging from several behavioural disciplines. For instance, Obonyo (2013) explains

that it appears there are three broad leadership theory categories reflecting the research and opinion on the topic, including trait, personal-behavioural, and situational theories.

One of the most comprehensive inquiries into personalities and leadership issues is the ―Big Five‖ personality traits. The five factors include openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Cross-cultural researched has concluded there is a universal pattern of sex differences on responses to the Big Five Inventory. Women consistently report higher neuroticism and agreeableness, and men often report higher extraversion and conscientiousness. Sex-based differences in personality traits are larger in prosperous, healthy, and egalitarian cultures in which women have more opportunities that are equal to those of men (Von Glinow, et *al*., 2006).

2.7   Coping Strategies of Female Leaders

Based on the work of Folkman and Lazarus (1988) the coping styles of female leaders can be classified as internal and external strategies. The internal strategies mainly involve cognitive aspects of passive appraisal (e.g. avoidance response) and reframing (e.g. redefining the situation) while external coping strategies involves more behavioural repertoires, including seeking social and spiritual support. Folkman and Lazarus also documented that female leaders may employ either one of the following types of coping strategies when faced with challenges in course of performing their duties: adjustment or adaptive coping strategies. Adjustment strategies are usually short-term and are often unable to meet the demands of female leaders encounter. Folkman and Lazarus (1988) further explained that if female leaders are unable to cope with their challenges by utilizing adjustment strategies they have to employ adaptive strategies.

Heilman (2012) have identified two main types of coping patterns: adaptive coping methods (e.g. information seeking and problem solving) and palliative coping strategies (e.g. efforts to deny, minimize, or escape the stressful situation). Adaptive coping strategies are directly aimed at coping with the source of challenges, whereas palliative strategies indirectly help reduce a person's awareness of the challenges. Shah (2008) and Van Vianen and Fischer (2002) explained that palliative strategies include a person's unconscious defence mechanisms, which are spontaneous reactions to challenging situations, individuals often use these defence mechanisms to help protect an individual from excessive threat, painful awareness, or from becoming overwhelmed by psychological challenges. Defence mechanism may be helpful when used for a short amount of time; however, excessive reliance on them prevents personal growth.

Heilman (2012) and Appleton (2005) state that, adaptive coping strategies are found to be more effective than palliative coping strategies. This is, however, a contested view. Arguments suggest even though some strategies have been found to be more effective than others, it is difficult to assess the outcomes of coping because some people strive for different means, and some approaches may be helpful in the short-term, but problematic in the long-run. This means that effective coping strategies are based on many different factors than a simplistic assumption of what works better or best. When coping efficacy beliefs are high, it is hypothesized that, individuals will focus efforts on actively rectifying pressing environmental and emotional demands through the use of active strategies (Best & Khan, 2007; Appleton, 2005).

However, when coping efficacy is low, it is anticipated that, greater energy will be directed toward avoidant coping strategies. In social cognitive theory, the perception that one coping strategy will be efficacious in exercising control over potentially threatening events plays a crucial role in anxiety levels. Bandura (1997) maintains that people who have high coping efficacy adopt strategies and courses of action designed to change hazardous environments into more benign ones. Therefore coping efficacy is seen as central to perceptions of control and the enactment of effective coping strategy. Coping efficacy is defined as a subjective appraisal of an individual's ability to cope with the demands of a stressful or traumatic condition.

Research on gender-specific use of natural coping strategies and their perceived effectiveness revealed that females use many coping strategies. The common strategies include such as eating, cleaning, shopping, crying, praying, and sex/masturbation. More females than males identified the following strategies as helpful: relaxation, shopping, crying and screaming (Best & Khan, 2007; Appleton, 2005; Latu, Stewart, Myers, Lisco, Estes, & Donahue, 2011). The study also found that ignoring others, ignoring the problem and doing nothing are not useful coping strategies. A previous studies argued that females tend to turn to informal helping system (e.g. spiritual leaders and family) rather than to formal helping systems such as shopping, talking to therapists. This may be due to the fact that some females may have a natural difficulty with disclosing problems or sharing emotions (Latu et *al*., 2011). Although relatively few of females used talking to therapists as their coping strategies, other works revealed that more women used this strategy (Latu et *al*., 2011). This is consistent with other research suggesting female leaders in administrative positions are more likely to access formal helping systems than other groups.

According to Pargament (1997), many people find spiritual support in a form of prayer, literature, participation in religious activities, joining organisations, or attending religious services. He is of the view that, faith and religious coping methods are the most frequently reported coping strategies among female leaders while others use religious reframing as a way to put things in a new perspective and make the situation more manageable. Writers such as Shah (2008) and Smith-Gina, Matkin and Fritz (2004) state that female leaders rely heavily on the church and spirituality for encouragement, guidance, training and fellowship. The church serves as an extended family. It provides important contexts for the personal as well as the professional lives of women in leadership. It allows them to receive support as well as offer support and leadership in the church and the community.

This means that religion offers guidelines for living and offers a sense of stability and some female leaders may view the difficult situation as an opportunity for spiritual growth. In the view of Smith-Gina et *al*. (2004) individuals appear to involve themselves with religion to a greater extent in more stressful situations than in less stressful moment of their lives. He looked at three different approaches to contend in religious coping. These are self-directing approach, deferring approach, and collaborative approach. The self-directed approach places more coping responsibility on individual and God. The deferring approach is described as an individual passively putting responsibility onto God. In collaborative approach, both the individual and God are active participants in the coping process. The collaborative approach has been associated with a greater sense of self-esteem, personal control, and a lower sense of control by chance. Folkman and Lazarus (1988) explains that certain spiritual strategies such as using religion to explain the event, seeking spiritual

support, and collaborating with God were found to be more helpful than other strategies.

Folkman and Lazarus (1988) examined the extent to which eight different types of coping would mediate the emotional responses in younger (ages 35 – 45) and older sample (mean age of 68) of white men/women who had experienced a stressful encounter due to certain challenges they face in life. Coping was associated with all four types of emotions; disgust and anger; pleasure and happiness; confidence; and to a lesser extent fear and worry. They suggest painful problem solving has improved emotional state, which make people often feel better when they directly focus on finding solutions to the problem. They further state that confrontive coping and distancing had a negative effect on emotions because it failed to diminish the distress and positive reappraisal had improved emotional states in the younger group, but seemed to contribute to a worsened emotional state in the older group. One explanation for this could be that, the older group had difficulty in sustaining the positive beliefs, when faced with difficult situations. The difference found between the age groups could be due to methodology, different types of stressful situations explained by the different groups, or the developmental changes in coping efficacy. The explanation supports the hypothesis that, certain coping strategies are related to varying emotional states and one form of coping may be more effective than another in increasing positive emotions.

From the review, the coping strategy may be adaptive or palliative. It may be a passive avoidance or reframing. Some strategies may be preferred by individuals, or group of psychologists, theorists or researchers. However, the advice by Folkman and Lazarus (1988) that the way researchers can assess the effectiveness of coping strategies is by measuring how well coping resources prevent hardships from resulting

in emotional challenges. They further explain that, in the past, coping was viewed primarily as a response to certain emotions. For example, Folkman and Lazarus (1988) found that the relationship between coping and emotions has a bi-directional effect. The way a person feels in stressful situations will determine his or her choice of coping mechanism. Some forms or types of coping strategies are associated with positive results, whereas some are associated with increases in negative results.

2.8   Summary

This chapter reviews the theoretical framework for the study: Conceptions of leadership challenges facing women political leaders and the coping strategies for dealing with the challenges. The review shows that there are numerous challenges that women in political leadership positions could face. However, the challenges and how they are enacted, their effects and how female political leaders cope with them within the Ghanaian context has not been a subject of much research attention. Thus, while there have been persistent efforts to promote women political leadership there have not been much effort to understand the challenges that those who are in political leadership positions encounter and how that traduces efforts being made. It is in this context that the present study is to explore the challenges and coping strategies use by female leaders in political leadership using the case of the Sunyani West District.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0   Introduction

This chapter describes the procedure used in conducting the research. Issues discussed comprised the study area, research approach and the design, population, sample and sampling techniques, methods of data collection, data analysis methods and the ethical considerations.

According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), about 51.2 percentage of the population constitute females. This percentage of national female population is similar to what pertains in the Sunyani West District. However, when it comes to leadership positions, this percentage does not reflect in the power distribution between males and females in political governance or leadership.

3.1   Research Approach and Design

The issues concerning females in leadership are so diverse that a study would require due diligence and in-depth analysis which calls for the use of case study. This study adopted qualitative approach. Qualitative research does not deal with large sample size but careful selection of respondents whose views will help explain the issues being studied since the focus is on in-depth analysis (Flick, 2006). According to Silverman and Flick (2006), qualitative research is useful in uncovering the understanding of the nature of a person's experience with a phenomenon about which little is known since it allows those who are studied to speak for themselves rather than respond to categories predetermined by the researcher. Hence the study is designed not only to provide more meaningful weight to the challenges that confront female leaders but more importantly to examine the coping strategies they adopt to

solve those challenges. Willig (2005) was of the view that qualitative research is concerned with meaning attributed to events by research participants themselves. This study is therefore interested in how people make sense of their world and how they experience events. It aims to understand ‗what it is like' to experience particular conditions and how people manage situation. An example Willig (2005) cited is how people negotiate their life. Hence the study of females in leadership required the use of qualitative approach which made the researcher study the issue of females in leadership in detail. Also the researcher adopted this method because it was realised that a qualitative study was more appropriate to examine the challenges of female leaders and the coping strategies they employ.

The researcher also adopted the case study design. Wolcott (1990) opines that case study is a form of qualitative research approach which allows detailed investigations of individuals, groups, institutions or other social units. Yin (1994) defined case study as a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence. Kumekpor (1999) explains the rationale behind the use of case study method as to know, understand and be conversant with the circumstances in order to explain, advice, decide on, defend or reject a given situation, condition and argument among others. Case study focuses on understanding a particular case in its complexity. Therefore, case study method under qualitative paradigm was used to understand and be conversant with complexities of female leaders' challenges and the coping strategies they employ.

3.2   Population

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), population is the focus of a researcher's effort. The target population for this study comprised females who were involved in political party leadership, female Assembly Members and parliamentary candidates.

3.3   Sample and Sampling Techniques

In all, fourteen (14) female political leaders comprising eight (8) political party executives, four (4) Assembly women and two (2) women who were parliamentary candidates in political parties in the constituency were selected. Purposive sampling technique was employed for this study. According to Kwabia (2006) purposive sampling is a sampling procedure where the researcher is only interested in a sub-group that is typical of the whole population. Cohen et *al*. (2011) are of the view that with the purposive sampling the researcher knows that specific characteristics exist in a certain segment of a population. Since these traits are extremely critical to the results of the investigation, the subjects who contain the characteristics were selected that is women in political leadership positions. Case studies also require specific criteria for the selection of the case (Silverman, 1992). This study focused on females in political leadership positions in the Sunyani West District. The choice of respondents was based on the following criteria of inclusion.

- The female leaders had to be occupying a political leadership position at the time of conducting the study.
- The female should have occupied that position for minimum of one year.
- The leader should be willing to participate in the study.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Interviews were used for data collection. The reason for using this method for data collection was that in a qualitative case study research interviews involve collection of data through verbal interaction between the researcher and subjects (Willig, 2005). Qualitative methods using in-depth interviews (Denzin & Yvonna, 1998) help to collect naturally-occurring data (Silverman, 1992). The method helped to explore participants' views in more depth (Invankova *et al*, 2006) by keeping an open mind about the groups and cultures being studied to do in-depth analysis (Silverman, 1992; Flick, 2006).

3.5 INTERVIEW

There were a number of reasons for the use of interviews in qualitative case study research. McNamara (1999) noted that interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. Kvale (1996) also explained that the qualitative research interview seeks to describe the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects. Open-ended interviews were used because the research interview seeks to collect data at both a factual and a meaning level. Kumekpor (1999) opines that in face to face interview, both the respondent and the researcher can see and observe each other personally and in the process may develop personal friendship, rapport, collaboration and exchange of information beyond the specific interview. It was further argued that in an in-depth interview, longer time is spent on fewer questions or on more restricted aspects of the subject but a larger amount of information is collected in greater details. Face to face in-depth interview was therefore used to collect data for the study.

The researcher traced and contacted the participants individually. The interviews were scheduled separately with each individual for time and place

convenient for them either in their work places, political party offices or at home. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from each participant. Each interview commenced with self-introduction and explanation of the purpose of the study and presentation of an introductory letter from the University. The interview was conducted to discover ideas and approaches of female political leaders. The researcher focused mainly on the female leaders' perceptions on leadership challenges and coping mechanism they employed to overcome challenges they encounter in performing their duties. These themes were important in maintaining the focus of the research to avoid concentrating on less important points. The themes in the interview guide were followed critically so as to exhaust all questions. It was difficult for the researcher to collect data from the beginning as most of the female leaders were not available and others had busy schedules. After several efforts they willingly contributed towards the success of the study.

A tape recorder was used to capture accurate record of the interactions and discussions with permission from the interviewees. Interviewees were allowed to listen to the playback of the interview recorded after each session. English was used throughout since respondents were all educated. The researcher also used field notes to supplement the tape recordings.

3.6   Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an important feature of qualitative research, which determines rigour in the place of validity. According to Shenton (2004), trustworthiness in qualitative research encompasses four areas: a) credibility; b) transferability; c) dependability; and d) confirmability. In addressing credibility, investigators attempt to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented. In this research my concern about credibility relates to

how the research findings and recommendations can be accepted as trustworthy. I achieved this through peer-debriefing (sharing questions about the research process and/or findings with peers who provide an additional perspective on analysis and interpretation); member checking (returning findings to participants to determine if the findings reflect their experiences). The analysis of the findings were organised based on the main research questions. In doing so, the context of the research were clarified, the characteristics of the participants and the processes by which they were selected, the methods of data collection, and how all of that influenced the analysis leading to answering the research question. To allow transferability, they provide sufficient detail of the context of the fieldwork for a reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is familiar and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to the other setting. I followed the ideas of Li (2004) that thick description ─enables judgments about how well the research context fits other contexts. I explained the methodology and methods as thick description entails the researcher elucidating all the research processes, from data collection, context of the study to production of the final report (Aney, 2014). To meet the dependability criterion, I detailed every aspect of the research design and implementation, including the methodology and methods, the details of data collection. Finally, to achieve confirmability, researchers must take steps to demonstrate that findings emerge from the data and not their own predispositions. To achieve this, I clarified the steps taken both to manage and reflect on the effects of my philosophical or experiential preferences and, based on the ontological and epistemological positions. I explained that the results are based on the experiences and preferences of the research participants (for example through verbatim presentation of their comments) rather than those of the researcher. Such

reflexivity does not necessarily demonstrate a removal of bias, but does help explain how my position manifests in the research findings.

3.7   Data Analysis

Stake (1994) cited in Denzin (1998), explained that in analysing a qualitative data, the main task is to understand the case through teasing out relationships, probing issues and aggregating the data categorically. Stake (1994) advocates thematic approach to data analysis where themes and patterns are developed from the data collected based on the research questions backing the study. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected. The analysis involved processes of listening, transcribing, reading and re-reading, inductive reasoning, reflecting and coding the interview transcripts and drawing out major themes and patterns of views from the data collected. The researcher in an attempt to use the thematic analysis for this study listened to the recordings several times before the data was transcribed onto a notebook. After going over the data four times, major themes were identified and the data was organized along those themes. Excerpts from participants were used to support the themes.

3.8   Ethical Considerations

Ethics are important requirements in qualitative research involving human participants. In this research, ethical standards were observed to minimise the risk of violating participants' rights; and to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality. Following the data protection law, consent were sort first from the participants before I interviewed them. Each participant gave verbal consent and were assured that participation in the research will not mean any harm to them. Confidentiality was observed in the data collection and analysis. Also, participants were told of their

rights to withdraw data if they chose not to participate in the research. I assured each participant that the data will be kept safe and will be shared in my research report in ways that cannot be linked to them. Pseudonyms were used to code the data such that the real names of participants were not used in the research but different names. The data that were unused were discarded safely.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0   Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The findings are presented in two main sections. The first section presents biographical details of the participants. The second examines the perceptions of female leaders on political leadership positions, discusses the findings emerging from the challenges facing women in political leadership positions, and assesses the effects of these challenges and how they cope with their challenges.

4.1   Biographical Information on the Participants

There were fourteen women involved in the research. Biographic data were collected on the ages, educational background and marital status of the participants. Data were also collected on the number of children, number of years in political leadership and their political positions.

Table 4.1: Age Distribution of the Participants

Age	Frequency
20-29	3
30-39	3
40 - 49	3
50 – 59	4
60+	1
Total	**14**

Source: Field data (2019)

What can be deduced from Table 4.1 is that there were several generations of women involved in politics in the Sunyani West District. They cut across various age groups. Three were within the age range of 20-29, and another three were within the

age range of 30-39. Also, three were within the age range of 40-49 while four were found in the age range of 50 -59. Thus, the participants in the study included the young adults, the middle-aged women. There was only one who was 60 years and above. It can also be argued that there were early career women as well as one retired woman. Therefore, participation of women in politics is not limited to a particular age group.

Table 4.2: Education Background of the Participants

Education	Frequency
Secondary and below	0
Diploma	2
Degree	12
Total	**14**

Source: Field data (2019)

Table 4.2, indicates that majority of the participants had first degree. Only two had diploma. The implication is that the women involved in political leadership in the Sunyani West District were highly educated women. Therefore, these are people who, arguably, are informed and know the implications of their choices and decisions.

Table 4.3: Marital status of Women Involved in the Study 50

Marital status	Frequency
Single	7
Married	6
Widowed	0
Prefer not to say	1
Total	**14**

Source: Field data (2019)

Table 4.3 shows that some of the participants were married whilst others were single. Seven were single, one preferred not to say her marital status while six were married. This implies that both married and unmarried women were involved in politics in the Sunyani West District. Thus, the views represented in this research included women of various marital statuses. Although their views cannot be taken as representative of the views of all women involved in politics in the Sunyani West District, it can be argued that women with varying marital experiences were involved in the study.

Table 4.4: Number of Children

Number of children	Frequency
No child	6
1	1
2	4
3	2
4	0
5	1
Total	**14**

Source: Field data (2019)

From Table 4.4, six of the participants have no children while four have two children each. Another two have three children each whereas one has five children. One thing that was surprising was that the woman who had five children was 52 years and had been in politics for seven years. One participant who has two children was 34 years and had been in politics for 10 years. Another married woman who had one child and was 38 years had been involved in politics for 16 years. Another 38-year-old who had two children was involved in politics for eight years. Meanwhile, the 62-year-old single woman with no child had been involved in politics for only one year. Among the 50-year-old women who have been involved in politics and participated in

the research, only one has been involved in politics for seven years. All the older women have been involved in politics for less years than the younger women. This suggests that younger women are getting involved in politics than the older ones. These might be the results of recent women empowerment initiatives by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, NGO's and various social movements.

Table 4.5: Number of Years in Politics

Number of years in political leadership	Frequency
1-5 years	7
6-10 years	6
10+	1
Total	**14**

Source: Field data (2019)

From Table 4.5, the involvement of women in political leadership spanned various lengths of time. There were those who recently entered into politics and those who have been involved for many years. As the results showed, one (7%) of the participants had been involved for more than 10 years, whilst six (43%) were involved between 6-10 years. The remaining seven (50%) were involved for between 1-5 years. What can be argued is that there are experienced as well as emerging women politicians who were involved in the study. Thus, the views analysed come from various levels of experiences.

Table 4.6: Nature of Involvement in Politics

Nature of involvement	Frequency
Parliamentary candidate	2
Assembly woman	4
Political party executive	8
Total	**14**

Source: Field data (2019)

Table 4.6 indicates that eight of the participants were in party leadership positions. Two were Parliamentary candidates whereas four were District Assembly Members. This suggests that women are getting involved in all aspects of political leadership in the Sunyani West District. What can be argued further, is that the views of women from various aspects of political leadership have been sought and discussed as part of the data analysed for this study.

4.2 How Females in Political Leadership Positions Perceive Leaders

This section focuses on discussing the findings concerning how females in political leadership positions perceive leaders. The discussion is framed under various sub-themes that emerged from the findings. These include understanding political leadership, defining effective political leader and perception on leadership.

Understanding political leadership

The sub-theme that emerged from the data analysis concerning how females in political leadership positions perceive leaders was their understanding of political leadership. From the interviews with the various participants, it was revealed that they hold different understandings of political leadership. The common conceptions that participants described were as follows:

> **Addo:** *Leadership is a tool for development. It makes everything… It determines whether the society will develop or stagnate. … Political leaders makes the decisions that determine whether our society will develop or not* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 17, 2019]

> **Ana:** *Political leadership ensure resources are effectively utilised for the benefit of all. It is about managing the resources in a way that it is equitably distributed so that all citizens can benefit* [Interview with Party Executive, June 10, 2019]

Eunice: *Political leadership is a good experience. It is something every citizen should benefit from doing. Everyone needs to have that experience at one point in time* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 21, 2019].

Sarfo: *Political leadership provides opportunity to lead and serve people. Political leadership is like rendering a national service. You lead people from all walks of life* [Interview with Parliamentary candidate, June 6, 2019]

Alida: *When you talk about political leadership, it is about managing women in politics. I understand it this way because I am Women Organizer. Our political leadership is about mobilising women to support the party* [Interview with Party Executive, June 27, 2019]

Akos: *Political leadership involves directing political activities* [Interview with Party Executive, June 20, 2019]

Eda: *Service to mankind. It is about serving your people* [Interview with Party Executive, June 6, 2019]

From the views expressed by the participants, several understandings of political leadership were revealed. Some of the participants noted that political leadership it is about serving people. Others see it as managing people. The participants also indicated that political leadership is a social experience all people must have. These explanations focused on the people. Another view holds that political leadership is about resource allocation for development. Political leadership was explained in terms of its purpose, viewing it as a way of ensuring that resources are effectively utilised for the benefit of all. These understandings of political leadership are not so common in the literature that was explored. However, the understandings showed that political leadership is understood differently by political actors. The literature indicates that, the various conceptions lead to confirmation of the view that leadership is a complex sociological concept (Bennis, 2009; Wakoko &

Labao, 2009). Similarly, the understandings of leadership in terms development sees leadership as the principal dynamic force that motivates and coordinates the organization in the accomplishment of its objective (Anderson et *al*., 2015, Heilman 2012; Wakoko & Labao, 2009). Overall the data fits well into the views of Anderson et *al*. (2015) and Heilman (2012) that leadership understandings include many things such as interpersonal influence, directed through communication toward goal attainment.

Defining Effective Political Leader

The next sub-theme that was generated from the interview data concerning how females in leadership positions perceive political leaders is who they define as an effective political leader. From the interviews, typical comments included the following:

> **Peace:** *A person who is committed and has consecrated him/herself to serve people irrespective of the challenges at hand* [Interview with Party Executive, June 5, 2019]

> **Addo:** *Effective political leader manages responsibilities and duties effectively* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 17, 2019]

> **Ana:** *A person who discharges her responsibilities effectively* [Interview with Party Executive, June 10, 2019]

> **Sarfo:** *A person who discharges her responsibilities well.* [Interview with Parliamentary candidate, June 6, 2019]

The comments say several things about who the females in political leadership consider as an effective leader. They consider leadership effectiveness to be commitment to performing tasks despite challenges. Within this view, the leader is committed to serving people by helping them to work on the tasks irrespective of challenges. These views on an effective leader are task-oriented because the focus is managing responsibilities and duties effectively and not how well the people are

served. This is a very traditional understanding of leadership that are used in appraisals where the effectiveness of the leader is assessed based on pre-set tasks and how well they are performed. Within this thinking, the effective leader is one who is focused on performing his/her duties. Therefore, dedicated and committed leadership is not about service to the people, it is about performance of responsibilities.

A second set of conceptions that emerged from the interview data were expressed by Esi, Amy and others.

Esi: *An effective leader is one who is dedicated and committed to set goals… Such a leader focuses on achieving their goals.* [Interview with Party Executive, June 11, 2019]

Amy: *Achieving set goals is the aim. You are not effective if you have not achieved your goals. Effective leader must achieve stated goals.* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 17, 2019]

From these conceptions, an effective leader according to the females in political leadership in the Sunyani West Dsitrict who were interviewed is one who is goal-oriented. Perception of leadership as goal-attainment is common within the works of Anderson et *al*. (2015) and Heilman (2012).

Another conception of effective leadership among the females in political leadership were people-oriented. Two examples of that conception were the comments from Aba and Eunice.

Aba: *An effective leader to me is someone who listens to the grassroots. …Someone who seeks the interest of the community and advances the welfare of the people.* [Interview with Parliamentary Candidate, June 21, 2019].

Eunice: *I will say an effective leader is someone who makes positive impact in the lives of the people he/she leads. It is about serving the people* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 21, 2019].

The view of effective leadership as listening to the people at the grassroots comes from a school of thought that views leadership as something about being impactful. As Eunice noted, an effective leader is one who makes positive impact. Thus, it can be argued that leadership to the females in political leadership in the Sunyani West District can be understood from two main perspectives. One perspective is about commitment and dedication to achieving set goals. The second view is about serving the changing interests of the people and making meaningful impacts on their lives. These views support the opinion of Kotelniko (2001) on leadership as a service to the community. In summary, there are three different conceptions of effective leaders. One view sees effective leaders as task-oriented people, another sees effective leaders as goal-oriented people. A third view sees leaders as people-oriented.

Females in political leadership positions perceptions on leadership

A third theme generated from the interviews with women in political leadership positions in the Sunyani West District was how they perceive their leadership. From the interviews, typical comments included the following.

Sarfo: *I see political leadership as something very difficult for me. ... I see it to be difficult.* [Interview with Parliamentary candidate, June 6, 2019]

Abena: *It seems to be the preserve of men and difficult for a woman like me... it is just difficult.* [Interview with Parliamentary candidate, June 8, 2019]

Eunice: *Men are more capable than we the women. Political leadership is not for women who have things to do* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 21, 2019].

Addo: *I see leadership to be a difficult endeavour. Very difficult as I am combining leadership activities with house duties.* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 17, 2019]

> **Alida:** *Political leadership is very difficult but manageable. It is demanding. It takes much of your time and your life away.*
> [Interview with Party Executive, June 27, 2019]

The various comments indicate that the females in leadership positions conceptualise leadership as a very difficult endeavour. The difficulty is defined in the context of investments women need to make to free time and space to work as leaders. However, this definition of leadership as very difficult presents several challenges. First, it seems to cast a slur on efforts that have been made and are being made to promote female leadership in Ghana. As females continue to understand political leadership as a venture that is much easier for men and difficult for women, it will be more difficult to encourage women to take up such positions. This may be one reason why many women are not venturing into political leadership positions. In this context, it can be argued that it is not society that precludes women from political leadership positions. It is their own understanding of leadership that produces limitations, hindrances and stumbling blocks that discourages women from taking political leadership positions. As in the literature, their understanding of leadership is both contextual and relational (Alcoff, 2006) as well as gendered. The genderedness of their understanding of leadership seemed dependent on cultural and belief systems in a society as well as structural patterns (Shah & Shah, 2012) of discrimination that prevent women from ascending into political leadership positions. The main factors include gender power relations, role stereotyping, role socialization, public/domestic divide and others leading to this phenomenon (Shah, 2008).

Despite these views, other comments from the interview data present a different view of how females in political leadership understand their leadership.

> **Addo:** *It is a normal leadership activity. It is not different from what other people do as leaders.* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 17, 2019]

> **Ana:** *I see political leadership as an avenue to mobilise and bring everyone on board for development.* [Interview with Party Executive, June 10, 2019]

> **Alida:** *Political leadership is a stepping stone that bridges the gap between males and females and also give them recognition and dignity in the society* [Interview with Party Executive, June 27, 2019]

> **Weila:** *It is an opportunity to exhibit potentials within me. It is an opportunity to exhibit that women can also lead.* [Interview with Party Executive, June 15, 2019]

These second conception of their leadership brings a different dimension. It views leadership as opportunity, avenue for mobilisation and stepping stone to bridge the gap between men and women. In one breadth it views their leadership as an opportunity for equalisation. It provides avenues for females to contribute in developing society. This view finds empirical support within the literature that calls for need to ensure that women contribute to national development and change the social status of their children especially girls and reduce negative stereotyping of the female gender and the consequences of these negativities on society (Allah-Mensah, 2005). For some, it was a way to bridge the gender equality gap and promote women's participation in political processes. Thus, their leadership is defined in the context of addressing disparity between males and females wherein leadership is used to be considered as an area for males. For others, it was an opportunity to demonstrate their leadership potentials and skills.

4.3 The Challenges Facing Women in Political Leadership Positions

The second major theme was on the challenges that females in political leadership positions face. This theme was generated from the second research question.

General challenges confronting females in political leadership

The first set of challenges identified from the data were categorised as general challenges. These are challenges that affect the individual and personal lives of the females in political leadership positions. From the analysis of the interview data, several opinions emerged.

> **Esi:** *Marriage is affected badly. You find it difficult to make time for your marital responsibilities ... your marriage can break up if you are not careful.* [Interview with Party Executive, June 11, 2019]

> **Addo:** *Quality time for the family is lacking. You have no time to take up family responsibilities sometimes. It affects child care ... You are not able to attend some extended family programmes and all that.* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 17, 2019]

These comments relate to family level challenges that females in political leadership face. The effects are in two directions. The first is the effect on marriage of the female leaders. The view is that leadership positions can break their marriage. The second is the effect it has on their larger families. The participants indicated that it has effect on performance of child care responsibilities and participation in extended family programmes. It affects their social life and commitments to siblings and parents.

There are additional effects. These include among others the following concerns expressed by the participants in the study.

> **Eunice:** *People think you are disrespectful woman. They think your husband is suffering or that he is not able to contain you. This mentality makes you feel for your husband* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 21, 2019].

> **Eda:** *Some men perceive women in political leadership to be disrespectful; some make unfair criticisms and comments that you have to live with* [Interview with Party Executive, June 6, 2019]

> **Abena**: *Men mostly see women as not fit or capable of executing our assigned duties. You always have to live your life proving to them that you are capable in that position all the time.* [Interview with Parliamentary candidate, June 8, 2019]

The comments mainly show that a principal challenge that females in political leadership are concerned about is respect. The findings showed that they are undermined as incompetent to lead. As Eda's comment indicate, the disrespect produces unfair comments that female political leaders need to bear. The undermining is so severe according to the women that it affects the ways in which females in political leadership do their work. As Abena noted, they live their leadership life proving the point that they are capable. This could be stressful for females in political leadership. Another direction of the disrespect is visible in the comments of Eunice who revealed that females in political leadership positions are viewed disrespectful women. This stereotyping has negative consequences as a powerful barrier, impacting societal culture, specifically, persisting gender stereotyping of politics as exclusively as a men's activity (Watuka, 2017). It can affect the family life of the females and undermine their social status within the community. In one breadth it explains the reasons why many females are not very successful in their political ambitions. Given the patriarchal nature of Ghanaian society, it would be difficult for people to rally behind a female when positioned as disrespectful to the husband. Also, the psychological effects of a decent woman being presented as disrespectful to the

husband and ridiculed as such can be frustrating. This mentality makes the females in political leadership positions feel demeaned, undermined and unappreciated. The implication is that females need to be openly supported by their husbands. This will take away some of the negative perceptions that position them as people who cannot be controlled by their husbands or are disrespectful in their homes.

One thing can be noted from the discussions so far. The main concern is that females in political leadership are not assessed in their own rights. They are defined by their marital status and what the implications of leader are for their marital homes. Also, they are not assessed based on their competencies. They are simply defined by their biological positioning as women and the marital commitments. Their submission to their husband which should be understood as a household issue is invoked as a measure in the public domain. What is more informing is that the females involved in study did not mention that they have challenges from their homes or from spouses. This is something that contradicts much of the literature that suggests that females are constrained from occupying leadership positions because husbands are restrictive in allowing them to do so (Laff, 2006; Searby & Tripses, 2006; Oplatka & Hertz-Lararowitz, 2006). The challenges seemed to be contextualised and environmental as suggested by Robak, Ward and Ostolaza (2005).

Challenges related to community recognition of females in leadership

One sub theme on challenges generated during the data analysis focused how females in political leadership positions are recognized within the communities in which they lived. In that regard, the data brought up various comments. Some of the ways in which females in political leadership are defined are not in line with their competencies. This is visible in other comments.

Sarfo: *Being a woman, some people feel I can"t be effective, especially when it comes to the issue of dealing with people in a male dominated society* [Interview with Parliamentary candidate, June 6, 2019]

Ana: *They recognise me as a capable leader however, sometimes they make you feel you are not capable. At times people say things that impute that a male would have done better. ... What is important is that many in the society also believe in women because of our matrilineal inheritance system.* [Interview with Party Executive, June 10, 2019]

Alida: *Some accept you as a leader while others think you are proud. Those who accept you stay and encourage you…. But the rage of attacks from those who think you are proud always try to silence the beautiful stories.* [Interview with Party Executive, June 27, 2019]

Akos: *Sharing views with subordinates and taking decisions with them has been a challenge especially when majority in party leadership are males. They think your election was a mistake ... Sometimes ... they openly say a man would have been better. I get frustrated many times when people look at me from these social perspectives rather than what I am doing and can do* [Interview with Party Executive, June 20, 2019]

The arguments that can be derived from the comments of the various females in political leadership are many. One thing is however clear. They face challenges at various levels. One level is social perceptions of male chauvinists who think that women are incompetent or not born to lead. These concerns speak to the need to ensure that women can gain needed confidence and contribute to the politics of the country by getting involved effectively in political activities (Allah-Mensah, 2005). The second level is where traditional adherent's views of social normalisations think that women are not supposed to lead. The third level of challenges comes from the political leadership groups to which females in political leadership belong. These challenges as Akos described are frustrating to the females in political leadership who read it as an undermining of competence and as a severe form of gender stereotyping

and bias. The literature is replete with such stereotyping and their effects on female participation in politics.

Another thing that is surprising is that the women did not locate financing as a challenge facing their leadership. Whereas we do know that weak or lack of finance has partly been blamed for women's disinterest in political and other equally important roles in the public sphere (Allah-Mensah, 2005). One participant was clear that finance was not the major problem.

> **Weila:** *There are many positions that do not require money to occupy. The problem is with the social mind-set that women cannot lead properly. That"swhat we have to address.* [Interview with Party Executive, June 15, 2019]

Given this knowledge, it seems that discussions about challenges facing female participation in political leadership need to be framed differently. The issue of economics factor needs to be replaced by social factor addressing persisting social stereotyping of women in politics as indecent people. The consequences of such stereotyping are many and unhealthy. The literature supports the numerous views on the power of education to change the stereotyping of women to particular confines, which has affected their interests and willingness to participate in politics (Allah-Mensah, 2005).

Overall, the argument can be made that the challenges espoused by the females seemed to be more of socio-cultural than legal and economic. This is not consistent with the literature that have highlighted economic factors. The views highlight gender stereotypes that have been identified in much of the literature (Obonyo, 2013; Rudman & Phelan, 2010; Abagi, 2000). As much of their experiences are contextualised, Obonyo (2013) argument holds true that their social image of the challenges is a projection of the cultural environment in which we live within the

Sunyani West District. This image is a self-fulfilling prophecy. The findings contradicted arguments that the challenges impeding women from ascending to political leadership positions is that they have been excluded from obtaining higher education (Abagi, 2000; Wamahiu, 2005; Obonyo, 2013). In this context, factors such as attitudes towards girls' education are not identified as a factor.

4.4 Effects of the Challenges Facing Women in Political Leadership Positions

The third theme that emerged from the data analysis was the effects of the challenges women face in political leadership. From the data there were different categories of effects that can be observed.

Personal effects

The first level of effects is the personal effects. There were many of comments concerning effects that the challenges facing women produced in their personal lives. One comment from one participant related to time for the family

> **Abena:** *Inability to find time to spend with the family has been the common effect of the challenges I face.*

Apart from this comment highlighted, there were many other comments concerning the effects of challenges they face on their lives. Some of these comments include:

> **Sarfo***: It sometimes makes me lose interest in leadership* [Interview with Parliamentary candidate, June 6, 2019]

> **Eda**: *It discourages me from executing my duties* [Interview with Party Executive, June 6, 2019]

> **Eunice:** *It is sometimes stressful* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 21, 2019].

> **Ana:** *Sometimes they demoralise me* [Interview with Party Executive, June 10, 2019]

Alida: *Personally, I feel emotionally disturbed* [Interview with Party Executive, June 27, 2019]

Esi: *Sometimes I feel a little bit sad because it seems some people don"t appreciate my effort* [Interview with Party Executive, June 11, 2019]

The comments indicate that the challenges affect women in political leadership emotionally. These effects range from stress, self-doubt and becoming demoralised. These challenges have the potential to breakdown the individuals who have resolve to contribute to political and public life. It suggests that women in political leadership positions need much psychological support in addition to social and financial supports.

Other participants also expressed their views on how the challenges are affecting them.

Amy: *There is always divided attention for the sake of national development* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 17, 2019]

Abena: *Political leadership negatively affect everything we do. It takes away much from your family life. You need to invest much because it adds to your burden. It affects your work life and reputation in the society sometimes. People try to discredit you and some people believe some of the lies* [Interview with Parliamentary Candidate, June 17, 2019]

Contrary to these views expressed by some of the participants on the negative effects of their challenges, some participants saw within their challenges, opportunities to work hard in order to stand out.

Akos: *The challenges motivate me to work harder* [Interview with Party Executive, June 20, 2019]

Aba: *Challenges strengthen me to work hard* [Interview with Parliamentary Candidate, June 21, 2019].

Weila: *I put my challenges behind and focus on the future* [Interview with Party Executive, June 15, 2019]

It can be observed that some of the females in political leadership are resilient. Unlike other comments, the challenges are either ignored or used as a source of strength. Thus, it may be argued that some females in political leadership do not allow the challenges they face to discourage them from participation in political leadership positions.

Effects on family

The participants indicated that their challenges have effects on the family. A careful analysis of the comments suggests that of female's participation in politics have emotional, psychological and social effects on the family. The following are the views expressed by the participants.

Akos: *The family is criticised for allowing you to be in politics* [Interview with Party Executive, June 20, 2019]

Eunice: *My family finds it difficult to deal with some harsh comments passed on political leaders* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 21, 2019].

Esi: *Members of my family, especially become sad when people insult me* [Interview with Party Executive, June 11, 2019]

Weila: *Sometimes my family members become sad when people say bad things about my work* [Interview with Party Executive, June 15, 2019]

Sarfo: *Most of my family members feel offended because of the insults people reign on me and the entire family* [Interview with Parliamentary candidate, June 6, 2019]

Eda: *My family members usually complain that I do not have enough time for them* [Interview with Party Executive, June 6, 2019]

Abena: *I plan schedules well that makes me have ample time for my work and family* [Interview with Parliamentary candidate, June 8, 2019]

It can be observed from the comments that family members go through stressful moments when a female in leadership position is attacked, verbally or physically. As Weila and Esi indicated, some family members become sad when people say bad things about their work. Sarfo has the same concern where her family members feel offended because of the insult she endures. What is interesting about Sarfo's comments is the view that people insult the entire family. Similar situation is revealed in the comments by Eunice who stated that the family finds it difficult to deal with some harsh comments.

What is difficult is the knowledge from the comments from Akos who noted with concern that people sometimes insult the family for allowing the females to participate in political leadership. In this case, the family is invoked as barrier to prevent women from participating or to withdraw from political participation. This again epitomises how social norms have become sedimented in limiting the opportunities that women may have to participate in political leadership.

Relationship with Superiors

One theme that emerged from the data focused on how political leadership roles impact on their relationships with superiors wherever they work. Some of the participants shared their experience and stated:

Esi: *My superiors do not worry much about my political leadership activities. They turn a blind eye on them* [Interview with Party Executive, June 11, 2019]

Weila: *My superior officers are always concerned about my political leadership roles and how it affects my work life. ... The problem is that they think I do not spend much time thinking through my work meticulously. What I have suffered is lack of cooperation and support to do my work effectively* [Interview with Party Executive, June 15, 2019]

Abena: *My superior sees it as normal. He jokes that women are now getting serious, he encourages me to aim higher. He thinks my political leadership doesn"t affect my work in any way* [Interview with Parliamentary candidate, June 8, 2019]

Eda: *I work hand in hand with them* [Interview with Party Executive, June 6, 2019]

From the comments, there are many effects that the challenges produce in relation to superiors of females in political leadership. In the view of Weila, her challenges include problems associated with co-operation with superiors. For some female participants, their superiors do not really pay attention to such challenges. Other superiors ignore those challenges and focus on the main issues that can encourage females in political leadership positions.

Effect of Challenges on Community

Effects of the challenges on the community were also identified. These effects are embedded the following views:

Alida: *The people in my community at times do not get what is due them because of my inability to perform all my roles…. You see, the problem is that when people try to discredit females in political leadership positions, it blocks some of the opportunities you have to lobby for development projects* [Interview with Party Executive, June 27, 2019]

Ana: *The challenges sometimes make people in the community lose hope and confidence as to whether our set goals can be achieved* [Interview with Party Executive, June 10, 2019]

Sarfo: *The challenges do not allow us to work well for the community to get results in terms of development projects. … It makes the community lose interest and hope in us the leaders* [Interview with Parliamentary candidate, June 6, 2019]

Esi: *The challenges can lead to misunderstanding* [Interview with Party Executive, June 11, 2019]

Weila: *The ways people try to undermine women in political leadership positions makes development delays. The development of the community is delayed since I am not able to execute my work* [Interview with Party Executive, June 15, 2019]

Abena: *Sometimes, my supporters in the community get offended when people insult me. Sometimes my supporters feel like fighting those discrediting me. It leads to disunity in the community* [Interview with Parliamentary candidate, June 8, 2019]

The effects of the challenges females in political leader face in the community are generally negative. There are three essential issues raised by the participants. First, it delays development of the community. This happens because those who could have supported the females in political leadership to develop their communities withdraw support. The corresponding issues are that it breeds misunderstanding and division among the members of the community. There are clashes between the supporters of females in political leadership positions and other members of the community. The third point is that it prevents the females from being effective. This implies that the effects on the community are not pleasant, and these serve as impediments to the development of the community. Overall, it may be argued that there are several effects of the challenges females in political leadership positions face. These challenges affect the females, their families, superiors and the entire community.

4.5 How Women in Political Leadership Positions Cope with their Challenges

The fourth main theme from the data was on coping strategies adopted by femalespolitical leaders in dealing with challenges they face. From the findings, their coping strategies were varied and contingent.

General coping strategies of Females in Political leadership

The first set of coping strategies that emerged from the data were classified as general coping strategies. These strategies were revealed in several comments.

> **Abena:** *I cope through motivation, I mean self-motivation. I just tell myself that I have to do my best.* [Interview with Parliamentary candidate, June 8, 2019]

> **Peace:** *I have dedicated some house duties to maid to enable me have time for my work* [Interview with Party Executive, June 5, 2019]

> **Ana:** *I look at my abilities and not my gender* [Interview with Party Executive, June 10, 2019]

> **Esi:** *I take both motivation and criticism from role models to be able to do the right thing* [Interview with Party Executive, June 11, 2019]

> **Sarfo:** *I learnt from my challenges and don"t repeat my mistakes* [Interview with Parliamentary candidate, June 6, 2019]

> **Addo:** *The challenges help me to develop good planning habit* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 17, 2019]

> **Alida:** *I take challenges as opportunities and solve them. I also learn from these challenges to give me more experience*
> [Interview with Party Executive, June 27, 2019]

> **Eda:** *I don"t actually react to some of the things people do to undermine me. I just concentrate and work. Sometimes they force me to overwork in such a way that I don"teven have time to react to negative comments and other things that people try to do to obstruct me* [Interview with Party Executive, June 6, 2019]

From the comments, females in political leadership positions have several general coping strategies. They relied on self-encouragement and self-motivation. This meant that they depended on their inner strength to carry on. This helped to deal with much of the emotional stress they experienced. Aside from that they resorted to task sharing. They shared tasks with maids and other people to ensure that they have space to deal with some urgent issues they need to attend to. A third general strategy was good planning. They tried to be organised and ensured that they were able to work towards achieving goals. A fourth strategy was to learn from previous mistakes and improve. They avoided repeating previous mistakes. The fifth was to turn challenges into opportunities. They tried to find response to each challenge and used it for a transformative agenda. Finally, from the words of Eda, they tried to overwork and ignore the challenges. This was to help avoid being distracted. This might be the reason some claimed that the challenges produce stress. They get themselves overworked as a coping strategy.

Dealing with Male chauvinist

Another sub-theme that emerged on how females in political leadership positions deal with challenges was the ways in which they handle situations related to male chauvinists. There were several ways they achieved this. The data indicated that these ways are numerous.

> **Esi:** *When the males try to undermine females in political leadership, I try to understand them from the male perspective* [Interview with Party Executive, June 11, 2019]

> **Peace:** *I am able to cope with my challenges through hard-work and motivation from family.* [Interview with Party Executive, June 5, 2019]

> **Addo:** *It is difficult dealing with the male counterparts but having a cordial relationship with them makes my work easy* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 17, 2019]

Ana: *Listening to their views on certain issues* [Interview with Party Executive, June 10, 2019]

Eunice: *I try to deal with males who create problems by proving them wrong. I give them the necessary respect and perform my duties* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 21, 2019].

The simplest way in which the challenges were dealt with was to understand them within the frame of mind of the male chauvinists. As Esi's comments indicated, some female leaders in political leadership positions try to understand the perspectives of male chauvinists and to limit their challenges to that frame of mind. That idea seems very helpful as social change is a process that takes time. A related strategy was to give them the attention they deserve but move on to focus on tasks to be performed. Another strand of coping strategies was to give male chauvinists a listening ear. In other words, females in political leadership positions take time to be consultative. This is a good attribute that helps to understand different points of view and to make the best judgement in the interests of community and national development.

Dealing with Societal Misconceptions

How females in political leadership deal with social misconceptions was another sub-theme that emerged. These misconceptions are mainly about the social perception of females as not people who should lead. As noted earlier, this emerged as the main challenge females in political leadership positions face.

Ada: *When people make negative stereotypic comments about female leaders, I just ask them to concentrate more on my potentials* [Interview with Political Party Executive, June 25, 2019].

Eda: *You know society thinks females are incapable of certain things like leading political parties. ... I always try to prove society wrong about some of these misconceptions* [Interview with Party Executive, June 6, 2019]

Addo: *I tell myself, female leaders are very competent, and no amount of societal words could make me regret.* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 17, 2019]

Abena: *Society has several stereotypes about female in political leadership. I just concentrate on doing things to prove them wrong. I just focus on defending my aims and goals.* [Interview with Parliamentary candidate, June 8, 2019]

Eunice: *Misconceptions will always be there. I just disprove them by doing what society considers as the impossible* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 21, 2019].

Sarfo: *I don"t worry about social misconceptions. I just act professionally when it comes to execution of duties. That"s the antidote. That"s the way to go* [Interview with Parliamentary candidate, June 6, 2019]

Ana: *I ignore misconceptions. I am not concerned about them. I do my best. Once I know what I want to do, I just do my best by delivering* [Interview with Party Executive, June 10, 2019]

From the comments, the social misconceptions make some women try to do what Eunice described as the ‗impossible'. This will imply that they try to do things to prove a point that they are able to perform leadership responsibilities. Eda for instance believes she has to prove society wrong and this, seemed problematic because it puts undue pressure on female political leaders. Abena's ideas added onto the use of this

strategy where she stated that she tries to prove a point to defend her goals and aims. For Addo, she tries always to comfort herself that she is capable as a leader. Sarfo, the experienced Parliamentary Candidate noted that she focuses on acting professionally in executing any task whilst Anan indicated that she ignores all social misconceptions and just focuses on the task. Thus, while some engage, others ignore.

When the females were asked to give suggestions to other females who may be interested in participating in politics, several suggestions were given. These views include the following

Weila: *They should work hard and avoid the misconception that women could never be successful political leaders* [Interview with Party Executive, June 15, 2019]

Ana: *They should be of themselves and perform their responsibilities effectively* [Interview with Party Executive, June 10, 2019]

Sarfo: *They should work hard and always achieve their objectives* [Interview with Parliamentary candidate, June 6, 2019]

Peace: *My little advice to fellow females in political leadership positions is that they should always be focused irrespective of the challenges, criticisms and the misconceptions about female leaders* [Interview with Party Executive, June 5, 2019]

Alida: *Females should be empowered and motivated to take more political leadership positions* [Interview with Party Executive, June 27, 2019]

Eunice: *They should not react negatively to people especially men that make them feel threatened in their political leadership positions. They should rather let their output and achievements as political leaders prove to them that women are capable of contributing meaningfully to society as political leaders.* [Interview with Assembly Woman, June 21, 2019].

Ada: *Women should be ready to consider the stigmatization, insult and other related abuses as an occupational hazard* [Interview with Political Party Executive, June 25, 2019].

Esi: *Women in politics should believe in themselves that they are capable of delivery* [Interview with Party Executive, June 11, 2019]

Despite their challenges, women in politics appear to encourage others to opt for political leadership. What they advise is that females seeking a place in political leadership positions should not react negatively to people especially men that make them feel threatened in their political leadership positions. In that consistency, the proposition is that to be successful in political leadership positions, females need to focus on their output and achievements as political leaders. In that context, they suggest that the goal of women participation in political leadership is to show that women are capable of contributing meaningfully to society as political leaders. Conscious of social misconceptions, they suggested that females in political leadership positions should be ready to consider the stigmatization, insult and other related offences as occupational hazards.

Although positive and encouraging, the propositions suggest that females in political leadership positions do not envisage significant social changes that will produce positive attitudes towards female leadership in the nearest future. When interpreted within liberal feminist theory, the findings reveal the nature of inequality, gender politics, power relations and sexuality and how women empowerment can propel them from lower level of society to the top (Gheaus & Robeyns, 2011). As the findings showed, women political leaders did not seem to have the degree of freedom to do politics the way men would have done it because of social misconceptions about female political leadership (Schwartzman, 2010). As critical liberal feminist thought, there are some coercive interference (Young, 2006) on the political leadership of females to the extent that some of them suggested their challenges had effects on the community, their families and friends. Also, it seems that female in political leadership positions have limited personal autonomy (Fox-Genovese, 1990; Held, 1987) because they are always trying to prove people wrong by overworking

themselves. Thus, it may be argued that social arrangements often fail to respect women's autonomy and to support them to flourish as distributive justice requires. Women's needs and interests are inadequately addressed in the democratic process in terms of ways that should promote positive social attitudes towards female leadership (Stafford, 2004). As Okine (1989) argued, it seems that Ghanaian society operates a patriarchal ―gender system" (Okin 1989, 89), rooted in inherited traditions and institutions, and that needs to be identified and remedied. As liberal feminists argue, it is the appropriate role of the state to develop systems that will promote women's autonomy so that they can be respected as capable of serving in political leadership positions (Gerson, 2004; Boucher, 2003).

Overall, it can be argued that the four autonomy enabling conditions that are required to support females' political leadership are essentially absent in the Sunyani West District. As Liberal feminist listed the four conditions include a) being free of violence and the threat of violence that violates women's dignity (Cudd 2006) free of the limits set by patriarchal paternalistic and moralistic laws that restrict women's options on the grounds that such limits are in women's (Smith 2004; Brake 2004; Chambers, 2008); c) having access to options as entitlements (Andersson, 2007; Alstott 2004). There are several elements in the findings that support this argument.

As the findings suggest, there are social arrangements which put social misconceptions in place such that female political leaders had to constantly navigate these misconceptions about female political leadership. These include social roles expectations of females and housewives which works in such a way that even if the enabling conditions such as husband allowing the wife to take up political leadership positions are in place, women become disadvantaged because of

what other social interlocutors say (Smith, 1998). Society expects female subordination which is deeply rooted in customary and legal practice in the Sunyani West District. As Tong (1998) would argue, these conditions have not yet been challenged by any legal process. Thus if conditions for women are to be improved, there is need for significant disruptions in Ghanaian cultural repertoire, thinking and theorisation of womanhood at all levels. Otherwise, it seems that for now creating and supporting acts of legislation that remove the barriers that prevent women from having equal opportunities with men in society have not had any significant effect at the Sunyani West District (Thurschwell, 2008; Smith, 2004; Spinner-Halev, 2001). Thus, realisation of the hope that individuals should be free to pursue their own interests irrespective of their gender; and equal consideration without discrimination on the basis of sex, as enshrined in Article 1 and 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is limited for females in the Sunyani West District.

As liberal feminists (Smith, 1998) argued, in terms of political autonomy, there is need for the state to ensure that the basic structure of society distributes the benefits and burdens of social cooperation fairly, that is, in a manner that women as well as men could endorse (McKeen, 2006; Alstott 2004; Baehr 2004; Bojer 2002; Lloyd 1998). Otherwise, the current gender system's basic social structure distributes benefits and burdens unfairly against females in political leadership (Barclay, 2013; Bhandary, 2010; Brighouse & Wright, 2008; Gheaus & Robeyns, 2011). Whereas females are legally not limited from participating in political leadership positions; and although they have space in public deliberation and electoral politics the social system at the grassroot cultural level has not evolved sufficiently to the level where women can be considered as co-authors of the conditions under which their participation in political leadership positions can be understood and discussed (Barclays, 2013; Baehr

2004). Principles of guaranteed equal representation of both sexes in parliament has not been espoused and females' political leadership lack supporting efficacy mechanisms (Peters, 2006). My argument is that the liberal feminists' belief that both sexes should have equal rights under the law may have been realised. However, the conditions that need to exist to promote equality is absent in the social and cultural ethos. As such, in my view, there is need for significant social re-organisation that seek to expand the rights and opportunities of women to the same level enjoyed by their male counterparts.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0   Introduction

This chapter sums up the main findings of the research. It brings the main themes together to present organized thought on the main research questions. The chapter is organized under three main sections. The first section presents the summary of findings. The second section is where the conclusions from the research findings are presented whilst the third outlines the recommendations.

5.1   Summary

This study sought to examine the challenges facing women in political leadership positions and how they cope with such challenges in the Sunyani West District. The researcher adopted the qualitative approach using case study design. Fourteen (14) women comprising four (4) Assembly women, eight (8) women in executive party positions and two (2) female parliamentary candidates were involved in the study. The main objectives formulated to guide the study were to:

1. examine the perceptions of female leaders in political leadership positions on leadership in Sunyani West District.

2. examine the challenges facing women in political leadership positions.

3. assess the effects of these challenges on women in political leadership positions.

4. explore how women in political leadership positions cope with their challenges.

The principal questions that were explored were

1. How do females in political leadership positions perceive leaders?

2. What are the challenges facing women in political positions?

3. What are the effects of these challenges on women in political leadership positions?

4. How do women in political leadership positions cope with their challenges?

Females in political leadership positions' perception of leadership

The females in political leadership positions defined leadership based on their experiences. Some of the women leaders view leadership as a task-oriented activity focusing on certain task that the leader has to perform. This view of leadership seemed very organisational in terms of job descriptions. Another group sees leadership goal-oriented whilst other women in political leadership view leadership as opportunity for equalisation. They believe leadership provides avenues for females to contribute in developing society. Leadership was seen as an opportunity to demonstrate their leadership potentials and skills, and to address disparities between males and females wherein leadership used to be considered as an area for males. In this view, the leaders are focused on achieving some set goals and do hope that achieving those goals will prove that they have been effective leaders. Their leadership is, thus, an outcomes-focused activity. Another conception of leadership was people-oriented. This view puts human needs at the centre. It sees leadership as service to the community of people the leader represents and whose interest is paramount.

Challenges facing women in political leadership positions

There are several sets of challenges identified in this study which affect women in political leadership positions. The first set of challenges affect the individual and personal lives of the females in political leadership positions. These include family level challenges that females in political leadership face. One is the threat to their marriage; implying leadership positions can break their marriage. Another is the challenge associated with the performance of child care responsibilities and participation in extended family programmes. This relates to the challenge of how to combine political life with social life commitments to siblings and parents.

A principal challenge to females in political leadership was disrespect that some people show to them. They are undermined as incompetent to lead. They are not assessed in their own rights but defined by their marital status and biological positioning as women. The findings reveal that their submission to their husband which should be understood as a household issue is invoked as a measure in the public domain. The findings further indicated that females involved in the study did not have challenges from their homes or from spouses. This is something that contradicts much of the literature that suggests that females are constrained from occupying leadership positions because husbands are restrictive in allowing them to do so. This point is important because it did not come up in spite of the fact that about half of the females who participated in the study were married. The major challenge facing women in political leadership position is the social perceptions of male chauvinists who think females are incompetent or not born to lead.

From the discussions, females in political leadership positions face many challenges that are culturally rooted or grounded in social stereotyping. This implies that much has not changed in the structure of Ghanaian society that can significantly

influence and promote females participation in political leadership positions. As such, it is important for the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to develop systems to enhance opportunities for, and to support, females in political leadership positions.

Effects of challenges on women in political leadership positions

The findings indicated that the challenges females in political leadership positions face have many effects that can be categorised into four main strands. There are effects on the individual. These include psychological and emotional effects such as stress, self-doubt and becoming demoralised. There are effects on the family who also suffer psychologically as they are sometimes attacked verbally. The third strand of effects reverberates among their superiors (both political and occupational). However, the main effect is communal in nature. The challenges female political leaders face delay development of the community as people who wish to support the females to develop their areas withdraw support. Also, the findings reveal that the attempts to undermine females in political leadership positions breed misunderstanding and division among the members of the community. Therefore, it can be argued that challenges of females in political leadership produces negative results for the entire society. These challenges affect the individual leader, their families, their superiors and the entire community, negatively

Coping strategies of women in political leadership positions

Females in political leadership positions indicated that they have several general coping strategies such as self-encouragement and self-motivation which helps to deal with much of the emotional stress they experience. Other strategies include task sharing with maids and other people to ensure that they have space to

deal with some urgent issues they need to attend to. The findings also reveal that they try to be very organised, so they can plan well for various tasks. They try not to repeat previous mistakes and turn challenges into opportunities. Others overwork and ignore the challenges.

In terms of dealing with male chauvinists, females in political leadership positions noted that they try to understand the perspectives of male chauvinists to limit the challenges emanating from those people to that frame of mind. It was also revealed that they give male chauvinists the attention they deserve but move on to focus on tasks to be performed. They further indicated that they take time to be consultative in order to consider various perspectives in their decision-making.

In terms of social misconceptions, the findings reveal some of the women in political leadership positions engage, and others ignore. Those who engaged try to do the ‗impossible' to prove a point that they are able to perform leadership responsibilities. However, some ignored all social misconceptions and focus on the task. Despite their challenges, they encourage other females to take up political leadership. The findings indicated that they do not envisage significant social changes that will produce positive attitudes towards female leadership in the nearest future, hence they encourage other women to consider the challenges as important motivators to achieve results for society.

5.2   Conclusions

Females in political leadership positions perceive leadership in three different ways as task-oriented, goal-oriented and people-oriented. Whatever way they perceived political leadership, they faced several challenges in their leadership roles. The challenges take various forms and come from various sources. Females in political leadership positions face challenges related to family and community.

Further, the main challenge facing females in political leadership positions is social misconceptions about their participation in political leadership positions. The effects of the challenges confronting females in political include emotional breakdown of the females in political leadership to the extent that some consider quitting. Further, their family members and supporters receive several emotional traumas emanating from insults and stigmatisation. The main effect of the challenges faced by females in political leadership positions is retardation in community development. Despite their challenges, females in political leadership positions encourage other females to venture into political leadership. Females seeking political leadership positions should not react negatively to the challenges they may face. In order to be successful in political leadership positions, females need to focus on their output and achievements to show their capabilities in contributing meaningfully to society. In order to challenge social misconceptions, females in political leadership positions should develop resilience towards stigmatization, insult and other related abuses. Females in political leadership positions do not envisage significant social changes that will produce positive attitudes towards female leadership in the nearest future.

5.3   Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations are made for policy and research.

To deal with the challenges facing women in political leadership positions, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection must intensify public education against social stereotypes that pose challenges to women participation in political leadership. The Department of Women should collaborate with Women Networks of International and National Level Non-Governmental Organisations to develop systems for social behavioural change communication. This should be aimed at

developing a long-term national campaign to change negative social misconception about female participation in political leadership.

Concerning the effects of the challenges facing women in political leadership, political parties must adopt a women manifesto that reserves some seats for women in Parliament. The State should reserve 12 seats in Parliament to be occupied women. These seats should be equally distributed among the first three political parties. These should be by appointment.

In terms of coping with challenges women face, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection needs to provide much psychological support to females in political leadership positions. Women in political leadership, women political leaders must be firm and strong to oppose all forms of barriers, insults, vilifications and labelling and offer themselves for political leadership positions in their respective jurisdictions.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

This research focused on the challenges and coping strategies of women in political leadership positions in the Sunyani West District. It will be useful if a larger scale study is conducted to understand the situation at a national level. Also, this study specifically explored the views of females in political leadership positions. Further study can explore the views of females who are not involved in political leadership positions. Other studies can also explore the views of males on women political leadership and the challenges they face.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter of Introduction

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

29th January, 2019

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MS REGINA AGYEIWAA

We write to introduce Ms. Regina Agyeiwaa to your outfit. She is an M.Phil. Social Studies Education student with index number 8180490008 from the Department of Social Studies Education, University of Education, Winneba.

As part of the requirements for the award of the Master of Philosophy degree, she is undertaking a research on the topic: *Challenges and coping strategies of women in political leadership positions in the Sunyani West District.*

We wish to assure you that any information provided would be treated confidential.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Lucy Effeh Attom (Ph. D.)
Ag. Head of Department

HEAD
DEPT. OF SOCIAL STUDIES STUD.
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION
WINNEBA

Interview Guide

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

Interview for women in political leadership positions in the Sunyani West District of the Bono Region

Introduction

This is an academic work with the objective of finding out challenges facing women in political leadership positions and how they deal with such challenges in the Sunyani West District of Bono Region. I will be grateful if you could respond to these questions. All information provided will be treated as confidential.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Age:..
2. Academic Qualification:…………………………………………………….
3. Number of years in politics:………………………………………………
4. Marital status:……………………………………………………………
5. Number of Children:…………………………………………………….

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

1. What motivated you to opt for this position?
2. Are you happy with your position as a leader?
3. What was the process you went through before becoming a political leader?

PERCEPTION ON LEADERSHIP

1. What are your views on political leadership?
2. Who is an active and effective leader?
3. How do females in political leadership positions perceive leadership?
4. Are females good in leadership positions?
   i. If Yes, give reasons
   ii. If No, give reasons

CHALLENGES CONFRONTING FEMALES IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

1. What are the challenges facing females in political leadership?
2. Being a female, do you encounter challenges in effective performance of your responsibilities?
3. How does the community recognise you as a leader?
4. How do you deal with your subordinates?
5. How do you relate to your superiors?
   i. What are their expectations from you?

EFFECTS OF THESE CHALLENGES ON FEMALE LEADERS IN EDUCATION

1. How do these challenges affect you personally?
2. How do these challenges affect your family?
3. How do these challenges affect your superiors?
4. How do these challenges affect everybody in the community as a whole?

COPING STRATEGIES

1. How do you cope with your challenges?
2. How do you strike the balance between your work as a leader and your family life?
3. As a leader, how do you cope with male chauvinist?

4. How do you cope with societal misconception of female leaders?

5. As a female leader, how do you cope with your superiors?

SUGGESTIONS

6. Any advice or comments to females in political leadership positions