Challenges to Women in Educational Leadership

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Abstract: *This paper is a qualitative researchas well as a case study of women in educational leadership positions in the YiloKroboMunicipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The study finds out the challenges that the women leaders encounter in the performance of their roles as leaders.Thirty participants were sampled for the study. The data for the study was collected using interviews and observation and analysedthematically. The interview guide consisted of ten items with the opportunity of follow up questions whiles the observation checklist was made up seven items. The outcome of the study showed that women in educational leadership are facing a lot of role conflict situations due to the multiple roles they play as wives, mothers, and managers. It was further observed that some of the women leaders experience an inferiority complex. The study also revealed that some traditional beliefs and practices continue to serve as a barrier to the performance of their leadership roles which clearly shows that there are some traditional beliefs and norms that need to be totally discarded. It is obvious that there is urgent need to discourage the unequal treatment sometimes given to women and girls, but rather encourage them to have leadership aspirations.*

Keywords: *Leadership, Education, Women, Gender*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Fourth World Conference on Women by the United Nations took place in Beijing, China in September 1995. The Beijing Declaration was signed and all African countries made commitments to women's advancement and empowerment at that conference. One important aspect of these commitments was for women's human rights and initiatives for women's increased empowerment, especially as evidenced by women's occupation of leadership positions (Longwe& Clark, 1999). Women's occupation of leadership positions potentially enables them to address gender issues in all areas of social, economic and political arena. Despite such calls, there are few women today in leadership positions. These women in leadership positions encounter many obstacles in their life.

From the day a normal baby is born, that baby is either classified as a girl or boy based on the physical appearance. The society establishes a set of cultural expectations for each gender and children are taught to conform to such expectations. Gender role socialization primarily begins by parents at birth. Girls are compelled by parents and society at large to engage in feminine roles such as preparing food, taking care of children, tidying up the home and many others. Boys, on the other hand, are socialized to engage in jobs outside the home and in decision making. It is in the light of this that Ankomah (1998) states that in the socialization process, while boys are taught to be fit for places of responsibility, girls are considered to be dependent and their important role in life is marriage. As a result of this conception, girls themselves lose their self-motivation for upward mobility from their childhood and think that leadership is the prerogative for males and not for them.

Ankomah (1998) further states that stereotyped patterns of socialization that differentiate different roles for the two sexes are very prevalent concerning priorities for furthering one's education. These patterns are inherited right from childhood in the homes and in the community. Consequently, no aspect of social life is free from the division of labour. The social structure of gender inequality underlies the surface evidence of the gender gap in the public school. Gender gaps are caused by the different treatment given to girls and women by comparison with treatments given to boys and men. These create gender hierarchy and female subordination.

In Ghana, the 1992 constitution emphasises on equal rights under the law. In practice, this is often not obtainable as government bureaucracies operate under patriarchal rules and customs. Besides, the

Ghanaian constitution allows a dual system of law, statutory and customary. According to Ruth (1998), the patriarchal system in the society is built on the principle that men rule and women obey, that men take care of themselves and women to take care of everyone but themselves. It is in support of this thatLongwe and Clarke (1999) state that patriarchal politics entails the belief that a man is a "natural" head of the household, and that their decision-making role naturally extends to the public domain of national politics. They further argue that it is this belief that justifies treating women as legal minors, second-class citizens. Hence, a woman needs the permission of her husband or other supervising males for any action including leadership in the public sphere.

Some religious groups such as Islam, Christianity, and many others wholeheartedly believe in patriarchal theology which makes women subordinate and submissive to men. These patriarchal politics ensure that the man is the "natural head" of the household and that their decision role naturally extends to the public domain. They therefore, occupy most of the leadership positions in institutions from all walks of life. According to Adjei Boadu (2001), there is society's tacit belief in male superiority. As much as lack of education is the obstacle of effective participation of women in power and decision making, the basic obstacle is still the society's tacit belief in male superiority. Even when a woman qualifies for a post and is appointed, there is still a tacit feeling that the woman is just favoured. Deep-seated cultural perception of women as inferior compared to men has been and continues to be a major hindrance to women's advancement in the area of leadership.

Although men generally dominated traditional African societies, some women were able to lead wars of resistance against foreign powers. The female prophetess Nehanda of Zimbabwe led her people in resistance to the imperialism of Cecil Rhodes during the late 19th century. Queen YaaAsantewaafought against British colonial conquest in the Asante Kingdom. It is believed that educationis a route to women's personal achievement within the confines of the existing patriarchal system. It is in response to this that emphasis is now placed on the education of females to ensure self-reliance and empowerment. Formal education enables women to affirm their own identities while transforming societal notions of gender and family roles. In recent times, some women in Ghana have distinguished themselves in leadership positions. These women include a former speaker of parliament, Mrs. Joyce Bamfo-Addo, the former and present Chief Justices Mrs. Georgina Theodora Wood and Madam Sophia Akuffo, Doctor (Mrs) Ocloo - one of the leading industrialists, Madam Joyce Aryee – former Chief Executive of the Chamber of Mines and Professor Florence AbenaDolphyne – the former Pro-Chancellor of the University of Ghana, Legon, the former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Coast and former Minister of Education, Professor Naana Jane Opoku Agyemang, and the current and first-ever female Chief of Staff – Madam AkosuaFrema Osei-Opare.

Despite the capabilities of educated women in leadership positions, there are obstacles in their way. Some of the women experience role conflict that affects their performance in the leadership positions and their desire to climb the academic ladder to enable them get into higher positions in their workplace. This can partly be attributed to the social structure and the patriarchal ideology which deems women to perform roles associated with child-bearing and incapable of exercising their reasoning powers necessary for participation in social, political activities and for interaction in economic competition.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In YiloKrobo Municipality, gender socialization continues on the job where women in unconventional roles such as leadership roles are expected to perform other gender roles in the workplace apart from their job description roles. Consequently, they encounter problems. It seems both men and even women in the workplace tend to have negative attitudes towards women in educational leadership. Interactions with people who believe in patriarchal ideology and theology reveal that they see women in leadership positions as a threat to transform society in the direction of equal rights for women. This is against the norms and values of such men and women; hence they challenge the women in educational leadership.

In general, women whose life causes veer towards leadership roles in the educational sector rather than homes normally have problems. It seems the twist and turns in their lives are unplanned and hence accompanied by a great deal of confusion and stress. Consequently, most women are afraid to enter into leadership while some of the women in educational leadership find it very difficult to perform their leadership responsibilities and family roles effectively.

2.1. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this research is to investigate the barriers in the way of women in educational leadership in the YiloKrobo municipality in Ghana. Other sub-objectives of the study are to:

1. evaluate how women in educational leadership positions perceive leadership.

2. assess how women leaders view the society's perception of women in educational leadership.

3. explore traditional roles that conflict with the leadership roles of women in educational leadership.

4. examine traditional beliefs and practices that conflict with the leadership roles of women in educational leadership.

5. explore the issues women in educational leadership encounter in the performance of their responsibilities.

2.2. Research Questions

The research questions formulated to guide the study are;

1. How do women in educational leadership conceptualize leadership?

2. How do women in educational leadership view society's perceptions of their capabilities of leadership?

3. What traditional roles conflict with the roles of women in educational leadership?

4. How do traditional beliefs and practices conflict with the leadership roles of women in educational leadership?

5. What are the issues women in educational leadership encounter in the performance of their responsibilities?

2.3. Research Design

This research is a case study of women in educational leadership positions in the YiloKrobo Municipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The qualitative research design was also adpted. In her study of female school Principals perception of leadership, Mwingi (2000) stated that research in this field can no longer afford to be entirely quantitative reducing experiences, meanings and viewpoints to impersonal statistical figures because people are in constant interaction with the world they live in. Their engagements conceive attitudes and viewpoints and hold values and beliefs. Considering this perspective and the objective of this research is to explore barriers confronting women in educational leadership, the researchers used the qualitative research model. The qualitative model provides detailed information about phenomena. They can also be used to gain a new perspective on things about which much is already known or to gain in-depth information (Hoepfl, 1997). It focuses on how people make meaning of their experiences as they interpret their world.

A case study approach was consequently adopted in carrying out the research. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) contend that case studies strive to portray what it is to be in a particular situation, to catch the close-up realities and take the description of participants. Kwabia (2006) asserts that the case study is a research work about a single social group entity or phenomena and its characteristics. The researchers considered women in educational leadership as a single social group and obtained a comprehensive description about the experiences of such women.The qualitative nature of case studies, the need to get in-depth understanding and the purpose on a single group make it appropriate for this study.

2.4. Participants

The target population for this study comprised of the women who occupy leadership positions in the various educatonal institutions in the YiloKrobo Municipality of the Eastern Region of Ghana. The researchers employed purposive sampling to identify the primary participants. The researchers first contacted a woman in a leadership position in an educational institution who in turn introduced him to additional participants by using snowball sampling. Snowballing is a method of expanding the sample by asking the informant or participant to recommend others for an interview. The researchers sampled

16 women from Primary and Junior High Schools, 8 women in the second cycle institutions in the YiloKroboMunicipality and 6 women from Mt. Mary College of Education. In all, 30 women in leadership positions were used for the study.

2.5. Instrumentation

The researcherss used interview and observation to enable them to understand and describe the world experience of women in educational leadership. Speaking about the world of human experience requires an extensive commitment in terms of time and dedication to process (Myers, 2000). The researcherss recorded and tried to understand the women in their own terms, hence a detail description of events, situations and conversations was recorded. Regarding the semi-structured interview schedule, the researchers played back the tape to respondents after the interview session to ensure that what they said has been correctly recorded. The study participants were asked to check the findings and provide comments. This enabled the researchers to gain feedback on results from the participants to enhance credibility thereby ensuring the internal validity of the data. The researchers enhanced transferability by detailing the research methods and providing an explanation of the research setting and individuals. Seal (1999), endorses the concept of dependability with the concept of consistency or reliability in qualitative research.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

For consistency, the researcherss sought an interface between data from the interviews and the observations made. The researchersanalysed the data that emerged during the study through the thematic analysis. The first step was the collection of the data using audiotape, pen, and book. The conversation on the audiotape was transcribed. The researchers read through all the transcribed information and noted the themes that were running through the various transcribed materials and patterns of experiences were listed. Concerning the observation, the researchers wrote what they observed and expanded it into notes as soon as possible in other to record easily what happened. The data obtained from the observation was also considered under the patterns of experiences already identified through the interview. The researchers combined related patterns into sub-themes to obtain a comprehensive view of the information and supported it with excerpts of the data collected from the respondents.

4. RESULTS

Table1. *Age of Participants*

Age Group	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
31-35	0	0
36-40	5	16.7
41-45	9	30
46-50	9	30
51-55	7	23.3
Total	30	100

A brief profile of the participants was collected. The information sought was on age, marital status, qualification, etc. In terms of age, it was found out that most of the interviewees were between 41 and 50 years. That is, eighteen participants out of the thirty were within that age group. This represents 60% of the participants. Five respondents (17%) were between the ages of 36 and 40 years while seven respondents (23%) were between the ages of 51 and 55 years. This is shown in Table 1.

Concerning the marital status of the interviewees, it was found out that twenty-three (77%) were married while seven (23%) were single.This presupposes that most of the respondents are wives and are expected to perform their traditional roles. A number of husbands might not compromise when it comes to the performance of roles such as cooking, cleaning the house, caring for the children, etc. They expect their wives to perform these roles despite their positions as leaders. The women leaders who are not married can decide not to perform these roles and nobody perhaps will force them.

Table2. *Qualification of Participants*

Qualification	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
3-Year Post Secondary	6	20
Diploma	3	10
Bachelor's Degree	14	46.7

Masters Degree	6	20
Doctorate Degree	1	3.3
Total	30	100

With regard to the qualification of participants, six (20%) were 3-Year Post Secondary holders, three (10%) were Diploma holders, fourteen (47%) were Bachelor's Degree holders, six (20%) were MastersDegree holders and one (3%) was a Doctorate Degree holder. This indicates that women are well educated and are therefore properly equipped to perform leadership roles in their careers.

In terms of positions held by the participants, it was found out that one (3%) was a senior housemistress, two (7%) were assistant headmistress, seventeen (57%) were occupying the positions of headmistress, six (20%) were heads of departments and four (13%) were administrative heads. This is shown in Table 3.

Table3. *Positions Held by Participants*

Position	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Senior Housemistress	1	3.3
Assistant Headmistress	2	6.7
Headmistress	17	56.7
Head of Department	6	20
Administrative Head	4	13.3
Total	30	100

In determining the years of experience of participants in leadership positions, it was revealed that seventeen (57%) women have been in their leadership positions for between 1 to 5 years. Nine (30%) respondents have been in their leadership positions for between 6 to 10 years; two (7%) have been in their positions for between 11 to 15 years, one (3%) has been in the position for between 16 to 20 years while one (3%) has also been in her position for between 21 to 25 years. This is shown in Table 4.

Table4. *Years of Experience of Participants in Leadership*

Years of Experience	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
1-5	17	56.7
6-10	9	30
11-15	2	6.7
16-20	1	3.3
21-25	1	3.3
Total	30	100

Concerning the workplace of respondents, six (20%) work in primary schools, ten (33%) work in Junior High Schools, eight (27%) work in Senior High School while six (20%) work in a College of Education. This is shown in Table 5.

Table5. *Work Place of Participants*

Work Place	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Primary School	6	20
Junior High School	10	33.3
Senior High School	8	26.7
College of Education	6	20
Total	30	100

4.1. Discussion of Results

Women in educational leadership believe leadership is an area for human beings whether a man or a woman, young or old, provided the person has the qualities of a leader. They believe leadership deals with managing, directing and controlling others to achieve specific goals or objectives. The qualities of a leader include having the ability to motivate people, knowing how to work with a group, having a clearly defined vision and knowing how to achieve that vision. A leader must be able to work under all conditions, be respectful and tolerate the views of others.

Within the community, people perceive women in educational leadership in different ways. Some people think women are weak, sympathetic and cannot be effective leaders so they underrate the

capabilities of women in educational leadership. Others see them as competing with the men. Another perception is that they are hard or tough or difficult people.

According to the findings of the study, some traditional roles are considered as the preserved roles of a woman whether the woman is a leader or not. Such traditional roles include cooking, keeping the home and child care. All women interviewed believe that domestic chores are considered women's responsibility. Therefore, any other occupation should be done in addition to the household chores. Women in educational leadership have to manage their numerous roles of being a leader, mother, wife, and daughter. All these positions have specific roles that need to be performed and the society does not compromise on any lapses when it comes to the performance of such roles. The women therefore find themselves doing so many things at the same time. This frustrates and creates tension and stressful conditions for them.

The study also revealed that the performance of some of these roles such as caring for children and family life sometimes conflict with their leadership roles and constitute major challenges to women in educational leadership. A further observation from the study is that issues concerning the traditional beliefs and practices of a group of people are difficult to be changed so most people still have a strong belief in the traditional system in spite of education on equal rights. Some people still hold the opinion that women do not have the right to control people especially men. Besides, most people think a leader should always be a man as the man is the head of the family. Consequently, when women in educational leadership talk to people, they do not take them seriously. This seems to support the assertion of Ruth (1998) that for centuries the traditional system has maintained control over women and over traditional institutions that guide the political, economic and cultural arrangement governing our lives. Cultural practices such as silencing, menstruation taboos and others still exist. The study also shows that some husbands oppose their wives in leadership for various reasons and make life uncomfortable for them.

The study further reveals that women in leadership are under constant pressure to prove that they can perform their responsibilities as women effectively. These findings seem to confirm a study by Indiresan (1992) on a sample of women principals of colleges which revealed that 10% reported that men or women, the problem faced in the administration were the same. The other 90% reported that because of their gender, they faced specific problems related to work, values, gender, social and self.

The study further reveals that some of the women in educational leadership have an inferiority complex because of the type of people that they have to work with. It can be established from the findings that "women are their own enemies" because, from the study, it became obvious that some women out of jealousy pose problems to women in leadership. Some of these women think they deserve the leadership position because they have been in the service for long. This has adverse effects on women in educational leadership.

The findings were explained under five themes.

Theme1: Participants' Perception of Leadership

For every society to progress and achieve its goals, there should be leaders. Women in educational leadership believed leadership is subject to all kinds of explanations. The participants' view on leadership had to do with vision, ability to motivate others to achieve results. They believe leadership had to do with teaching others through example. It also had to do with the ability to work with people as a team. During the interview, the women were asked to come out with their perceptions of leadership. On reacting to this question, some of their responses were the following;

An administrative head of an institution said:

Leadership is an act of managing, directing and controlling others to achieve specific goals or objectives. Leadership has to do with some group of people to achieve some results.

A Head of department also said:

Leadership is an act of leading people to reach the goal or target. Through leadership, the leader can have some influence on the people she is leading.

The headmistress of an institution stated:

Leadership means service. It is not just a matter of giving subordinates instructions. You have to work with them to achieve the set vision.

The researchers further probed with a question on qualities of a leader and some of the responses were the following;

An administrative head of an institution said:

A good leader is one who is able to serve as a role model for both superiors and subordinates. A leader must be a person who has special qualities such as tolerance, respect and must also be hard working. He or she must be able to work under all conditions.

Considering the views shared by the women in educational leadership, it becomes clear to them that leadership involves having a set target, motivating and encouraging the people one is working with to achieve the goals of the organization. A leader is a person who is able to mobilize people to perform a task effectively at one time or the other for the growth of the organization. That individual is able to lead others to grow the organization. It is demanding and also a joy when leaders share with the people they are working with. Leaders share knowledge, ideas, and skills with other people. The reason is that two heads are better than one. This supports Cole's (1995) assertion that leadership is essentially a process in which one individual influences the efforts of others towards the achievement of goals.

Theme2: Societal Perceptions of Women in Educational Leadership

People have different perceptions of women leaders, particularly, women in educational leadership. The participants noted that most people within their communities do not show positive attitudes towards women especially when it comes to considering their capabilities as leaders. Such people think women are weak, sympathetic and can be influenced easily hence they cannot be effective leaders. Some of the members of the community use this form of stereotype to limit women.

This coincides with Eagly and Karaul (2002) perception that gender stereotyping has created and reinforced a set of beliefs about the nature of men and women. Women are cast as more communal, sympathetic and nurturing. Men are seen as assertive, dominant and forceful. According to the women, some of the people within the community underrate their capabilities as women. Commenting on the community's perception of women in educational leadership,

A head of department in an institution stated:

Males within the community will like to tell you that you should sit down and watch them demonstrate to you. If you are not firm and strong and say I can do it, you will be there and they will tell you what you should do as a leader. Until they realize your competencies, they will not allow you to be at the forefront.

Another head of department also said:

The members of the society see women as sympathetic, easily influenced and weak. A woman really has to be very exemplary before she is somehow accepted as a leader.

A headmistress stated:

In some communities, they look down upon women because of the traditional expectations of women. So if you are a woman and you come out boldly to be a leader, they think you are too known.

Some people also have the fear that women cannot be effective in certain leadership positions. "If we give a whole department to a woman, can she handle it?" According to a head of a department, one of the respondents, this is a comment made by a man in his disapproval of a woman to be made a head of a department in a male dominated department. Reviewing more than 2000 books and articles on sex differences, Maccoby as cited Calhoun, Light, and Keller (1994) concluded that on the average, males and females do not differ significantly in terms of sociability, suggestibility, self-esteem, achievement, motivation, rote learning, analytical skills and response to auditory and visual stimulation. This presupposes that both men and women are capable of being effective leaders.

However, most people within the community consider leadership as a male endeavour and do not readily accept women to be leaders. So the percentage of women in leadership positions is always low.

A headmistress shared her experience and said,

"They will always try you and see whether you can cope with the problems, then they will give you the go-ahead to lead".

An administrative head of an institution recounting her experience also stated:

A few days ago, I sat on one committee as far as work is concerned; it was there that I had a letter that I should chair the committee. I looked at it and said this is interesting. All the time, the committees I serve on are chaired by men. Some people especially men think that if you are a woman you shouldn't be a leader.

Within the community itself, even the females feel certain leadership positions should always be in the hands of their male counterparts because, for them, the chances of women rising to the top are marginal. Instead of seeing these women as partners working together to achieve a common goal, most people think such women are competing with the men.

A head of department of an institution articulated this:

If you are a leader in this institution, most of the people that you are working with think you are competing with the men so they have to fear you.

A headmistress also said:

I believe there may be two factions. We have individual differences so some see women in educational leadership as threats while others see them as partners to achieve the aims of the institution.

An administrative head of an institution said:

Most men see women in educational leadership as a threat. These men think women leaders are competing with the men in terms of leadership and may occupy some vital positions.Besides, women in educational leadership always have to work hard to prove that they are capable of handling the positions. They are compelled to work very hard to prove themselves.

A headmistress stated:

Yes, you have to prove that a man was in that position but now a female is there and she is meeting the standards set. This sometimes puts pressure on women leaders as we have to prove ourselves that we are capable of handling the position.

A head of department of an institution said:

While your male colleagues will do something and they are free, yours will attract unnecessary scrutiny simply because you are a female. It underscores the fact that probably there is doubt about your ability to deliver so you will find yourself always going the extra mile to ensure that everything is in its proper place.

A headmistress stated:

As a woman leader, you will always have to ensure that your work doesn't attract any negative feedback and that could put a lot of pressure on you.

It becomes clear to the participants that people are observing them so they have to work very hard so that they will not have anything to say about their work.

Another perception about women leaders particularly in the education sector is that they are "hard" or "tough". It is the belief of some people within the community that women in educational leadership are very difficult people. When asked, how do members of the community perceive members in educational leadership?

A headmistress stated:

People normally think if a person is a headmistress or a principal of a college then, she is a tigress. They see women in such positions as "hard" and strict.

Another headmistress stated:

Some people have the opinion that when a woman leads she causes problems so when they see that the leader is a woman then they conclude that she is troublesome. They prejudiced that women are like that, they cause problems when they are in leadership positions. Few women leaders cause trouble anyway.

An administrative head leader also said:

I have also noticed that it is the mindset of some people in the society that a woman should be soft, respectful, humble, etc. so if a woman is a leader and she is effective then people feel that she is 'tough' and difficult to work with.

A headmistress stated:

Some people within the community think women leaders are too stern or too strict. It is not that they are too stern, bad, or too "hard" but it is just because they want to do their work in an acceptable way.

Although the position may sometimes be challenging, women leaders live by principles. They always perform their duties strictly according to the laid down rules and regulations.

A headmistress stated:

Those who do not know me think I'm very difficult or hard. The whole issue is that I'm principled and that there are certain things if you want me to do I will not give in easily. I hold to my principles.

Some of the women in educational leadership believe that despite these opposing views by members of the community, if they see you performing very well in the leadership position, sometimes they hold you in high esteem and always wish their female children grow up to be like you.

An administrative head of an institution said:

Some of the members of the community see women leaders who are hardworking and honest as role models to their girl child. They hold them in high regard. They respect them.

The members of the community perceive women in educational leadership as weak, sympathetic and incompetent. As a result, they look down upon the capabilities of women and do not readily give women the chance to perform leadership roles. Sometimes they try some of the women to find out if they are competent before they give them the chance to lead. Women in educational leadership have to meet certain standards in order not to attract negative comments on their work. Besides, other members of the community see women in educational leadership as "hard" or "tough" and very difficult to work with. Despite these perceptions, some members of the community respect women in educational leadership and hold them in high esteem especially if they perform their responsibility very well.

Theme3: Traditional Roles

In most traditional societies, men and women are expected to perform different tasks. Women are expected to perform household work such as cooking, keeping the home and caring for the children and the sick while men work outside the home. It is a popular saying that "a woman's office in the kitchen" so people who have not yet known what women are capable of doing suppress women and prevents them to come out as leaders. When it comes to traditional roles, a woman in educational leadership has to do more than a man. The traditional system demands that women combine their duties of a homemaker, a mother and a daughter with any other job they do in the formal sector.

Married women in educational leadership take on almost limitless labour of services at their homes. Their tasks are not wholly specified but comprise of the satisfaction of almost every kind of physical and emotional needs their husbands and children require as well as all the services needed for smooth maintenance of family life.In the home, their children and teenagers may help in the performance of roles such as housework, childcare, food preparation, and other caretaking activities as household chores.However, women are held responsible if any of these chores are not performed well. This is because traditionally, these chores are supposed to be performed by married women. Consequently, most of the married women in educational leadership perform the majority of these household chores themselves.

This is in line with a study conducted by Ferguson (2001) which reveals that most of the household labour, up to 80 percent, is done by adult women. This includes preparing meals, washing dishes, cleaning the house, shopping, and laundry. During the interview, women in educational leadership were asked to state their views on the traditional roles of women and women's position as leaders. The following were some of the views shared by the participants.

A headmistress stated:

Traditionally, society has defined the roles of women differently from men. Women are expected to be homemakers, nurture children, care for the sick and so forth. If you are a leader, then you have to combine those traditional roles with work in the formal sector.

A head of department of an institution said:

Women have always been placed in some straight jacket position that once you are a woman you should be cleaning the home, caring for children, found in the kitchen and so forth. These things have been pigeon-holed for women. As a result, if you are placed in the position of leadership, then they expect that you go by those traditional pigeon-holes set up for women.

A headmistress stated:

When I was going to further my education, some people asked, "what else do you need? Sit home and look after your children."Due to the traditional expectation of women, most people discourage them from undertaking certain jobs.

All the women interviewed accepted that traditional roles such as cooking, washing of clothes, cleaning the house and many others are the preserve of women. It is a few men who sometimes give helping hand in the absence of the wife and children.Whether the woman is a leader or not the traditional role expectations are almost the same especially if she is married and has children. They will expect that she performs her duties as a wife and a mother. Even though they may delegate some of the traditional roles, the primary responsibilities remain hers nonetheless.

These views suggest an underlying conviction that women in educational leadership engage in many "tasking" jobs. This supports Ruth's (1998) assertion that the married woman who works outside the home actually carries two jobs; one paid and the other unpaid. The professional woman, Ruth continues, pays an exacting price for this dual responsibility.Through the socialization process, parents have made their daughters aware that the performance of traditional roles such as cooking, cleaning of the house, washing of dishes, caring for the children are the preserved roles of a woman. Mothers themselves have long modeled these realities for their daughters. Individuals need not be told what their expected roles are. Continued exposure to people of the same sex performing those roles, is sufficient reinforcement.

Theme4: Traditional Roles Versus Leadership Roles of Women

Most of the women interviewed consider some of the traditional roles to conflict with their leadership roles.

A headmistress stated:

As a woman coming from a place where cultural values and practices are at its peak, I believe the homemaking procedure conflict with women's leadership roles. My husband was against a woman leaving the home to even further her education so I was suppressed for nineteen years.

A head of department of an institution said:

For a woman to be a leader, she should be able to surmount such traditional roles that go with her position as a mother, a wife, and a homemaker. So it is not easy at all to combine such roles at the same time with leadership.

A headmistress stated:

There is a conflict as you may not have enough time to perform your duties as a mother, homemaker and a leader.

Another headmistress stated:

Sometimes, you may have an important meeting to attend but there is a sick person such as a child, mother, etc., in the house so you are expected to take care of that person. Such an issue could really be problematic. I won't deceive you. It has not been easy at all.

The themes that emerged from the interviews regarding this point are that participants are expected to perform specific responsibilities and put up specific behaviours in each of their positions. Some of their positions are mothers, wives, and leaders. People have specific expectations for them in each of these positions. These conditions create conflict between their traditional roles and their leadership

roles. This is confirmed by the studies of Ferguson (2001) which revealed that a quarter of caregivers who remain in the labour force do have conflicting feelings and many suffer from fatigue and strained personal relationships.

Women in educational leadership experience stress from competing responsibilities.The vast amount of work women do both within the workplace as leaders and at home is compounded by women's roles and by the sex-based division of labour within the traditional setup. For a woman in sucha position to succeed in all spheres, it is appropriate for her to have the needed knowledge and skills to joggle in all those roles and responsibilities appropriately so that while she performs the responsibilities attached to her career effectively, her home will not suffer. It comes with its own challenges.

The participants believe that child-bearing responsibilities pose a greater challenge to them. When women are leaders and they have young children to cater for, it is very challenging. The child-bearing responsibilities sometimes delay the time some of the women get to further their education. By the time they would like to further their studies, age would have caught up with them. They may be too old to seek scholarships or pursue certain studies.

Sometimes, the women in leadership are expected to stay on to meet deadlines while their children are waiting for them to come home. Besides, the nature of the work may demand travelling. This becomes a problem especially when the children are young.

Talking about her experience, an administrative head said:

When I had my first child, sometimes I was supposed to travel and attend meetings at other places so I was always asking a colleague to attend on my behalf. It took some time before my husband and I discussed the issue at length and agreed upon something. So I was able to leave my child for a few occasions to attend to those meetings.

A headmistress also stated:

As a woman at the child-bearing stage, I am concerned about catering for my children and have to send a child to crèche before I come to the office. While I am at the office, my mind will sometimes be on my children.

Another headmistress narrating her experience said:

Some of us have problems. I, for instance, I didn't get somebody to care for my children so I couldn't go forward in terms of my education.

A head of Department said:

Sometimes there are obstacles in my way as a woman leader and a family woman. Considering certain roles such as nursing a baby, I have to see to it that the baby is well fed before I come to the workplace to pursue whatever duties I have to perform.

This confirms the Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) assert that events regularly occur that simultaneously require women's physical presence or mental concentration. These individuals often must choose between feeling like dutiful parents who regard their children's needs and ignore important aspects of their jobs and the demands of work or disregard the needs of their children but attach importance to the demands of work.

The participants believed they have problems with family life because it is not easy combining family life effectively with their work as leaders. As mothers and wives, they have to spend time with the family members to discuss pertinent issues that crop up within the family. They have to get time to chat with the family members freely to build a strong family. However, due to the nature of their work sometimes they have to use the time at home to prepare their lesson notes, mark exercises, work on the continuous assessment and so forth. Regarding challenges confronting them, the following were some of their responses;

An administrative head stated:

I think my greatest problem is getting time to spend with my family members. As for your child, you can tell him or her anything and the child will accept it but not with your husband. Sometimes, my husband will be talking to me and I will be seriously marking or writing sometimes. He will see that I'm not paying attention to him.

A head talking about her experience said:

The demands on my time are so much that even weekends when probably I should be with my family, I find myself in the office to get some of the work done. Sometimes, from the grapevine it attracts a few negative comments.

A head of department said:

Sometimes, you get the feeling from your family that you are neglecting them when you put yourself too much into the role you play as a leader. You will work late at night because there are letters to write and some things to do. When you get home late, it affects your family and they may not understand.

This confirms the study conducted by Ferguson (2001). Ferguson discusses her research to see how people are balancing their work and family lives. In that research, the goal was to determine how those workers manage the work-family "speed-up" created by working mothers, inflexible jobs and increased work hours for both men and women. She found out that people work too many hours, which hurts the work-family balance. The combination of family life and leadership roles is challenging considering the views expressed by the women. This requires careful planning as they are tempted with the demands of the work to lean too much towards the work. Yet, if they lean too much towards their family too, the result will be disastrous in the workplace.

Theme 5: Beliefs and Practices that Conflict with Women's Leadership Roles

There are some traditional beliefs and practices that conflict with women's leadership roles. Traditional beliefs and practices of a group of people are difficult to change. Besides, human beings by nature resist change. Most people still have beliefs in the traditional system to the extent that despite the education on equal rights for all, some people still think there are certain things a woman should not do. Leadership is one of those things that traditionally a woman should not do.

The participants believed in the traditional system, women are looked down upon. They hold the opinion that some people still believe that women do not have the right to control people; women should be submissive to men and should not lead if men are around. When most people think of a leader, they believe he should always be a man, since the man is the head of the family. This belief supports that of Longwe and Clarke (1999) who state that patriarchal politics entails the belief that the man is the "natural" head of the household, and that the decision-making role naturally extends to the public domain. They further state that it is this belief that justifies treating women as legal minors, second-class citizens.

During the interview with the participants, most of them revealed that there are traditional beliefs and practices that will serve as barriers to them.

A head stated:

There are some traditional beliefs that conflict with women's leadership roles. When a woman is a leader, she is supposed to take decisions on issues, but in our traditional setup, women are not supposed to be involved in decision making, they are sidelined.

Another head stated:

When it comes to decision making, it is a problem. In my traditional area, generally, it is accepted that the man is the head of the family and so decisions are taken by the man. The woman will have to comply with the decisions made. So as a woman leader, they expect you to be sober and know what to say and what not to say. Know when to speak and when to keep quiet.

She continued:

The idea that the woman should not talk, you should know when to speak conflict with leadership roles. Sometimes at meetings, you will say something you know is the right thing. The chairman, who is a man listens to you and raises the issue again. A man will just summarize what you have said and they take that as the best option.

Another head said:

There are traditional norms such as a woman should not lead a man or men. It is a misconception so with education, it is gradually being washed away although there are still some people who believe in those norms. I think it is attitudinal and depends on the individual.

There are places where women are not allowed to go. Cultural practices such as silencing, menstruation taboos, and others still exist. Sometimes when women leaders talk to people, they do not take them seriously. The reason is that most people within the community have pre-conceived ideas that there is no sense in a "woman's talk".

A headmistress stated:

Men are the people with power in our society so anything you say, most of them think it's 'women's talk'. It is not easy as the performance of leadership roles go with a lot of challenges and conflict with society's expectations.

Another headmistress said:

There is a conflict coming from a background where traditional expectations are so high. In my traditional area, for instance, a woman is not allowed to talk when men are around. When you are leading a group and the men among the group strongly believe in this, they try to suppress you.

These views expressed by the participants pre-suppose that there is a patriarchal ideology within the community and this affects the belief system. The members of the community have the belief that women should not lead men; women should not talk if men are around and that decision making is for men. They, therefore perpetuate these beliefs through the socialization process. These affect the work of women leaders especially if the people they are working with believe in the patriarchal ideology.

This assertion that there is a patriarchal ideology within the community is supported by Ruth (1998) and it states that the control of women by patriarchy is affected by mastery of beliefs and attitudes through the management of all the agencies of belief formation.According to Ruth, the most potent form of control is one that reigns not over the body but over the mind. To place into the belief system of an individual the idea that the restraints governing him or her are inevitable, right, proper and desirable is to place a perpetual sentry at the door to a free existence. So long as the belief remains, women will be suppressed. Some people, even women themselves have often supported the patriarchal status quo. They demand that their daughters and granddaughters do so as well. Agencies such as the home, the school, the church, and the mass media all put emphasis on some of these beliefs.

Marriage is one of the traditional practices in Ghana. Marriage as an institution is treasured and it is the desire of most women in Ghana to get married.So married women always do what they can to protect their marriages. Women in the study even think sometimes marriage is considered as one of the criteria for someone to be appointed as a leader. The reasonbeing that if a woman is married, there is the likelihood that she willbe morally upright than the one who is not married. Besides, married women are considered to be responsible people who can easily manage the affairs of educational institutions which primarily see to the training of people. The participants stated that some of their husbands oppose the idea that they should become leaders. When asked why they think their husbands oppose their leadership roles, the following were revealed;

A head od department said:

My husband doesn't want me to become a leader because he is jealous and thinks being a leader I will meet so many men and maybe be tempted by some of them.

On the same issue, another head said:

My best friend's husband opposed her leadership to the extent that she has to resign from the post in order to save her marriage. She resigned and today, she is happily married.

Another head stated:

Sometimes you may see that the woman is effective but the husband may be an obstacle. He may not be happy that his wife is taking a leadership role while he himself is not a leader. So he will frustrate you in pursuing your leadership roles.

These views underline the convictions that some of the interviewees face oppositions from their husbands for various reasons. These husbands opposed them in their attempt to protect their marriages and to ensure that they are at their rightful place as the head of the family.The participants said that if the opposition from one's husband is intense, then you have to opt-out from being a leader else you face the consequences of separation or divorce because he will do all he can to make life

uncomfortable for you. Marriage as a traditional practice does not necessarily pose problems to women in leadership but the idea that the husband is the head within the marriage makes his views supreme. Consequently, where the husband opposes the wife in the acceptance of the performance of leadership roles, the best she can do is to opt-out to save her marriage.

Some of the interviewees have problems with an inferiority complex because of the type of men that surround them. They may want to give up so some of them allow the subordinates to have their way. This coincides with Ruth's (1998) assertion that because women do not do the things men do, it is evident that they cannot do what men do and are therefore obviously inferior. The women believe there is an inferiority complex among some of them.

This may be a result of how society perceives women as subordinates to men. Throughout a woman's upbringing, she is made to believe that she is not the co-equal of men and then suddenly she finds herself in a leadership position to supervise, organize and control the affairs of both men and women. This sometimes poses a big challenge to the woman leader and if she does not master courage then the inferiority complex will set in.Some responses in relation to inferiority complex are:

A headmistress stated:

Naturally, I cannot stand people who will humiliate me or criticize me wrongly. When I am humiliated, my spirit dampens and it takes time before I organize myself again to deal with the issue.

Another head said:

Some of us have a problem with the inferiority complex because of the people we are working with. Some men will always want to tell you that they are superior to you. When an issue crops up and they are involved, they chest out that they are men and probably their wives are like you so you can't talk to them in a certain way.

An administrative head stated:

Some people believe that there is an inferiority complex among women so they try you and if you shy away from the company of men then they think you don't fit to be a leader.

A headmistress also said:

Some women are not bold and feel inferior. Inferiority complex brings them down when they want to take up certain decisions concerning some of their subordinates. This normally happens when those subordinates have higher qualifications than them.

These views expressed by the participants supportBrodie (1999) who argues that when regarded as the natural bearers and rearers of children, women are characterized as emotional, sentimental, and generally inferior to men.The inferiority complex affects the work of some women leaders especially those who got their positions through long service.

When women become leaders at their workplace, they assume responsibilities such as supervision, organization of subordinates to perform certain duties and so forth. It is not easy for women to combine the work at home, social network and leadership roles at the same time. The participants revealed that for them to make time for other occupational needs and the needs of the family, they cut down what is least important to them such as attending weddings, funerals, naming ceremonies and others. To manage time and make time for all their responsibilities, they sometimes turn down social engagements. Thus, women leaders are forced to give up their periphery ties with neighbours and some relatives so that they can keep an active grip on their schedules.

However, as Ghanaians, the attendance of these occasions strengthens social ties and binds the society together. Although the idea of cutting down social gatherings will enable them to make time for other things, it will negatively affect their social network system to the extent that they may not get people to support them when they are in need. Besides, women in the study find it difficult to develop relationships with other women or even with men in the workplace. This inhibits the growth of social life outside their marriage. This sometimes deprived them of having contact and getting certain vital information concerning their work. At the workplace the women normally do not have time to associate themselves with friends to establish networks because always there is pressure on them to go home early to perform household chores, care for the children and so forth.

A head talking about her experience said:

I try to move away a bit from things such as funerals, weddings, etc., unless the invitation is from a very close relative. I want to plan well to balance my activities although it affects my social life.

An administrative head said:

As a woman, I rush home to do household chores and care for my children so I don't have any friend in the workplace who can send certain information to me. In our institution, we are trying to come together from time to time as women but we complain about time.

Some of the participants revealed that they believe sometimes most decisions that are taken during meetings are even done outside the meeting room. They believe most men get their folders and discuss them with their friends and come to a conclusion during their informal meetings for networking.

An administrative head sharing her experience said:

The men attend meetings and they have formed alliances. So if you are a female leader and you don't fall within the network and you don't have a close friend who will tell you what is going on, a lot of things will fly over your head.

Another administrative head collaborated:

Some men discuss the issues they want to put forward at meetings with their friends during their informal meetings after the day's work and lobby for support.

What the women said confirms the argument put forward by Bryson (1993) that the "boys club" thrives in an environment of secrecy. These views expressed by the women in the study indicate that the numerous roles attached to their positions as leaders, wives, mothers, and daughters make it difficult to get time for social engagements in order to establish contact.

The saying that "women are their own enemies" was emphasized by most of the respondents when they were talking about the challenges confronting women in educational leadership. The participants revealed that some women out of jealousy will not like their friends to be leaders hence they speak evil against their friends when they are leaders. Yet, they themselves may not be qualified or be courageous enough to be leaders. Sometimes, when it happens that they are the subordinates of the woman leaders, they do all that they can to make the work of the woman leader very difficult so that she will fail as a leader. Some of the women think because they were probably at the workplace before the woman leader came and rose to that rank, the leader has blocked their chances.

A headmistress narrating her experience said:

I was appointed the head just a year ago. When I was appointed, there was this teacher who thought she had been in the school for a long time and must be given such a post. At times, when there is information that I have to give to my subordinates, I go to her class and tell her. Instead of saying something better, she will just throw me off. I have to report the issue to my superior.

Another headmistress said:

It is true that women are their own enemies. Some women will never understand why a woman should be made a leader over them. They will never vote for you to be in power.

An administrative head also stated:

Sometimes, the problems you face as a woman leader may not come from the men but your own women colleagues who think that because of long service, they should be given the post. Instead of upgrading themselves, they will never do that but always say 'mebaa ha akye'- The M. B. A. system.

A head of department came out to say that:

Our own female counterparts who are working under us sometimes try to pull our legs because they think that we are trying to be hard on them. They prefer a man should be hard on them but not a woman.

From the views expressed above, it is obvious that some women out of jealousy pose problems to women in educational leadership. Some of these women think they deserve leadership positions

because they have been in the service for a long time. They are not happy that other women are excelling in leadership and therefore create problems for them. Consequently, some women leaders have regretted taking up the post while other women shy away from leadership. This is rather unfortunate because it is women who normally call for gender equality in all spheres of life so if it comes to leadership and they pull each other down, then who will stand?

Conclusion

Leadership is a very important endeavour for both men and women in every society. It is the process of providing direction and influencing individuals or groups towards goal setting and goal achievement. One is a leader only when he or she gets things done through other people. A leader is a person in a position or office of authority who articulates a vision with deeply held values to ensure the attainment of the vision.

Women in educational leadership are confronted with numerous obstacles. Based on the findings discussed, the following conclusions have been drawn.

The performance of the traditional roles poses a major challenge to women in educational leadership. Women leaders especially those who are married have a lot to do as their traditional roles. They are supposed to clean the house, wash clothes, cook, and care for the children and husbands. Women in educational leadership perform their responsibilities at their workplaces and when they close from work, they have to go home and perform their household chores as their second full-time job. In situations whereby they delegate some of these roles, they have the primary responsibilities to see to it that the roles are performed well. Considering leadership roles such as planning, supervision, organization of subordinates, coordination of resources and so forth, it becomes clear that combining women's traditional roles with these leadership roles is not an easy task. Women leaders face difficulties in balancing leadership roles and their traditional roles as women. This puts tension on them and results in stressful conditions for most of them.

Some of the study participants also expressed difficulties linked with the performance of responsibilities associated with family life and leadership. These difficulties are intense when the children are young. Women leaders have to joggle in the responsibilities associated with their career and childbearing. Consequently, some of these women were unable to access scholarships for further studies and other professional development programs for upgrading because of child-bearing age.

Besides, traditional beliefs and practices also affect the acceptance of women in educational leadership and pose a challenge to them in the performance of their duties as leaders. Traditional beliefs and practices are often deeply entrenched in the culture, social and religious norms. This makes it difficult to be eradicated. The belief that women should be submissive leaves them to relax in asserting their capabilities as leaders. They are therefore suppressed by these beliefs. Other beliefs are that women do not have the right to lead whilemen are there. They cannot supervise, organize and control people especially men. The traditional beliefs emphasizes that a woman should be seen but not be heard. Consequently, women leaders are expected to know what to say and what not to say when they are dealing with men. These beliefs are obstacles to gender equality and the impact on societal development. The reason is that women who constitute the majority of the population are handicapped with these beliefs. Until women themselves come to the realization of the harm, some of these beliefs cause to their progress, they will always coil on their shelves.

Women themselves sometimes serve as barriers to other women who are in educational leadership. They really create problems for the women leaders and make their work difficult.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Gender sensitization of people in policy-making positions as well as in society, in general, must be intensified. There is an urgent need for the development and implementation of policy and programs on gender sensitization of people.

2. The socialization process should critically be considered to reflect the changing times. Boys and girls should all be made to do the household chores. By this, the young generation will learn that boys and girls are equal. Parents, teachers and other socialization agents have a critical role to play and they must prepare the boy child also to have a fair share in the household chores considering the modern trend of events. Women need to lobby their husbands to support them in

the performance of household chores. Marriage counselors have to come in to convince men to take part in the performance of household chores.

3. Women in leadership positions should mentor women and girls coming up. There is a need to set up mentorship schemes where women leaders can mentor other women and girls to move ahead and inspire them to be leaders. Also, there are some ideas about female leaders which are negative so women leaders should actually work around some of those things to break them to be able to win the support of others.

4. The school curriculum in Ghana needs to incorporate gender issues. The school curriculum can be used to portray a better image of women and girls. Besides, gender sensitization should be made an important aspect of the curriculum.

5. The government should implement and enforce all existing policies and international conventions and treaties to promote women's rights and gender equity. This will enable women to exercise their rights and promote their equal representation in leadership. NGO's and the private sector should also work to eliminate all barriers and inequalities in the system to ensure the participation of women in leadership.

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