UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE DIRECTORS IN PUBLIC SECTOR

INSTITUTIONS: A CASE STUDY OF ELECTRICITY COMPANY OF

GHANA (ECG)

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**A thesis in the Department of Strategic Communication,
School of Communication and Media Studies, submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the award of degree of
Master of Arts
(Communication and Media Studies)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

MARCH, 2023

DECLARATION

STUDENTS' DECLARATION

I, Patricia Omari, 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 that it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

DATE: ……...................…………….

SIGNATURE: …….…………….....................……….…….

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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

DATE: ……...................…………….

SIGNATURE: …….…………….....................……….…….

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Madam Cynthia Amartey and my entire family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Although women are being actively elevated to top management positions in recent years, they still have to put up with some unpalatable experiences in order to achieve personal and organisational goals. In this study, the qualitative approach was adopted to examine the experiences of female directors in the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG). Particularly, the study relied on interviews and participant observation to generate the data. Based on thematic analysis and via the lens of the Stereotype and Feminist Standpoint theories, the study observed that despite occupying leadership positions, there were constraints of female directors to perform their roles and functions. The study also found that the authority of these women sometimes suffered resistance from colleagues and subordinates. Additionally, female leaders in the ECG are sometimes excluded from decision-making processes on occasion they should be involved. The analysis also show that gendered discrimination is somewhat institutionalised in this organisation with other women contributing to the discrimination against women leaders. In ascertaining how these practices are dealt with, the participants indicated that they employ resilience, avoidance and confrontational strategies. The study recommends that government institutions should develop stringent regulations to deal with such issues in order to ensure equity and organisational growth.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Women make up half of the workforce in today's fiercely competitive and fast-paced business environment, and they are credited with being crucial to the economies of their nations (Cole, 2005). According to Najmabadi and Sharifi (2019), women constitute 50% of the world's population, and 40% of the world's labour force however their involvement in management is comparably low. Orbach (2017) avers that women are disproportionately underrepresented in executive and management positions.

Men have historically held leadership positions in all social institutions, whereas women appear to be marginalized in office holding (Eckert & Assmann, 2022). While women are still working hard to become CEOs, chiefs of state, and media professionals, gender-based discrimination perpetuates their inferior standing (Miliopoulou & Kapareliotis, 2021). Although the proportion of women working in large companies has drastically increased in the world, this has not been reflected in the gender makeup of management positions in such institutions (Carli, 2020; Van Der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020).

Women demonstrate leadership in every part of the private and public sectors. Yet, women's leadership opportunities are still unequal in comparison to men's leadership. Rhode (2017) explains that though women constitute more than 50% of voters, only 19% of congress, 12% of governors and 19% of mayors in the United States are women. In the field of academics, though majority of college students are women, only 30% of full professors and university leaders are women.

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Women's underrepresentation in influential or top management positions do not impact individual women only, but the society as well as the economy of the state. Ghana is a patriarchal society where men dominate in almost every sector (Aidoo et. al, 2016) however, the constitution of Ghana permits all people (male and female) to be given equal opportunities. Article 24 sub-section (1) of the 1992 constitution indicates that "every person has the right to work under satisfactory, safe and healthy conditions, and shall receive equal pay for equal work without distinction of any kind". To add to this, sub-section (3) includes that "women shall be guaranteed equal right to training and promotion without any impediments from any person".

Piscopo and Clark Muntean (2018) argue that laws and regulations do not necessarily prevent women from being excluded from top-level management positions. In agreement, Thomas (2018) asserts that even when women are able to reach top management levels or the highest level of corporate decision-making, they are likely to still face biases that are implicit. This is as a result of lack of understanding of the challenges women face in boardrooms (Vasiliou & Adams, 2018). Therefore, Martin and Barnard (2013) urge that to change the status quo, people should be given a better understanding of such situations. According to Gabaldon et. al (2015), informal discrimination institutionalized against women is the cause of homogenous leadership boards in organisations. Women who desire to be involved in top management positions often have to overcome higher barriers and undergo excessive scrutiny (Singh & Vinnicombe, 2004).

Harlley (2001) aver that most women who have advanced in public service and other sectors have been as a result of a conscious effort to provide support and create an enabling atmosphere for enhancement of competencies. The author posits that women are putting in maximum efforts to make the best out of this situation (of being

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discriminated against in the strive for management positions). However, the society which is used to the patriarchal system does not appear to support women.

Doyin-Hassan (2006) asserts that there are many negative stereotypes about women which makes it difficult for them to hold managerial positions. He explains further that though women in the various workplaces encounter such stereotypes, the very few women who hold leadership positions experience it more. In agreement, Tai, et al. (2005) state that female executives or managers are strongly faced with negative stereotypes which distinguish them from their male counterparts. It is for this reason that Anker (1997) as cited in Ayodele (2009) aver that discrimination against women in higher places discourages other women from desiring to pursue such positions of power.

Including women in leadership boards and top management positions can bring added value to institutions. This is due to women's diverse knowledge, skills and experiences (Goodwin et al., 2014). What should teacher educators know and be able to do? Perspectives from practicing teacher educators. *Journal of teacher education*, *65*(4), 284-302.2014). Again, women leaders contribute to diversity of thinking and ethics, and are naturally concerned about employee and environmental issues (Terjesen et. al, 2009). According to Terjesen, Sealy and Singh (2010), women in leadership also help to nature, train, and develop younger women, as role models in their respective organisations.

1.2 Representation of Women in the Public Sector

The public sector is the segment of the economy which comprises organisations owned, operated and controlled by the government. Organisations or agencies in the public sector provide services to the public and contribute to their well-being. Some services

provided by the public sector are law enforcement, national defense, public transportation, educational institutions, transit infrastructures and health services. The aim of the public sector is not to make profit off its services. It seeks to promote economic growth and stability as well as providing essential services for citizens. The public sector is responsible for the implementation of policies at all levels of government which includes services provided by elected officials. It also engages in outsourcing of services to other public agencies. There are three levels of government in the public sector, and they are federal, regional, and local governments.

Women constitute 50.1% of Ghana's population, and 39% in public service, but make up only 12% representation at management levels of public sector organisations (Oduro & Aryee, 2003). With respect to top level leadership positions, women constitute less than 20% of Chief executive positions across ministries and organisations within the public sector (Adusei-Karikari & Ohemeng, 2014). This is a clear indication that women are underrepresented in top level management positions in the public sector of Ghana.

The 2022 Ghana Stock Exchange (GSE) study conducted on representation of women on thirty-five (35) Companies in Ghana revealed that women occupied 25% of seats on boards and 27% of seats on non-executive boards. Though there has been a slight increase from 2021, it was indicated that the most common role occupied by women on boards is the corporate secretary role which in actual fact is not a board of director position (Asare, 2022).

Adusei-Karikari and Ohemeng (2015) posit that women offer outstanding leadership and management in public service; however, they are still denied equal access in top level management and leadership positions. This hinders women from contributing to

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organizational policies, plans and decisions which affect performance and output. In the same vein, Allah-Mensah (2005) also insist that women in the public sector are intimidated by male dominance, and the patriarchal system operated within such organisations.

1.3 The Electricity Company of Ghana

The Electricity Company of Ghana is a public utility organisation in Ghana in charge of the supply and regulation of power (Dwomoh, 2012). The company supplies power from the middle part of the country to all other regions. The Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) is a limited liability company entirely owned by the government of Ghana operating under the Ministry of Energy. It was established in 1963 but began full operations in February 1997. ECG purchases power in bulk from energy providers such as the Volta River Authority (VRA), and independent energy generators such as the Bui Power and Sunon Asogli and distributes them to different regions in Ghana (https://www.ecg.com.gh/index.php/en/).
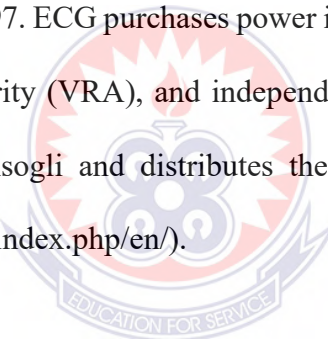
With foreign aid and support, the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) has become a more effective energy distributer and has invested in different areas with the aim of enhancing quality of work. Over the past few years, ECG has committed to the distribution and installation of prepaid metres all over the country, in order to efficiently manage power.

The vision of the Electricity Company of Ghana is to be a financially sustainable and customer focused energy service provider by 2024. Its mission is to provide quality, reliable and safe electricity services to support the growth and development of Ghana. The primary objective of the Electricity Company of Ghana is to distribute electrical energy to Ghanaians within the company's operational areas.

The aim of the company is to operate on sound commercial lines in the discharge of its duties. It also seeks to achieve a judicious supervision of rural electrification projects on behalf of the Government of Ghana.

Below are the core mandates of the Company:

- To transmit, supply and distribute electricity.

- To purchase electrical energy in bulk from VRA or any other supplier for distribution.

- To construct, reconstruct, install, assemble, repair, maintain, operate or remove sub-transmission stations, electrical appliances, fittings and installations.

- To execute and supervise national electrification programmes on behalf of government.

- To carry out any other activity incidental or conducive to the attainment of the objectives above.

The company (head office) is headed by a managing director who is being supported by three deputy managing director. There are seventeen (17) directorates headed by individual directors. The Company also has a training center and the Ashanti Strategic Business unit (SBU) which are also headed by directors. These directors are assisted by General Managers who head various divisions and are also assisted by Sectional Managers. Also, there are eight (8) administrative regions headed by General Managers and eighty-eight (88) operational districts headed by managers. There are other special units within the office of the Managing Director headed by General Directors, and these are:

- Corporate Planning

- Monitoring and Evaluation

- Project Management Office

- Energy Trading   (https://www.ecg.com.gh/index.php/en/)

1.4 Statement of Problem

There has been an increase in studies on the representation and participation of women in positions of leadership and power (Singh et. al, 2008; Terjesen et. al, 2009; Paustian-Underdahl, 2014; Pafford & Schaefer, 2017). This is because though women have been given opportunities to work in government and private institutions, the percentage of women occupying leadership and management positions is low (Aidoo et al., 2016). The Ghana Stock Exchange report in 2022 on the representation of women in 35 listed companies in Ghana indicated that only 22% of women were occupying board positions of which most of them occupy the corporate secretary position, which is not a board of director role (GSE, 2022).

Many studies have been conducted on the underrepresentation of women in organizational and governmental leadership (Burgess & Tharenou, 2002; Allah-Mensah, 2005; Anderson, Diabah & Mensah, 2011; Awozum, 2021). Some of these studies have focused on the underrepresentation of women in politics and governance (Allah-Mensah, 2005; Haraldsson, & Wängnerud, 2019; Anderson, Diabah & Mensah, 2011).

For instance, Allah-Mensah (2005) in her study, focused on the participation of women in both politics and public offices. The study aimed at identifying the detailed positions of women and their roles in selected political parties, ministries and public organisations. The study adopted a quantitative approach to research. It was revealed in the study that there are some challenges inhibiting the efforts and interests of women

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from playing significant roles in the political economy of Ghana. The study concluded that there are only few women at the apex where important decisions are made.

Haraldsson and Wängnerud (2019) examined the participation of women in parliament and media sexism. In their study the authors sought to identify the number of women present in the parliaments of 56 countries around the globe. The study revealed that the number of women in parliament are comparably low and concluded that media sexism is a contributing factor to the willingness of women to participate in governmental leadership.

Anderson, Diabah and Mensah (2011) also conducted a study on the media's role in the underrepresentation of African women in politics, focusing on the naming and referential features given to women in politics. The research was done by comparing the media's report on Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and George Oppon Weah. The study sought to establish the differences in the representation of the two Liberian (female and male) candidates. By analyzing 60 articles, the study concluded that though there are significant changes in power relations in terms of gender, there are still some entrenched biases against African women in Politics and these biases are constructed by the media to shape the opinion of the public.

Other studies have looked at the representation of women on management boards of public and private organisations (Singh et al, 2002; Singh, Terjesen & Vinnicombe, 2008; Afedo, Aziale & Ahiekpor, 2011; Singh et al, 2014; Giannetti & Wang, 2020).

Afedo et al (2011) for instance, focused their study on the factors contributing to women's lower participation rate in top management positions of organisations. Using a quantitative approach, and collecting data through a survey, the study concluded that women are highly interested in top management positions. The study further described

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that women are also as competent as men with respect to taking up such positions but the unsupportive attitude towards one another as women is the reason they are underrepresented in top leadership.

Also, Burgess and Tharenou (2002) in their study reviewed the state of women's representation on boards of directors and reasons why they need to be on such boards. The study adopted a quantitative approach to research. It was concluded that over the period, women have gained some seats at the table of boards of directors, however, those seats are relatively low and minor. The authors also argued that the findings of their study suggest that the representation of women in top management positions will remain low in many years to come due to gender discrimination.

Another study by Giannetti and Wang (2020) focused on the factors that contribute to low female board participation and how to increase female board participation. The study indicated that factors such as discrimination and gender inequality, demand and supply cause low female participation on leadership boards. The study recommended that public attention to gender equality is associated with changes in decision makers' awareness of gender equality problems. Hence, contributing to the increase in female board representation.

A research conducted by Torchia et al. (2011) which sought to identify the contributions of female directors towards organisations, through a survey, indicated that through their participation in strategic boards, women contribute to organization's innovation. However, the study concluded that the rate at which women are able to contribute towards the organization positively is determined by the percentage of women on the strategic board. The study therefore recommended that there should be at least three women on every strategic board of organizations.

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Despite the various studies conducted on the underrepresentation of women in top leadership and management positions, fewer studies have been done on the experiences of women leaders with respect to gender discrimination in the public sector. A study conducted by Goyal et al. (2021) focused on identifying the gender discrimination suffered by female directors and the process of how they build resilience through coping strategies within UK context.

From the review, it is realized that studies that have been done on the experiences of women leaders in the organisations are not within the Ghanaian context. However, studies within the Ghanaian context focused on the factors leading to underrepresentation of women in politics and governance. It seems that in Ghana studies delving into the experiences of women occupying top management positions, from the perspectives of women are limited. This study therefore seeks to investigate the perspectives of female directors on the gendered discrimination against women at top management positions in the public sector within the Ghanaian context, using the Electricity Company of Ghana as a case study.

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To investigate the experiences and perspectives of female directors in ECG on gendered discrimination against women at top level management.

2. To determine how female leaders deal with gendered discrimination at top level management.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What are the experiences and perspectives of female directors in ECG on gendered discrimination at top level management?

2. How do female leaders deal with gendered discrimination at top level management?

1.7 Significance of the study

This study sought to investigate the perspectives of female directors on gendered discrimination against women in top level management, and how they deal with such discrimination.

The findings of this study will be relevant to government of Ghana, leaders of institutions and policy makers, investors and gender advocates.

Firstly, the findings of this study may serve as a guide to stakeholders and players of the Electricity Company of Ghana, especially the Ministry of Energy in policy development as well as decision making on gender-based situations and leadership.

The study will secondly proffer a guideline on attaining information, knowledge, tactics, and suggestions to help recruit, retain, train, empower, motivate, assist, and mentor Ghanaian women leaders. As such, the study will be of essence to female directors and other stakeholder of Electricity Company of Ghana as they aim to remain competitive in the energy sector of Ghana and beyond.

The research, like many other studies, will add to knowledge, bringing out yet-to-be-found dimensions in the knowledge area of experiences of female directors through good administration and leadership, hence serving as an addition to literature on the field leadership. As a reference material, it will be a necessary document important for other researchers who wish research deeper into this arena focusing on other dimensions and grey areas as well as members of the public who need information on the subject. The findings of this research will also create room for further research using a wider scope and a different geographical setting.

This study will also serve as a source of valid information for gender advocates regarding decisions and programmes.

Leaders of other institutions will also use the findings and recommendations in this study to trace and make the necessary adjustments with respect to gendered discrimination in their institutions, to promote formidable leadership teams.

1.9 Delimitation of the Study

The role of female directors in public sector institutions is at the heart of offering quality leadership in every institution and its prospects has potential positive influence on all players in an institution. As such, a research with such a focus could have involved all public sector institutions in Ghana. However, the research is limited to Electricity Company of Ghana in Accra. Though the researcher concedes that efforts could have been made to extend the research to include more branches of ECG, and other public sector institutions, the challenge of having to move distances to interview respondents due to the geographical locations of the various institutions in the country and the time limit did not allow for such accommodation. Therefore, all other public institutions are exempted from the study.

Also, the study is limited to only female executives in the Electricity Company of Ghana, hence the perspectives of male executives are excluded. The outcome of the study cannot be applied to other women in the middle or lower level of management since only females in top management levels were considered for this study.

1.10 Organization of Chapter

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One consists of background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study, and organization of the study.

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Chapter Two dealt with literature review, which examines the objectives, and the summary of literature review, theoretical framework and conceptual framework. Chapter Three focuses on the research methodology under the target population, research design, sample size and sampling procedure, research instrument, instrument's validity, instruments, reliability, data collection procedure data analysis and ethical considerations. Chapter Four entails the data analysis, presentations and interpretation. Chapter Five presents the summary, conclusion, recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This study seeks to investigate the perspectives of female directors on the gendered discrimination against women in top management positions, and how they deal with them. This chapter therefore reviews literature on women and leadership as well as gendered discrimination. The chapter also reviews relevant literature on the feminist theory and the standpoint theory and elaborates on their significance to the current study.

2.1 Women and Leadership

According to Rhode (2017), women form the majority of the most well-educated people in the world, thus, a greater pool of talent for leadership. Leadership can be defined as the ability to influence people to work towards the achievement of a specific objective (Anra & Yamin, 2017).

According to Hojgaard (2002) leadership and top management positions are viewed as masculine domain, traditionally exempting women. Grant (2005) in the same vein exposes that in Africa societies, men are believed to lead, and women meant to follow. Growe and Montgomery (2003) argue that leaders are genderless and alike. However, the authors found in their study on school administrators that schools managed by female administrators were better managed and progressing more than schools with male administrators. Aladejana and Aladejana (2005) in their study concerning female leadership representation in education administration also concluded that similar to schools managed by female leaders performed better than those managed by male leaders. Therefore, De la Rey (2005) suggested that there may be differences in the leadership styles adopted by women and men.

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In Rwanda, all businesses with three or more women in management outperformed those with fewer women in management in terms of organizational performance (Kantengwa, 2004). The study by Kantengwa (2004) found that businesses with more than three women in management saw the greatest improvements in their work environment, values, vision, cooperation, and control. Innovation, accountability, and capability barely differed by one point, so there was little difference between businesses with more or fewer women in management.

In terms of leadership styles, women practice a more participating and democratic approach of leadership and engage in the sharing of power and information (Boulanger, 2008). According to Matthew et al. (2013) women are likely to practice relational leadership approach, whiles men on the other hand are likely to engage in a dominant approach to leadership. To Terjesen and Patel (2017), women in leadership exhibit transformational leadership.

According to several academics, women enjoy teamwork and are more likely to be approachable, kind, and supportive. They emphasize the importance of instructional leadership in promoting student learning (Coleman, 2003, 2005; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2009). Numerous research (Coleman, 2002, 2003; Franzén, 2005; Hall, 1996; Qiang et al., 2009; Morris et al., 1999; Neville, 1988; Ouston, 1993; Shakeshaft, 1993; Stelter, 2002) have demonstrated that women use a collaborative and participative leadership style. Women that embrace this method promote inclusivity and use group decision-making (Shakeshaft, 1993; Qiang et al., 2009). The higher bar that women must clear to be promoted into leadership posts and the belief that they "must sustain greater performance to keep these jobs" are two interpretations of how effective women leaders are (Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 793). Few experts, meanwhile, have attempted to explain why women are more inclined to like these fashions. It may be

suggested that it is due to the good stereotype of women as being "nurturing, caring, and people-oriented" (Noddings, 1984 as cited in Coleman, 2003, p. 40).

According to Eagly and Johannessen-Schmidt (2001), democratic and participatory leadership styles are more advantageous to women than to males because of "the attitudinal bias against female leaders that derives from the incongruity of the female gender role with numerous leader responsibilities."

In talent development, women are more likely to focus on and be better at developing others in comparison to men (Gowing, 2006). In the same vein, Zenger and Folkman (2012) agree that women are more inspiring, encouraging, and good at building relationships, promoting collaboration and teamwork than their male counterparts. Terjesen and Patel (2017) agree to this assertion while stating that female directors or leaders are likely to become role models for younger women in the organization.

Nielson and Huse (2010) asserts that corporate boards with enough women or female directors are likely to engage in board evaluation and board programmes which help internal processes. In agreement, Adams and Ferreira (2009), states that a more gender-diverse boards put in a lot of efforts into internal monitoring. Thus, the authors indicate that female directors experience better attendance records as compared to male directors. According to Metz and Kulik (2015), boards that have a gender-diverse group of directors pay more attention to detail than a homogenous group of directors.

On the contrary, Triana et al. (2014) disagrees with the assertions above. They suggest that gender diverse boards create a less cohesive team which may in turn make it difficult arriving at a strategic decision. Meanwhile, Post and Byron (2015) asserts that female directors on a board are able to foster cohesion and induce cooperation among board members even when the boards are larger and geographically dispersed.

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With respect to financial performance, Jalbert, Jalbert and Furumo (2013) and Poni (2014) agree that with corporate organisations whose strategy is focused on innovation, a diverse board of directors has a positive impact on their financial outcomes. Again, Dwyer, Richard and Chadwick (2003) assert that more women in management have a positive impact on the financial performance of organisations especially those that emphasize on innovation, flexibility and interaction, and exhibit growth orientation. Meanwhile, Richard, Kirby and Chadwick (2013) and gender diversity in management only had a positive impact on organisations where participative strategy making was high. Ali, Metz and Kulik (2015) determined where organisations with diverse management have limited work-family programmes, there is negative impact on financial performance and vice versa.

2.1.1 Women's leadership experience

Women who run successful firms that place a strong emphasis on financial success, employee well-being, and having a positive social impact are said to have leadership experience. Although women make up the majority of the world's population, men predominate in positions of leadership in business and politics. Women are underrepresented in higher positions when it comes to leadership experience. The failure of Ghana to elect a woman to the office of president serves as an obvious illustration. Around the world, women hold fewer than a quarter of senior leadership positions, and in a third of enterprises, there are no women in any senior positions (Gipson, Pfaff, Mendelsohn & Catenacci, 2017). It is necessary to take into account how socialization and cultural worldviews affect how leaders are formed.

The results demonstrate that participants made decisions that deviated from both gender and sex norms by selecting traits from both paradigms (Coleman, 1996, p. 166). It's interesting to note that compared to their English counterparts, Singaporean female

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principals preferred to pick more "masculine" leadership traits. This might be connected to the sociocultural variances brought forth by the individuals' various geographic areas. Regarding androgyny, while it is undeniable that gender has an impact on leadership style, what drives women to go against their gender stereotypes and adopt a more masculine approach? According to Morris et al. (1999), "a strongly male-dominated culture" in developing nations and cultural variations between Singapore and England may be to blame for the reasons behind the participants' decisions in the aforementioned study (Oplatka, 2006, p. 615). According to the literature, culture has a big impact on how leaders behave. The variables that empower women and gender activists to gain voice, influence, and leadership skills in the political, economic, and social arenas as well as the factors that signal active strategies of resistance are recurring themes.

It is important to support a culture that encourages women to participate in activities that advance their level of education and expertise (Coleman, 1996, p. 166). Female leadership is perceived by some people in most workplaces as the reality that women can and do lead. Others may characterize it as an issue of equality and the entitlement to the same chances from a feminist perspective. Some claim that it relates to specific feminine traits that are advantageous in today's workplaces (Palmu-Joronen, 2009). Others believe that female leadership should not even be distinguished.

2.1.2 Leadership and career

Since leadership is influenced by culture and evolves through time, it is challenging to provide a single definition that applies to all leadership. However, the essential characteristics of leadership will be discussed next to better comprehend female leadership and what is meant by it. Three components make up the idea of leadership: influence, goals, and people. Leadership is an influential action used to achieve goals. Leadership is centered on people, and the capacity to motivate others is crucial to

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achieving an organization's objectives (Daft, Kendrick, & Vershinina, 2010). People can be motivated by using leadership as a process or a tool. Motivation seeks to influence those people's behavior to accomplish specific goals. Different methods of motivating employees, various types of objectives, and the form of organizations all contributed to the many leadership philosophies (Hannagan, 2008). Therefore, leaders set the course for others to follow in the future and inspire people to achieve the predetermined goals by adopting a particular functioning or acting style. A good leader doesn't only dictate where to go they must take part in it personally to go. In other words, a good leader participates in every task assigned to followers since this demonstrates to the followers that the leader is willing to serve rather than just be served. Similar to this, a good leader's participation in activities or projects communicates that they are aware of what is required of each follower. Leaders must put their visions into reality because their actions, not their words, are the easiest way to judge them (Hannagan, 2008, 40). In addition to having duty and authority, leaders also need to have a clear sense of the future and the self-assurance to guide everyone there.

It is important to consider the significance and meaning of a career. After all, experience—which is typically acquired via prior working and life experiences—is required to become a leader. Different activities and events make up a career. Career development is a lifelong process that is influenced by education, a variety of work environments and positions, family, and extracurricular activities. Organizational structures and career structures both evolve. The structure of a career used to be simpler, with people being loyal to a firm or a job and developing their careers there. Today's career structures are more flexible [what do you mean]. The development of a career is also influenced by additional activities like social interactions and a variety of life roles.

In a profession, it is possible to advance to higher positions, return to a lower-demand position, and then advance once more.

A career can imply different things to different people and organizations. It is possible to separate these two dimensions into subjective and objective meanings. The process that a person goes through in their working life is the subjective notion of a career. A person develops a professional identity for themselves by going up through the ranks of an organization, typically in a hierarchical fashion. A person defines his or her meaning for a career. The operational model of an organization's career policies and potential career structures are referenced in the objective definition of a career (Aaltio-Marjosalo, 2001).

2.2 Gender Discrimination

Dipboye and Colella (2005) defines gender discrimination can be defines as a discriminatory treatment based on gender as the criterion in the where there is the need to select, compensate, promote, train and development and give professional recognition. Discrimination is an unfair behavior towards individuals within a specific group. It projects prejudice and stereotypes. Goyal et al. (2021) in their study of female boards of directors' resilience against gender discrimination revealed that institutionalized gender discrimination against women is the main cause of the underrepresentation of women in top level management. The authors explain that the underrepresentation of women on leadership boards may be an account of a practiced based institutionalized gender discrimination. This type of discrimination results in women having to undergo stricter examination or assessments and overcoming extremely high barriers to become part of top management boards (Smith & Parrotta, 2018). Clevand et al. (2005) argues that gender discrimination in the workplace can take the form of deliberately treating individuals differently based on their gender. The

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authors suggest that depending on the degree on visibility, a distinction can be determined between formal or overt discrimination which is legally offensive and punishable. When discrimination at the workplace is made less visible or hidden, it is known as covert discrimination (Collela & Stone, 2005). Gender discrimination has a negative effect on both public and private sectors and should therefore not be encouraged.

According to Bell et al. (2002), gender discrimination encompasses glass ceiling, sexual harassment and overt discrimination.

2.2.1 The glass ceiling phenomenon

The glass ceiling presents an invincible but impermeable barrier or covering which prevent women from reaching the top management positions regardless of their knowledge, experiences or skill. Carli and Eagly (2001) asserts that the glass ceiling is a metaphor which represents prejudice and discrimination. The authors aver that prejudice against female leaders interferes with women's ability to gain authority and exercise and would produce biases when it is translated into decisions regarding organization's human resource and political structures.

Gelfand et al. (2005) call it an invincible barrier which blocks the advancement of women into higher leadership or management. According to Haslam and Ryan (2008), the glass ceiling is basically the underrepresentation of women in positions of power and influence. The term "glass ceiling," according to the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995), refers to the invisible but immovable barrier that prevents women and minorities from ascending to the top rungs of the corporate ladder regardless of their credentials or accomplishments.

Postulate for main characteristics of the glass ceiling which are discussed below:

- The glass ceiling depicts differences and inequalities that are not relevant to the employee's work or related to features relevant to carry out duties or functions but solely makes reference to gender (Cotter et al, 2001).

- The inequalities caused by the glass ceiling increases with hierarchical ladder since discrimination gets worse at higher management levels. This implies that the higher the level of management, the more difficult it is for females to penetrate.

- The inequalities caused by the glass ceiling do not refer to the fewer number of women in top management in comparison to men only, but also refer to the probability of females reaching such management positions.

- The inequalities practiced becomes more intense over time. When this happens, it discourages or demotivates females from pursuing further higher positions.

Macarie and Moldovan (2008) argues that the discriminatory practices against women hold them back from reaching top level management positions, and in such organisations, the lower levels of management are mostly made up of women.

2.2.2 Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is a gender discrimination practice at the workplace. Sexual harassment comes in two forms which are:

- Quid pro quo harassment

- Hostile environment harassment

Quid pro quo harassment is the type of sexual harassment which involves the use of bribery and threat to obtain sexual compliance. Quid pro quo harassment requires that

perpetuator to exercise some form of power or authority over the target, therefore it is often perpetuated by managers or supervisors (Gorton, 1998).

Hostile environment harassment occurs when one person within the working environment intends to create an intimidating or hostile environment to interfere with an individual's work performance (Paetzold & O'Leary-Kelly, 1996).

Sexual harassment contributes to the existence of occupational sex segregation since most women experience it and may want to be a part of a typical female dominated occupation.

According to Galen et al. (1991), 53% of the members of National Association of female executives in the US were reported to have experienced sexual harassment. McKinney (1992) indicate that female managers or directors (women in higher ranking positions) are harassed by their male counterparts. This happens mostly because female executives are far outnumbered by their male counterparts thus, they are likely to be the minority on management boards.

In addition to being harassed by their male counterparts and seniors, female managers also experience "contra power" harassment. Contra power harassment refers to female leaders in higher management levels being harassed by men from lower ranks or status.

In Burda's (1996) study of female executives, it was revealed that 29% of female executives and 5% of male executives had experienced sexual harassments. The study also revealed that executive women in male dominated management levels were harassed more than the regular working woman.

Sandoff (1992) asserts that the further a woman went in the management levels, the more they are harassed. In the same vein, McKean (1992) added that harassment is one of the most prevailing problems which has resulted in lower levels of job satisfaction

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and commitment. It is evident that sexual harassment is not limited to women with lower ranks in the corporate environment.

2.2.3 Overt discrimination

overt discrimination is defined as the deployment of gender as a basis for employment -related issues such as hiring, promotion, dismissal, salary differentiation and others (Macarie & Moldovan, 2008).

Overt discrimination can be in the form of refusal to employ women for jobs even when they qualify, unequal wages, and assigning women to insignificant positions basically associated with women. According to (Goyal et al, 2021), women have experienced many of such practices at the workplace for a long while now. According to Bose and Whaley (2001), overt discrimination has led to organizational sex segregation, whereby about 75% of workers in a particular organization, department or level of management are either men or women. They further discuss that though there may be a decline in the number (percentage), the above assertion remains true. For instance, Roos and Gatta (2001) expresses that majority of nurses, secretaries, flight attendants and other supporting jobs are made of a higher percentage of women, whereas men are highly numbered in jobs such as pilots, physicians and executives.

In agreement to this assertion, Shaffer et al. (2000) posit that jobs that are known for women have low status, low income, shorter career ladder and are very common. However, even in high status organisations, women are found occupying a greater percentage of the lower levels of management or obscured positions such as secretaries and front desks whiles men are positioned at the highest levels of management.

To summarize this, overt discrimination, sexual harassment and glass ceiling are all forms of discrimination against women, therefore it is likely that an attempt to eradicate

one of them will end up eradicating all. More so, the underrepresentation of females in top management positions and occupational segregation are caused by gender discrimination.

2.2.4 Gendered discrimination coping strategies

According to Goyal et al. (2021), females in top level management who have stayed in institutions despite the biases against women in leadership have adopted coping strategies and mechanisms to enable them deal with these biases. In their study, the author listed three levels of mechanisms adopted by female leaders in institutions. These mechanisms are discussed below:

- **Self-Denial**

Self-denial strategy/mechanism is adopted at the early stages when female is appointed or given access to join leadership boards. According to Goyal et al. (2021), these women though in a male dominated environment are often on denial of the discriminatory practices that may be carried out against them. In their study, the authors argued that newly elected or appointed female leaders' adoption of the self-denial mechanism prevents them from going through the stress of dealing with gendered biases. Female executives adopt this strategy to prevent them from being demoralized or discouraged.

- **Avoidant Coping Strategy**

This is the second level of coping mechanism adopted by female executives to help them cope with gendered discrimination. In this level female executives tend to avoid professional settings where discriminatory activities may be carried out. Goyal et al. indicates that some of these female executives avoid taking part on discussions during board meetings or socializing with board members after board meetings. Joyce et al

(2005) argues that when executives avoid work related social gatherings, where important strategies are being discussed, they might end up being affected. Avoidance is defined by Goyal et al (2021) as a state of cognitive responds which prevents a person from coming into terms with a problem.

- **Active Coping Strategy**

Under this strategy, female executives adopt a more proactive approach to gendered discrimination where measures are taken to promote gender equality at the workplace. It includes:

- Ensuring that paternity leave is approved to debunk the notion that child raising is the responsibility of mothers only.
- Promoting eligible conditions of work to accommodate and favor both men and women encouraging women to apply for promotions with outright confidence.
- Organizing programmes or events where aspiring young women can associate and bond with potential mentors.

2.2.5 The Experience-Based-Bias Arguments

According to proponents of the experience-based prejudice, women are underrepresented as corporate executives because they lack the skills required for effective leadership. Women are perceived to be underrepresented, particularly at the highest decision-making levels, primarily because they are less likely than men to have the qualities that make them suitable for inclusion at these levels.

Thus, the main contention of the viewpoint is that if and when men and women are qualified similarly, they will be treated equally. Supporters of this viewpoint agree with the statement made by a respondent to a study conducted by the Harvard Business Review on CEOs' attitudes toward women in management: "Men and women pursue

the same career path if their competencies are equal" (Sutton & Moore, 1985: 50). This idea has received some support from recent studies on the appraisal of men and women, which discovered that knowledge about women's high-performance ability mitigates negative judgments. For instance, Heilman et al (1988) discovered that knowledge about women's strong performance reduced undervaluation of their abilities and likelihood of job success. Similar to Schein's (1973) study, Heilman, Block, Martell, and Simon's (1989) extension of it revealed that when successful female managers were found, perceptions of female and male managers in general converged.

Furthermore, there is some evidence in the literature that gender discrimination does not occur when hiring talented managers. For instance, Hitt, Zikmund, and Pickens (1982) discovered that, for holders of Masters in Business Administration (M.B.A.) degrees who were similarly qualified, race but not sex affected chances for employment in entry-level professional roles. Similar to this, additional research has indicated that sex disparities in selection and performance evaluation are substantively explained by qualifications (e.g., Graves & Powell, 1988; cf. Olian, Schwab, & Haberfeld, 1988).

Powell (1990: 68-69) recommended that "Given that men typically enter the workforce sooner and tend to stay in it longer than women, there is no doubt that male and female managers achieve different levels of success. This can be because male managers tend to be older and more seasoned than female managers. In other words, males keep their jobs and strive to advance in their fields while women take maternity leave and some people abandon their jobs to be able to care for the family. It would only be a matter of time when the proportion of women was roughly the same at all managerial levels if there were no fundamental distinctions between male and female managers ". Similarly, Friedman (1988) and Williams (1988) noted that young women who received their M.B.A.s and entered management in the mid-1970s are still younger than the average

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senior executive, suggesting that it may still be too early for women to have attained proportional representation in high management positions. This was a product of the early cultural system, which required most women to stay at home rather than attend school.

Although the literature given above focuses more on women's representation in managerial positions than in firm governance, it is obvious that the experience-based bias argument may be extended to account for the makeup of boards' standing committees. Women are typically less likely than men to be qualified for committee membership at such high levels of corporate leadership and decision-making because of women's comparatively recent entry into management (Martell, et al. 1998). The experience-based bias argument contends that the odds of committee participation are influenced by the experience of male and female directors rather than by their sexes. This is relevant to the current study since biases against women in leadership roles are mostly related to the leadership experiences of women executives in the public sector.

2.2.6 Gender Stereotypes

Lane (2007) expresses that many of those who engage in discrimination are unaware of their actions. Their main intention is to choose the right person for the job when in reality they are just being biased against women. Dovidio and Gaertner (2004) asserts that our beliefs about social groups is what makes individuals discriminate with the thought that they are merely making the right choices. For instance, individuals are able to prejudice against women as leaders because they hold a stereotype about women that is against the qualities required for effective leadership.

Heilman (2001) argues in this context that stereotypes lead to an unfavorable attitude or behavior shown towards those that do not match with the requirements for

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leadership. Thus, those whose qualities do not match up to the requirements for leadership are discriminated against in the selection process.

Kite, Deaux and Haines (2008) defines gender stereotypes as attributes and beliefs that people hold about the characteristics of men and women. Costa et al. (2001) refer to gender stereotypes as consensual beliefs such as traits which are widely shared by both men and women.

Deaux and Lewis (1984) generated two themes to help understand gender stereotypes. These are the communal qualities of women and the agentic qualities of men. The communal qualities of women refer to the tendency of women to be concerned about interpersonal relationships and the welfare of others (Deaux & Lewis, 1984).

Therefore, Prentice and Miller (2006) explain that women are stereotypically seen as kind, forgiving, helpful, empathetic, and are motivated to nurture and associate with others. On the contrary, the agentic qualities of men are spelt out as men being self-interested and focused individuals. The stereotypical traits of men are mastery, dominance, independent, control, ambitious, competent and competitive (Deaux & Lewis, 1984).

Prentice and Miller (2006) argue that despite these stereotypical traits, gender stereotype also encompass cognitive and physical characteristics. However, the authors note that irrespective of the beliefs about how men and women differ, communion and agency prevail in gender stereotype.

Heilman (2001) adds that cultural stereotype holds two types of beliefs which are:

- They hold the expectations of what members of a particular group are like – descriptive beliefs.

- They hold the expectations of what members of a particular group should be like – prescriptive beliefs.

Kark and Waismel-Manor (2005) argue that though the descriptive and prescriptive beliefs hold the same characteristics, they differ in some ways. To Hayden (2004), the stereotypical traits of women are incompatible with the prescriptive traits of leadership. Whiles Eagly and Karau (2002) agree that the perception of leaders is more compatible with the descriptive traits of men, Schein (2001) refers to this phenomenon as "think manager, think man". Schein (2001) study reported that managers are viewed more in the descriptive traits of men than women. However, Duer and Bono (2006) argue this assertion stating that even though men are seen as effective leaders than women, specific roles in leadership require the traits of women.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

2.3.1 Stereotype theory

The stereotype theory is one of the most common theories used to give more meaning to issues of discrimination and gender inequalities. According to Pickrang (2001), Walter Lipmann first introduced the term stereotype in social science. Lipmann (1965) described stereotype as the mental images people hold about certain things or categories. He referred to stereotype as what comes to mind when a particular group, category or thing is mentioned. Lipmann argues in his book titled "public Opinion' that the reality of things in the world differs from the images that exist in people's minds in the society, however, the majority of people continue to project incorrect images.

Thompson and Hickey (1999) refer to stereotypes are fixed and oversimplified opinions and thoughts about a group or social category that strongly impact our beliefs and behaviors.

As cited in Kanahara (2006), Lipmann (1965) aver that when people are confused about how to relate with other people or things, they stick to what culture has already defined for them and perceive what they chose to stick to in the form of stereotype created for them by culture.

According to Kanahara (2006), stereotypes are negative ideas or perceptions accepted to be true of every member of a particular category of people. Wella, Burnett and Moriarty (1992) also refer to stereotype as the state of presenting a category of people in a consistent pattern without any form of uniqueness often reflecting general misconstructions.

DeFleur and Denis (1998) argue that stereotypes operate to keep marginal people in places of little authority or control. This implies that stereotypes are used to marginalize people by portraying them as an unreliable minority. To add to this, Lipmann (1965) acknowledges that stereotyping is insufficient and biased, as it approves the interests of those who employ them, as resistance to lucid valuation and social change. In consonance, Blum (2004) adds that the use of stereotypes forms the user's perception of stereotype groups to see stereotypical features when they do not even exist whiles refusing to see the conflicting characteristics which actually exist.

To Brewer (2010), stereotypes manage to separate individuals into smaller categories within the society based on the categories they belong to. According to McKillip, DiMiceli and Luebke (1997), there are two diverse categories of intergroup interactions. The first of them is the universal stereotype which refers to the tendency of people to see those in the same group with them as better than others in a different group. For instance, men see themselves are better than women, the reason for the discrimination against women in top management positions. The second category is the reciprocal

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stereotype where members of the dominant group keep those in the minority group in a place of less power through interactions with members of the dominant group using common platforms such as mass media. For instance, even though women outnumber men, women are underrepresented in top level managerial positions to keep them from wielding enough authority as the dominant group (men).

The society, to give more power to men, and to prevent women from being in a place of power have carved out certain stereotypes for both groups. For instance, the society stereotypically define men as competent, assertive and focused, whiles women are defined as submissive, empathetic and generous.

Lewis and Clarke (206) define the stereotyping theory as a "way to frame disparate treatment that can reach second generation discrimination by exposing how workplace structures rely on stereotypes associated with protected class status to disadvantage members of that class".

2.3.2 Feminist Standpoint Theory

The standpoint theory emanated from Harding (1991). The theory proposes that when knowledge is being sought for concerning a particular phenomenon, the first point of call should be the subjects of the phenomenon. Garcia (2018) aver that those being oppressed may have an in-depth knowledge and a clearer picture about the situation in which they find themselves. The feminist standpoint theory starts from the position that power validates certain forms of knowledge and methods of producing knowledge as indicated by Allen (2017). This means that marginalized groups see things differently than those who occupy dominant positions.

According to Keohane (2015), the feminist standpoint theory argues that the experiences of women whiles they are being marginalized increases their knowledge on social issues that gives insight into politics.

Heckman (2011) acknowledges that the feminist standpoint theory is premised on the fact that there are certain perspectives in society that does not reveal the real relations between humans and the natural world. According to Hartsock (1983) as cited by Heckman (2011), the society creates certain differences between the dominant group (men) and the marginalized group (women) to favour the dominant group. Hartsock (1983) urges that these differences should be rejected by women as they are socially constructed and not real. To Allen (2017), humans create knowledge across power relations that categorizes social groups into two which are the dominant and the non-dominant group. The author further explains that based on the experiences of a person within a specific group, the differences in opportunities, knowledge and identity are constructed. However, Allen (2017) reveals that the non-dominant group understand the world from the perspective of the dominant and non-dominant groups. Thus, the non-dominant group can provide a complete knowledge about the world in comparison to the dominant group. Regardless of the knowledge produced by the non-dominant group, Cockburn (2015) indicates that this knowledge gets devalued and dismissed eventually by the dominant group.

Contrary to these assertions, Smith (2017) argues that there are some socially constructed situations within which people from the dominant group may acquire a complete knowledge of the world. This means that what a man may know about the underrepresentation of women in top management positions may vary from the perspectives of women on such a phenomenon. However, a man whose wife has

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suffered from the inequalities and discriminatory activities may have knowledge from both perspectives.

Harding (1991) as cited in Joore (2006) posit that sometimes material life and structures limits human understanding. She insists that while knowledge can be socially constructed, the standpoint of a person should not be objectively predetermined without tangible consideration of specific times and moments. For instance, there are social situations where men are single fathers and therefore have situated knowledge just like single mothers. Regarding this assertion. Yin (2009) disagreed that much attention should be given to the fact that there are diverse positions within which one may need to transact instead of focusing on the social position and knowledge of the oppressed. Therefore, Yin (2009) implies that in order to have a better understanding of any situation, a person will have to swing perspectives. From the review, Yin (2009) is encouraging people to overlook the social positioning idea of feminist standpoint theory and move beyond an entrenched understanding of whose views are real.

Heckman (2011) posit that there are two major assumptions of the feminist standpoint theory. These are:

- All knowledge is located and situated
- The standpoint of women provides a vantage point that reveals the truth thus it is privileged.

Literature on the standpoint theory reveals two main modules which are the situated knowledge thesis and the epistemic privilege thesis.

2.3.1.1 The situated knowledge thesis

The situated knowledge thesis was developed by Haraway in 1988. It is one of the main claims of the Standpoint theory. The concept of situated knowledge claims that in terms

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of a phenomenon or a situation, it is important for a person to choose a specific point of sight from which issues are seen (Cipriani, 2020). According to Haraway (1988) as cited in Cipriani (2020), the primary step to understanding that knowledge is situated is the power of fractional objectives which are both inadequate and restricted. Anderson (2017) argues that situated knowledge begins with identifying that, the subjects of a particular phenomenon are situated in specific locations which include historical, geographical, cultural and social locations. Therefore, they relate differently with the world around them with respect to other subjects of the same phenomenon. The author further asserts that the knowledge produced by these subjects is dependent on their location as well as the kind of relationship they have with the world and other knowing subjects.

Yin (2009) also mentions that what an individual can know and the extent to which they can have knowledge about a specific issue is determined by their social location. Meanwhile, Demirezen (2018) posit that an individual's social location is determined by their social identity including class, gender, race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, nationality, and other social categories such as occupation, political affiliations, among many others. This implies that different persons are subject to different environments and conditions and so their experiences and beliefs will be different. According to Intemann (2010), being a part of a particular group with a particular context is very important with respect to the kinds of experiences people may have because of how the context impacts material circumstances.

Anderson (2015, p. 6) identifies some considerations of the situated knowledge thesis, as:

1. The social situation of the privileged standpoint

2. The scope of its privilege

3. The characteristics of the social situation which created the standpoint and how they were created

4. How privileged the knowledge is

5. The social situations that created the knowledge inferior to the privileged standpoint

2.3.1.2 Epistemic Privilege

The epistemic privilege theory of standpoint avers that the views of those underprivileged, sidelined or victimized against are epistemically privileged. This means that knowledge is presented to disadvantaged groups, relations and communities. Intemann (2010) expresses that the experiences of the subjugated community may aid in the achievement of a more severe deliberation or consciousness because the experiences they have are needed in classifying problematic background assumptions and limitations. According to Toole (2019), the thesis of epistemic privilege is all about how consistent specific categories of knowledge are likely to be, giving the social conditions of the production of such knowledge. He explains that when people become a part of marginalized or oppressed groups, they gain a better and collaborative understanding into their situation, thus, a clearer picture of the alternative position -the dominant group.

Contrary to the above, Anderson (2017) disagrees that the fact that a person joins an association or group of marginalized people does not spontaneously guarantee epistemic knowledge, but the knowledge transpires from analytical thinking and consideration as well as sharing and ruminating over experiences. This implies that epistemic knowledge is not a given to individuals but is born out of the marginalized

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groups (Amoako & Owusu-Manu, 2021). In the same vein, Cipriani (2020) explains that it not just by being a member of such groups that helps one to generate knowledge, but members must become aware of their group identity and share in a common understanding of the power relation that caused their oppression. Moreover, as part of the group, there should be an independent body which accelerates the consciousness of other members of the group. As such, the epistemic knowledge changes to the group giving the chance to perform as a mutual diplomatic agent.

Therefore, the difference between the situated knowledge thesis and the epistemic knowledge thesis is that the former fails to interrogate their privileged social position (Cipriani, 2020) critically and systematically. The situated knowledge thesis asserts that the 'knower' is socially situated, therefore the knowledge he or she produces is also socially situated. Epistemic knowledge thesis holds that there are social groups that have epistemic privileges, namely a privileged access to, and privileged understanding into the details of the phenomenon they observe as a society.

Harding (2015) indicates that The Standpoint theory associates epistemic groups to those that are oppressed, marginalized and discriminated against. The epistemic knowledge thesis presents three main claims.

Claims of the Epistemic Knowledge Theory:

- Social relations and human orientation with nature as well as the meaning of both, give rise to Standpoints in nature.

- The Standpoints of the oppressed groups and their understanding of nature is distinctive. This implies that their perspective and understanding of nature is different from that of the dominant group.

- The knowledge produced by the marginalized group serves as resources.

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2.4 Relevance of the theories to the study

Studies done on women empowerment and feminism usually adopt feminists' theories to explain and give a better understanding into the phenomena and findings. One of such theories is the feminist standpoint theory. The feminist standpoint theory is a feminist - critical theory that helps researchers question and understand the world from the perspective of the marginalized (Domingue, 2015). This study seeks to examine the gendered discrimination used against women at top level management from the perspective of female directors of ECG, as well identifying the strategies used to deal with such biases. In this study, the standpoint theory gives more meaning into the perspectives of women on gendered discrimination and how they as the marginalized group use situated knowledge to empower themselves.

The use of the standpoint theory in any study throws more light on the position of the marginalized and gives a clearer indication of their privileges in the development of knowledge (Pausé, 2020). According to Stoll and Thoune (2020), who adopted the standpoint theory for their fat studies, it is prudent to use the standpoint theory in studies that concern marginalized people in that, the theory emphasizes the importance of situated knowledge and the epistemic advantage of marginalized groups.

The study also adopted the stereotype theory to give a deeper meaning to discrimination and the power relations between men and women, as well as the socially constructed perspectives of both gender and leadership. The stereotype theory has been used by researchers to question and understand the world from the perspectives of the dominant and non-dominant groups in the society.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter seeks to review literature on the perspectives of female directors on the gender discrimination of women at top management positions. Literature was reviewed on women and leadership, focusing on the role women play on management board, the underrepresentation of women on leadership and the discriminatory activities conducted against women in top management positions.

Reviewed literature indicates that discrimination against women on higher level of management includes the glass ceiling, sexual harassment and overt discrimination though many studies have been done on the underrepresentation of women on politics and leadership, limited studies have been done on the perspectives of women on the discriminatory practices carried out against women in higher positions. Very few studies have focused on how women deal with such discrimination levelled against them I higher management positions. Also, from the literature, there seem to be limited studies on the phenomenon in the Ghanaian context hence a justification for the study. Again, the study adopted and reviewed literature on the stereotype theory and the feminist standpoint theory which have been adopted in fewer studies to discuss the underrepresentation of women in top management positions and the discrimination against women in leadership.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methods employed in data collection and analysis. It explains the underlying principles for the methods and procedures used. It comprises the approach to research, the design of the study, sample size, sampling technique, data collection methods, the procedure for the collection of data and the data analysis method for the study.

3.1 Research Approach

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research approach can be adopted if a deeper meaning needs to be given to a phenomenon that has gained little attention from researchers. This study adopted a qualitative research approach because studies into the experiences of female directors in the public sector have gained little attention from researchers and thus, need to be understood. The researcher was able to gather data from the respondents using qualitative research to gain a deeper meaning into the phenomenon.

According to Holloway and Galvin (2016), qualitative approach does not employ numerical values to present its data but seeks to identify, explore, and explain the attitudes and actions of people within a social setting. Hancock (2002) also indicates that qualitative research is concerned with the opinions, experiences, and feelings of individuals producing subjective data. The current study did not concern itself with numbers as data but rather sought to answer the questions of how and why with respect to the experiences of female directors in the public sector through a descriptive method of research. This study focused on the perspectives of female directors at the Electricity

Company of Ghana on gender discrimination. This agrees with the assertions of Richards (2015) and Sarantakos (2013) that, qualitative approach deals with reports of experiences or data which cannot adequately be expressed in numerical values.

Denzin et al. (2017) also posit that qualitative research involves the adoption of an interpretive and naturalistic approach to research. This means that the qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings whiles attempting to make sense of and interpret data according to the meanings people ascribe to them. It describes social phenomena as they occur naturally, and no attempt is made to manipulate the situation under study as in the case with experimental research. For this reason, data was collected based on participants own opinions without any form of manipulation since qualitative research places premium on the voice of participants in the research process.

Again, according to Creswell (2013) and Marshall and Rossman (2006), some key factors should be considered in the adoption of a qualitative research approach. One of such is the researcher being a key instrument in the entire research process. Due to this assertion, the researcher was very instrumental in the entire research process. The researcher was involved in the collection of data, verifying, and crosschecking information and ensuring that data collected and analysed was credible and devoid of any biases.

3.2 Research design

A research design is a comprehensive plan or method for obtaining data scientifically (Schaefer, 2004). It is the master plan of research which indicates how the research is to be conducted. It demonstrates how the major parts of the research such as the samples and data collection methods work collectively to address the research questions (Thomas, 2010). A research design also refers to the process or tactics of inquiry. In

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qualitative research, research designs include narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Creswell, 2014). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the nature of the research, the researcher's experiences and the target audience are all determinants of the research design. Thus, for the purpose of this study (experiences of female directors in public sector) and its target audience, a case study was required.

3.2.1 Case Study

A case study is a research design in which the researcher studies a phenomenon in its real life setting especially in a bounded system where the researcher has minimal or no control over the phenomenon and its context of study (Yin, 2009). Yin's definition implies that a case study is a thorough investigation into a case that answers the "why" and "how" questions about a specific study. In the context of this study, the researcher identifies and examines the experiences of female leaders in the public sector within a specific organization where the researcher has no control.

Through a detailed data collection, a case study explores real life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over a period (Creswell 2014).

Again, Wimmer and Dominick (2011) indicate that a case study can be employed if the researcher is seeking to understand and explain a phenomenon. In the current study, the research is seeking to understand the experiences of female directors in the public sector according to the participants' perspective. Case study involves different sources of data collection such as interviews, observations, audio-visual materials, documents and reports. The current study involves the use of observation and interviews to collect data.

3.3 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The sampling technique is very important in every study to ensure the accuracy of the data collected (Boateng, 2022). Lindolf and Taylor (2017) argue that the right choice of a sampling technique allows researchers to easily make a methodological connection with the phenomenon in question. This implies that the sampling technique is. Important in every study to ensure that data is collected rightly. In qualitative research, the sampling technique is selected with the goal of providing thick, rich and descriptive information.

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2017), there are two main types of sampling techniques. These are the probability and non-probability sampling techniques. The authors explain that probability sampling is a sampling procedure where every member of a population has an equal chance of being selected. A non-probability sampling however does not follow such statistical rules of selection but selects samples based on convenience or by a specific criterion. The current study did not use statistical means of selecting samples for the study, thus employed the non-probability sampling technique. There are several types of non-probability sampling which include snowball sampling, quota sampling, purposive sampling and convenience sampling (Wimmer & Dominic, 2011). For the purpose of this study which is to identify and assess the experiences of female directors in the public sector, the researcher chose the purposive sampling method.

Purposive sampling is a sampling procedure in which cases, sites, and units are chosen based on the assumptions that what exists at that location is important in understanding the research problem and questions (Lindolf &Taylor, 2011). Also, Ezzy (2002) avers that purposive sampling ensures that participants are selected based on their relevance to the topic of study. This implies that purposive sampling allows the researcher to

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select participants who can give information which relevant to answering the research questions. Bernard (2002) and Kusi (2012) agree that a purposive sampling gives the researcher the authority to decide the required information for the study, as well as who and where to get that information.

To answer the research questions, the researcher purposefully selected all female directors in the women in managerial positions in the Electricity Company of Ghana in the Greater Accra Region occupying senior management positions. The company is part of an economy that is controlled by the state. The researcher sampled twelve (12) women in managerial positions. The researcher purposefully selected the Electricity Company of Ghana following the consisted Women in Energy Conferences held each year to foster the increase of women in the energy sector of Ghana. Again, the selection was based on the basis of the company being a part of the public sector.

The selection criteria of inclusion were women in managerial position who had been on the job for at least five years for senior management positions. The basis of this selection criterion is that women in managerial positions with the required five (5) years of experience would be able to understand the organizational behaviour, ins and outs of their jobs since most government institutions promote staff between three to four years of occupying the position.

The sample frame for the study comprised of six (6) branches in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana which were the ECG Head Office in Accra, ECG Office East Makola, ECG Office in Kwabenya, the ECG Dansoman District Office, ECG Legon Office, and ECG Customer Service, Osu. Out of a population of 55 participants, twelve women in managerial position were selected as well as eight tenured staff. The selection was done at a saturated point of twelve and eight respectively. The saturated point was attained

by asking questions. A total of twelve (12) women in the managerial positions were interviewed for this study. This sample size was settled on because, the study reached saturation at the point. Saturation refers the point in a qualitative study where additional participants provide similar responses to questions that have been provided by earlier participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

3.4 Data Collection Methods

According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), qualitative research adopts four methods of data collection which includes in depth interviewing, observational methods, group discussions and document analysis. The current study employed observation and interviews as the data collection methods. Creswell (2013) avers that using multiple data collection methods allows the researcher to gather accurate information for the achievement of the study's objectives. Yin (2009) agrees that the use of multiple data collection methods allow in research ensures credibility in the data collected.

3.4.1 Observation

Ayimbire (2020) asserts that observation is one of the most significant varied tools employed in studies within the field of social science. Observation allows the researcher to take note of people's behaviour and actions in their natural setting in a sociocultural context. Observation can either be direct or indirect. Observation in research, according to Denscombe (2008) involves the researcher being a first-hand witness to events. Being on the field allows the researcher to see things in their natural settings and ask questions relevant to the research topic. The researcher used observation to collect data that would not have been collected with other methods of data collection.

According to Wimmer and Dominic (2011), there are four categories of observation which are the overt observation, overt participation, covert observation and covert

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participation. Overt observation is the type of observation whereby the researcher's identity is disclosed to the participants during the observation process. Overt participation is whereby the researcher participates in the activity together with the participants with his identity being known. However, with covert observation, the researcher observes the activity under study without being noticed. With the last approach, which is the covert participation, the researcher participates in the activity being studied without being identified as an observer.

For the purpose of this current study, the researcher in seeking to gather information on how women participate in decision making and the discriminatory practices leveled against them during leadership meetings, adopted the overt observer where her identity was disclosed to the participants. Thus, the researcher was allowed to sit in some management meetings to observe the conducts of leaders during decision making as well as the participation of women during such meetings.

3.4.2 Interviews

An interview is a data collection tool used to gather information about another person's perspective on a phenomenon (Kvale, 1996). According to Cohen, Manion and Morison (2017), interviews are an exchange of ideas or opinions between two (2) persons on a mutually interesting topic placing emphasis on the social context of research data. Creswell (2014) however describes an interview as the means by which researchers engage participants in conversations regarding the topic of study.

Interviews are best used when researchers require information which can be provided by the participants as they share their views (Stake, 2010). More so, interviews allow the researcher to gather information that cannot be collected through observations. Through professional conversations, researchers are able to collect information from

key informants with the aim of getting them to share their perspectives on the research topic (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

Peters and Halcomb (2015) indicate that an interview is a data collection method which can be used together with other data collection methods such as observations. Hawkins (2018) asserts that to determine the best interview technique, the researcher must consider factors such as proximity and cost, research objectives and technology.

3.5 Data Collection Process

The data collection process involves the steps, ways and means by which the researcher collected data through the data collection methods for the research (Asiamah, 2017). The study aimed at determining the experiences of female directors in the public sector using the Electricity Company of Ghana as a case study. Below is the procedure followed to gather data for the study.

3.5.1 Observation

The researcher sought to gather data on the gendered discrimination against female managers in top level management in the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) therefore meetings among managers and their subordinates were observed. Before the observation, the researcher submitted introductory letters from the School of Communication and Media Studies, University of Education, Winneba to all six branches selected. This was intended to seek permission (Creswell, 2013) and negotiate access to the Organization for data collection. The letters were left with the secretaries or administrative personnel of each branch. However, the researcher was redirected to head office for a follow up on the letters sent to the other branches.

On September 14th, 2022 the researcher went to the head office following a correspondence to meet the General Manager.

During the meeting, the General Manager interrogated the researcher on the objectives and purpose of the research how their institution could be of help. The researcher was allowed to conduct an observation by being present at the organization on some selected dates which were Friday, 20th October, 2022, Thursday, 17th November, 2022 and Thursday, 8th December, 2022.

On the three occasions, the researcher was allowed to sit in departmental meetings to observe how decision making was being done. All along the researcher was closely observing and taking notes especially where there were interactions between female managers and their male counterparts as well as their direct subordinates, to gather relevant data for the study. During the observation process, the researcher made sure not to interfere with the regular activities of the day as indicated by Hennink et. al (2020).

3.5.2 Interviews

The same procedure employed for the interviews. However, On the 12th of December 2022, the researcher was given the opportunity to conduct an interview with the female leaders in the organization. The interviews took place at the head office because there had been a general meeting causing all managers to consolidate at the head office. The interviews followed a semi-structured pattern, using a printed interview guide. I was made to meet each female leader in their office, so I moved from one office to the other to interview them. Before I began with each interview, I introduced myself and briefly explained the study to the participants. I adopted a face-face approach for all the interviews. All interviews were conducted in the English language as that was the most common language to both the researcher and interviewees. While asking the interviewees questions, I made sure that the questions were free from any form of ambiguity and gave the interviewees the opportunity to ask questions for clarity.

During the interviews, I had my phone's recorder on in order not to miss any relevant information. I used my iPhone 12 to record the interviews. Before recording, I asked permission from the interviewees to record and assured them of confidentiality. Also, I had my notebook available to note some gestures and insinuations that may not appear on the voice recording. I also noted in my notebook the demographics of the interviewees including their age, educational background, years of experience and ethnic background. I was given the chance to interview the subordinates the following week, using the same approach as I did with their leaders.

3.6 Thematic Analysis

Clarke and Braun (2013) define thematic analysis as a qualitative data analysis method which involves searching through data to identify, analyse and report repetitive patterns. The authors explain that thematic analysis involves the process of developing codes and constructing themes.

According to Kiger and Varpio (2020), thematic analysis can be applied to various designs and sample sizes. Braun and Clarke (2012) aver that thematic analysis is an appropriate data analysis method to be employed when the researcher is seeking to give meaning to experiences, thoughts and behaviours of others. Many scholars have employed thematic analysis in their works to explain individual's meaning and experiences to give a deeper understanding into reality (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Joffe (2011) asserts that most researchers employ thematic analysis when they seek to investigate social meanings and implications behind the topic of interest.

This study adopted Clarke and Braun's (2018) approach for thematic analysis. This approach consists of six (6) steps which are familiarizing oneself with the data,

generating initial codes, developing themes, reviewing the themes, defining themes and the final writeup.

Braun and Clarke's thematic approach begins with familiarizing with the data. To do so, I had the voice recordings on auto repeat mode so that it played continuously and replayed even after it had ended. I listened to it several times in a day so I could understand and be familiar with every word recorded. I did that for five days consistently before I began to transcribe the content. I transcribed the content of the voice recording myself using a Bic pen and A4 sheets. Personally transcribing also gave me another opportunity to relate with the data. After the transcription, I read through the written data while comparing them to the voice recording to ensure that the transcription was verbatim. I then took my notebook and added the relevant information from the data collected through observation to what I had transcribed. I went over the notes in my book several times to also familiarize myself with the data. Going over the transcriptions and my notes allowed me to identify trends and patterns which emerged on frequent bases in the data.

The second step as listed by Clarke and Braun (2018) is to generate initial codes from the data. The authors explain that coding of data creates categories for further interpretation. Having immersed myself in the data, I was able to generate initial codes which were raw and latent from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

After the codes had been assigned, I developed themes to encompass the most relevant information which consistently showed up in similar or different ways as in the third step. I then reviewed the existing themes by merging some and also creating new ones to cover relevant issues. I went over to ensure that all relevant data had been covered.

Lastly, I put together the categories and themes I had noted into a whole writeup as the final document on the data attained.

In analysing the data, I made sure to focus on the meanings, understandings, or interpretations the participants link with their own experiences and not with any form of biases.

3.7 Ethical Issues

Ethics is defined as a branch of philosophy that addresses the question of morality (Jennings et al., 2003). According to Creswell (2014), every researcher needs to anticipate some ethical concerns that may arise in the course of their study so that they can put in the effort to minimize its effect on their outcome. Creswell (2005) posit that it is unethical for researchers to enter any organisation or institution to gather data without permission from the gatekeepers. With respect to this assertion, the researcher ensured that introductory letters were sent to the organisation (Electricity Company of Ghana) and the right permission was given before accessing the organisation for data collection.

According to Creswell (2014), when research involves the collection of data from participants, the researcher should be objective, and sensitive enough to promote credibility and protect the identity of participants. In the same vein, Fouka and Mantzorou (2011) explain that participant's right of confidentiality and anonymity should be respected in every research. To ensure the participant's confidentiality and protection of their identity, the researcher ensured that participants freely engaged in the research and that they understood the objectives of the study. The researchers also made the participants aware that at any point in the interview, they could opt out if they felt uncomfortable to continue. Before recording anything by phone or in writing, the

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researcher sought permission from the participants. The researcher ensured that in the process of data collection, there was no misrepresentation, neither did she alter participants responses. The researcher checked with the participants after transcribing the information to ensure that their responses have not been altered in any way.

Also, the researcher employed the use of Alpha numeric codes to represent the names or identities of the participants, to ensure anonymity. For the female managers, these names were used: FMP1 (female Director participant 1), FDP2 (Female Director Participant 2), FDP3 (Female Director Participant 3) to FDP12 (Female Director participant 12). SWP1 (Subordinate Worker Participant 1) SWP8 (Subordinate Worker participant 8).

Trustworthiness

According to Creswell (2014) qualitative research requires eight (8) validation processes or methodologies. The validation processes include triangulation, peer debriefing, rich thick descriptions, extended time in the field, external audits, negative case analysis, research base clarification and member checking.

Shenton (2004) aver that trustworthiness of a research is a way of ensuring that the data produced is devoid of the researcher's biases. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), a researcher can adopt at least two strategies for a study. In these current studies, the researcher employed four strategies to ensure trustworthiness. The researcher adopted triangulation by using different methods of data collection to validate the outcome of the study. The researcher used two data collection methods which are interviews and observation. This is in line with Reimers et al. (2008) theory which posits that researchers may employ different data collection methods to ensure validity. The researcher also used the peer debriefing strategy to ensure validity. The researcher

allowed colleagues from the graduate school to review and assess the data thoroughly to ensure validity. Another way by which the researcher ensured validity in the data is by conducting member checking. This is a strategy adopted to validate the findings of the data collected. The researcher sent the transcribed data to the participants of the interview to go through and validate their contributions. The participants then confirmed that their responses were accurately captured in the transcribed data. One other strategy employed to ensure trustworthiness of the study is rich thick description. The researcher subjected the data to a detailed description where excerpts from the data were used to give a deeper meaning to the findings.

3.8 Chapter Summary

The procedures and processes employed for gathering data for the study were described in this chapter. The study adopted a qualitative research approach with a case study design. Interviews and observations were used as the data collection methods for the study. Sampling techniques and sample size were also discussed in this chapter as well as ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the study. Also, rationalization for the choices of approach, design, data collection methods, data analysis and sampling techniques were also discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter present findings, discussions and analysis of data collected from twenty (20) participants from the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG). To ensure the participants anonymity, the researcher used alphanumeric codes to represent them. For easy description, some of the findings are presented with tables whiles others are put into themes. Below are the research questions which guided the collection of data and analysis.

1. What are the perspectives of female directors in ECG on gendered discrimination at top level management?
2. How do female leaders deal with gendered discrimination at top level management?
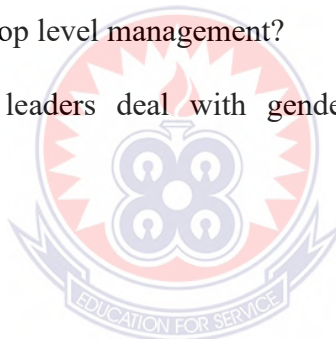
4.1 Demographics

From the interview guide used in collecting data, the demographics of participated participants were taken. According to Ray (2020), collecting demographic data of participants is important due to the noticeable representation of the participants. Demographic data makes it possible to identify the representation of a particular group of individuals within a society, context or phenomenon. Therefore, this study made it a necessity to collect demographic data in order to identify the number of represented groups for this study.

In this study, the demographic data collected for analysis were based on items such as age group, years spent with Organization, and academic qualification of participants.

Therefore, descriptive analysis was done to identify the number of representations for each identified demographic category.

Table 4.1: Age distribution

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	36-45	9	75
	46-55	3	25
		12	**100**

Source: Field Data, 2022.

From Table 4.1 above, there were only two age groups identified with respondents for this study. From the two groups tabulated above in Table 4.2, the most dominating age group was "36-45", while the least was age group "45-55". This implies that, most employees used for this study are adults.

Table 4.2: Educational Distribution

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	First Degree	8	66.7
	Master's Degree	4	33.3
Total		**12**	**100**

Source: Field Data, 2022.

From Table 4.2, two categorizations of academic qualifications were identified. From Table 4.2, it could be identified that the highest level of education was a master's degree, representing 33.3% of the total participants. The participants with First Degree were 66.7%. This indicates that female employees in management positions working in the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG), are well-educated.

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Table 4.3: Years with organisation

		Frequency	**Percent**
Valid	5-10	7	58
	10-15	3	25
	15+	2	17
Total		**12**	**100.0**

Source: Field Data, 2022

Table 4.3 above, tabulates the number of years participants have been working with their respective organisations. Three categories were identified. They were employees who have been working for over 5 years, 10 years and 15 years. The above illustrates that, 58% of participants have been working for ECG between 5-10 years. This was the dominating group for the number of years participating employees had worked with ECG. The least group was employees who have worked with the ECG for more than 15 years, and they represented 17% of the total participants. The group next to the most dominating group represented 25% of the participants. This implies that, more than 42 percent of participants have been working with their organization for more than 10 years. This also illustrates that; majority of the participants were acquainted with the operations the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG).

4.1 RQ1: What are the experiences and perspectives of female directors in ECG on gendered discrimination

To answer the first research question, interviews conducted at the Electricity Company of Ghana. Twelve (12) female directors and their direct subordinates were interviewed. The interview was transcribed, and key ideas noted and developed into themes. The researcher realized that to give a better understanding of the phenomenon, the discriminatory practices withing the organization, mentioned by participants should
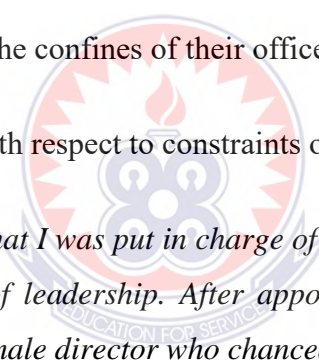
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precede their perspectives. Therefore, below are the discriminatory practices against women in top level management positions at ECG.

4.1.1 Constraints on professional freedom to work

From the interviews, it was realized that one of the discriminatory practices carried out against female directors at the Electricity Company of Ghana is constraints or restrictions on professional freedom to work. Professional freedom refers to the right of an individual to exercise control, make decisions and exercise judgement without any interference (Karakunnel & Nelliyullathil, 2022).

From the analysis, it was revealed that female directors in ECG are not given the autonomy or the platform to exercise control and judgement or to make outright strategic decisions within the confines of their office, without abstract interferences.

This is what FMP2 said with respect to constraints on professional freedom to work:

> *There was a time that I was put in charge of a project which had to do with my field of leadership. After appointing members of my team, a colleague male director who chanced on the list boldly told me that I had too many men on my team who have not given their consent to be a part of the project. I was taken aback because I have received a lot of invitations from men to join teams that without my consent and I never questioned anyone.*

The excerpt above gives an indication that some female leaders do not have the full authority to operate withing their offices. This is in line with Dipboye and Colella's (2005) definition of gender discrimination which refers to the discriminatory treatment based on gender criterion where there is the need to select, compensate, promote, train and give professional recognition.

FMP3 also added that:

> *I mostly get frustrated when projects are being carried out within my jurisdiction but male counterparts on the same level are being put in charge to ensure that goals are met efficiently.*

The above excerpt signifies that, women in higher management levels are not given the room to operate autonomously as their male counterparts. This confirms the claims of Clevand et al. (2005) that gender discrimination takes place in the workplace where individuals are treated differently based on their gender.

This is in line with Dipboye and Colella's (2005) definition of gender discrimination which refers to discriminatory treatment based on gender criteria where there is the need to select, compensate, promote, train and give professional recognition.

Again, the fact that the cognitive capacity of women in leadership is not considered instead of their physical or visible differences confirms one of the claims of the stereotype theory which states that stereotypes are the simplified pictures of individuals within a group based on the physical and visible differences being derogative of the other category (Hoggs & Vaughan, 2010).

It also affirms the claim that persons to whom stereotypes apply are not identified by their individual titles or differences but as representatives of the group to which they belong, hence, the female directors are not seen as leadership representatives in their respective offices but representatives of women.

4.1.2 Resistance of Authority

To resist a person's authority means to devalue, challenge or oppose the control of an established office. From the interviews, resistance of authority was identified as one of

the ways by which female directors are discriminated against. During the interview, the participants explained how some of their subordinates resist their authority.

FDP1 revealed that:

> *we have actually come across situations where your subordinate of the other gender tell you to the face that they will not carry out certain instructions or directives you have given them, after getting irritated for not doing something the way I asked them to, told me in the face that even his wife cannot order him around like I want to do, and he will not entertain my "bossiness".*

Regarding the same issue, FDP6 said:

> *they always say we are bossy. It is always something subordinates say about female leaders to get away with being insubordinate. Deliberately, they ignore directions given them and they do what they think is right and then you make an effort to correct or caution them that's where they call you names. Sometimes, even the female subordinates do it.*
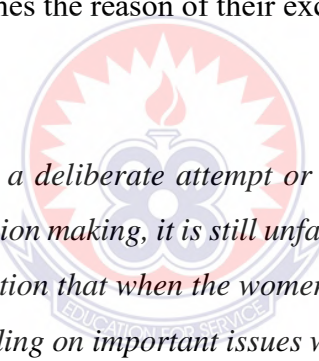
It can be noted from the above statements that women on top level management positions face discriminatory practices mostly carried out by men. However, the excerpts above indicate that some females also engage in the discrimination of women in top level management. This refutes the claims of the feminist standpoint theory stating that marginalized group (women) produces knowledge from their social position in the society which is unique and different from knowledge produced by the dominant group who are men (Joore, 2016).

It also confirms the assertions of the stereotype theory that people associate certain characteristics to social groups and have expectations from them (Lipmann, 1965). When people perceive that, women must be soft and not assertive, they tend to perceive assertive female leaders as "bossy".

4.1.3 Consistent exclusion from decision making

Another recurring issue participants talked about during the interviews is consistent exclusion from decision making. To be excluded means to be denied access or not considered (Amore et al., 2017). Data from the interviews and observation indicated that female directors are mostly excluded from decision making regarding strategic issues. It was revealed that though strategic meetings are held for discussion of relevant issues, men usually casually meet earlier at common places to take the best decisions on strategies to implement, hence whatever their female counterpart brings onboard is deemed void. Though deliberate effort was not put into exempting female leaders, the mere thought that there are just about two or three women on the table and their numbers are insignificant is sometimes the reason of their exclusion.

FDP1 explained that:

> *Whether there was a deliberate attempt or not to exempt us from some relevant decision making, it is still unfair, however, these male directors have a notion that when the women are left to go through the process of deciding on important issues with them, we may drag the process. To avoid wasting time in the decision room, they try to do so without us. The most annoying part is when you are left out of the decision-making process but you are an important part of the implementation process, the whole thing just feels so unfair. The moment you question anything that has already been decided, people think you just want to challenge your male counterparts by looking down on their decision which may not be the case.*

According to the stereotype theory, those who engage in discrimination may not necessarily be aware of their actions and its implication. Their main intention is to do make the right choice for the institution (Lane, 2007). From the excerpt above, the

decision of the male directors to exempt their female counterparts from decision making processes is from a place of making the best choices for the organization.

More so, it confirms the claims of the stereotype theory that says that the dominant group sees every member of their group as better than the other group. Male directors see themselves as the best people to even decide for the organization but sees the female directors as not fit or better to engage in such strategic decision making.

FDP10 also added that:

> *There are times I get informed by other directors who are male about decisions that have been taken regarding my office. Anytime I question them to find out why I was not involved in such decision making, they would tell me that I am a mother with a lot of responsibilities and that they covered up for me so that I wouldn't have to stress over a lot of things. Obviously, they do not want me to stress over logical thinking, they would prefer I carry out instructions just like the subordinates in their offices, because I am a woman in the midst of 'competent men'.*

The above excerpt confirms the claims of the stereotype theory by Hayden (2004) and Eagly and Karau (2002) which argues that the stereotypical traits of women are incompatible with the prescribed traits of leadership whiles the descriptive traits of men are compatible with the prescriptive traits of leadership.

4.1.4 Gendered discrimination is institutionalized

Data from the interviews revealed that female directors in ECG perceive gendered discrimination against women in top management positions as institutionalized. According to Goyal et al. (2021), institutionalized discrimination refers to the workplace discriminatory practices that are a part of the structures and systems with the institution. The participants expressed that most of the discriminatory practices have

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been ongoing for years and are also carried out mostly by highly ranked executives within the company. From the analysis, twelve people agreed that discrimination against women has become a consistent pattern within the organisation, thus their view of it as an institutional practice.

In relation to the above, FD P6 said:

> *The practices of being excluded from meetings even as a director, and having male supervisors challenge my authority is not a surprising story. It happens in different forms and ways and has become a normal pattern for some of us. I have come to accept that if not in this organisation, if I were to move to another organization, I bet I will still experience these kinds of discrimination. To me, my perspective is that the discrimination especially against females in top management positions have been institutionalized.*

In agreement with this assertion, FDP4 added that:

> *I think that most women in top management positions are now used to discrimination. For me, I see these things as normal now because as long as we are in this institution, these things will go on. We will be denied access to certain opportunities because we are women and will be remember by our male counterparts every single day that we are women.*

The excerpts above are in line with the assertion of Allen (2017) that knowledge across power relations constructs and divide the society into two categories which are the dominant and non-dominant group. In this context, women refer to men as the perpetuators of their discrimination, whereas they are the marginalized or non-dominant group.

This also affirms the claims of the situated knowledge of the feminist standpoint theory which aver that, women who are the marginalized or non-dominant group are able to produce not only unique knowledge but an understanding into the oppression they are

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subjected to. Hence, the knowledge produced by the female directors about their discrimination being a part of the internal structures of the organisation.

Again, the institutionalization of gender discrimination reflects Thomas and Hickey's (1999) definition of stereotype as fixed and oversimplified opinions and thoughts that strongly impact our beliefs and behaviours. Thus, from the excerpts above, it is revealed that in line with this definition, the opinions and thoughts created about women and men are fixed and strong such that they have been integrated into a whole corporate system without fail.

In this same discussion, Blum (2004) argues that the perception people have created for themselves about men and women allows them to see what they only belief exists, and not what really exists especially if the reality conflicts with the perceived ideas. Therefore, the reality that both male and female directors are leaders working together for the success of the institution and should be treated equal in that regard, conflicts with the perception that women are weak and should be subjected under a man's authority in terms of leadership, even in a corporate environment.

FDP3 also added that:

> *I have personally reported such discriminatory practice and got nothing in return. It seems to others that I took things too serious by reporting subordinate who challenged my authority and used stereotypes to justify his choice of words and manners.*

The excerpt above confirms that assertions of Goyal et al. (2021) that some discriminatory practices are a part of the structures and systems of an institution.

4.1.5 Women contribute to the discrimination against them

Another perspective shared by the participants was that women are partly responsible for the kind of discrimination levelled against them. From the interviews, participants

discussed why they think men discriminate against them in higher levels of management. They concluded that women sometimes are responsible for the kind of biases carried out against them as women leaders. The participants shared that there are existing stereotypes perceived to be false but in reality, is true.

In this regard, FDP7 shared that:

> *When you come across a very playful and childlike woman at the workplace, before being angry, you will understand why men can't trust us with anything. This is not to justify the actions of men towards women at the workplace. Women should also put themselves in a higher place first.*

On the same subject, FDP2 also stated that:

> *Women undermine women a lot. Instead of supporting one another after being discriminated against by men, we tend to enjoy being looked down on. Some of these men who are our counterparts were once our bosses and so on. They know how we carried ourselves as junior staff or managers and will continue to relate with us the same way because being a woman brings us a step down the ladder already.*

It can be noted from the above excerpts that though men discriminate against women, women are expected to put in extreme effort to be recognized and acknowledged by their counterparts. Data from the interview showed that participants are well aware of the male's perception of them and cognisant of how they view themselves as well. This confirms the claims of the feminist standpoint theory that knowledge stems from a place of social positioning and that the marginalized always have both perspectives of the dominant and non-dominant group (Allen, 2017).

It also confirms the assertions of the stereotype theory that women who are the marginalized group, in order to fit into leadership, should pick up the traits of men such

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as being disciplined, assertive, strong, decisive, apathetic and focused (Deaux & Lewis, 1984).

The perspective of female directors that women are partly responsible for the discrimination of women in leadership is in line with Lipmann's (1965) assertion that though the reality of things differs from the images created in the minds of people, majority of people both dominant and non-dominant group still project incorrect images since that has become their reality and truth. Women just as men have also been raised with the perception that they are not qualified for certain male dominated roles of which leadership is one. Thus, some women have adopted the attitude of followership and therefore do not even support other women to rise to such positions where women do not belong.

More so, according to Martell and Simon (1988), when women put in the effort and their strong performances and successes are revealed, the undervaluation of their abilities reduces increasing the likelihood of job success. This implies that when women stick to the norms of stereotypes and do not rise above it, their efforts in corporate entities will be continually devalued, and they will continue to experience discrimination at their workplaces.

4.1.6 Gendered Discrimination is socially constructed

Data from the interviews showed that gendered discrimination is socially constructed. Participants discussed in the interviews their perception that biases against women though have become a part of the institutions are socially constructed. They indicated that issues of biases or discrimination against the female began from individual homes, culture and traditions.

On this point, FDP7 discussed that:

> *The issues of biases towards women did not begin from this level of top management, neither did it begin in the workplace. It started from the society deciding who should be and do what among humans. It began from whence we were little children and saw the gender of our presidents and national leaders, bank managers and military men. This created a mental picture that cannot be removed at once. It will take time if it hasn't taken enough already.*

This excerpt is in line with the claims of the stereotype theory which states that when we are confused about how to think about or relate with someone, we stick to what culture has already defined for us and perceive what we chose to stick to in the form of stereotype is the reality created for us by culture (Kanahara, 2006).

Again, FDP9 also said that:

> *It is not actually seen as a bias against women because no one intends to do so. Men intend to do the right thing because it is their duty to do so. The society has placed such a responsibility on men that they feel they were born as natural leaders and so they should ensure that everything is done appropriately. I believe that is the reason they step in and step on us without giving women the professional freedom to function. I am not saying this is right or justifiable, but I am saying that from my viewpoint, men were put where they are by the society and the society expects a lot more from them.*

From the excerpt above, it can be realized that the participant is describing how the stereotypes work in the society affirming the definition of Costa et al. (2001) that gender stereotypes are consensual beliefs such as traits which are widely shared by both men and women. It implies that not only do men view themselves as dominant, but women see and accept that men have been categorized into the dominant group.

The excerpts also confirm the agentic qualities of men and the communal qualities of men's concept of the stereotype theory (Kite, Deaux & Haines, 2008).

In support of the excerpts above, Blum (2004) asserts that stereotypes were created by the society to categories people into groups to keep them marginalized and in little places of power. Thus, women were subjected to the leadership of men by the society.

It also supports the assertion made by Goyal et al (2021) that the society, to give more power to men, and to prevent women from being in a place of power have carved out certain stereotypes for both groups.

4.2 RQ2: How do female leaders deal with gendered discrimination at top level management?

4.2.1 Resilience

Resilience can be defined as the ability of overcoming stress, challenges and adversity while maintaining a sound mind (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Resilience has to do with the mental strength to overcome adversities and challenges as well as criticisms. Data from the interview showed that female directors deal with gendered discrimination by building resilience against them. Participant described resilience as having a tough skin against hardships being headstrong irrespective of what biases are levelled against you as a female leader.

FDP11 indicated that:

> *Since we know that these biases against women especially women in top management positions will not stop, we have also decided to wear our skin tough such that whatever stones thrown at us will not succeed at bringing us down from the higher places. It gets tough sometimes, but we get tougher to match up to the speed and rate at*

which we are devalued. We fight when we are supposed to but the goal is to keep going.

FDP12 also added that:

Women at top level management need to be strong and tough. It took a lot for every single woman at the top to get there. We went through a lot of difficulties while being selected, assessed or promoted. If we were able to go through all that which is the toughest process, then holding our offices regardless of the biases should be easier. We don't have to be like the men, but we need to be tough and strong in our own way so that we can overcome the stereotypical biases against us and our offices.

From the excerpts above, it revealed that one of the ways female directors in ECG deal with gendered discrimination is by building resilience against the discrimination. The knowledge of building resilience as a group who are marginalised affirms the epistemic claims of the feminist standpoint theory which states that the experiences of the marginalized community may help to gain a more thorough reflection or consciousness because the experiences they have, are needed in identifying problematic background assumptions and limitations (Intemann, 2010).

Again, it affirms the assertion of Cipriani (2020) that it not just by being a member of such groups that helps one to generate knowledge, but members must become aware of their group identity and share in a common understanding of the power relation that caused their oppression. The female directors were able to develop knowledge about how to handle or deal with discrimination from their epistemic positions or standpoints.

In approval of the excerpts above, Heilman et al. (1989) revealed that when female managers exhibit strength and success in their respective positions, perceptions of female and male managers will become meaningless.

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4.2.2 Avoidant Strategy

From the analysis, it is revealed that female directors at ECG adopt the avoidant strategy to deal with discrimination and biases geared against them. They use the avoidant strategy in two ways. First of all, participants discussed that they ensured that they avoided places that were not crucial to the performance of their duties but are more likely to experience discrimination in the form of harassment, sexist comments and other biases.

FDP8 stated that:

> *I would rather avoid some of these biases where I can especially if these places are not crucial or relevant to the performance of my duties. For instance, if going to a common eatery will cause me to be a subject of ridicule and sexism, I would rather not be there. It is not compulsory to be where you are not appreciated or valued.*

FDP9 also discussed that:

> *I even try to avoid meetings that are heavily dominated with men so that I don't have to be looked down on by my own colleagues. I equally do not talk at meetings when the subject matter is about something that will cause others to use discriminatory or sexist language on me.*

The excerpts above connote participants avoiding places and conversations or discussion which may lead to issues of gender discrimination.

Another way the avoidant strategy is used is when female directors ignore biases and discriminatory activities used against them.

On that note, FDP11 explained that:

> *I have decided on my own that I will avoid discriminatory activities at all costs so that I can have mental stability. Anytime I am approached with anything that is biased against me, I ignore it and*

> *pretend it didn't happen at all. It may not be easy, but I have done*
> *it all the while and I am good at it.*

FD P2 also added that:

> *If anyone comes to my office to confront me on anything using*
> *stereotypical language, or devaluing me in any way, I am going to*
> *pretend that person isn't there or is not talking to me. It's funny but*
> *that is what will give me peace, so I ignore it.*

The excerpts above indicate that female directors in ECG adopt avoidant strategies to deal with gendered discrimination. This is in line with Goyal et al.'s (2021) assertion that when individuals adopt coping mechanisms in different ways, they are enabled to overcome expectations of negative outcomes (Bonanno, 2004).

Also, Allen (2017) asserts that when women are given the position of the non-dominant in the society, their quest to rise from that social position enables them to develop knowledge relevant to overcoming their social situation. The excerpts above indicating that female leaders understand their social position and have developed a way to deal with the gendered discrimination against them confirms this assertion.

4.2.3 Confrontational strategy

The analysis of the data revealed that confrontation is one of the ways by which female directors deal with gendered discrimination. Confrontation refers to the act of opposing an idea with the intent of getting a desired response (Bourne, 2022). Participants indicated that they adopt the use of confrontational strategy to immediately confront perpetuators of gendered discrimination with the intent of creating awareness and correcting their error.

FDP3 expressed that:

> *I do not give in to the pressures of gendered discrimination or biases. If it happens in my face, I confront it right away with the intent of creating awareness. I create awareness on the fact that I am aware that certain practices and choice of words are gendered and not addressing it will affect my mental health. Secondly, I create awareness so that the perpetuator is aware if he is not already conscious of his actions and the effects thereof.*

FDP4 also stated that:

> *I am personally of the view that if anything distorts my peace, it should be dealt with immediate effect. So, if anybody makes me feel less of myself because I am a woman, I will confront the person in an educative manner. It may just be that people do not know the implications of what they say or do. I feel like I am in the right position to let you know how your words or actions made me feel and I will instantly do so.*

In the same vein, FDP1 also discusses that:

> *I choose confrontation in dealing with the issues with regards to gendered discrimination because I believe that we are in a time whereby people are knowledgeable enough to know when their actions or words hurt others or not.*

From the excerpts above, it is revealed that female directors adopt confrontational strategies to deal with gendered discrimination. This confirms the assertions of Goyal et al. (2021) which emphasizes that some women choose to use a more active and engaging approach in dealing with gendered discrimination.

It also confirms the claims of the epistemic privilege of the standpoint theory that the experiences of the oppressed community may help to attain a more rigorous reflection or consciousness because the experiences they have are needed in identifying

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problematic background assumptions and limitations, and in creating solutions (Intemann, 2010).

Toole (2019) also indicates that when people are marginalized for a while, the discomfort they experience gives them the strength to negotiate their freedom in whatever way possible.

4.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the findings and analysis of the research questions for the study. The data collected on the two research questions were analytically described, explained and analysed using the Stereotype and Feminist Standpoint theories. The first research question (RQ1) which sought to investigate the experiences and perspectives of female leaders of ECG on gendered discrimination analysed and discussed a total six (6) themes. These were Constraint on Professional Freedom to Work, *Resistance of Authority, Consistent Exclusion from Decision Making, Gendered Discrimination is Institutionalized, Women Contribute to the Discrimination Against Them* and *Gendered Discrimination is Socially Constructed*. Three themes were discussed and analysed for Research Question two (RQ2). They were: *Resilience*, *Avoidant Strategy* and Confrontational Strategy.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter comprises the summary and conclusions attained from the study which aimed at investigating the perspectives of female directors on the gendered discrimination against women at top level management, and how they deal with the biases levelled against them. It includes a discussion of the limitations of the research for future studies.

5.1 Summary

Research on the underrepresentation of women in leadership has focused more on politics and governmental leadership, delving into the media's misrepresentation of women and stereotypical actions levelled against female leaders (Verge & Pastor, 2018).

Though the underrepresentation of women on top management positions are important to researchers, studies on the representation of women at top management levels of public sector organizations are limited (Bishu, 2022). Therefore, this research was undertaken to investigate the perspectives of female directors on the gendered discrimination against women at top management levels on the public sector within the Ghanaian context. The study also sought to identify the strategies adopted by female directors in dealing with gendered discrimination.

The following research questions were used:

1. What are the perspectives of female directors in ECG on gendered discrimination at top level management?

2. How do female leaders deal with gendered discrimination at top level management?

To have a foundation upon which findings from this research were analysed, an extensive review of literature was carried out. Literature was reviewed under the following: women and leadership, gender discrimination, sexual harassment, the glass ceiling, and gender stereotypes. Literature on relevant theories were also reviewed. The theories adopted for the studies were the stereotype theory and the feminist standpoint theory.

The study adopted a qualitative research approach (Creswell, 2014), a case study design (Yin, 2009) and observation (Wimmber & Dominic, 2011) and interviews (Creswell, 2014) as data collection methods. Purposive sampling (Etikan et al., 2016) was used to select the Electricity Company of Ghana as well as female directors for the study. Thematic analysis was employed to describe the data in a thick rich manner (Braun & Clark, 2006). From the thematic analysis of the data, three themes emerged for the discriminatory practices experienced by female directors at ECG and these are: *Constraints on professional freedom to work, Authority resistance* and *Consistent exclusion from decision making.* Three (3) themes were emerged for perspectives of female directors on gendered discrimination against women at top level management were: *Gendered discrimination is institutionalized, Women are partly responsible* and *Discrimination is socially constructed.* Again, three (3) themes emerged for the strategies in dealing with discrimination and these were: *Resilience, avoidance strategy* and *confrontational strategies.*

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5.2 Main Findings

After the data analysis, the key findings were:

First of all, the study revealed that in the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) female directors experienced gendered discrimination in the form of constraints on freedom to work, authority resistance and consistent exclusion from decision making. Female directors discussed in detail how these gendered discriminatory practices affected their work and made them feel inferior to their male counterparts.

Secondly, the research sought to find out the perspectives of female directors on gendered discrimination against women at top level management. Three themes emerged from data collected through interviews. First, female directors perceived that gendered discrimination was institutionalized. The study also indicated that from the perspectives of the female directors, women are partly responsible for the discrimination faced by women at top level management and lastly, gendered discrimination was perceived to be socially constructed.

Also, the study sought to find out how female directors of ECG dealt with gendered discrimination. Regarding this research question, participants revealed that they dealt with gendered discrimination by building resilience to withstand the effects of the biases geared towards them. Participants also indicated that they used the avoidance strategy where they avoided social gatherings and places where they will be discriminated against. Finally, participants expressed that they used confrontations to deal with gendered discriminations by opposing discriminatory practices held against them and educating perpetrators of the consequences of such biases.

5.3 Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that women are discriminated against in top management positions in the public sectors. It confirms the claims of the stereotype theory that the society have been categorized into two groups which are the dominant and non-dominant group based on the mental pictures and perspectives we have which might not be real.

The findings also revealed that the forms of gendered discrimination levelled against female executives in ECG makes them feel inferior in comparison to their male counterparts. This confirms the assertions of the stereotype theory that one group (dominant) views it's members as superior to the other group (non-dominant). It affirms that the stereotypical traits described for women are not compatible with the prescriptive traits of leadership, thus women in leadership are viewed as incompetent in comparison to men whose descriptive traits conforms to the prescriptive traits of leadership.

Also, the findings of the study indicate that female directors have developed strategies to deal with the gendered discrimination practiced against them. This confirms the claims of the feminist standpoint theory that women are able to produce unique knowledge due to their social position of being marginalized.

 5.4 Recommendations

The study encourages more women to empower themselves to rise beyond the glass ceiling because findings of the study indicate that the more women in the higher ranks of leadership, the less marginalized they would be.

It is therefore suggested that the government especially the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP) and social bodies such as NGOs, churches

will continue to introduce programmes to empower more women in the field of leadership. Also, it is recommended that the government and social bodies such as NGOs and religious bodies and the media will be employed to educate the masses on the positive traits of both genders and the implications of having diverse leadership teams.

The Electricity Company of Ghana should ensure that policies against gendered discrimination are developed and adhered to within their organization. Again, educative programmes should be conducted to inform and educate all workers on the essence of women in leadership.

The media can be employed to use popular culture such as movies and advertisements to debunk negative stereotypes and promote positive leadership traits as part of awareness creation and education.

Government institutions should have consistent regulations for the recruitment, selecting, promoting or compensating both men and women free from gendered discrimination. This can be done by enacting strict laws against any form of discrimination and setting out legal punishments for such practices.

5.5 Limitations

The purpose of the study was to investigate the perspectives of female directors on the gendered discrimination against women at top level management in the public sector. The study also sought to identify the strategies used by female directors to deal with gendered discrimination. The study adopted interviews to gather data for the study.

First of all, the researcher chose only one company from the public sector for the study. Though several branches of ECG were used for the study, the findings of the study

cannot represent all organisations within the public sector of Ghana. However, the study has credible data which can be used as basis for further studies.

The second limitation was the use of branches of ECG within the same region when the company has branches all over the country. The researcher's quest to expand the geographical context of the study by including other branches from various regions was feasible because of the short period of time allotted for the study.

5.5 Suggestions for further studies

Future research can focus on perspectives of male executives on gendered discrimination against female executives. When the perspectives of men are investigated in future studies, the findings will give more meaning to the findings of this study by supporting or contradicting the claims of the stereotype and feminist standpoint theories.

Other researchers can also focus on expanding the scope of this study to include other public sector organisations in order justify the findings of this study and make a more generalized presentation of knowledge in this area of study.

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