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A Study of the Lived Experiences of Ghanaian Women in Leadership

Dorothy Roseline Appiah
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Dorothy Roseline Appiah

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Review Committee
Dr. Kimberly Anthony, Committee Chairperson, Management Faculty
Dr. Danielle Wright-Babb, Committee Member, Management Faculty
Dr. Hamid Kazeroony, University Reviewer, Management Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

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2020

Abstract

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Abstract

Underrepresentation, inequities, and career advancement to senior leadership positions continue to present obstacles for Ghanaian women, affecting their performance in organizations. This qualitative descriptive phenomenological study aimed to explore and understand the lived experiences of Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers in 5 different organizations and how best to improve them. The conceptual framework used was Eagly and Karau's role congruity theory of prejudice and Scheim's leadership and organizational culture theory. The research question explored the experiences of Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers in organizations. Fifteen purposefully selected Ghanaian women leaders with at least 10 years of experience from 5 organizations were interviewed. Data analysis included coding, categorizing, and analyzing themes. The 8 resulting themes were gender discrimination, opportunities, promotions, mentoring and role models, work and family life balance, the wage gap, networking, education and experience. These findings indicated that Ghanaian women leaders are still underrepresented in organizations and lack support from policymakers and human resource personnel in their pursuit of professional careers. The results may inform policymakers and human resource professionals to revisit and revise organizational policies by promoting the same career advancement opportunities for women representation through inclusion, corporate support, and education. This awareness might contribute to positive social change across all organizations, influencing organizational performance.

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Dedication

Onto you, Oh Lord deserves all my praise and adoration. Your Grace and Mercies continue to sustain me. Thank you for bringing me thus far, and may your name be praised forever. I dedicate this academic accomplishment to my dear husband, Rev Morris Appiah, for believing in my God's given potential. My beautiful daughter Louisa Appiah, and my handsome son, Ernest Appiah, for their tremendous support, love, and understanding throughout this journey. Through it all, you stood by me and encouraged me even when I was down. I also dedicate this accomplishment to my beloved late parents, who instilled in me the quality of education but passed on to eternity before starting this journey. May they rest in perfect peace. Above all, to my Lord and personal Savior, Jesus Christ be all glory, honor, and thanksgiving for His grace, mercies, favor, strength, wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness that enabled from the beginning to the end of this journey.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Underrepresentation, lack of equal opportunities, and career advancement to senior leadership positions are problematic and continue to be obstacles for Ghanaian women in organizations (Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015; Darko & Seibu, 2016). Regardless of a woman's level of education, and their desire to progress in their careers, they do not reach the same leadership positions as their men counterparts (Abakah, 2018; Aidoo & Achira, 2016; Bruce-Twum, 2013). In Ghana, the lack of women in senior leadership positions has attracted many researchers (Abakah, 2018; Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015; Gyekye, 2013; Tagoe & Abakah, 2015). Despite the numerous studies, there are still critical gaps in the literature that undermine efforts to find answers to this problem (Ngunjiri, 2016; Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009).

The Ghana Statistical Service (2019) reported that 51.4% of employable women and 48.6% of employable men enter the labor market; only 7% of employable women compared with 93% of employable men are selected for senior leadership positions despite equal education. In Ghana, women leaders continue to struggle to ensure equal flexibility and opportunity for participation in leadership positions (Abakah, 2018). Having more women in leadership positions will result in positive role models and mentors, allowing other women to possibly gain the confidence necessary to be exemplary leaders in organizations (Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015).

This chapter consists of the background of the study, problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the research question. The later sections present the description of the conceptual framework and the theories that supported the study, the nature of the

study, operational definitions, assumptions, scope, delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study in practice. The chapter concludes with the summary and an introduction to chapter 2.

Background of the Study

Underrepresentation, lack of equal opportunity for career advancement, and stereotypes about women in leadership continue to keep women out of top-ranking positions globally, with no exception in Ghana (Aidoo & Achira, 2016; Bawa & Sanyare, 2013; Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). In Ghana, women are mostly esteemed as subordinate to the men instead of leaders, and they are oppressed, and dominated by the patriarchal society (Sossou, 2011). Ghana is a developing country in West Africa; and the first African country to gain independence in 1957, with a population of 18.4 million (Frimpong & Agyeman-Budu, 2018). Approximately 41% of women, compared with 21% of men, are highly educated (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019). Additionally, Ghana is among one of the first African countries to grant formal consent to women's rights and elimination of all forms of gender issues in the country (Frimpong & Agyeman-Budu, 2018; UN General Assembly, 1979).

Since the attainment of independence in Ghana, women have progressively entered the workforce; however, a lag in representation remains in high ranks of organizational hierarchy (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019; Sossou, 2011). This increased workforce participation did not guarantee career advancement opportunities in reaching senior leadership positions (Anku-Tsede & Gadegbeku, 2014). Persisting gender gaps, stereotypes, and prejudice embedded in these organizations create an often challenging

workforce for Ghanaian women leaders (Bruce-Twum, 2013). Although men and women are considered equal in the workforce under Ghanaian law, women face resistance despite their outstanding abilities and influence in implementing social change (Abakah, 2018; Odame, 2014). Without the necessary change, a deficiency of tools to aid the improvement of career advancement may continue to perpetuate the underrepresentation of women to leadership positions in Ghana (Bruce-Twum, 2013; Roca et al., 2018).

Understanding the negative effects of the underrepresentation of women in senior-level leadership positions is vital (Darko & Seibu, 2016). Although Ghanaian women leaders surpassed their men counterparts academically, their education does not translate into career advancement in many fields due to the undervaluation of women's effectiveness as leaders in Ghana (Javadi et al., 2016). Several researchers asserted that well-qualified women might be denied promotions because of gender rather than lack of merit in organizations (Abakah, 2018; Bulley, Osei-Bonsu, & Rasaq, 2017; Javadi et al., 2016; Kaufman, 2012). This conundrum has attracted many researchers and scholars worldwide (Al-Mansara, 2013; Almaki, Silong, Idris, & Wahat, 2016; Bruktawit & Beyene, 2018; Msila, 2013).

Javadi et al. (2016) noted that women leaders worldwide continue to fight for their rights and strive to have a significant influence with their voices, abilities, or capabilities against prevailing prejudices in society. Despite efforts and provisions for women's rights, equal opportunities, and career advancement, cultural barriers continue to affect the lives and rights of Ghanaian women (Darko & Seibu, 2016). Hodges (2017) argued that the lack of career advancement opportunities for women remains a challenge

that affects women's recruitment and retention. Nadya, Romilia, Kevin, Wen-Hsin, and Min (2016) observed that the underrepresentation of women in leadership could be attributed to exclusion, lack of equal opportunities, organizational structure, and cultural barriers in organizations.

The unfavorable cultural attitude toward women in authority remains prevalent in Ghana, which translates into limitations and social hindrances on women seeking leadership roles (Darko & Seibu, 2016). Anku-Tsede and Gadegbeku (2014) noted that women are generally seen to exhibit specific characteristics such as being nurturing, supportive, and relationship-oriented, which can be positive attributes to be covered in the workforce. Boateng (2018) also asserted that throughout history, women who seek to pursue professional careers face hostility, ridicule, and other forms of social sanctions often rooted in patriarchy. Adongo et al. (2013) observed that in most private and public organizations in Ghana, men shy away from giving women a position of authority, especially if they involve autonomous decision making.

Organizational policies, practices, and processes continually maintain stereotyping and prejudice, leading to underrepresented situations that prevent women from reaching senior-level leadership positions (DeFrank-Cole, Latimer, Reed, & Wheatly, 2014; Madden, 2011). People's stereotypes pose a significant hindrance to women leaders when standing up for their rights because the gender gap still exists in organizations (Exkano, 2013). Odame (2014) noted that high levels of ethnic and cultural discrimination toward women in leadership still rates high in Ghana, which could be the driving force for stereotypes.

Obstacles preventing gender equality and equal opportunity to top leadership positions for Ghanaian women have been well documented as a demonstration of patriarchy, and these obstacles need serious consideration (Bulley et al., 2017). Although there have been studies on African women in leadership, little is know on how best to increase representation and improve career advancement opportunities for Ghanaian women to advance to senior leadership positions (Ngunjiri, 2016; Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). Based on the literature reviewed gap, there is a need to conduct a qualitative study to explore, describe, and understand the lived experiences of Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers in organizations. Affording Ghanaian women, the opportunity to contribute to innovation and social change in organizations will transform the future of organizational practices, culture, and belief toward a more inclusive and progressive society (Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015).

Problem Statement

Despite advances in the public consciousness and the unraveling of negative social constructs, underrepresentation and gender gap remain as obstacles for Ghanaian women leaders in their pursuit of professional careers (Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015; Darko & Seibu, 2016). The increased dialogue surrounding gender gap and leadership in organizations, and the role that stereotypes and prejudice play in women's underrepresentation, have indicated the necessary amount of work to be done in improving Ghanaian women's career advancement opportunities and increasing their representation (Rincon, Gonzalez, & Barreo, 2017; Sossou, 2011).

The general management problem to address in this study is that the number of Ghanaian women occupying leadership positions is low, resulting in their underrepresentation at the higher level of leadership, which can affect organizational performance (Apusiga & Adatuu, 2017; Darko & Seibu, 2016; Tagoe & Abakah, 2015). The specific management problem to address in this study is that Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers has received less value from corporate and human resource personnel in organizations compared with their men counterparts (Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015; Aidoo & Achira, 2016; Atingah, Fatawu, & Adanse, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore, describe, and understand the lived experiences of Ghanaian women leaders pursuit of professional careers in organizations. Researchers of organizational leaders have noted that the underrepresentation of women coupled with a lack of career advancement opportunities in organizations makes it challenging to attract and retain Ghanaian women leaders (Acar, 2015; Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015; Aidoo & Achira, 2016). The descriptive phenomenology supported by Edmund Husserl's approach for understanding human experiences helped provide a detailed description of the lived experiences of the Ghanaian women leaders (Lo et al., 2019; Moustakas, 1994). I addressed the research gap in this study using a phenomenological qualitative approach. The phenomenological approach added dimensions to the study and helped understand how an individual can make meaning of her personal experience or phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Giorgi, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). The collected data was through semistructured interviews with open-

ended questions by Skype and telephones. I implemented ethical procedures to establish trustworthiness and enhance the study to promote positive social change (Yin, 2016).

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Research Question

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What are the experiences of Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers in organizations?

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Conceptual Framework

</div>

The conceptual framework for this study was Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory of prejudice and Schein's (2010) organizational culture theory. The conceptual framework in a study is a network of interlinked concepts that provide a comprehensive understanding, interpretative approach to social reality, and a soft interpretation of intentions of a phenomenon (Jabareen, 2009; Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). Ravitch and Riggan (2017) described a study's conceptual framework as the system of concepts, theories, expectations, assumptions, and beliefs that ground and inform the research, and thereby guide data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Other researchers contended that without a conceptual framework, reasoned decisions in the research process could not be reached (Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014). Based on this study's purpose, I used three concepts and two theories to describe and understand the lived experiences of Ghanaian women regarding underrepresentation and career advancement opportunities to senior leadership positions. These concepts includes underrepresentation, women leadership experiences, and career advancement opportunities.

The two theories supporting the study's concepts asserted the philosophies on gender issues in organizations. The role congruity theory of prejudice provided perspective on the persistence of gender role stereotyping of women in leadership positions in organizations (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Kacmar, Bachrach, Harris, & Zivnuska, 2011; Smith & Gayles, 2018). The role congruity theory presented by Eagly and Karau (2002) explains prejudice or stereotype toward women and the continued underrepresentation in leadership positions. The role congruity theory is similar to the social role theory in that it deals with the conception of gender roles and leadership behavior (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Kacmar et al., 2011). The organizational culture theory provided insights into understanding the women's stories in organizations and the effects on its members (Gochhayat, Giri, & Suar, 2017; Schein, 2010).

This new understanding of the concepts and theories provided a lens to address the research question and study objectives. It will give organizational leaders and human resource personnel the tools needed to understand how changes to increase women's representation and equal opportunities in the organizational structure, policy, and practices will reduce underrepresentation and increase career advancement opportunities for women leaders (McCleskey, 2014). The new understanding of the concepts might allow organizational leaders to reconsider the effectiveness of their policies (Acar, 2015) in promoting Ghanaian women leaders in their careers. Zhu, Gardner, and Chin (2016) asserted that organizational culture could affect leaders' performance and, therefore, affect organizational performance, the promotion of women's interests and issues to ensure future advancement opportunities. The study of leadership is critical because

effective leadership results in positive organizational outcomes (McCleskey, 2014). A more detailed explanation of the conceptual framework and theories will be presented in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

This section of the study provides supportive documentation of ways in which a descriptive phenomenological qualitative approach accomplished the goals of the study. The descriptive phenomenological approach focuses on the commonality of a lived experiences of an individual or group and brings added dimensions to the study of human experience through qualitative research (Moustakas, 1994). The aim in selecting this approach was to gain a deeper understanding of Ghanaian women leaders' lived experiences regarding their pursuit of higher leadership positions in organizations.

Amid other qualitative research available for this study, the phenomenological approach was best suited for answering the *what is it* question (Giorgi, 2012). For example, according to Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormston (2013), the grounded theory uncovers an emergence of philosophy based on systematic gathering and analysis of data. An ethnography inquiry explores different facets related to individuals and cultures. The narrative design uses a format to relay nonfictional participants' stories to dramatize experiences (Miles et al., 2014). A case study helps in a descriptive and exploratory analysis of a person, group, or event (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013).

The rationale for selecting this phenomenological approach was to increase understanding of the essential characteristics of the phenomenon as experienced by several Ghanaian women in leadership (Giorgi, 2012; Groenewald, 2004). Another intent

was to describe the phenomenon accurately and arrive at a more profound understanding of women's experiences (Mariotto, Zanni, & de Moraes, 2014). The rationale for selecting this approach was to add unique understanding, set aside biases and preconceived notions about human experiences, and access the feelings and thoughts of study participants in their natural setting (Moustakas, 1994; Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Gathering this information was done by collecting data using semistructured interviews with open-ended questions. A criterion sampling was used to select 15 Ghanaian women leaders with at least 10 years of experience in management or leadership. The qualitative research, according to Lo et al. (2019), entails gathering in-depth data on peoples' perceptions, contexts, and processes of events that transpired. This phenomenological study helped in revealing a situation from a broad spectrum in the lives of women leaders in the form of comprehensive explanations (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014).

According to Giorgi (2009), participants in a phenomenological study tend to develop a unique voice that expresses the phenomenon. The phenomenology method can be divided into two broad categories (i.e., descriptive and interpretive) (Giorgi, 2009). They are used to capture detailed descriptions of the research problem and provide a possible explanation of the observed phenomena. In this study, I focused on the descriptive. Descriptive phenomenological research offers the opportunity to understand human experience and engage in scholarly inquiry. Researchers used it when interested in understanding individuals' lived experiences through their reflection (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Giorgi, 2012; Moustakas, 1994).

Purposeful sampling, semistructured interviews with open-ended questions by Skype or telephone, and a possibility of probing questions with 15 women leaders were employed until data saturation occurs. Saturation is reached when there is recurring or enough information to replicate the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The snowball sampling will be utilized if necessary, a method of expanding the sample by asking one participant to recommend others for interviewing (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). Field notes were taken, in addition to an audio recording of all the meetings with the participants permission.

The writing of field notes during the interview process will help maintain the clarity of the information communicated in each interview. The audio recordings will avoid misinterpretation and misquotation of participants' responses during the research process (Caelli, 2001; Tessier, 2012). The transcripts from the interviews were transcribed and coded (Saldaña, 2016). I used Microsoft Excel, one of the most popular, cost-effective software programs and the most used spreadsheet programs globally. Microsoft Excel can perform, organize, and analyze a large amount of data to discover patterns, trends, and themes that can improve the study's result (Meyer & Avery, 2008). These strategies seemed helpful to the data collection and analysis as I sought to understand the lived experiences of Ghanaian women in leadership pursuit of professional careers in organizations.

Definitions

The following definitions will enable readers to understand the essential concepts used throughout this study and their operational meaning.

Career advancement: Moving to higher job responsibilities or reaching a top position in companies or organizations to anticipated future posts (Roman, 2017).

Equal opportunity: The principle of treating all people the same without being discriminated against based on gender, age, or national origin (Bishu & Alkadry, 2017).

Gender: A set of characteristics that are associated with specific biological sex (male or female) that is also referred to as masculine or feminine, but associates with females or discrimination (Pryzgoda & Chrisler, 2000).

Gender stereotype: The differences of treatment that exist because of stereotypical expectations, behaviors, and attitudes toward women (Ellemers, 2018).

Leadership: The ability to influence, inspire, persuade, and motivate others to pursue a shared vision to achieve worthwhile goals (Mind Tools, 2016).

Lived experiences: An experience a person has encountered during their lifetime (Exkano, 2013).

Underrepresentation: Is to give inadequate representation to, or to represent in disproportionately low numbers (Gumpertz, Durodoye, Griffith, & Wilson, (2017).

Work-life balance: The extent to which an employee is satisfied that his or her work and life role is fulfilled according to his or her values at the time (Koh, Allen, & Zafar, 2013).

Assumptions

The significant negative discrepancy in women's representation remains at senior-level leadership positions in organizations in Ghana and continues to be an obstacle (Abakah, 2018; Bruce-Twum, 2013). In this study, I made various assumptions. The

primary assumption was that the participants would share information ethically with the researcher without restraint. The participants would spend enough time with me, the researcher, to collect rich data on their lived experiences of career advancement. The participants would be honest and open in their answers and subjective with their responses to clarify the study's phenomenon and the research questions (Morse, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Another assumption was that engagement as a primary instrument, and a Ghanaian woman would allow the Ghanaian women leaders to tell their stories with ease using their authentic voices (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). This engagement would provide enough meaning that would explain the underrepresentation and career advancement opportunities of Ghanaian women in leadership. This assumption was necessary because of the phenomenon of the study. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), an authentic voice is made up of individuals who do not receive equal opportunities and do not have a view and a voice in their careers. The last assumption was that there could be similarities across the women leader's experiences, which can blend into themes or data (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this descriptive phenomenological study was to explore and describe the lived experiences of Ghanaian women in leadership. In the review, I aimed to obtain a rich understanding of the effects of the underrepresentation and career advancement of Ghanaian women in leadership positions. To determine what long-term practical strategies will be essential for increasing women's representation and improving career

advancement opportunities in organizations in Ghana (Aidoo & Achira, 2016). The study

will contribute knowledge and promote positive social change in public, private, and

political organizations. This study's delimitation was confined to interviewing 15 to 20

Ghanaian women in leadership positions until saturation occurs (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Additional participants will be recruited if the need arises. The use of snowball

sampling will be added to the purposive sampling (Patton, 2015). This study is limited to

past and present Ghanaian women leaders with at least 10 years of experience in

leadership positions because the focus of the research is only on women. Although the

lived experiences of the participants may include obstacles related to underrepresentation

and career advancement opportunities, the study is not limited to the negative challenges

encountered; it will be inclusive of the positive experiences as well. This activity will

enable me to gain and maintain a holistic picture of the phenomenon (Miles et al., 2014).

The rationale for the delimitation was appropriate due to the sample size. These

experienced participants will provide the understanding by revealing a situation from a

broad spectrum in their lives in the form of a comprehensive explanation (Cleary et al.,

2014; Crouch & McKenzie, 2006).

Limitations

The limitation of a research study comprises of factors that a researcher has no

control over (Barron, 2019). Ideally, the study should draw participants across all

Ghanaian organizations, but due to limited finances and time, I conducted the study only

in the Greater Accra region. Another limitation was the demographic information of the

Ghanaian women leaders captured in the population who were purposefully selected

because the number of women occupying senior-level positions is limited (Bruce-Twum, 2013). Based on the study and the limited nature of the research time, only particular Ghanaian women leaders with at least 10 years of experience were solicited to participate in this study. The third limitation was that I was the principal instrument for data collection and analysis (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013), which can result in research bias causing distorted results and wrong conclusions.

The fourth limitation could be a lack of finances, study time, or the participants' work schedule—all of which can delay the study's completion. Miles et al. (2014) argued that time constraints are possible substantial limitations in research. The last limitation was that if saturation does not occur, I would use snowball sampling to trace additional participants (Emerson, 2015; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Kirchherr & Charles, 2018; Patton, 2015). This limitation may have contributed to the delay in the completion of the study.

Significance of the Study

Having more women in leadership positions will result in positive role models and mentors, allowing women to possibly gain the confidence necessary to be exemplary leaders in organizations (Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015). This study will provide insights to facilitate mentorship and will help fill in the gender gaps of earlier studies, including the absence of how to improve Ghanaian women's career advancement opportunities (Ngunjiri, 2016; Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). This study will help discover the practices of Ghanaian women in leadership positions that make them marketable for promotion. The results from this study will provide corporate and human resource leaders with a better understanding of the challenges that Ghanaian women face in their pursuit of higher

leadership positions (Abakah, 2018). The conclusion of the study will provide
information to assist Ghanaian women leaders or personnel working toward equal
opportunities and positive social change in organizations (Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015).

Significance to Practice

The effects of this study will improve the knowledge of human resource personnel
and corporate leaders' ability to develop equal career opportunity policies in all
departments in their organizations in Ghana (Bulley et al., 2017). The findings of this
study will provide information, knowledge, strategies, and recommendations to propel
toward attracting, retaining, training, empowering, motivating, supporting, and mentoring
Ghanaian women leaders (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). The results of this study will
help bridge the gender gap in the literature. The application of this study will add
relevance and value to the existing knowledge or practice on women's
underrepresentation, and career advancement, which will also affect performance
appraisal in organizations (Sharma, 2016). The study's outcome will help improve the
Ghanaian women leader's everyday relationships in the organizations so they can balance
their work and family responsibilities (Bruktawit & Beyene, 2018). This study will also
influence organizational leaders in hiring, recruiting, and retaining talented women to
help organizations become more competitive (Adua, Frimpong, Li, & Wang, 2017). This
strategy will improve the culture and practices in the public, private, and political
organizations and change the stakeholders' perspectives.

Significance to Theory

This study will contribute to the body of knowledge in the human resources discipline of organizational leadership development and add value to the role congruity theory of prejudice and organizational culture theory to address the research question and study objectives. (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Gochhayat et al., 2017; Smith & Gayles, 2018). The result of the study will equip Ghanaian corporate leaders and human resource personnel with a set of tools needed to mitigate women's underrepresentation in organizations (McCann & Kim, 2017; McCleskey, 2014; Kacmar et al., 2011).

Significance to Social Change

Positive social change is a transformational process necessary for human and social conditions toward societal and organizational well-being with real-world implications (Stephan, Patterson, Kelly, & Mair, 2016). This study will provide information that will contribute to reducing women's underrepresentation that has prevailed for years in organizations. Positive social change will take a form of continuous improvement to promote career advancement opportunities that will transform Ghanaian women leaders.

This study will lead to improvements in mentorship and better work-life balance, which will create less stress and more job satisfaction for professional women (Adua et al., 2017). Based on this social change, Ghanaian women leaders will be well equipped and encouraged to occupy key leadership positions in organizations. These improvements will allow the women leaders to participate fully in organizational decision making and effectuate social change through their communications as they stand up for their right to

take up positions of authority. Change is inevitable. When women get a chance, they can be exemplary leaders and change the future of organizational practices, culture, and belief for the better (Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015).

Summary and Transition

There is a need for more Ghanaian women in leadership positions in organizations to help bridge the gender gap (Ngunjiri, 2016; Sossou, 2011). The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is problematic and prevalent in Ghanaian organizations (Darko & Seibu, 2016; Tagoe & Abakah, 2015). From a historical perspective, women underrepresentation, lack of equal opportunity, career advancement, stereotypes and prejudice, and harmful cultural attitude toward Ghanaian women top-ranking in their fields still prevail in public, private, and political organizations and have put barriers on women's pursuit of higher leadership positions (Aidoo & Achira, 2016; Darko & Seibu, 2016). In Chapter 1, I introduced the background of the study and described the literature that justified the research. I presented the problem statement, the purpose of the study, research question that will guide this study, the nature of the study, the operational definitions, assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations. I also presented the conceptual framework and the significance of the study, practice, and positive social change in organizations. In Chapter 2, I will address the literature review.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The management problem that I addressed in this study is that Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers has received less value from corporate and human resource personnel in organizations compared with their men counterparts (Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015; Aidoo & Achira, 2016; Atingah et al., 2017). The purpose of this study was to conduct a thorough analysis in which I adequately explore, describe, and understand the lived experiences of Ghanaian women leaders pursuit of professional careers in organizations. The second purpose was to increase the understanding of how the underrepresentation and career advancement affect Ghanaian women leaders' progression to leadership positions (Adua et al., 2017).

The overwhelming evidence in the research showed that the underrepresentation of Ghanaian women in senior leadership positions is problematic and is still prevalent in the regions and organizations (Darko & Seibu, 2016). Despite advances in the public consciousness and the dismantling of negative social constructs, gender gap, lack of equal opportunities, fewer promotion opportunities, and stereotypes about women remain as obstacles for Ghanaian women in their pursuit to participate in higher leadership positions (Darko & Seibu, 2016). Increasing the understanding of the lived experiences, state, and opportunities of Ghanaian women leaders in organizations will help bridge the literature gap.

This chapter will include reviewing relevant literature on leadership that applies to the phenomenon under study and the literature search strategy including keyword searches in different databases–followed by the explanation of the theories in this study. I

describe the conceptual framework, present critical gender issues, and address leadership concepts in a senior position. I then end the chapter with a summary and conclusions that I obtained from the literature review.

Literature Search Strategy

Discovering the nature of truth and experiences about women leaders' pursuit of professional careers and their progression to higher leadership positions will contribute to the body of knowledge in the human resource discipline of organizational leadership development, which eventually will lead to positive social change (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). The literature search strategy was a critical step in performing proper authentic research, and it was used to gather relevant background information for the study (Grewal, Kataria, & Dhawan, 2016). This literature search strategy was aimed at identifying the need for research in the phenomenon of the study, which was the underrepresentation of Ghanaian women leaders and career advancement opportunities to higher leadership positions in organizations (Ngunjiri, 2016; Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009).

I examined more than 150 peer-reviewed articles with publication dates ranging from 2014 to present and other older works of primary research, focusing on Ghanaian women in leadership roles, career advancement, lack of equal opportunities, and the underrepresentation of women. The key terms in the literature search included women in leadership, equal opportunity, women underrepresentation, women career advancement, and Ghanaian organizations. The key search terms for the research design, framework, and theories included qualitative, descriptive phenomenology, conceptual framework, role congruity theory, and organizational culture theory. The resulting database included

relevant Websites such as EBSCO Host, ProQuest, Google Scholar search engine, and PubMed, alongside the Walden University's library database. I used the DOI locater, and URL home page, plus books, peer-reviewed articles, journals, and articles pertinent to the field of study.

The search began with developed questions aligned with the phenomenon of study as a strategy to identify relevant literature. The rationale for the search was to gain valuable insight into the phenomenon of the study. I focused on studies published within the past 5 years, continued by using the key terms in selected databases, and gradually extended by focusing on the topic of interest. I also added keywords for the research design, framework, and theories to widen the search. All keywords were searched individually to find any gaps that existed in the literature, which have impaired the examination of a study, and still amenable to further research.

Throughout the search, I attempted to point out essential missing links in the literature as to when they became observable and what databases were used, if appropriate. One hundred fifty peer-reviewed articles from 49 sources were reviewed. Forty-six (93.8%) were published within the last 5 years. Most of the older sources were seminal works that supported the conceptual framework; approximately 85% of the reviewed literature was published within the past 5 years. The sources also included five doctoral dissertations. Last, the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was used to organize the articles for easy access (Meyer & Avery, 2008).

Searching for published literature from different databases about the study's phenomenon led to the recognition that there was little conclusion reached on the basis

directly connecting to increasing Ghanaian women's representation and improving career advancement opportunities to higher leadership positions. The search also revealed that there were no recent studies about fostering career advancement opportunities and increasing the number of Ghanaian women in leadership (Abakah, 2018; Ngunjiri, 2016). The literature reviewed indicated that Ghanaian women leaders still struggle to obtain senior leadership positions despite their growing number of earning degrees; they remain underrepresented in all career fields (Bulley et al., 2017). This situation indicated that there is a significant discrepancy in Ghanaian women's representation in leadership positions in organizations (Bruce-Twum, 2013; Rincon et al., 2017).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this phenomenological study was Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory of prejudice, and Schein's (2010) organizational culture theory. The conceptual framework in a study is a network of interlinked concepts that provide a comprehensive understanding, interpretative approach to social reality, and give a soft interpretation of intentions of a phenomenon (Jabareen, 2009; Miles et al., 2014). Ravitch and Riggan (2017) described a study's conceptual framework as the system of concepts, theories, expectations, assumptions, and beliefs that ground and inform the research, and thereby guide data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Other researchers contended that without a conceptual framework, there would be no way to make reasoned decisions in the research process (Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014). The conceptual framework can best explain the entire research process under study and,

therefore, will make the findings more meaningful (Dickson, Adu-Agyem, & Emadi, 2018; Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Ravitch & Riggan, 2017).

Based on this study's purpose, a combination of three concepts and two theories was used to describe and understand Ghanaian women leaders' lived experiences regarding their pursuit of professional careers in organizations. These concepts included underrepresentation, women in leadership experiences, and career advancement. The two relevant theories supporting the ideas in this study included the role congruity theory of prejudice and organizational culture theory —implementing these two theories accounted for the complex state surrounding women underrepresentation and career advancement opportunities (Smith & Gayles, 2018). The study of leadership is a worthwhile endeavor because effective leadership results in positive organizational outcomes (McCleskey, 2014).

The aim was to gain a new understanding of the concepts to determine the practical strategies that would help Ghanaian corporate leaders and human resource personnel involved in improving women's career advancement opportunities. A review of leadership research showed that despite women's education level, numerous challenges, including stereotypes about women in leadership and fewer promotion opportunities, continue to keep them from top leadership positions (Aidoo & Achira, 2016). Researchers of organizational leadership have noted that based on gender stereotypes and prejudice in organizations, women find it challenging to accept leadership roles (Madden, 2011). In most private and public sector organizations in

Ghana, men shy away from giving women leaders responsibilities, especially

responsibilities that involve autonomous decision making (Adongo et al., 2013).

The role congruity theory of prejudice will provide perspective on the persistence

of gender biases and stereotyping of women in leadership in organizations (Eagly &

Karau, 2002). The role congruity theory is similar to the social role theory in that it deals

with the conception of gender roles and leadership behavior (Ayman & Korabik, 2010;

Kacmar et al., 2011). The organizational culture theory will provide insights needed to

understand the stories and culture of the members in organizations (Marchand, Haines, &

Dextras-Gauthier, 2013; Smith & Gayles, 2018). Zhu, Gardner, and Chen (2016) asserted

that organizational culture could affect leaders' performance and make everyone more

efficient and successful in organizations. The concepts and theories will provide a lens

through which to explore, understand, and address the research questions and study

objectives.

The new understanding of the concepts and theories will provide Ghanaian

corporate leaders and human resource personnel with the tools needed to understand how

changes to increase women's representation and promote career opportunities in the

organizational structure, policy, and practices could provide support for women leaders

(McCleskey, 2014). The role congruity theory presented by Eagly and Karau (2002) will

explain prejudice or stereotype toward female leaders and why they continue to be

underrepresented in leadership positions. The new understanding of prejudice and

stereotypes will provide corporate and human resource leaders a better understanding of

the challenges that women leaders face in their pursuit of higher leadership positions (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015).

Seminal researchers have used a qualitative descriptive phenomenological approach instead of a quantitative approach when lived experiences of participants' private lessons play a significant role in the research (Golberg & Allen, 2015). The conceptual framework involving different methods, models, and theories has been applied in various investigations on women's leadership, development, and career advancement in organizations and has resulted in significant findings (Charles, 2017; Richardson, 2014; Wood 2019). For example, a descriptive phenomenological study conducted by Charles (2017) applied the conceptual framework to get the different perceptions and understanding of the lived experiences of professional senior executive women of color on career advancement in the higher technology industry.

Underrepresentation of women and lack of equal opportunities are problematic in organizations, and they are considered a structural identity deeply intertwined with leadership status and social hierarchies (Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2015). To understand the absence of women in the higher leadership positions, Woods (2015) applied the conceptual framework and seven theories in her phenomenological study to explain the gender gap, stereotypes, and glass ceiling in the workplace. Richardson (2014) conducted a research and applied conceptual framework and models to understand the factors that affect job satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and performance in organizations. Cain (2015) used the conceptual framework in the phenomenological study to explore and understand African American women's lived experience and equal opportunities in the workplace.

For a better understanding of the underrepresentation of women and the lack of equal opportunity that has evolved over time and still exist in Ghanaian organizations, the use of the two preceding theories was the best fit for this study. According to the Ghanaian statistical report, due to gender gap violations, when occupying leadership positions in public, private, and political organizations, most employable women encounter more pushback than employable men (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019).

I relied on the role congruity theory of prejudice and organizational culture theory to understand how and why gender gap, lack of equal opportunities, and stereotypes about women occurs in public, private, and political organizations in Ghana (McCann & Kim, 2017). Pedwell and Whitehead (2012) asserted that organizational culture theory (OCT) and role congruity theory have long been concerned with the relationships between affect, power, and knowledge on women's leadership. The role congruity theory of prejudice used in this study will provide perspective on the persistence of gender role stereotyping toward women in a leadership role and reveal any observations in the study relating to underrepresentation to leadership positions (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Kacmar et al., 2011).

The role congruity theory explained that women are seen as less favorable at leadership positions in organizations than men (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The role congruity theory of prejudice will provide a lens through which gender will be viewed differently in organizations regarding underrepresentation and the women's role as leaders (Kacmar et al., 2011). DeFrank-Cole et al. (2014) noted that bias in favor of men in leadership makes it difficult for women to be successful in key leadership positions. This theory can be

fruitfully used to examine and explain the roots of the prescriptive content of gender stereotypes and prejudice (Diekman & Goodfriend, 2006). Based on the foregoing, the role congruity theory will provide additional information with a set of tools to understand why female leaders have lower status in organizations.

Adongo et al. (2013) noted that in most private and public sector organizations in Ghana, men shy away from giving women leadership roles, especially responsibilities that involve autonomous decision making. The underrepresentation of women in organizations indicates a significant gender gap in key leadership positions, and women need strong support for this change (Namrata, 2017). Various researchers such as Hoyt, Price, and Poatsy (2013) applied role congruity theory to understand why numerous challenges, including prejudice and stereotypes, about women in leadership, and fewer promotion opportunities continue to keep women out of the top spot of authority. Gyekye (2013) applied the role congruity theory, and the social role theory, to demonstrate why women leaders are discriminated against in some positions, but not in others. Acar (2015) utilized the role congruity theory to explain women's struggle to attain leadership positions.

The next relevant theory guiding this study is OCT, which will provide insights into examining the gender gap in organizations and the influence on its members at the workplace (Marchand et al., 2013). The OCT will help set the dynamics of participants' peculiar workplace processes from a scholarly perspective (Gochhayat et al., 2017). The OCT helps assist and favorably evaluate leaders who demonstrate effective leadership characteristics and abilities in the organizations.

In this study, the organizational culture theory provided a detailed description of the lived experiences, which will create an opportunity for new knowledge necessary to understanding the Ghanaian leaders' evaluation and stereotypes about women in the public, private, and political organizations (McCleskey, 2014). Gochhayat et al. (2017) contended that organizations with a unique culture perform more effectively than organizations with a weak culture. The OCT in this study will not only be utilized for managing the team; it will also help human resource and corporate leaders to get a better understanding of the perceptions, experiences, and values of Ghanaian women in leadership positions (Taplay, Jack, Baxter, Eva, & Martin, 2014). The literature selected from previous research on OCT served as a guide for this study, considering what steps Ghanaian corporate leaders and human resource personnel will take in increasing representation, inclusion, and improving career opportunities to provide support for women leaders (Bruce-Twum, 2013; Marchand et al., 2013).

A deeper understanding and the resulting benefits from these concepts and theories will provide knowledge for Ghanaian corporate and human resource leaders working toward equal opportunity and positive social change in organizations. Based on this knowledge and understanding, the HR leaders might be empowered to revisit their existing leadership development programs and policies (Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015). The revisiting of organizational policies may help increase the creation and promotion of a more positive and supportive environment for women's career advancement, retention, and inclusion to all leadership positions in organizations (Gipson, Pfaff, Mendelsohn, Catenacci, & Burke, 2017; Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015).

Literature Review

Underrepresentation in organizations is a complex phenomenon seen in organizational practices, policies, processes, and structures (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). According to Ngunjiri (2016), interest in women's leadership and career advancement continues to evolve in research. Still, a study on methods to fostering career advancement opportunities and increasing representation of Ghanaian women in organizations is currently absent. Underrepresentation, lack of equal opportunity, fewer promotion opportunities, and stereotypes continue to keep women from leadership positions in Ghana, with no exception (Aidoo & Achira, 2016; Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). Based on these obstacles, attracting, retaining, and recruiting women continues to be low and discouraging (Bruce-Twum, 2013).

Sossou (2011) explained in her explorative qualitative phenomenological study that information on Ghanaian female leadership, equal career opportunities, and gender-related issues in organizations need serious consideration. Moreover, Aidoo and Achira (2016) contended that numerous challenges, including stereotypes about women in leadership and fewer promotion opportunities, continue to keep Ghanaian women out of leadership positions. However, gaps remain in the literature that has prompted the researcher to explore, describe and understand the relationship between gender and leadership, causing underrepresentation and lack of equal opportunities in organizations, with particular reference to Ghana. The ultimate aim was to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding women's representation and career advancement opportunities in

addressing the situation for positive social change in organizations (Adu-Oppong &

Arthur, 2015).

The purpose of this literature review was to provide accurate content with relevant

background information of the study (Grewal et al., 2016) and provide evidence to

address the research question: What are the experiences of Ghanaian women leaders'

pursuit of professional careers in organizations?

The literature review will also discuss three critical gender issues with other

supportive related thoughts and concepts on women's underrepresentation and career

advancement to senior leadership positions. The three crucial gender issues to address in

this section included gender and leadership in Ghana, underrepresentation of Ghanaian

women in leadership in five organizations, and a roadmap to Ghanaian women's voice

and organizational change.

Gender and Leadership in Ghanaian Organizations

The situations on gender and leadership seem to be different in many developing

countries (Gipson et al., 2017). To better understand of how underrepresentation, lack of

equal opportunity, and career advancement affect women leaders' progression in Ghana,

it is essential to provide relevant background information on the situation of Ghanaian

women, beginning from the pre-colonial period. In Ghana, women are mostly considered

to be subordinate to the men instead of leaders (Sossou, 2011). In the past, Ghanaian

women were oppressed, dominated, and only allowed to work in the house and on farms

as mothers and wives with little or no education (Dako-Gyekye & Owusu, 2013). Their

workload at home was substantial, and their daily chores were overwhelming— they

gather firewood and take care of the household (Dako-Gyekye & Owusu, 2013; Sossou, 2011).

Although men and women are considered equal under Ghanaian law, women still face discrimination in Ghana (Bulley et al., 2017). Gyekye (2013) posited that women play a subordinate role to their men counterparts in leadership and their homes. Traditional society in Ghana has customarily considered women's education secondary to their roles as mothers and wives (Aidoo & Achira, 2016). Moreover, when young girls enrolled in school, they tend to have a higher rate of school drop-out rates due to responsibilities at home, which has limited their independence and performance (Sasano, 2015). Based on the patriarchal society, and the persisting stereotypes, generations of Ghanaian women have been oppressed and dominated in various forms, which has affected their standard of living (Sossou, 2011).

Ghana is a developing country and the first African country south of the Sahara to gain its independence (Frimpong & Agyeman-Budu, 2018). Independent since 1957, among its population of 30.42 million, 57.5 percent of women compared to 46.3 percent of men do not have a formal education and, thus, are unable to read and write (Frimpong & Agyeman-Budu, 2018; Ghana Statistical Service, 2019). Ghana is also one of the first African countries to adopt the international convention on women's rights and the elimination of all forms of gender discrimination (Sossou, 2011). Despite these efforts and provisions on women's rights and interests, gender gaps and cultural barriers continue to affect Ghanaian women's lives and rights (Gyekye, 2013). Darko and Seibu (2016) noted that negative cultural attitudes toward Ghanaian women are problematic and

have put barriers to women's progression. Al-Mansara (2013) asserted that women worldwide, at a particular stage of their life and career, need to overcome the obstacles they face to accomplish their career goals.

More Ghanaian women are getting out of their comfort zones as subordinates in the homes to educate themselves to be exemplary leaders (Abakah, 2018). Despite the growing number of African women earning degrees, they continue to struggle, ensuring equal opportunity and support to progress in organizations (Anigwe, 2014; Javadi et al., 2016). Regardless of advances in the public consciousness and the unraveling of negative social constructs, gender gap, underrepresentation, lack of equal opportunity with fewer promotions, and stereotypes remain obstacles for Ghanaian women in their pursuit of higher leadership positions (Aidoo & Achira, 2016; Darko & Seibu, 2016). Although women are the majority when it comes to management and political participation, they remain underrepresented at senior leadership levels of organizations (Bulley et al., 2017).

Leadership has been widely studied and explained with copious definitions (Madanchian, Hussein, Noordin, & Taherdoost, 2017). For example, Hao and Yazdanifard (2015) described leadership as influencing and motivating others to bring a positive change to achieve a worthwhile goal. Mangundjaya, Utoyo, and Wulandari (2015) explained leadership as a social influence process that maximizes others' efforts towards achieving a goal. Almaki et al. (2016) demonstrated that leadership inspires others to pursue the vision set to the extent that it becomes a shared effort, a shared vision, and a shared success.

Various research on gender and leadership indicated that women leaders' and men leaders' performance in organizations do not differ (Anku-Tsede & Gadegbeku, 2014; Archard, 2013; Shwetha & Sudhakar, 2014). Contrary to stereotypes about women suggesting that women leaders bring a different set of skills and mindsets to the organization than their men counterparts (Gipson et al., 2017). Adongo et al. (2013) explained why men shy away from giving women leadership responsibilities, especially those involving autonomous decision-making in private and public sector organizations in Ghana. Based on this negative discrepancy, the Ghanaian women leaders find it challenging to make a significant impact on organizations due to self-doubt and lack of confidence (Exkano, 2013; Kaba, 2011; Nadya et al., 2016). According to the Ghana living standard survey, Ghanaian women constitute 51.2 percent of Ghana's population of 30.42 million (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019). In general, these women do not fully participate in the decision-making process or public discourse.

Challenges Facing Women in Health Care Organizations

Ghana is one of the first African countries to confirm the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), a United Nations treaty that focuses on women's rights and women's issues worldwide (Sossou, 2011; UN General Assembly, 1979). Despite these advances and laws, negative cultural attitudes prevent Ghanaian women's success and development (Darko & Seibu, 2016).

Key et al. (2012) qualitative study on women and their pursuit of professional careers show that the number of women entering the workforce continued to grow in the 21st century. Despite the workforce increase, Adongo et al. (2013) conducted a

qualitative descriptive study comprising of 59 in-depth interviews with both men and women in Ghana. They found that in most private and public sector organizations in Ghana, men tend to shy away from giving leadership responsibilities to women, especially those involving autonomous decision-making. The authors highlighted that with these negative cultural attitudes, stereotypes, and underrepresentation of women, it would be very challenging for Ghana to achieve sustainable development in organizations.

In a meta-analytic test, Joshi, Son, and Roh (2015) addressed the underrepresentation women faced in health care organizations and argued that increasing the number of women leaders; it is incumbent upon corporate leaders to change the work evaluations. Klettener, Clarke, and Boersma (2016) affirmed in their findings that targeting women's participation in executive ranks may promote more effective practical and cultural change in support of a more excellent representation of women in leadership. Unfortunately, due to the underrepresentation of Ghanaian women at the senior level of leadership, the participation rate in all leadership positions is still at a significantly low number, thereby affecting organizational performance and appraisal as well as economic growth of the country (Adua et al., 2017; Bruce-Twum, 2013).

The role and status of women in health care organizations is approximately 75 percent compared to those of the men in all aspects of leadership positions. Yet, their representation at senior leadership positions is limited (Javadi et al., 2016). At this juncture, Javadi et al. (2016) revealed evidence on the role and status of health care women by using a qualitative phenomenological inquiry study as described by Moustakas

(1994) and found that gender challenges are an unpleasant fact in health care organizations. In Javadi et al.'s study, there were discussions and interviews with five women leaders on the underrepresentation in the health care workforce. The authors acknowledged the increase of degrees earned by women, yet they remain underrepresented in leadership positions.

Javadi et al.'s (2016) phenomenological study provided clarity on some lessons learned during the interviews, which identified some key issues to success and individual competencies. The strength of Javadi et al.'s phenomenological study provided insight to help mobilize the untapped women leaders by increasing their representation in the health care industry. Despite the increasing evidence of women's experiences and their image as to the vast majority of the health care workforce, they are still considered much less likely to hold leadership positions than men (Czabanowska et al., 2017; Javadi et al., 2016).

Related research by Guptill, Reibling, and Clem (2018) found that women leaders in health care were still having trouble gaining ground concerning equal opportunities and career advancement despite the earned degrees and professional gains. The authors contended that in most countries, women make up over 75% of the health care sector workforce, yet they remain underrepresented at higher leadership levels. Evidence from the Ghana Statistical Service (2019) indicated that there are more women than men entering the health care workforce. Yet, women leaders are not as visible in the health care organization as their men counterparts (Guptill et al., 2018; Morgan et al., 2016). In Ghana, health care jobs are among the fastest-growing occupations, and women

overwhelmingly dominate the majority of the health care workforce. Nonetheless, the representation of women health care workers moving up the hierarchy to the senior-level positions is limited (Adua et al., 2017; Guptill et al., 2018).

The qualitative study by Guptill et al. (2018) revealed that in the health care organizations worldwide, the highest proportion of women leaders is in obstetrics and gynecology, with a limited number in leadership positions. The researchers utilized semi-structured interviews with 22 women leaders selected using criterion-based sampling for data collection. They concluded that women should be complimented for the strength they bring to the leadership table. The advantage of this study rests on the fact that it provided insight in supporting the values of women pursuing leadership. The authors highlighted that the low representation of women in the upper echelons in the health care field has a significant effect on their jobs, making them virtually nonexistent in elite leadership positions.

According to Ayman, Korabik, and Morris (2009), this type of discrimination, stereotypes, and workplace bias influences the evaluation of women's job performance as well as career placement or leadership selection. Women leaders in the health care field in the corporate world continue to experience an enormous gender gap in leadership positions (Yee, 2015). These women leaders in the health care system represent a minority in senior leadership and decision making positions (Hirayama & Fernando, 2018). Various qualitative phenomenological studies show that women leaders in the health care professionals continue to experience more enormous challenges than men in wages and promotion opportunities (Bismark et al., 2015; Javadi et al., 2016; Yee, 2015).

According to Hirayama and Fernando (2018), although the number of women in medicine has increased worldwide, women generally remain severely underrepresented in all leadership positions in the health care field.

Kuhlmann et al. (2017) conducted a multicenter cross-counter comparison study in four sizeable European health centers focusing on closing the gender leadership gap. They argued that the gender gap is perceived stronger in academic enterprises than in health care enterprises and in middle management than at the top level. The findings of Kuhlmann et al. indicated an essential shift in the gender leadership gap that challenges gender policies in leadership positions. The limitation of this particular study is that gender-disaggregated data were not systematically collected and affected the findings. According to Catalyst Infographic (2018), and Kuhlmann et al. (2017), the underrepresentation and stereotypes in organizations are substantial obstacles to women's career advancement. Thus, result in false assumptions and equally false perceptions that women leaders in the health care industry do not have the needed traits and characteristics to lead.

Bismark et al. (2015) conducted a related qualitative study on the underrepresentation of women in medical leadership roles and why they remain remarkably underrepresented in senior-level positions. Bismark et al. utilized semistructured interviews of 30 medical practitioners and concluded that although women medical practitioners outnumber the men, significant barriers prevent them from entering into formal medical leadership roles. The strength of Bismark et al.'s qualitative study on the underrepresentation of women enabled a deeper and more nuanced

understanding of the barriers to women entering medical leadership roles. Their research showed that developing and improving skills to exercise effective leadership is essential to all health care organizations. The study's weakness is that less attention was paid to the persistent underrepresentation and career advancement of health care professionals.

Having more women in leadership roles in the health care industry might result in a healthier corporate social and ethical behavior, more innovation, and, in many cases, increased revenue (Kirsch, 2018). Supporting women to progress to leadership positions in the health care industry can transform the Ghanaian health care system, which will allow most women to proceed to the top and impact lives (Escribano-Ferrer, Cluzeau, Cutler, Akufo, & Chalkidou, 2016). The gender preference of medical doctors is more prevalent among female patients than it is among male patients. On this account, there is a need for the inclusion of more professional women in leadership positions in the health care industry (Hirayama & Fernando, 2018). Kirsch (2018) supported Hirayama and Fernando's (2018) argument that women physicians are more collaborative and may provide better clinical care to society than men physicians.

Challenges Facing Women in Religious Organizations

All Ghanaian women leaders need the opportunity and encouragement to ensure that their talents and skills are recognized (Sossou, 2011). In terms of religion among the people of Ghana, about 71.2% of Ghanaians are Christians, 17.6% are Muslims, and 5% practice traditional religion (Murray & Agyare, 2018). Despite all positive advances toward women representation and equal opportunities in Ghana, women remain

underrepresented in most major religious organizations (Agadjanian, 2015; Murray & Agyare, 2018).

Despite advances in women's leadership roles in religious organizations, Agadjanian (2015) study has shown that women leaders face severe barriers in ordination. Agadjanian conducted a study using survey data to test hypotheses and supported it with quantitative and qualitative data focused on women's religious authority in a predominantly Christian setting in Chibuto, Mozambique. A survey was used to collect data on women's formal leadership across different denominational groups. In the study, Agadjanian found that fewer attempts have been made to examine women's career advancement to official leadership positions.

Agadjanian further explained that despite women's expansion in religious leadership, various research studies had shown persistent barriers to women's ordination even in more progressive denominations. Agadjanian recommended that religious women leaders must be empowered in all aspects of leadership and decision making. The strength of Agadjanian's study is that it provided points of departure to examine women's involvement in formal religious authority, which added relevance and value to the existing literature on how to improve women's career pathways to authority. Agadjanian concluded that despite the importance of religion and women's involvement in church activities, formal church leadership empowers women yet, the power that women gain remains limited. These barriers resulted in an underrepresentation of women in official leadership or authority (Agadjanian, 2015; Murray & Agyare, 2018; Naidu & Hoel, 2013).

Although the ordination of women is a holy order and permitted by church law, resistance remains prevalent for women leaders worldwide (Hartman, 2013). In many cases, evidence shows that it takes religious women leaders a long time to secure their first leadership position as compared to their male counterparts. Newkirk and Cooper's (2013) study proved that in most seminary classes, women outnumber men, but the religious sector remains the men-dominated sector. Notwithstanding the growth in Ghana, women leaders cannot draw on equal opportunity law in a religious organization to serve in a senior leadership position or obtain ordination from conservative entities (Murray & Agyare, 2018). This situation remains unanswered because of the belief in African culture that God opposes the aid of women in religious service (Lyons, 2013).

Hauser (2014) contended that gender-related resistance, stereotyping, and workplace barriers pose a significant hindrance for women in leadership and their pursuit of leadership positions even in the church. As a result, women leaders in religious organizations find themselves at a disadvantage having to prove themselves as competent in leading in any form in the organization and society (Lyons, 2013). According to Bledsoe and Setterlund (2015), all women in religious leadership face countless challenges in their career advancement, which requires a support system and self-care practices for resilience and perseverance. Djupe (2014) investigated clergy gender effects on church leadership, which supported Agadjanian's (2015) conclusion that in most churches, women hold less lucrative positions than men.

In many instances, women leaders are posted to small or rural areas that struggle with their membership or on the verge of closure (Djupe, 2014). Acar's (2015) findings

from the applied congruity theory with 281 voluntary participants indicated that due to gender stereotypes, women might perform better in a declined or failing organization because of their nature. Acar's analysis and results showed that there is a conflicting finding on the hypothesis. Therefore there is a need for further studies that settle the debate on the treatment of women leaders in organizations. Acar asserted that although women outnumber men in theological training, they tend to head smaller congregations and less likely than the men leaders to occupy higher positions of ordination. Kubu's (2017) qualitative study supported Acar's research. Indicating that women leaders are as effective as men leaders, but the maintenance of their gender role constitutes a failure to meet a leader's requirement.

The implicit bias on underrepresentation, stereotypes, prejudice, lack of equal opportunity, and discrimination creates further challenges for women leaders (e.g., lack of confidence or lack of self-esteem) (Bruktawit & Beyene, 2018). Unfortunately, these failures of equal opportunities and career advancement in women's pursuit of their professional careers can lead to limited decision-making in the organization, which can affect performance appraisal (Sharma, 2016). Women's leadership and career advancement constitute an organizational challenge in most African countries and religious organizations (Dako-Gyekye & Owusu, 2013). In these countries, like in other countries around the world, men tend to characterize women leaders as subordinates— emotionally and intellectually vulnerable—who need protection and guidance (Dako-Gyekye & Owusu, 2013). Agadjanian (2015) argued that although these gendered

processes are present in all churches, the skills and religious manifestations vary across denominations worldwide.

Many religious organizations, including many of the largest denominations (i.e., Roman Catholics, Latter-Day Saints, and the Baptists), do not allow women to be ordained or hold leadership positions (Agadjanian, 2015). The fact is that men religious leaders had their interest in authority beforehand (Haskins, 2003). For example, in many Pentecostal and Apostolic churches in Ghana, the congregation is evenly divided and seated according to gender during service time.

This visible expression of stereotype, gender gap, and discrimination makes women feel inferior and holds them back from their full potential to participate in any decision making (Verniers & Vala, 2018). Verniers and Vala (2018) conducted a hierarchical regression analysis to justify gender discrimination against working women. They argued that stereotyping also increases the level of performance pressure and stress on women leaders. Therefore, stereotyping must be labeled as one of the most dangerous and worst forms of violence against women.

Even though efforts have been made to lift the religious organization's prohibition on women's ordination, women leaders still face severe underrepresentation in their pursuit of senior-level leadership positions (Verniers & Vala, 2018). Wood (2019) supported Verniers and Vala's (2018) argument. They contended that another worse form of power over women in organizations is the persisting gender biases and stereotyping that devalues, disregards, degrades, and hinders women's equal contribution and involvement in organizations. As a result, increasing representation of women leaders in

religious organizations to key leadership positions should be interpreted positively and not be attributed negatively to secularization (Schwanke, 2013; Verniers & Vala, 2018; Wood, 2019).

Anku-Tsede and Gadegbeku (2014) conducted a descriptive cross-sectional study on gender and discrimination. They employed snowball sampling and collected data from 160 workers. Anku-Tsede and Gadegbeku argued that women are generally seen to exhibit specific characteristics such as nurturing, supportive, and relationship-oriented. However, they do not receive equal career opportunities in their pursuit to reach senior leadership positions. The researchers concluded that it is essential for organizational leaders to provide an enabling environment for women leaders to occupy top positions in religious organizations. They recommended that if these barriers to the inclusion of women in senior leadership level are addressed, it will ensure not only the full participation of women but also economic growth in Ghana.

Wood (2019) contended in her theological studies that to support and encourage religious women leaders to obtain highly esteemed positions, the policymakers in the organization have to be active participants in the restoration of women's dignity. Wood further explained that this support must be done by addressing the complex situations surrounding gender gap, stereotypes, prejudice, underrepresentation, and career advancement that persist in religious organizations and society. The restoration can transform Ghanaian religious organizations by allowing more women leaders to progress to authority roles and become exemplary leaders.

Wood (2019) concluded that women leaders in faith-based organizations have to be empowered to fulfill an integral part of national development, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. Women demand respect and access to equal opportunity and career advancement in religious organizations and society at large. The strength of Kubu's (2017) study and Wood's (2019) study is that they provided valuable information and contributions on differences in ability that may affect women leaders and provide them with the support to lead. Increasing the support of women will encourage growth, development, and career advancement opportunities.

Challenges Facing Professional Women in Academia

A review of Msila's (2013) study shows that the underrepresentation of women in academic decision-making positions is a common feature worldwide and needs consideration. Underrepresentation of women academic leaders has been for centuries and continues to persist as an organizational or institutional problem (Yousaf & Schmiede, 2017). Recent research has documented that there are higher education institutions that failed to afford women top-tier positions due to factors such as stereotyping and gender discrimination (White, 2012).

In Ghana, gender differences in the labor market have persisted over time, but career advancement is lower for Ghanaian women than men (Darko-Gyekye & Owusu, 2013). Dako-Gyekye and Owusu conducted a qualitative phenomenological study with 25 women participants between the ages of 30 and 60. They utilized a purposive sampling method. The study revealed that Ghanaian women's employment level,

opportunities, and career advancement in academic institutions to leadership positions had been described as extremely low.

Their findings indicated that gender gaps exist in many countries, including Ghana. The researchers recommended that there is a pressing need for organizational leaders to understand better how stereotypes affect women and design interventions that would reduce such practice. The strength of the study provided Ghanaian corporate leaders insights on actions to take to support women leaders. The study's finding was supported by Boateng (2018), who rated Ghanaian women in academic leadership positions as a minority, consistently seeking flexibility and equal opportunity in career advancement.

Yousaf and Schmiede (2017) conducted a study on barriers to women's representation in academics. They asserted that the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions in higher education institutions and universities worldwide occurs in fascinating situations or contexts. Their findings indicated that there was a lack of organizational support for women leaders. Their study's strength brought awareness to corporate leaders to foster career advancement opportunities and increase women's representation. Yousaf and Schmiede recommended that women academic participation in developmental programs and their mobility in the system needed boost.

Jarmon (2014) conducted a study on women administrators and reported that despite their attainment of various degrees, they are still underrepresented in decision making positions. Jarmon's research was supported by Odame (2014), who noted that in Ghana, women are the minority in leadership positions not because they lack merit, but

only because of their gender. Jarmon's findings indicated that communication skills and traditional structure of the work environment in academia are a decisive factor preventing women leaders from progressing to senior-level leadership positions. Based on the findings, Jarmon concluded that administrators must be committed to lifelong learning, as well as personal and leadership development, and women must strive to overcome workplace barriers in their pursuit of professional careers.

The conclusion of Jarmon's study is supported by Lennon, Spotts, and Mitchell (2013), who explained that in academia, women are outperforming men, but they still face gender gap and wage gaps. Gallant (2014) emphasized that the underrepresentation of women leaders in senior leadership positions in academia worldwide remains a problem and affects performance appraisals. For example, in South Africa, women leaders occupy fewer than 10% of academic leadership positions (Msila, 2013). In Gauteng, 7.8% of men and 3.3% of women hold leadership positions (Msila, 2013). White (2012) reported that women leaders in academia remain undervalued, marginalized, and often excluded at the leadership level.

As referenced earlier in this study, in most private, public, and political organizations in Ghana, men tend to shy away from giving women leadership responsibilities, especially those that involve autonomous decision making (Adongo et al., 2013). Parker (2015) implied that although women leaders in academia have made little progress in their career advancement, they still linger behind their men counterparts. The findings from Parker's study are supported by Boateng (2018), who explained that in Ghana, despite women leader's progress, the number of women involved in leadership

still linger behind their men counterparts regarding leading and managing in organizations. Boateng also found that the women leaders' negative experiences in the men-dominated organizations are no different from those encountered in academia. The strength of Boateng's study is its contribution to the body of scholarship. It examines the strategies employed by some academic women staff in building resilience to overcome their challenges and succeed in their careers.

According to Shepherd (2017), it is not surprising that due to these stereotypes about women and underrepresentation at senior-level positions, progress toward increasing women's representation at all leadership positions is limited and slow. Shepherd's (2017) mixed-method study supported by empirical data from various universities indicated a severe gender gap at senior leadership positions in higher education sectors. Shepherd found that this significant gender gap is prevalent in institutions despite several women leaders who feel they are better prepared for those roles than their men counterparts. Shepherd further argued that this is an indication of the relative lack of importance attached to women's issues on career advancement. Shepherd emphasized in his argument that although many women provide leadership in academia, they appear to be less respected in the university and among their colleagues, and often excluded from the informal networking of intellectual leadership.

Boateng (2018) supported Shepherd (2017) argument and contended that women leaders in academia in Ghana lack self-confidence because they are suppressed and subdued, which denies them of their potential and feeling of belongingness. Boateng (2018) affirmed that in the Ghanaian society, women are seen as inferior to the men

intellectually and physically, and as a result, they hardly play a role in decision making. Lennon et al. (2013) indicated that more than 50% of doctoral degrees had been awarded to women, yet they are still underrepresented in senior-level leadership positions in academia. According to O'Neil and Hopkins (2015), the inability of women to break through these underrepresentation barriers is due to a lack of confidence and self-doubt. Yousaf and Schmede (2017) also argued that this underrepresentation and gender gap might be attributed to a lack of education, experiences, and resources to accomplish goals compared to men.

Leifer et al. (2015) argued that another factor for women's underrepresentation begins right from the recruiting and hiring process where biases in favor of men candidates are observed. Despite the credibility of Ghanaian academic programs, and the overwhelming participation of women, the gender gap in the higher education system is still prevalent in the organization (Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013). In all spheres of Ghanaian organizations, gender gap, lack of equal career advancement opportunities, and stereotyping have been slowing the progress of women struggling to achieve identity in higher leadership positions (Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013). Gender gaps devalue women's well-being, which is a form of injustice toward their progression despite their experience in the various fields (Boateng, 2018).

Despite what the myth of the pipeline might say about Ghanaian women leaders, studies prove that they are available to secure the senior-level leadership positions (Boateng, 2018). Various studies have shown that there exists a widespread problem of women underrepresentation that can be seen in gender-based obstacles, the wage gap, a

slower rate of promotions, lower rate of recruiting, retention, and less recognition in organizations (Murray & Chua, 2014). Few studies have formally probed how to improve the experience, status, and possibilities of professional women leaders' pursuit of career advancement. According to Madden (2011), failure to address gender gaps in organizations, women will continue to be disadvantaged as they remain undervalued, marginalized, and excluded from leadership positions in academia (Madden, 2011).

Jay and Morgan (2016) explained that organizations with women in senior leadership positions tend to have a more competitive advantage and high profits. For that reason, if women are viewed as equals in academia, supported, and allowed to progress to top leadership positions, the intangible barriers or norms (e.g., lack of self-confidence and self-doubt) that limit professional women from excelling would disappear (Shepherd, 2017). Not only would these women benefit, but other younger leaders entering the field would feel accepted and mentored, which in turn could create equal and fair employment opportunities (Wynen, op de Beeck, & Ruebens, 2015).

Challenges Facing Professional Women in Political Organizations

Lack of significant representation of women in decision making in political organizations is a widespread phenomenon in developing and developed countries (Anigwe, 2014). Women politicians face unique challenges in their pursuit of leadership careers. In political organizations, women leaders may participate in political activities (e.g., speaking in public and contributing to candidates), but at lower rates than men (Pyeatt & Yanus, 2017). In Ghana, men continue to outnumber women in senior political positions by a high margin. As Ghana continues to advance in the promotion of

democracy, the country and its policymakers need to take measures in creating structures that will inspire women leaders to participate since they account for the majority of the registered electorate (Abakah, 2018).

Sossou (2011) explorative study on Ghanaian women participation in politics, found that the backbone of any democratic governance is active participation by the men and women of the country. Sossou noted that even though Ghana's constitution gives women equal rights as their men counterparts to participate in the governance of their country actively, Ghana had never embraced a woman flag bearer. Sossou highlighted that despite recent gains in areas in political organizations, gender gap and lack of equal opportunity continue to inhibit women's ability to participate and contribute to the Ghanaian economy. Sossou's findings indicated that with the extensive study on women's leadership development, there is a hope that soon, women will have the ability to progress and participate in higher political positions. The limitation is the sample size of the participants. Sossou's study provided direct evidence from Ghanaian women concerning gender discrimination and call for action.

Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006) cross-sectional analysis found that women legislators serve as role models for upcoming young women leaders. Therefore, having more women in leadership could promote confidence levels in the newer generations of women. Contrary to Campbell and Wolbrecht's cross-sectional analysis on women politicians as role models for adolescents, they argued that when it comes to more explicit participation in political activities, women lag behind men.

Although in Ghana, women in political organizations represent the diversity of concerns and bring new thoughts and ideas to the table; they are still underrepresented in leadership positions (Tagoe & Abakah, 2015). Abakah (2018), used a qualitative case study design and collected data from 53 women with different political backgrounds. Abakah found that in most developing countries like Ghana, women remain significantly underrepresented in the senior ministerial posts, as well as politically elected positions, because of the patriarchal nature of the Ghanaian society where women's decision-making skills are not recognized. The study also found evidence contributing to the exclusion of women from participation.

The results indicated that the underrepresentation of women in the political sector shows that there is a tremendous problem of discrimination against and stereotyping women. Abakah (2018) concluded that the gender gap of women politicians in leadership positions undermines the Ghanaian democracy and women's empowerment. Abakah recommends that programs must be tailored toward women's progression to leadership positions. These programs will afford women to partake in the decision-making process and committed to their participation. This finding is supported by Sossou (2011), who emphasized that in Ghana, politics is considered masculine, limiting the involvement of professional women. Although women are the majority of the population in many countries, the average proportion of women in national parliaments is a mere 21.4 percent (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2017).

Krook and Norris (2014) explained in their study that promoting and increasing women in political leadership will constitute a developmental issue, a moral obligation,

and a human rights issue which, when addressed well, may influence and benefit the political and economic decisions of a country. Krook and Norris used a theoretical framework to explore options beyond quotas around the world. Based on the findings, women want to be more empowered through their formal and political education to increase their confidence and assertiveness level to enable them to participate in decision making roles. Krook and Norris concluded that if women ever get elected, other initiatives may be needed to ensure that they are being selected and promoted as candidates at later stages. The study provided essential information and strategies that may advance gender balance in politics. Krook and Norris recommended that future research should focus on evaluating the effect of these policies.

Sojo, Wood, Wood, and Wheeler (2016) sustained the notion that there is much evidence to support women in political organizations because women tend to bring diverse views, values, and proficiency on political awareness issues that tend to impact the public agenda of the country. However, these women lack the voice to obtain acceptance into the high ranks of leadership. According to the government of Ghana, for decades, women in Ghana have exhibited an ardent zeal to participate in the democratization discourse in different ways and at various levels, but because they do not receive equal opportunity in that field, they continue to be underrepresented (Madsen, 2019).

The different vantage points of women's career advancement or the slight increase of women in leadership may provide positive outcomes in leadership roles (Charles, 2017). Women are great contributors to society and should be able to do more

in political organizations if afforded the opportunity (Abakah, 2018). Unfortunately, the Ghanaian culture embraces women's overwhelming workload and responsibilities at home. However, women are dimmed not competent enough to bring the same abilities and talents to the political organization (Tagoe & Abakah, 2015).

Parcheta, Kaifi, and Khanfar (2013) argued in their case study that women are not as competitive as men. They refrain from negotiating as opposed to men and lack assertiveness, resulting in their underrepresentation in the political arena. Parcheta et al. findings indicated that women need leadership programs that will support their progression to leadership positions. The study provided information that HRM needs to include in the development programs that might contribute to women's success. They concluded that organizational leaders need to recognize the differences in temperament and persona between men and women and use it to better their organizations.

Allah-Mensah (2005) argued that the inclusion of women in political organizations might improve the quality of policymaking. Although Ghanaian women are in the majority when it comes to management, they do not obtain the same work experiences as their men counterparts who, in return play a part in the lack of progress to leadership roles for women (Allah-Mensah, 2005; Joshi, Neely, Emrich, Griffiths, & George, 2015). Ghana is a patriarchal society where women are expected to conform to men dominance; therefore, women suffer from numerous gender discriminations in their pursuit of professional careers (Darko & Seibu, 2016).

In a typical political organization, men hold most of the executive positions. This underrepresentation and stereotypes contribute to a severe marginalization of women.

Especially during the party nomination process (Sossou, 2011). For example, in 2016, a woman flagbearer lost her vote due to the stereotype about women as weak and subordinate to men (Apusiga & Adatuu, 2017). Women worldwide continue to fight for equality because they need security in their skill sets and knowledge that their performance might improve organizational practice and culture (O'Neil, Hopkins, & Sullivan, 2011). Anigwe (2014) argued in his basic interpretative qualitative study that because women, especially Africans, are considered weak, they are placed in subordinate positions to the men counterparts in that nation's political system.

Abakah (2018) supported Anigwe's (2014) argument by explaining that Ghanaian women make invaluable contributions to the country's political, social, and economic growth. However, these contributions are not recognized due to the gender gap, lack of equal opportunity, and stereotypes about women. Several arguments from different researchers on gender-balance representation, including equal rights to participate in politics and decision making, have been highlighted and need serious consideration (Musah & Gariba, 2013; Sossou, 2011).

Another article supporting women's equal opportunities to participate in political and public life is the United Nations' treaty collection, CEAFCAW, yet women are underrepresented in the political organization. Findings from Musah and Gariba's (2013) qualitative study is not too much different from Sossou's (2011) argument that women confront many challenges in their attempts to get into the policy-making and decision-making processes in organizations. These findings also demonstrated that the challenge Ghanaian women face is no different from women in other African countries. Musah and

Gariba's study's strength is that it provided grounds for exploring how women's participation has been viewed over the years.

Sugiyama, Cavanagh, van Esch, Bilimoria, and Brown (2016) agreed with Sossou (2011) that the value of women's inclusive relationships might encourage more favorable outcomes, and fewer women will feel devalued. Sugiyama et al. further pointed out that despite all the signs of substantial international progress, constitutional provisions, and development efforts on women's career advancement in organizations and society, Ghanaian women continue to be marginalized. Sugiyama et al. report indicated that in African countries, women play less important roles in political leadership because women have not kept pace with their men counterparts in gaining access to top political participation and decision making. Except for Rwanda, where the country's parliament is 49 percent women. The strengths of Sugiyama et al. (2016) are that the study added relevance and value to the existing literature on the importance of improving and focusing on women's career advancement. The weakness of the study is the limited coverage of clear leadership development programs.

This Rwanda's women representation made history for African countries and was reported globally (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2008). Sossou mentioned further that women leaders in South Africa, Mozambique, and Seychelles hold approximately 33 percent of the parliamentary seats, while women in Angola hold 37 percent of the seats. Tsikata (2009) supported this data by remarking that very few countries worldwide have an equitable representation of women in decision-making positions.

The literature presented by Tsikata also pointed to studies that elucidated women's political leadership predicaments in countries across the African continent and found them to be similar to Ghanaian struggle. Tsikata also reported that women leaders' attainment of full political participation is more than mere tokenism and political nomination. Based on Tsikata's conclusion, to encourage and support women leaders in political organizations, policymakers will need to engage long-term strategies in place to ensure full and equal participation. The study provided invaluable suggestions for policymakers to follow to ensure equal participation. Additionally, this body of work added relevance and value to the existing literature on underrepresentation in the political organization.

Leadership development and career advancement constitute a path that organizational leaders must build to create positive self-reflection in the work environment (Read, Pino-Betancourt, & Morrison, 2016). A similar conclusion was reached by Anigwe (2014) who conducted a qualitative study regarding women in political leadership positions in Nigeria, by exploring the perception and lived experiences of Nigerian women on gender equality and other issues affecting women's political leadership. In the study, Anigwe used 10 women from different administrative and governmental sectors who were in political leadership. Anigwe emphasized that gender barriers would have to be minimized for women to become politically active. She further argued that women would have to be empowered—rather than misunderstood in other to become competent in this area.

Anigwe (2014) concluded that an effective way to improve women's participation in political organizations would be in the area of education, which would offer equal opportunities for men and women. The strength of Anigwe's study is that it added relevance and value to the existing literature on gender inequality, lack of equal opportunity, and women's career advancement. Anigwe's research also contributed to positive social change by educating the public and policymakers in creating legislative initiatives to support Nigerian women in political leadership positions. The importance of Anigwe's findings is supported by Bawa and Sanyare (2013). They stated in their argument that every country deserves to have the best possible leaders, which means women have to get a chance to compete. Bawa and Sanyare pointed out that without women's participation, the countries involved are robbing themselves of great talent.

Hamah's (2015) line of argument about Bawa and Sanyare's (2013) study gives systematic and structural reasons for women's reduced participation in political governance. This reduced participation includes disadvantages in gender ideologies, control of resources, and many more, reinforcing inequalities and leading to public policy failure. Hamah's finding from the qualitative study shows that commitment to affirmative action is essential and could be an effective mechanism for boosting women's participation in the decision-making process. Hamah concluded that there is no doubt that Ghanaian women lag behind the men in political organizations. Hamah argued further that it is crucial for women to openly resist the odds at breaking the existing patriarchy by refusing any form of subordination and labeling to offer themselves for top-level leadership positions.

The Ghanaian women's manifesto reported that at all historical junctures, Ghanaian women had significantly contributed towards Ghana's political life, but has not improved the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions (Amoah-Boampong, 2018). Hamah's (2015) study's strength is that it provided a reference point for the women leaders in political organizations who seek to eliminate cultural barriers and other obstacles that prevent their pursuit of professional leadership careers.

Women's Underrepresentation in Corporations

Abakah (2018) performed a qualitative descriptive case study on the participation of women in Ghanaian corporations and mentioned that professional women in top-tier positions must not be left at the periphery but must have a voice in key decision-making positions. Rincon et al. (2017) noted that apart from the gender gap in high-ranking positions, there is a more excellent balance between men and women in mid-level leadership positions. When one looks specifically at senior roles in Ghanaian corporations, women remain underrepresented in all leadership positions (Petronella, 2017). Aguilar (2013) found that in the year 2010, women held 16% of the total number of board of directors' positions in Fortune 500 companies.

Review of Petronella (2017) literature indicates that women's underrepresentation in a corporation's decision making is a common feature worldwide. This view is supported by Rincon et al. (2017), who focused their study on the representation of women in corporate leadership positions. Rincon et al.'s study sought to identify the key factors resulting in a lower representation of women in senior leadership and decision-

making positions to provide policies and strategies to promote gender balance in senior leadership positions.

Rincon et al.'s findings highlighted the significant gender imbalance in high-ranking leadership positions. They argued further that most obstacles faced by women leaders in their pursuit of professional careers are related to gender stereotypes. Rincon et al. concluded their study by proposing a combination of short-term and long-term measures to support women leaders' progression to leadership positions. The actions involved access to education throughout the corporation and society. The strength of Rincon et al.'s study is that it provided detailed insight and contribution for policymakers on women's career opportunities.

While acknowledging that middle management women's representation has improved in corporations, the same cannot be said for senior-level positions (Hoobler, Lemmon, & Wayne, 2011). Leadership is the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically or to influence, inspire, persuade, and motivate others to pursue a shared vision to achieve worthwhile goals (Mind Tools, 2016). However, Ghanaian women leaders are not encouraged to prove their abilities and skillsets. Hoobler et al. (2011) presented arguments and reoccurring themes regarding the persistent underrepresentation of women in leadership.

The first argument is the lack of highly qualified and experienced women applying for senior-level positions because of the stereotypes and fewer promotions. The second argument was explained as a lack of mentorship in upper management that could encourage and prepare the middle and lower management because of fewer women in the

organizational hierarchy. Despite the researchers' arguments that men are perceived as more appropriate and effective than women in leadership positions (Hoobler et al. 2011), Shuji, Fainshmidt, Nair, and Vracheva (2012) showed a useful depiction of the increasing numbers of women in middle management and less in leadership. Atingah et al. (2017) study supported this argument by investigating the career challenges that prevent Ghanaian women leaders from reaching the top management positions.

Atingah et al. (2017) utilized the experimental research method to describe the participants, traits, scores, and other characteristics without any interventions. Atingah et al.'s study aimed to identify challenges facing women leaders to provide contributions that will help create a more supportive environment for them in corporations. Atingah et al.'s findings indicated a significant gender gap at the top. Thus women need to learn additional skills that will make them capable of managing senior-level positions. The researchers concluded that although the men had dominated the executive positions in corporations if women leaders had the opportunity to lead, they could perform better than men because of the true nature of a woman. The study's strength is that it provided suggestions and contributions to policymakers and human resource personnel involved in creating a more supportive environment to promote Ghanaian women.

The prior suggestions and contributions will help policymakers design better ways to prepare professional women in their pursuit of professional careers (Adom, 2017; Atingah et al., 2017). The study's weakness is that several participants were unwilling to give detailed information about their lived experiences. Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi, and Cheraghi (2014) contended that nevertheless, researchers faced ethical

challenges in all stages of the study; however, the researcher's role was to encourage and define the use of practical guidelines and protocols in all phases of the study. Another study by Faiza (2013) supported Atingah et al.'s (2017) study. It revealed that in Pakistan, equal employment opportunity and inclusion of professional women to a leadership position is a common feature in corporations. Faiza utilized an in-depth face-to-face interview of 30 working women in various Pakistani corporations for data collection and analysis.

Faiza's (2013) study focused on multi-level experiences and challenges facing women in pursuit of career advancement in Pakistan. The researcher indicated in the findings that organizational structures and routines of equal opportunity are affected by both macro societal factors and micro individual factors. Based on the outcome of the study, Faiza concluded that policymakers and human resource personnel must pay attention to sociocultural issues facing women promoting gender equality in organizations in their pursuit of career advancement. The strength of the study is that it contributed to improving equal career opportunities for women leaders in a major Muslim country where women are characterized as inferior and subordinate to the men.

According to Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, and Woehr (2014), women occupy a mere 3.8% of Fortune 500 chief executive officer seats in the USA and represent only 3.2% of the board's heads in the largest corporations of the European Union. The authors further explained that various researchers had proposed several explanations about women's representation in leadership positions for decades. At this juncture, the need is for policymakers to create a short- and long-term policy to make it a law in organizations

to bridge the gap in those areas. Paustian-Underdahl et al. argued further that one explanation for the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions points to how women are undervalued in terms of effectiveness as leaders. This argument is supported by several theoretical perspectives, including the role congruity theory presented by Eagly and Karau (2002).

Ellemers (2014) found that attitudes toward women leaders are shaped by organizational culture (e.g., queen bee effects). Ellemers contended that the queen bee effect places less value on women leaders' contributions as role models for other women than men. The study's findings highlighted the shifting stereotypes surrounding gender and leadership and men's ineffectiveness in leadership positions. The strength of their research is that it contributed to existing literature regarding gender advantages in leadership effectiveness. The study's weakness is the relatively small sample size that affected the findings in a real-life setting. Many structures and systems in Ghana are patriarchal and therefore act as obstacles to the participation of women leaders decision making at all levels.

This gender issue attracts much attention in corporations and among researchers (Petronella, 2017). Despite several instruments that make provision for Ghanaian women's participation in corporations, women still face numerous challenges. Petronella's (2017) study supported the explanation and arguments from Paustian-Underdahl et al. (2014). Petronella's research focused on Ghanaian women's participation in decision making in corporations and found that there are disparities between men and women regarding equal opportunity access to leadership positions.

Tagoe and Abakah (2015) gave examples of lack of education, cultural barriers, lack of resources, and structural barriers. Petronella (2017) explained further that several studies in Ghana indicated that the multiple roles women play as wives, mothers, and caretakers, prevent them from competing on the same ground as men, contributing to the silencing of their inputs. Beeson and Valerio (2012) emphasized that women who aspire to high-ranking positions face societal and structural business obstacles.

Petronella (2017) noted that the few Ghanaian women leaders' experiences in senior-level leadership positions overwhelmingly impact corporations' performance, yet a gap exists in improving their career advancement opportunities. Petronella found that the use of affirmative action policies can address these gender issues (e.g., low participation of women in decision making in corporations). Iddrisu (2010) agreed with Petronella that affirmative action by the Ghanaian government would stipulate a quota of 30 percent representation of women in leadership positions. Petronella's study's strength is that it provided strategies and recommendations for addressing women leaders' exclusion from decision-making in corporations. Another strength is the enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and equal opportunity for all women because the researcher understands the importance of focusing on women's leadership development and its impact on corporations.

Petronella (2017) concluded that because Ghanaian women leaders are a driving force of development, limiting their participation must be addressed as a matter of urgency. Finally, Petronella contended that if Ghana is to compete with countries that have effectively integrated women in decision making, the policymakers must enforce

affirmative action policies. Bawa and Sanyare (2013) supported the explanation and arguments. They added that because Ghanaian women leaders continue to be marginalized from leadership positions if Ghana wants to achieve gender balance in the decision-making process, quota systems must be introduced and enforced.

Road Map to Women's Voice and Organizational Change

The historical subordination of Ghanaian women leaders in public, private, and political organizations has been widely documented, and efforts need to be made to reverse this trend (Bulley et al., 2017). Various literature reviewed for this study conveyed the importance of and needs to improve and change the representation of Ghanaian women leaders in organizations.

According to various researchers, women leaders must be maintained, motivated, supported, and treated with dignity in their pursuit of professional careers to reduce the gender gap that has prevailed for years (Adom, 2017; Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015; Bulley et al., 2017; Tagoe & Abakah, 2015). To increase women's representation, improve career advancement opportunities in organizations, motivation for growth is essential (Adom, 2017). The various literature reviewed also showed concern about women's inclusion in leadership positions. These researchers explained in a detailed way, many factors affecting women's underrepresentation. They concluded that there are still limitations on specific content that can foster women's progression to all leadership positions (Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015; Bulley et al., 2017; Shwetha & Sudhakar, 2014; Tagoe & Abakah, 2015).

For example, one could cite developing mentorship programs, creating networking opportunities, and implementing affirmative action legislation can contribute to women's progression (Adom, 2017). However, lack of knowledge and commitment to implementing affirmative action for improving women's career advancement opportunities in organizations will continue to contribute to women's low representation in leadership positions. Researchers have unraveled other factors contributing to women's underrepresentation, such as lack of succession planning and generational stigmas (Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015; Bulley et al., 2017; Murray & Chua, 2014; Tagoe & Abakah, 2015).

Lennon et al.'s (2013) study rejected the idea that women are underrepresented in leadership positions because they cannot balance their life and work. Teague (2015) explained that another big obstacle faced by women, is their self-doubt—they perceive themselves as less qualified or less competent for leadership positions. Women leaders in African countries remain undervalued, marginalized, and often excluded in their pursuit of career advancement (Bawa & Sanyare, 2013).

On the contrary, many researchers have noted that although Ghanaian women's representation in lower management positions has improved, the same cannot be said for senior-level leadership positions. There is no doubt that Ghanaian women still lag behind their men colleagues because organizations appear to be slow to embrace women in leadership (White, 2012). Research by Cook and Glass (2014) showed that women seem to follow a traditional career path toward senior-level positions to succeed. For example,

Ghanaian women become well known as they get to the senior-level position because women are great contributors to the economy, society, and the nation.

Getting rich and elaborate details from participants will create a new understanding of the field of knowledge regarding women's leadership and career advancement opportunities in organizations (Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015). This new understanding of the phenomenon of interest will provide information to determine what practical strategies could be essential to improving the Ghanaian women's status, experiences, and possibilities in their leadership pursuit (Aidoo & Achira, 2016). Increasing the understanding of the lived experiences, state, and opportunities of women leaders in organizations will help bridge the literature gap. The new knowledge would also add relevance and value to the existing research on the gender gap, equal opportunity, and career advancement in organizations, which will impact organizational performance appraisal (Sharma, 2016).

Nelson Mandela and Dr. Kwame Nkrumah once explained from an old African proverb initially popularized by Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey that to educate a man is educating an individual, but to educate a woman is educating the whole nation (Holden, 2006; Maanga, 2013). Therefore, when women are given a chance to lead, they can positively change the future of organizational practices, culture, and beliefs (Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015). Cook and Glass (2014) found that women are striving hard to close the gender gap, but there is a need for leadership development, mentoring, and networking opportunities to support them in their career paths.

For this reason, there is a need for organizational policymakers and human resource personnel to put policies in place. That will give women leaders the chance to prove to the world that, together with their men colleagues, they can work as equals to significantly achieve organizational goals (Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015). The underrepresentation of women is a reality, but the struggle to overcome it is not lost since many potential women leaders could be role models and mentors, allowing future generations to participate fully in organizational decision-making (Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015). White (2012) supported this argument and advocated for women's leadership development programs, particularly in career advancement opportunities at different stages in organizations.

Throughout the literature reviewed from various sectors, it is imperative to explain why this study and its methodology are appropriate. Although men exhibit biases toward women in leadership positions, most people prefer a world where gender discrimination is rare, and success is based on merit (Bruckmuller et al., 2014; Ellemers, 2014; Walker & Aritz, 2015). Phipps and Prieto (2016) contended that based on stereotypes and organizational barriers, many women believe they will have to give up their personal life to navigate top-ranking positions to attain success successfully. Having reviewed all these studies on the underrepresentation of women, the themes and barriers that emerged were similar. They included the marginalization of women, difficulty in balancing work and family life, the absence of mentoring, obstacles to education, insufficient training, reduced social networking opportunities, insufficient resources, fewer promotions, wage inequality, and a lack of recognition and rewards in

organizations (Beeson & Valerio, 2012; Boateng, 2018; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Wynen et al., 2015).

Previous studies have confirmed a gender gap in leadership positions in public, private, and political organizations in Ghana. This gender gap discourages Ghanaian women leaders from pursuing senior-level roles (Adom, 2017; Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015; Bulley et al., 2017; Tagoe & Abakah, 2015). Unfortunately, no studies have included an exploration of how to increase Ghanaian women's participation in higher leadership positions.

The methodology deemed fit for the study is the qualitative descriptive phenomenological approach. Scholars have validated the qualitative phenomenology method. Researchers use it when they seek to understand how individuals make sense of particular situations in their lives and personal experiences or phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Van Manem, 2014). From a phenomenological perspective, this design will provide an opportunity to explore, describe, and understand the participants' experiences through interviews (Van Manem, 2014). The rationale was to capture a detailed description of the research problem and provide a possible explanation of the observed phenomena (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

Summary and Conclusions

The guiding voices of Ghanaian women leaders in the labor pool would promote the establishment of policies and legislations that could foster a women-friendly work environment resulting in more women thriving in their fields. However, organizational obstacles have proven to be extremely difficult against success. These obstacles persist in

discouraging women from pursuing leadership roles. Thus, there is a need for research that leads to reform to reverse the stereotype, prejudice, and deficient opportunities in career advancement resulting in women's underrepresentation in organizations. This chapter has conveyed the importance of and needs for practical strategies in improving women's career advancement opportunities to higher leadership positions in organizations. The section looked at the background of Ghanaian women leaders in different organizations related to the underrepresentation and career advancement of women in leadership positions.

The literature search covered various terms and databases, including ProQuest, Google Scholar, EBSCO Host, PubMed, and Walden University library. The chapter gave insight into gender and leadership in Ghana and how it affects Ghanaian women leaders in organizations. The chapter also contained a detailed presentation on the conceptual framework and the two relevant theories supporting the study. The researcher further discussed the qualitative descriptive phenomenology method as the methodology appropriate for the research. In summary, the literature review provided an exhaustive understanding of the study, concepts, and evidence that leadership development and progress are critical to Ghanaian organizations.

Chapter 3 will include a discussion on the research design for the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

This qualitative descriptive phenomenological study was aimed at exploring, describing, and understanding the lived experiences of Ghanaian women leaders regarding their pursuit of professional careers in organizations. The study started by identifying the research gap in the literature. Based on research undertaken in the current body of works, the underrepresentation and career advancement opportunities on women's progression to senior-level positions in Ghana and their continued success in all leadership ranks remains sparse (Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015; Aidoo & Achira, 2016; Atingah, Fatawu, & Adanse, 2017). In this chapter I present the research methodology, research design and rationale, role of the researcher, participant selection logic, sample size and characteristics, instrumentation, the procedure for recruitment, and participation.

In this chapter, I outline the data collection and data analysis procedures in line with ethical guidelines. The section on the research design and rationale consists of the research question, the central concepts and phenomenon of the study, the research tradition appropriate for this study, and the rationale for choosing the tradition over others. In the next section, I explain my role in the research and personal relationships with the participants.

In this chapter, I describe how I managed my biases and other ethical issues if the need arose. In the methodology section, I give an in-depth explanation of the participants' selection process, the instrumentation for the data collection, protocols to ensure content validity, and a data analysis plan. In the last section, I present the appropriate method and strategies to control ethical procedures for managing participants and data. Based on the

sufficient depth of information presented throughout this chapter, other researchers will be able to replicate the study.

Research Design and Rationale

A researcher's responsibility is to consider what research design is appropriate to answer the research question adequately (Seidman, 2013). Crosby, DiClemente, and Salazar (2006) explained that relevant research questions help choose the type of design. Valid research questions are developed to provide quality answers to facilitate the understanding of real-world cases (Yin, 2016). As stated in Chapter 1, the study's problem statement and purpose allowed the development of the research question, which served as a guide on the lived experiences of Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers in organizations. The developed research question is:

RQ: What are the experiences of Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers in organizations?

The selection of the research design corresponding with the study's problem, purpose, research question, and research sample was vital. Based on this, a qualitative design, as opposed to a quantitative or mixed method, was chosen. The purpose of this study was to conduct a thorough analysis that explores, describes, and understands the lived experiences of Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers. The appropriate research method selected was phenomenology. The phenomenology supported by Husserl is an approach to qualitative research that allowed an understanding of human perceptions and lived experiences through the use of *what* and *how* questions (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology is a qualitative approach in which researchers gather in-depth data on people's perceptions to gain a new understanding of human lived experiences relying on first-hand accounts (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbon, 2015; Lo et al., 2019; Patton, 2015). Edmund H. Husserl (1859-1938) was a German philosopher and contributor to the phenomenological movement. Husserl introduced phenomenology as understanding how humans make meaning of their experiences to form a worldview about a phenomenon (Giorgi, 2012; Patton, 2015; Roberts, 2013). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) contended that the phenomenology method is used by researchers when interested in understanding how individuals make meaning of a situation in their lives and personal experiences or phenomenon.

Phenomenology becomes descriptive when its method is to describe the lived experience of individuals (Moustakas, 1994). A descriptive phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research methodology seeking to understand individuals lived experiences through their reflection (Moustakas,1994). This design allowed for a descriptive paradigm and placed the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Maxwell, 2013).

Descriptive phenomenological research allows a researcher to explore and describe participants' experiences in-depth through interviews and observations (Maxwell, 2013). This selection intended to understand the meaning and essence of the complex and holistic lived experiences of Ghanaian women leaders in organizations. Although other qualitative research designs will have merit, they will not be adequate for describing and understanding women's leadership experiences in this context. For

example, grounded theory uncovers an emergence of philosophy based on systematic gathering and analysis of data (Ritchie et al., 2013). An ethnography inquiry explores different facets related to individual people and cultures. A case study helps in a descriptive and exploratory analysis of a person, group, or event (Houghton et al., 2013).

Researchers use the qualitative phenomenological approach to understand individuals and make meaning of their lives and personal experiences (Patton, 2015). According to Roberts (2013), phenomenology has its basis in the humanistic research paradigm and takes a qualitative approach. Giorgi (2009) explained that in a phenomenological study, participants tend to develop a unique voice that expresses the phenomenon. Miles et al. (2014) documented that phenomenology plays a vital role in qualitative research because of its rigorous science that finds truth in the tangible experiences of those who have lived the phenomena and helps the researcher construct data into themes effectively. Because phenomenology describes first-person accounts through interviews, the themes and meanings that emerged will enable a detailed understanding of the lived experiences (Giorgi, 2012; Patton, 2015; Roberts, 2013).

The theory that supported this design was the role congruity theory of prejudice presented by Eagly and Karau (2002), which explained prejudice or stereotype toward women and why they continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions. The second theory was the organizational culture theory presented by Schein (2010), which provided insight into examining women's experiences, behaviors, routines, and practices. The choice of this design was appropriate because the study required the voice of the participants. It allowed an understanding and description of human perceptions and lived

experiences through the use of *what* and *how* questions regarding the phenomenon of

study (Hatch, 1993; Homburg & Pflesser, 2000; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Miles et

al., 2014; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). Lastly, this approach added a unique

understanding to the study's phenomenon, set aside biases and preconceived notions

about human experiences, and accessed the participants' feelings and thoughts in their

natural settings (Moustakas, 1994; Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Role of the Researcher

A qualitative researcher has several roles to play while conducting a study.

According to Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2013), a qualitative researcher is part of the

research and the primary instrument. The researcher's primary function was to fulfill the

study's expectation and provide confidentiality to the participants by critically accessing

and addressing personality identity issues in the research inquiry and findings towards the

determination of accuracy and trustworthiness (Berger, 2015). The primary role was to

create an opportunity for the Ghanaian women leaders in organizations to enumerate their

challenges and the strategies that can be adapted to improving their participation in

leadership positions. As the researcher in this study, I had to be mindful of and open to

the emergence of a new understanding of the research (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013;

Yilmaz, 2013).

Furthermore, the primary researcher has the critical responsibility of informing

participants of the steps taken in protecting the participant's human rights. Based on this,

data collection, analysis, and interpretation must be ethical and thorough. The researcher

served as an interviewer and an observer. According to Patton (2015), a qualitative

researcher is gaining insight into the study's phenomenon and gaining quality data by understanding how the participants understand the study's phenomenon. For example, building trust with participants will add detailed information and value to the study (Giorgi, 2012).

As a Ghanaian woman researcher, I had no personal or professional relationship with the participants. On this account, I had no informal or formal power over any of the participants that would impose any subjective findings on the participants or the study. There were field notes and audio recordings during every step of the interview process, with the participants' permission to avoid and manage any research biases.

This strategy was to clarify each interview settings (Caelli, 2001). According to Maxwell (2013), another role in managing the research biases is by the researcher introducing into the participants' experiences, values, beliefs, and perspectives of the real world, because the researcher is responsible for understanding the participants lived experiences as told by themselves (Yilmaz, 2013). By not ruling out the participant's body language (Patton, 2015), I ensured transparency throughout the interview process (Yilmaz, 2013).

Before being allowed to perform a study in the field of interest, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was completed, submitted, and approved. The purpose of IRB approval is to ensure that the research design meets the entire ethical standards and determination. In line with addressing the ethical issues, the researcher provided a consent form to all participants with all pertinent information to ensure accurate and efficient informed consent. The interviews were confidential, and alphabetic tagging was

used to maintain their confidentiality. The participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time during the process. Finally, in case of any ethical challenges, I will contact the dissertation committee members and the IRB group for further advice.

Methodology

This qualitative descriptive phenomenological study cannot be replicated without describing how the researcher will conduct it. The methodology section of this study described in sufficient depth the research approach and thorough documentation of the techniques that will guide this study (Patton, 2015). According to Erlingsson and Brysiewics (2013); and Archard (2013), a qualitative researcher must review the methodology to ensure that the research questions are answered, which in turn, will enhance the study. A researcher utilizing a qualitative phenomenology method for the study can explore and understand the participants' lived experiences. A researcher listening to participants will gain a more substantive understanding of the phenomenon of study (Seidman, 2013).

For the researcher to succeed in carrying out this study, preplanning is vital and will allow rigor in developing quality research regardless of the design or method employed (Cleary et al., 2014). Researchers use a phenomenological qualitative approach when interested in understanding how individuals make meaning of a situation in their lives and personal experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Characteristically, this qualitative phenomenological study employed semi-structured interviews with open-ended and probing questions. Through Skype and phone with 15 participants until

saturation occurred. Data saturation is reached when enough information is collected, new information attained, and coding is no longer feasible (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The next section will consist of participant selection rationale, data collection and interview protocol, a data analysis plan, and other criteria and processes for performing this study.

Participant Selection Logic

The current study was aimed to gain a new, productive, and unique understanding of the lived experiences of a sample of Ghanaian women leaders in public, private, and political organizations. The participant selection process for this study involved a purposeful sampling approach. Patton (2015) identified various types of sampling, but the appropriate sampling strategy selected for this study was purposeful; however, snowball sampling will be added when the need arises. Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research to select and identify rich information related to the phenomenon of study (Palinkas et al., 2015; Patton, 2002). This sampling criterion allowed the researcher to delve into the research gap in the literature, and advocate for a positive social change in improving Ghanaian women's pursuit of their career advancement in public, private, and political organizations.

For the researcher to trace additional participants if the need arises, snowball sampling is the best fit. Snowball sampling is a method of expanding the sample by asking one participant to recommend others for interviewing (Emerson, 2015; Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2015). The sampling strategy and the criteria established for the participant pool in this study was intended to target 15 Ghanaian women leaders in public, private, and political organizations with at least ten years of past or present

experience in leadership. Age was not part of the criteria because the researcher assumed that most participants would be 30 years or older due to a woman's time frame or gain a leadership position. The selection of 15 participants as the sample size is due to the commonality in qualitative research for reaching saturation (Cleary et al., 2014; Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Saturation is when the participants' responses become redundant, and recurring themes emerge from each interview section (Cleary et al., 2014; Fusch & Ness, 2015). According to Cumming-Potvin (2013), theme enhancement occurs when participants and researchers work jointly and are mindful of the study's phenomenon. In addition to using a purposeful sampling criterion to recruit participants (Patton, 2015), the researcher sent an introductory email to the identified participants asking for official permission to participate in the study with confidentiality information. In the email, the interviewer asked participants for their availability. Assess the dependability and tangibility of information they will provide (Yin, 2016). A researcher applying a phenomenological approach is concerned with the complexity and subjectivity of people's lived experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The importance and success of this study will depend on the selected participants. To achieve this, establishing a rapport with the participants in a conversational engagement (Davis, 2016), before conducting the interviews was vital. Creating a rapport with the participants will provide a deeper understanding of the participants' responses (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Focusing on the research question allowed the researcher to contribute a convincing account of the phenomenon (Cleary et al.,

2014). Aside from the purposeful sampling technique in this study that will help reveal various meanings of participants' lived experiences, the semi-structured interview by Skype strategy will also help facilitate more flexibility in the participants' responses (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Finally, the secured participants' list, research responses, results, and all other interview documents will be destroyed after five years as required by the IRB.

Instrumentation

Extensive communication engagement with participants for data collection was an essential feature of qualitative research. It was a key to a fruitful relationship towards gaining and maintaining trustworthiness during the interview process (Cleary et al., 2014). As a researcher, there are many ways in which data from these interactions can be collected to determine the scope of the study (Lo et al., 2019).

In qualitative research, specific instrumentation can be used in gathering adequate data to answer the research questions (Cleary et al., 2014). In this study, the instrumentation for data collection included the gathering appropriate protocols that align with the problem, purpose of study, research question, and are congruent with the conceptual framework. Carefully choosing the proper instrumentation for this study generated detailed information on the research question and allowed the researcher to provide a convincing account to support it (Cleary et al., 2014). The instrumentation sources include semi-structured interviews via Skype or telephone with open-ended questions, writing field notes that will help in the memories of the meeting, and audio recording, which is an essential instrument for subsequent data collection (Tessier, 2012).

The data collected was processed using Microsoft Excel. One of the most popular and widely used spreadsheet programs in the world due to its ability to enable its users to perform, organize, and analyze a large amount of data to discover patterns, trends, themes that can help improve the study's result (Meyer & Avery, 2008).

Semi-structured Interviews

Unlike quantitative studies that use numbers and surveys, in qualitative studies, interviews are the principal instruments and primary method for data collection. Interviewing in research comprises of two forms: face-to-face meetings or face-to-face group talking (Brinkmann, 2014). Interviews can evoke a detailed and in-depth description of a person's perspective of experience or phenomenon, as well as allow the researcher to ask probing and follow-up questions for additional information (Yilmaz, 2013). Interviews in a study can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured (Brinkmann, 2014). In this qualitative descriptive phenomenological study, semi-structured interviews by Skype was selected.

Semi-structured interviews characterize phenomenological study, help the researcher develop a rapport with the participants (Bell, Fahmy, & Gordon, 2016). They are used to facilitate specific topics in a study to explore the participants' experiences. An advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they provide great flexibility, enabling the researcher to obtain rich data. On the contrary, time and analysis are intensive with this type of interview (Brinkmann, 2014). The researcher will develop the use of an interview guide that will serve as a critical component in answering the research question on the

lived experiences of Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of higher leadership positions. The interview guide will ensure that the focus remains on the study (Maxwell, 2013).

Audio Recording and Field Notes

Audio recording and writing field notes during interviews are a great way to capture qualitative data memories after the meeting to ensure validity, credibility, and accuracy (Tessier, 2012). In this qualitative phenomenological study, the handwritten field notes will ensure transparency and efficiency in conjunction with audio recordings with the participants' permission. Technologically speaking, before the invention of recording devices, field notes were solely used because of their simplicity and flexibility in allowing the researcher to verbally transcribe nonverbal cues that cannot be captured through the audio recording (Sutton & Austin, 2015; Tessier, 2012). These historical recording events are often useful because they are more interpretive and contain summaries of the interviews and the researcher's impressions (Tessier, 2012). Field notes are crucial to a qualitative researcher whose primary goal is to fully understand the real perspectives of the study's phenomenon or the participants' lived experiences.

Handwriting field notes in this study will assists with the memories from the interviews. These notes will help to avoid misinterpretation and misquotation of participants during the research process. In this case, audio recording and field notes will be essential for subsequent data analysis support; thus, they should be used complementary to each other unless the research question requires one or the other, exclusively (Tessier, 2012). Although recording an interview can be very easy, it could become challenging with a poor-quality recorder. All interview recordings will be

transcribed verbatim before data analysis can begin (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Based on this information from Tessier (2012), in this study, the interviewer will pay close attention to the recording of the interviews using the Sony ICD-ux560 recorder.

The primary rationale and advantage of using this recorder are the fantastic sound and clarity features with no mechanical noise captured by the microphone (Tessier, 2012). The researcher of this study believes that a quality qualitative interview is a powerful tool to understand the participant's authentic lived experiences; therefore, the researcher will ensure that the interviews will be compelling. Similarly, data collection will be accurate, productive, and substantive. It will draw a meaningful conclusion that genuinely reflects the study (Sutton & Austin, 2015) and promote positive social change in Ghanaian organizations.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

This qualitative descriptive phenomenological study was to gain a more in-depth and rich understanding of the shared lived experiences of Ghanaian women leaders in organizations. This intent will involve multiple data collection outlets, such as semi-structured interviews, possible probing questions, handwritten field notes, and audio recordings. Before the recruitment, participation, and data collection, which is an integral part of the success of this study (Sutton & Austin, 2015), the researcher will obtain IRB approval. In addition to other consent forms to ensure participant confidentiality in accompaniment with issues of trustworthiness, accuracy, and transparency of data. The received IRB approval number will be presented in the appropriate section of the study.

Recruitment

Participant recruitment was essential to the success of a research study, but also most challenging (Marcus, Moran, & Kotschwar, 2016). Recruiting participants involved several activities, including sourcing eligible participants, explaining the purpose of the study, screening the participants, and keeping the participants motivated for the data collection (Gelinas et al., 2017). The study participants were recruited in 2 weeks. Based on the study's phenomenon, and fewer Ghanaian women in leadership positions, the best fit employed was purposeful sampling, which is widely used as a dominant strategy in qualitative research (Palinkas et al., 2015). The recruiter solicited the study participants via LinkedIn, family, and church members about the doctoral studies and the dissertation topic.

Based on the discussions, family and church members introduced some potential leaders for the study. The recruitment began by getting in touch with potential women via emails, letters, and phone interactions to ensure they were suitable for inclusion, depending on the study (Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010). The emails and letters included the sampling criteria and the purpose of the study (See Appendix A). Also, there were fliers on the professional LinkedIn Website that served as an advertisement for inviting Ghanaian women leaders to participate in the study. These recruitment strategies allowed the researcher to broaden the population's scope for inclusion and excluded women who were not appropriate for the research (Gelinas et al., 2017).

Most importantly, this recruiting procedure's specific nature had a significant impact on the study's phenomenon because well-spoken and thoughtful participants

involved will provide invaluable insight to the study (Gelinas et al., 2017; Kendall et al.,

2007). As a result, recruiting participants was conducted ethically, and the fieldwork with

the participants took place after the IRB approval.

Participation

In the participation section of this study, the researcher answered these three

questions based on the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015) before selecting participants: (a) Who

will participate? (b) How many will participate till saturation occurs? (c) How will the

participants be chosen? After answering these questions and acquiring the necessary IRB

approval, there was a connection with the identified participants. In this

phenomenological study, the study participants will consist of 15 Ghanaian women

leaders in public, private, and political sector organizations until saturation occurs (Fusch

& Ness, 2015). Additional participants will be added through snowball sampling if

necessary (Sadler et al., 2010). The recruiter requested the consent of the study

participants via email before the interview.

The informed consent form associated with the study included the purpose of the

study, participants' participation, participants' commitment expectations, the right to

withdraw at any time, and information on their confidentiality and how their data will be

stored (See Appendix C). Study participants were also provided with the date, place, and

time options of the interview. The recruiter confirmed with participants whether the

details and quality of the interview process are understood. Based on the participants'

confidentiality in this study, the interviewer will employ the member checking process

using a follow-up email to ensure clarity, accuracy, and verification of their responses.

The recruiter also assured the participants of receiving the interpretation of the interviews within two days for review. Finally, a thank-you email was sent to the participants for their involvement.

Data Collection

This qualitative descriptive phenomenological study enabled the researcher to obtain rich and elaborative details (Giorgi, 2012; Groenewald, 2004). These details created further understanding regarding Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers in organizations. Gaining a new understanding of the phenomenon of interest provided information to determine what practical strategies will be essential to improving the Ghanaian women's career advancement opportunities (Aidoo & Achira, 2016). This qualitative descriptive phenomenological study will benefit the future generation of Ghanaian women aspiring to leadership positions.

The primary method for collecting the data was conducting semistructured interviews via Skype or telephones with the use of an interview guide that served as a critical component in answering the research questions (Maxwell, 2013). In a qualitative research paradigm, interviews are a negotiated accomplishment of the interviewer and interviewee because of the most direct research-focused interactions and keeping boredom at bay (Alshenqeeti, 2014).

Semistructured interviews are also seen as one of the best ways to gain the perspective of a participant. An interview requiring an in-depth explanation of sensitive lived experiences can be very emotional to the interviewer and the interviewee. Still, the interviewer has a responsibility to create a pleasant ambiance for the situation (Sanjari et

al., 2014). Semistructured interviews by Skype can also be used to the researcher's advantage by noticing social cues such as body language, voice, and intonation, giving the interviewer extra information on the response of the research question (Oltmann, 2016; Opdenakker, 2006). Before delving into answering the questions, the researcher developed a communication engagement rapport and acted as a role model about working as a Ghanaian woman. This introduction relaxed the participants, built a trust level, and encouraged a display of full openness.

The interview questions were open-ended with the possibility of probing or follow-up questions. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes (See Appendix D). Fieldnotes were taken along with audio recording for accuracy and memories of the meetings further down the data analysis process. The information gathered during the data collection enabled the researcher to analyze and meaningfully report it (Miles et al., 2014). At the end of the interview, the interviewer thanked the participant for volunteering for this study. Reassure them of their confidentiality (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Data Analysis Plan

Researchers have noted that the first strategy that can lead to a successful data analysis is to proceed with an analytical approach ahead of time. A careful and well-planned strategy for carrying out the report is vital for any research study (Gregg, 2008). The data analysis plan's construction depends on the research design, which drives the research problem, the purpose of the study, the research question, data collection, and the strategies used to analyze themes with transparency (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This qualitative descriptive phenomenological study aimed to obtain a detailed and substantial

understanding of the Ghanaian women leaders' lived experiences in public, private, and political organizations. Although several data analysis plans are associated with phenomenological studies, they are all geared towards uncovering the essence of the study (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Such as thematic analysis, Moustakas modified Van Kam, descriptive, and interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Analyzing qualitative data can be very bewildering and challenging due to the unstructured nature of this study (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Still, analysis can be carried out using the right methodology to draw the necessary conclusions. The validity of a research study largely depends on the interpretation and results of data analysis; therefore, the researcher must be mindful and open to the participants' perspective as their truth (Patton, 2015). For this reason, an essential aspect of understanding and accurately interpreting the participants' data collection is the ability to acknowledge any preconceived notions and biases about the phenomenon to make it easier for readers to contextualize the work (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Based on the line of study, the data analysis plan will consist of accurately interpreting the raw data collected and reading over the written field notes. Accurate interpretation will be achieved by repeatedly listening to the audio recording searching for patterns and themes of interest followed by an explanation of the observed patterns and themes on the *how* and *what* relating to the research question.

The data analysis strategy in this study followed the three-step process described by Patton (2015), which included gathering the data, organizing the data in a manageable manner, and then presenting a meaningful, holistic picture to the reader. In this study, the

data analysis involved coding and categorizing the data to appropriately interpret or give a detailed description of the participants' experiences (Miles et al., 2014). Coding also allows researchers to revisit the data collected and interpret accurately (Saldaña et al., 2014). The coding process was divided into two sections to generate meaningful results within the research question. The first section was in the form of the data chunk that summarized the collected data.

The second section was the chunk summary, divided into smaller themes as an overall description of the problem of the phenomenon of the study from the participants' perspectives. The data collected were manually coded, audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, and Microsoft Excel was used to process all the data (Meyer & Avery, 2008). According to Sutton and Austin (2015), transcribing is laborious, but critical component in data analysis. Transcribing the interviews is one way of immersing yourself in the data and becoming more familiar with it (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Moreover, as aforementioned, Microsoft Excel is a proven, cost-effective, qualitative data analysis tool with the ability to handle a large amount of data, provide multiple attributes, and allow for a variety of display techniques (Meyer & Avery, 2008).

In this study, the use of Microsoft Excel enabled the researcher to manage the data accurately, increase the credibility, validity, and trustworthiness of the study (Meyer & Avery, 2008), and move forward to think about the broader implications of the study. As a final step, all paper data collection will be kept anonymous and confidential and destroyed after five years. Also, all electronic data from the study will be deleted after five years. The 15 participants were tagged from A to O to maintain the anonymity of the

participants or any extreme case or challenge that might occur (Patton, 2015). The most crucial part of data analysis and management was for the researcher to be truthful and transparent to the participants, strengthen the data's trustworthiness and replicate the study so others can read and learn from them.

<div align="center">**Issues of Trustworthiness**</div>

In qualitative research, trustworthiness refers to the degree of confidence in the methods used to ensure the study's quality. The researcher's role is to establish protocols and procedures for readers to replicate the study (Amankwaa, 2016). The methods used for trustworthiness must fit the research design of the study. Trustworthiness is an essential aspect of a study that a researcher uses to reassure the readers that the research is significant and valuable (Miles et al., 2014). The criteria outlined for trustworthiness in a study included credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Patton, 2015). These categories will be described in the next section.

Credibility

Credibility is the authenticity of a study or the confidence in the truth of the study's results. To ensure credibility in this study, the author implemented appropriate strategies (e.g., clarifying any research bias to the study from the onset). This self-reflection created an open door and honest attitude that resonated well with the readers and, in turn, increase the probability of the data being reliable (Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2015). The strategies also included prolonged engagement with participants, persistent observation, peer-review, saturation, member checking, and negative case analysis (Morse, 2015). To support the study's credibility, providing the participants with a copy

of the transcribed data will ensure the accuracy of the interviews on their lived

experiences as a member checking (Carlson, 2010). The qualitative tool that assisted with

this triangulation was Microsoft Excel (Meyer & Avery, 2008).

Transferability

Transferability is a qualitative term that is synonymous with external validity.

Although in qualitative research, the findings are not generalizable, lessons learned in one

setting can likely replicate in other studies (Miles et al., 2014). As a criterion of

trustworthiness in this study, transferability was assessed by the extensive and exhaustive

description of the context, location, participants, and the transparency about the data

collection and analysis (Amankwaa, 2016). In line with transferability, the researcher

applied the interview guide protocol that focused on the research questions (See

Appendix C) with the emphasis on the participants' shared experiences on the

phenomenon of the study. This transferability represented the researcher's vivid picture

that will inform and resonate with readers (Amankwaa, 2016; White, Oekle, & Friesen,

2012).

Dependability

Dependability is a qualitative term parallel to reliability in quantitative research

and refers to the extent to which there is documentation to substantiate elements of the

study (Barron, 2019). Dependability can also be referred to as whether one can track or

provide a detailed and thorough explanation of how data were collected and analyzed

(Miles et al., 2014). In this study, the procedure used to ensure dependability included an

audit trail of process logs, the handwriting notes of all activities during the research

(Amankwaa, 2016). The researcher's role was to have a clear description of the study, including the data collection from Ghanaian women leaders in organizations with the support of field notes and audio recordings to ensure dependability. In line with the dependability in the study, Microsoft Excel was used. Microsoft Excel is a qualitative data analysis tool for large amounts of data with multiple attributes and can be used for audit trail and triangulation (Meyer & Avery, 2008).

Patton's three-step data analysis process, including gathering the data, organizing the data in a manageable manner, and then presenting a meaningful, holistic picture to the reader, was used. This process will allow other researchers the ability to replicate the study.

Confirmability

Confirmability is a qualitative research term similar to objectivity in quantitative research. Confirmability in the study includes the maintenance of an audit trail of analysis and the researcher's methodological memos (Amankwaa, 2016). According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), confirmability occurs in qualitative research with an audit trail highlighting every step of the analysis to provide the rationale for the decision made. In this study, the researcher documented and kept detailed notes of every process in the study for peer review. In this section of the study, data was collected in a neutral setting and manner, meaning the findings will be the participants' response, not the researcher's bias or motivation (Houghton et al., 2013).

In line with the study, member checking with the participants to ensure the study's accuracy, preventing research biases, and setting aside preconceived notions

about the study's phenomenon was inclusive (Miles et al., 2014; Shank, 2009). By ensuring that the researcher is prepared to meet the expectation of performing quality qualitative research, all necessary actions were taken throughout the study to demonstrate confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). As mentioned earlier, confirmability in qualitative research relies on how the findings will be consistent and can be repeated. An additional consideration to ensure the overall trustworthiness of this study and the ethical procedures established by the IRB and other laws will be described in detail in the next section below.

Ethical Procedures

In any research study, ethical issues relating to the protection of participants are of vital concern (Crosby et al., 2006). Based on the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1978), interactions between a researcher and participants can be ethically challenging. In qualitative research, ethical principles, consideration, and procedures are paramount in protecting the participants from preventing any harm to those involved in the study (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012). Because human subjects' protection is of paramount importance in research studies, adhering to ethical requirements helped promote the study's purpose through fundamental knowledge from the participants' responses, not a misinterpretation of data.

The three core ethical principles in this research consisted of respect of persons, which, according to Yin (2016), represent the dignified treatment of a person from a researcher. Beneficence, which is the second ethical principle, ensured the well-being of

the participants and society regarding the phenomenon of the study (Bowie, 2017).

Justice, the third ethical principle, represented the fair and equitable treatment of all

participants and the potential benefits of the participants' responses (Sieber & Tolich,

2013). These three ethical principles were honored throughout this research study to

prevent potential harm to those involved (Crosby et al., 2006).

Before any contact with the identified participants, IRB approval was obtained

and made known to the participants. A researcher or scholar should be concerned with

producing ethical and compelling research so other researchers can replicate it. As a

result, the researcher adhered to all ethical standards surrounding the qualitative

descriptive phenomenological study because of the risk and challenges involved

(Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012).

Since this study does not involve recruiting participants from the vulnerable

population, diligent attention was required to meet all ethical standards rather than the

sensitive topic of participants' lived experiences. Before any fieldwork, including

recruitment of participants and signing of the informed consent forms, the researcher

communicated the study's detailed purpose to the IRB by submitting a completed

application and the Human Research Protection training certification. To obtain approval

and ensure the confidentiality of the results of the study. This procedure enhanced the

study by gaining detailed information from the participants in addition to maintaining

participant confidentiality. Traditionally, the use of an informed consent form provides

participants details of the expectations they share with the researcher regarding the

phenomenon of the study (Gelinas et al., 2017).

This acquired knowledge enabled participants to decide on their participation in the study. The researcher's role was to inform participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time if they felt uncomfortable with the research process and content. Another concern was the participants' time and work schedule because of the positions they hold. At this juncture, the interviews were scheduled based on the participants' convenience and availability. Overall the protection of participants in a study was vital.

The interviewer managed any potential conflict of interest and assured the participants of their confidentiality. Interviews will be stopped at any time at the participant's request. In this study, data collection was semi-structured interviews by Skype, in addition to handwritten field notes and audio recordings with the permission of the participants. To ensure and maintain confidentiality and anonymity, tagging from A to O was used. In this regard, the participants' responses will contribute and promote positive social change in public, private, and political organizations in Ghana due to the collaborative approach used to conduct the interviews. Finally, all materials and data collected and analyzed will be destroyed after five years.

Summary

Chapter 3 outlined the research design and rationale, the researcher's role, methodology, and issues of trustworthiness. The research design for this study is a qualitative descriptive phenomenological study. The rationale for using this design was to explore, describe and understand the lived experiences of participants through interviews, and observation, regarding career advancement opportunities and the impact of their underrepresentation in leadership (Giorgi, 2012; Patton, 2015; Roberts, 2013). The

researcher's primary role in this study was to fulfill the study objectives and expectations and provide confidentiality and trustworthiness to the participants (Berger, 2015). The research question focused on the lived experiences of Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers in organizations.

The methodology section for this study consisted of the participants' selection logic, instrumentation, recruitment, participation, data collection, and data analysis plan. The data collection was a semistructured interview, supported by handwritten field notes and audio recordings. Data analysis was performed by coding and transcribing, with the support of Microsoft Excel, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis tool to organize and manage all collected data (Meyer & Avery, 2008). Ensuring trustworthiness in this study, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability was assessed. Ethical procedures and principles were implemented in regards to respect of persons, beneficence, and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1978). Chapter 4 will present data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4: Results

In this qualitative descriptive phenomenological study, I aimed to explore, describe, and understand the lived experiences of Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers in organizations. The research question for this study was: What are the experiences of Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers in organizations? The study's conceptual framework was the role congruity theory of prejudice, and organizational culture theory, which was the foundation for uncovering the participants' lived experiences and effects.

In this chapter, I focus on the research settings, demographics, data collection, analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and findings from 15 semi-structured interviews conducted with Ghanaian women leaders. The sufficient sample size in this qualitative research permitted me to obtain a detailed and thick description and understanding of the interviewees (Giorgi, 2004; Groenewald, 2004). Addressing the study's purpose and the research question, the three-step process described by Patton (2015) was followed, which includes gathering the data, organizing the data in a manageable manner, and then presenting a meaningful, holistic picture to the reader. The study involved semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions by Skype, phones, audio recordings, handwritten field notes, and Microsoft Excel to process the data. The results from this study provided information, knowledge, useful, practical recommendations that will propel policymakers and HR personnel towards improving Ghanaian women career advancement opportunities, representation, retaining, recruitment, training, supporting, and reconsider the effectiveness of the organizational policies, and programs.

Research Setting

The research setting section describes and justifies any influential factors in participants' experiences and interpretations of the study results. Purposeful sampling was used to select the number of participants for this study. Participants were identified through a criterion sampling, which included 15 Ghanaian women leaders with at least 10 years of experience in management or leadership. Alphabetic codes A-O were used for the confidentiality of participants' identities. Scheduling took place via email after the IRB approval, and the informed consent documents were signed.

Due to the limited number of Ghanaian women occupying leadership positions, finances, and time, the study was conducted only in the Greater Accra Region. Data collected were from five different organizations, encompassing health care, academia, religious ministries, political, and corporations. The participants were offered an opportunity to select the locations in which they were comfortable completing the interviews. They also chose times and days for the meetings that worked with their schedules. It was appropriate to ensure that their concerns, plans, and the environment were conducive and quiet for the interviews.

Demographics

The demographic section describes the participant profile information, who the participants in the study are, and their characteristics relevant to the study. Demographic data was on 15 Ghanaian women leaders, who currently serve or have previously served in leadership positions in public, private, and political organizations. There was no limit to the participants' age range because the assumption is that most participants would be

of age or older before gaining access to a leadership position due to stereotypes about

women in organizations. Table 1 shows the participants' characteristics.

Table 1

Participants Demographics and Characteristics

Participants	Organizations	Years in leadership	Years before Promoted
Participant A	Healthcare	12 years	8 years
Participant B	Healthcare	15 years	10 years
Participant C	Healthcare	20 years	10 years
Participant D	Religious	10 years	9 years
Participant E	Religious	12 years	9 years
Participant F	Religious	15 years	10 years
Participant G	Corporation	12 years	Not yet
Participant H	Corporation	25 years	15 years
Participant I	Corporation	20 years	10 years
Participant J	Political	12 years	10 years
Participant K	Political	11 years	Not yet
Participant L	Political	12 years	10 years
Participant M	Academia	35 years	12 years
Participant N	Academia	13 years	11 years
Participant 0	Academia	15 years	12 years

Note. All 15 participants have master's degrees and married with families. Participant, I
had additional leadership practice certification.

Data Collection

This study's data collection process encompassed a series of pre-planned

activities (e.g., pre interview work, and post interview work) after the IRB approval.

Fifteen participants (three health care leaders, three religious' leaders, three academic

leaders, three political leaders, and three corporate leaders) were contacted using the

information they provided via Church members and the LinkedIn platform. The

participants were offered a report on the study's purpose, nature, and their participation

and contribution to promoting positive social change for present Ghanaian women leaders and future women aspiring to leadership positions.

The data collection and analysis process occurred within a month from April 30, 2020, to June 1, 2020. I sought the participants' consent and discussed in detail the anonymity and confidentiality regarding the information they provided. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews via Skype and telephones, which was the preferred method. The questions were open-ended with the intent of asking probing questions with handwritten field notes and audio recordings of each meeting with the participants' permission.

The audio recordings and handwritten field notes were used for critical listening to avoid misinterpretation from participants' responses and to capture data memories after the interviews to ensure validity, credibility, and accuracy (Tessier, 2012). The meetings lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes with each participant. Although the interviews were semi-structured, they involved a conversational approach that allowed the participants to open up more in their responses, ensuring richness of data.

The interview began with establishing a rapport with the interviewee by creating a relaxed atmosphere through casual conversation. I introduced the essence of the meeting by providing a brief background statement regarding the study and reminded them of the audio recordings. Each interviewee was asked if there is any question before commencing. The interview elucidated information about the lived experiences in the pursuit of professional careers in organizations as a Ghanaian woman leader, how to improve the situation and needs of future women leaders.

Due to the nature of the interview, each interviewee presented as much information as possible. The interview guide used allowed me to learn more with an open mind to explore, describe, and understand the data gathered from the interviewees. The conceptual framework remains flexible and emergent because, without some conceptual framework, there would be no way to make reasoned decisions in the research process (Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014).

The OCT and the role congruity theory of prejudice used accounted for the complex state surrounding Ghanaian women in pursuit of professional careers in organizations. The role congruity theory of prejudice provided perspective on the persistence of gender role stereotyping of Ghanaian women in leadership positions in organizations. This information showed that Ghanaian women leaders found it difficult to pursue professional careers and maintain their positions through achievement and success. The role congruity theory of prejudice explained the prejudice and stereotype of Ghanaian women and their continued underrepresentation in leadership positions.

The OCT explained the organization's culture and provided insights into understanding the stories of the Ghanaian women leaders in organizations and their impacts on the members. The OCT created an opportunity for new knowledge necessary for understanding the Ghanaian leaders' evaluation and stereotyping about women in organizations, which will also be beneficial to policymakers. I provided opportunities for the conversation to flow naturally (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010) to ensure the flexibility of responses. These theories provided a lens through which I was able to address the

research question and study objectives. I offered the interviewees a chance to provide any additions or feedback to enhance the data's richness after each session.

Saturation was reached on the 15th participant when there was no new information or themes observed in the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The participants were notified that they would receive a transcript via email within 48 to 72 hours after the interview. Upon completing the meetings, I transcribed the recordings precisely as captured by the handwritten field notes to ensure the transcript's reliability and validity.

I later conducted a member checking of the transcript as a form of verification from the interview. The interviewees were encouraged to make any corrections to the transcript to ensure its accuracy. Fortunately, there were no corrections made. All data collected were stored on a USB drive and stored in my office cabinet with a secured passcode to ensure the participants' confidentiality. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), researchers who do their transcription, immerse themselves in the data and become more familiar with it.

To prevent research bias, I practiced *epoche,* which involves viewing the phenomenon from the participants perspective with a fresh eye instead from the researcher's perspective (Moustakas, 1994), or bracketing one's own experiences as much as possible to take a new view of the phenomenon under consideration (Moustakas, 1994). Before reporting the results from data collected, I tagged the participants' identity for confidentiality with alphabets A to O and pseudonyms for extra privacy protection for any organization that may be mentioned during the interviews. Once all these tagging and

masking was completed, I moved on to data analysis. As outlined in Chapter 3, data analysis involved the use of Patton's three-step process.

Data Analysis

The analysis involved manual coding, the use of Microsoft Excel, and Patton's three-step process. It gathers data, organizes the data in a manageable manner, and then presents a meaningful, holistic picture to the reader. Before commencing with the analysis, every vague expression by the participants was eliminated. I began typing and saving all field notes, transcribed all audio recordings from participants' responses into organized Microsoft Word while still searching for commonalities across individuals' answers.

Read through the data collected over and over, paying attention to the reactions. The descriptive phenomenological approach guided the data interpretation. The data were analyzed from the lens of a conceptual framework grounded in two theories, which effectively addressed the research question and study objectives. The conceptual framework, the role congruity theory of prejudice, and OCT became how the data was interpreted and coded. I implemented Van Manen's (1997) advice not to confuse incidental with essential when sorting themes or categories.

Coding was done manually using a generated alphabetical tagging and pseudonyms for participants' confidentiality and an extra level of privacy protection. A code captures and represents the original content and essence of qualitative research data (Saldana, 2013). Coding also helps researchers to conceptually identify and classify

qualitative data into major themes (Saldana, 2013). Coding ensures the confidentiality and privacy of study participants (Gibson, Benson, & Brand, 2013).

I grouped the codes into categories and themes and labeled them according to their importance and relation to the participants' shared experiences. Then validated the data collected with each participant. According to Miles et al. (2014), to organize the data in a manageable manner, the researcher can use coding to categorize the data to make meaning from participants' lived experiences appropriately. Another rationale for coding and categorizing the data into themes is exploring the interconnections within data to find the meaning for the initial analysis (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). The use of Microsoft Excel assisted in organizing the data, which is a proven qualitative data analysis tool with the ability to handle a large amount of data, enhance the trustworthiness of the study, provide multiple attributes, and allow for a variety of display techniques (Meyer & Avery, 2008).

I set aside as much as possible all preconceived experience to understand the lived experiences of the participants. I listed every significant statement relevant to the study, determine the meaning of statements, continued by clustering the codes and categories into themes by removing overlapping and repetitive comments. I examined the themes and learned how they fit into the literature and framework. This process allowed theme formation from the research question and the ten interview questions. Lastly, a composite description was written to identify and present the essence of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015).

Through the lens of the role congruity theory of prejudice and the organizational culture theory, the four categories derived from the interviews with 15 Ghanaian women leaders were 1) limited career plan and advancement, 2) leadership readiness, 3) leadership development, 4) program effectiveness. The eight themes that emerged from the codes and categories were

1. Gender discrimination,

2. Opportunities,

3. Promotions,

4. Mentoring or role models,

5. Work and family life balance,

6. Wage gap,

7. Experience and education,

8. Networking.

Due to the nature of the data collection and the environmental settings, no discrepant cases occurred.

Table 3

Sample of the Theme Development Process

Participants	Participant's quotes	Categories	Themes
Participant B	"Ghanaian women leaders are more likely to quit the job after giving birth due to no paid leave for women."	Program effectiveness Limited career plan and advancement	Work and Family Life Balance.
Participant C	"Career advancement opportunities and unfairness are the strongest obstacles of women leaders' job dissatisfaction."	Limited career plan and advancement Leadership development	Opportunities Gender Discrimination
Participant D	"Ghanaian women are less likely	Leadership career plan and	Gender

	To be hired and promoted to senior leadership position easily, compared to the men."	advancement Program effectiveness	Discrimination Opportunities Promotions
Participant F	"Ghanaian women leaders experience everyday discrimination and less ability to advance in the workforce, especially in the areas of wages and promotions."	Leadership readiness Limited career plan and advancement Leadership development Program effectiveness	Gender Discrimination Opportunities Wage gap Promotions
Participant G	"Balancing work and family responsibility is one of the most challenging for Ghanaian women seeking leadership positions. It can be frustrating because women are usually caregivers of the family, and are more likely to work part-time or take time off for family commitment than men."	Limited career plan and advancement Leadership readiness Program effectiveness	Gender Discrimination Work and family life balance
Participant H	"Ghanaian women leaders representation in senior leadership positions will not increase greatly without major changes in the organizational practices, culture, and policies."	Program effectiveness Leadership development Leadership readiness Limited career plan and advancement	Opportunities Promotions Wage gap Work/family life balance Gender discrimination Mentoring and Role models Education and Experience Networking
Participant M	"I think Ghanaian women have made great gains in earning more degrees than men. But they still trail in senior academic leadership; they are underrepresented at ranks of full professors and tenured faculty and this limits our opportunities to advance."	Limited career plan and advancement Leadership readiness Program effectiveness Leadership development	Gender discrimination Promotions Opportunities
Participant N	" Networking is vital to Ghanaian women leaders in moving up to the senior leadership positions. I feel we need the support and funding from the organizations so, every woman can gain from it."	Program effectiveness Leadership development Leadership readiness	Networking Opportunities Promotions Mentoring and role models
Participant O	"We need more women leaders at the top so, we can benefit from their powerful mentoring and experience. However, a lack of this can be an obstacle to career advancement for Ghanaian women. I worked with experienced leaders which was a sort of help for me in terms	Program effectiveness Leadership development Leadership readiness Limited career plan and advancement	Mentoring and role models Education and experience Opportunities Promotions Networking

of adapting a leadership role."

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of research enhances the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

To ensure credibility in this study, I implemented several strategies to triangulate the data, such as clarifying any research bias to the review from the onset. The interviews conducted with the 15 Ghanaian women leaders contained the participants' truth of their lived experiences, heightening specific patterns and themes relating to their pursuit of professional careers and career advancement opportunities in organizations. The manual coding was another essential aspect of the data analysis, which provided the opportunity to understand the content of the participant's shared experiences. This method also allowed the legitimacy of the data and thereby purged any unnecessary error, as suggested by Miles et al. (2014). By performing member checking, I ensured the accuracy of the data collected from the participants. The use of Microsoft Excel was a tool that handled a large amount of data, provided multiple attributes, and allowed a variety of displayed techniques to gain efficiencies with the analysis. Based on these methods and tools in place, I was able to be truthful, transparent to the participants, strengthened the trustworthiness of the data, and created the conditions of transferability of the study.

Transferability

The detailed descriptive information about the methods and tools used enhanced transferability for this research. Thus, another researcher will be able to replicate the study to read and learn from them. The collected data was rich, thick, and detailed, utilizing open-ended questions and interview guides to give in-depth perceptions of the participants' shared experiences. An essential duty that was key in performing this research was transparency about the processing of data collection and analysis. Keeping all records safe and confidential, which led to the topic of the dependability of the study.

Dependability

Dependability is the extent to which there is documentation to provide evidence to support the study (Miles et al., 2014). I achieved dependability in this study by establishing audit trails and triangulation. Throughout this study, I incorporated the reasons behind the right selection of participants, research questions, research design, and methods. The data collected from the 15 Ghanaian women were audio-recorded with handwritten field notes. Data analysis reports were compiled to facilitate an accurate accounting of the study and justify the findings using Microsoft Excel. The Patton three-step process enabled the organization of the interviews into manual codes, which facilitated the emerging themes for interpretation. The theory perspective, which was the utilization of multiple theories to interpret the data collected, provided the opportunity to understand how the conceptual framework aligned with the participants' perceptions into meaningful data. To ensure all expectations of performing this descriptive qualitative

study are met, I completed the necessary assignment to demonstrate the research findings confirmability of my research findings.

Confirmability

My responsibility and expectation of performing this study were to accept the participants' perceptions as being their truths while remaining objective and setting aside any preconceived notions about the phenomenon of study. I achieved confirmability in this study by implementing the use of *bracketing or epoche* recommended by Moustakas (1994), member checking and the use of audit trail that highlighted every step of the analysis and rationale for the decision made. To enhance confirmability, I was attentive to the participants' perspectives, which enabled me to gain in-depth insights into the phenomenon of study. I was also conscious of any personal biases that might occur (Patton, 2015; Yilmaz, 2013). Every step taken throughout the process of data collection and analysis was documented.

<div align="center">

Study Results

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The following section described the data collection and analysis process about the research question and participants' responses. The study consisted of 15 Ghanaian women leaders from healthcare, academia, corporations, religious ministry, and political organizations. The participants were enthusiastic about reliving and sharing their lived experiences regarding their pursuit of professional careers and what can be done to improve the situation.

This study's task was to identify the participants' responses to the research question and the interview questions. The research question is: What are the experiences

of Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers in organizations? Based on

the subject, I developed ten interview questions to guide the study.

The Ghanaian women leaders volunteered and participated in a 45-60 minutes

interview via Skype or phone. The results were captured through the use of one research

question. It was designed to tell a story on the lived experiences of the participants'

pursuit of professional careers in organizations. I captured all the essential information

relevant to the study by utilizing manual coding and transcribing the interviews verbatim.

The research question served as a connection and guide in understanding the

Ghanaian women's lived experiences. After careful review of the transcripts, the 15

participants' responses were parallel. They produced common threads regarding their

experiences in their pursuit of professional careers, but with a slight difference in

language. The participants mentioned factors that are instrumental to women's

underrepresentation, career advancement opportunities, and the need to improve the

situation. The participants' responses were grouped into codes and categories to

determine the themes based on the phenomenon of study.

Research Question What are the experiences of Ghanaian women leaders'

pursuit of professional careers in organizations?

The three participants A, B, C, are from healthcare organizations. They defined

their career journey and the challenges they have faced in their pursuit of professional

careers as unfair. All three participants had a college degree in medicine, with ten years

of experience in leadership. They also explained the perceived challenges of promotions

to senior leadership roles as a stumbling block in their way. Interestingly, they all

mentioned stereotyping and prejudice about women leaders as obstacles that do not allow them to reach senior leadership positions. They also explained that the policymakers and HR personnel do not give women the opportunities to reach top posts compared to the men counterparts.

Participant A stated that "it is difficult to prove yourself as intelligent enough capable as a woman in the medical field because of men domination." She explained that men get more attention than women, but she feels that most of the women she works with outperforming the men, but the men are visible. She stated, "I am proud of any accomplishment made in the workplace by women." She expressed her primary concern as the unfairness in wages, time flexibilities, and promotions.

Participant B explained that men manipulate the health care system. Therefore, it makes it difficult for the administration to recognize them. She stated, "although women health care leaders take their work very seriously, they continue to face wage gaps and lack opportunities in promotions." Her concern is that women leaders need equal wages as their men, equal opportunities in promotions, and take time off without consequences.

Participant C explained that women leaders are more nurturing, role models, and team builders, yet they lack opportunities in promotions compared to their men counterparts. She reported how she experienced stereotyping and prejudice before and after her promotions to senior-level positions, which she worked extra hard for. She stated, "women leaders' I work with are devoted to helping employees feel secure about their jobs and very confident about their future in organizations, yet they are underrepresented in leadership." She also stated, "my greatest concern is that women

needed more qualification and must come together via networking to compete with the men."

Participants D, E, F, are from the religious ministries. The three participants explained their experiences in their pursuit of professional careers as challenging because society sees women as subordinate to the men, not leaders, which has limited their independence and performance as ministers. All three had master's degrees in theology with over ten years of experience in leadership and management. The participants explained how the ordering of power and stereotyping has severe consequences for women's leadership. They also explained how their goal is to fight for fair representation of women within religious organizations because of how women are undervalued in knowledge and experiences. One big concern of all three participants is that women leaders had experienced a lack of promotions throughout the organization.

Participant D stated, "Men dominance is the main obstacle to women rising to top positions in the religious organizations." She explained that labeling or stereotyping about women place stumbling blocks in their career paths because women leaders' ideas are ignored, and undervalued. She stated, "It is a challenge to prove yourself competent to lead a church because of men dominance and lack of opportunities."

She further explained the importance of ordination in the organization by saying that "although ordination of women is a holy order and permitted by the church law, she continuously faced resistance from the men counterparts not because of her experience and education but rather her gender." She also mentioned that she never had an official mentor but was posted to a small rural area to struggle with membership because that

church was on the verge of collapse. "What that did was allowed me to see myself as someone who can be in a senior leadership position to transform the organization." She ended by saying that, "This visible expression of stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and gender gap makes Ghanaian women leaders' feel inferior, which holds them back from their full potential to participate in any form.

Participant E explained how stereotyping and prejudice about women in religious organizations had prevented her from ordination to senior leadership positions, despite her vocal and growing presence as a woman leader within the community. She stated, "this journey has not only been slow but challenging and painful as well." She recalls her painful experience when she was excluded from an ordination ceremony because she was a woman. She emphasized that she did not give up hope because of her calling to the ministry. She explained how women are not given opportunities to reach a senior leadership position, left alone to stand on the altar and preach.

Participant F explained how she lost confidence when excluded from promotions because the church's policies and politics make it almost impossible for a woman leader to advance to a senior leadership position. She stated, "this is why I was not able to receive promotion." She mentioned that although career advancement opportunities were always available, women leaders were not given a chance to take advantage of them, which is an uncomfortable and painful challenge. However, she still did her best as a woman leader in the ministry with experience and qualification.

She explained how women are marginalized as subordinates not competent to lead. She stated, "before I became the general secretary in the organization, I faced some

challenges in my career path to a senior position. The ministry is male dominated but with minimum qualification and experience. I fought hard, and with the help of a woman departmental head, I was recommended for the position after eight years of work." Her concern was that women leaders do not get enough time off for family issues; thus, it is challenging to balance work and family life.

Participants G, H, I was from Corporations. All three Ghanaian women leaders have a master's degree, but one had additional leadership practice certification. They all have over ten years of experience in leadership and management. It is facilitating that all three participants expressed how organizations have talked about gender balance for centuries in Ghana, yet progress is slow. As a result, Ghanaian women leaders have been asking themselves what needs to change to thrive. All participants perceived themselves as being leaders before their promotion, although they face few leadership opportunities to advance and succeed, they were confident within themselves. They expressed that one big concern is the lack of mentoring being the principal element absent in pursuing professional careers to senior leadership positions in organizations.

Participant G Stated, "my experience to senior leadership position had not been easy but very challenging that the men counterparts do not understand." It is not fair that women have to struggle and jump to clear extra hurdles to be successful. She explained that if women are sincere and earnest about doing great work in the organizations, they will succeed in their career paths. She stated, "I recall when I was pushed down, pushed aside, and told I do not belong at the table." It is not easy to be bullied, but I did not give

up because I feel there is a way to pass it. She expressed her concern that these issues of stereotype, prejudice, and biases prevent many women from becoming senior leaders.

Participant H mentioned that she struggled in her full-time job as an assistant manager with a lack of respect and negative attitude toward her from the men counterparts. Still, she held on to the position waiting for a promotion, which she never received. She explained that women need some form of organizational support, such as formal and informal networking to succeed. She also said that women need a proactive network of leaders and colleagues who will develop, promote, and champion them throughout their journey as they pursue their career aspirations in organizations. Compared to the men who use their position of influence to provide favors to help their colleagues promoted. She stated, "Men are always sitting together doing nothing, but recommending each other when it comes to promotions, and taking huge wages." She further mentioned that women need role models at the senior leadership position who will support them.

Participant I stated, "I worked for over seven years in middle management and never got promoted to senior position until ten years." She explained that few opportunities for promotion come every five to seven years in her department, but she never got the chance. She stated, "But I was honored to be in the field so I can make a difference in the organization and employees' life because leaders look to the future, provide meaning and purpose, motivate, inspire and impassion employees in a positive direction."

Participant J, K, L are Ghanaian women leaders from the political organization. All three participants are graduates with a master's degree. They all expressed how they experienced bias, stereotyping, and prejudice in their pursuit of a senior leadership role but overlooked for the position. They mentioned that it was these experiences that prompted them to start networking as their significant solution. They expressed their primary concern as working with competent and confident colleagues because women value the quality of work and value professionalism compared to the men who receive promotions without much knowledge and skills.

Participant J explained the unfair treatment she encountered during her political appointments. She stated, "I feel women in the political organizations need more confidence, qualification, and training to compete with the men counterparts because the Ghanaian political system is manipulated and dominated by men. More women should be allowed to apply to positions of a senior role." She expressed her experience as "potholes" and very challenging. She continued by saying that she was able to sail through because she demonstrated excellent communication and patience when leading. She went further by saying that women are not discouraged from political leadership, but they are not given a chance to utilize the available opportunities.

Participant K explained how women lag behind the men in political organizations; they are not even called for meetings because they are seen as less favorable and incompetent to lead. She stated, "I recall the bias, stereotyping, and prejudice I encountered seeking promotion, as an unpleasant experience." "Women should be given opportunity, encouraged, and mentored to take political leadership roles, but because

society sees the political organization as masculine, women do not get promoted quickly. She expressed how hard she worked with all her qualifications, training, and experience, but she was jumped over during promotions and never moved up. "Currently, I am looking for another organization to go, but if I see an improvement to support women leaders in the organization, I will stay."

Participant L explained her experience in pursuit of professional careers as painful and challenging. She stated, "I felt that being highly educated with experience in public service, I will get the chance to be promoted or elected easily without any obstacle. However, due to gender marginalization and discrimination, I never got the chance until after ten years when a woman colleague recommended her." She mentioned that although education can be a factor in obtaining a political senior leadership position, it is not the deciding factor in the men dominated era. She stressed that women need to be highly educated, confident to speak up, financially sound, have mentors, and role models to compete with the men.

Participant M, N, O, was Ghanaian women academicians. All three have master's degree and teaching certification, with over ten years of experience. All the participants expressed their growing concern regarding the lack of women in senior positions in academia. They also explain how women leaders struggle to navigate their career path due to stereotyping or prejudice they encounter. All three participants reported that they had experienced less recognition throughout their careers, which was unfair.

Participant M stated, "my experience in my career advancement was like a turbulent with lots of resistance, and every action of mine questioned." She continued by

explaining how the policymakers conducted her assessment before promotion time, which they never followed-up with her. "I later realized a man counterpart was placed at the position; meanwhile, I have all the skills and qualifications. Regardless of women's education and qualification, organizations prefer to appoint a man as the head." She stated, "where I am now and what I have been able to achieve depends not only on the organization but also on my determination to achieve the goal that I have set before me." Her most significant concern is that although Ghanaian women's academicians have qualifications and have made little progress in their career advancement, they still lag behind their men counterparts.

Participant N described her experience as bitter and unfair. She recalled being called for an interview when she was an assistant professor for promotion, which she did her best. Later, she was called back to the selection office where every member was present and was told that although she gave her best and was outstanding, they are sorry because that position had been offered to a man counterpart. She expressed bitterness and stated, "in fact, Ghanaian women continue to be underrepresented. The obstacles we face are real, women voices are never heard, do not matter, and we are not visible." She continued by saying that Ghanaian women leaders must step-up, network, speak up, mentor each other, recommend when possible because her departmental head did so when there was another promotion opportunity.

Participant O expressed the importance of role models and mentors in her field when asked about her challenges and experience in her pursuit of a professional career. She stated, "I did not face many challenges in my career advancement because I had a

mentor and felt it was beneficial to me. I acquired more knowledge and obtained more training from her. She advocated on my behalf, and I benefited greatly from her guidance." She expressed her concern that for Ghanaian women academicians to compete with their men counterparts, there is a strong need for more training and networking. She describes how women are nurturing, relationship-oriented, promote teamwork, and always want their subordinates' best. However, they still lag behind the men counterparts when it comes to promotions. "Ghanaian women leaders are multi-tasking compared to the men; therefore, they need to be treated fairly in organizations.

Based on the description, understanding, and importance of the 15 participants' lived experiences stories; the 8 themes emerged aligned with the research question. They were developed based on the available data, the use of the conceptual framework, Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory of prejudice, and Schein's (2010) organizational culture theory to understand how Ghanaian women leaders are viewed differently in organizations and its effect on the members. The eight themes that emerged include

1. Gender discrimination,

2. Opportunities,

3. Promotions,

4. Mentoring or role models,

5. Work and family life balance,

6. Wage gap,

7. Experience and education,
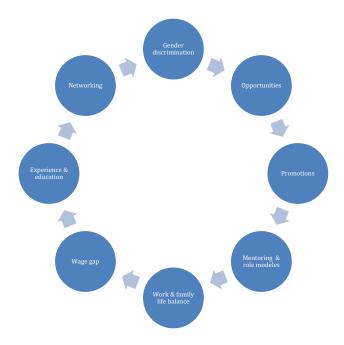
8. Networking.

Figure 1: depicts the themes developed and factors contributing to underrepresentation.

Theme One: Gender Discrimination

One hundred percent of the participants expressed their feelings about why women's leadership is essential in organizations. Having more women in leadership will bring new ways of operating and more insight into organizational performance because of their nature. All the participants experienced workplace challenges because of their gender. They also experienced stereotyping or prejudice attitudes aimed at them because of their gender. They were marginalized and not recognized for their expertise and ideas and always pushed to the side in meetings. They all agreed that gender discrimination is a stumbling block before them because Ghanaian women are underrepresented in leadership positions.

Theme Two: Opportunities

One hundred percent of the participants expressed their feelings about leadership opportunities because they feel the gateway to leadership is career advancement opportunities. The participants acknowledged they never obtained advancement opportunities quickly in the organizations to develop their leadership capabilities. They reported that they learned through their background as women but never attended formal or informal leadership development training. I discovered that all the participants had expressed different views on career advancement opportunities that may provide policymakers and human resource personnel with a better understanding of Ghanaian women leaders' feelings in pursuit of professional careers.

Theme Three: Promotions

Theme three had a frequency of 100 percent. All participants agreed that there was a strong need for more promotions on the women's side, which would allow them to be more visible, confident, and productive, hence improving the organization's performance. They expressed the importance of promotion and said that as they move from one position to another level of leadership, their skillset broadened and changed, bringing about transformation, self-renewal, and confidence throughout their career. They agreed that to enhance promotions, Ghanaian women leaders must be inclusive and treated fairly during the promotion period.

Theme Four: Mentoring or Role Models

One hundred percent of the participants expressed a lack of mentoring or role models as the vital element absent in leadership development and career advancement.

They agreed that mentoring gives a leader more exposure, provides advice and guidance, and helps the less experienced leader seek out work experiences and assignments, learn how to advance in organizations, and gain the most they can from their career. The majority of the participants explained that the women leaders mentored, benefited significantly. This issue demonstrated that there is a strong need for mentoring or role models for Ghanaian women leaders.

Theme Five: Work and Family life balance

Theme five had a frequency of 100 percent because all the women have families. The participants expressed their feelings on the importance of work and family-life balance. They explained how flexibility in organizations does not always translate into a better work-life balance for women leaders. The participants also discussed how organizational policies on paid family leave is unfair to women in the workforce. They all agreed that a positive relationship between work and family-life balance would bring about job satisfaction and family satisfaction, which would increase organizational performance. Their most significant concern was for them to have the flexibility and take time off for family issues without any consequences.

Theme Six: Wage Gap

This theme had a frequency of 100 percent. All participants acknowledged that it is unfair that Ghanaian women leaders face sluggish wage increments while their workload in organizations is more than their men counterparts or the same. The participants explained that women leaders face implicit and explicit biases in organizations on wages. Also, women are not being recognized for their

accomplishments or viewed as competent leaders. They all agreed that women leaders need additional training to speak up on wage negotiations. They expressed their feelings that the wage gap is a harsh reality. It hurts and suppresses women leaders' earnings, making it harder to balance their work and family, regardless of education and work experience.

Theme Seven: Education and Experience

Theme seven had a 100 percent frequency. All participants had degrees. They felt education and experience are keys to every position in an organization through hiring and promotions. They explained that highly educated and experienced leaders make better decisions, both professionally and personally. All participants acknowledged the importance of education and experience in some form that helped leaders build capabilities, strength, and confidence to succeed in their careers. It helped to have had the knowledge and experience of being in a position of senior leadership. They expressed their feelings that lack of education, experience, and mentoring are significant hindrances to their pursuit of professional careers as Ghanaian women leaders.

Theme Eight: Networking

The majority of participants (90 percent) explained and acknowledged that networking was the most successful part of their career advancement to a senior leadership position. Most of them utilized networking as a tool to make themselves more visible within their organizations. Ten percent of participants felt that insufficient networking prevented them from recognition. Networking seriously serves as connectivity to leaders of influence and help to provide guidance.

Discrepant Cases

In this qualitative descriptive phenomenological study, no discrepant case occurred. I referenced back to the conceptual framework, the role congruity theory of prejudice, and the OCT when describing why there was a lack of Ghanaian women leaders in senior leadership positions. I discovered that stereotyping or prejudice, lack of opportunities, and promotions were the major obstacles as possible reasons. Based on this understanding, all 15 participants agreed that they need positive change in organizations on how women are viewed and mistreated in pursuit of professional careers. When implemented, they will remain in the workplace and be more productive. However, as long as the gender gap is prevalent in Ghana, there can be no solution to the dilemma of the underrepresentation of Ghanaian women leaders in organizations. Abakah (2018) acknowledged that bringing benefits to organizations by using expertise, skills, and knowledge, with women leaders inclusive, is extremely important.

Table 2

Study Results

Emerged themes	Participants	Percentage of frequencies
Gender discrimination	Participant A-O	100 %
Opportunities	Participant A-O	100 %
Promotions	Participant A-O	100 %
Mentoring & role models	Participant A-O	100 %
Work & Fam. Life Balance	Participant A-O	100 %
Wage Gap	Participant A-O	100 %
Education & Experience	Participant A-O	100 %
Networking	Participant A-O	90 %
		10% did not

Summary

The chapter presented findings on the lived experiences of 15 Ghanaian women leaders in different organizations' pursuit of professional careers and how they can be improved. All interviews were semi-structured via Skype or telephones. Participants were interviewed after IRB approval with consent to participate via the informed consent form. The research question with the conceptual framework, the role congruity theory of prejudice, and OCT was used to understand how Ghanaian women leaders are viewed and treated differently in their career advancement.

I performed data collection and analysis using Microsoft Excel, which revealed eight themes regarding Ghanaian women's leadership experience in their pursuit of professional careers. The themes emerged were 1) Gender discrimination, 2) Opportunities, 3) Promotions, 4) Mentoring or role models, 5) Work and family life balance, 6) Wage gap, 7) Experience and education, 8) Networking. The chapter also outlined the participants' demographic using alphabetic tagging A to O that prevented disclosure of their identity. All participants experienced challenges transitioning from one level of leadership to another. They held on to their challenges by demonstrating confidence, strength, and resilience despite the obstacles prevalent in organizations.

Chapter 5 will present the discussion, conclusion, and recommendation of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this was to explore, describe, and understand the lived experiences of Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers in organizations. I employed a descriptive phenomenological qualitative approach as the research method. The descriptive phenomenological approach focuses on the commonality of a lived experiences of an individual or group and brings added dimensions to the study of human experience through qualitative research (Moustakas, 1994).

The gender gap at the senior-level positions in organizations is a crucial topic in the field of management. Ghanaian women leaders in organizations have expressed a desire for gender equality in senior-level places and the pursuit of professional careers. It has been difficult for corporate and human resource personnel to understand these women leaders fully. The management problem addressed in this study was that Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers had received less value from corporate and HR personnel in organizations compared with their men counterparts. This qualitative descriptive phenomenological study aimed to understand 15 Ghanaian women leaders' lived experiences regarding their pursuit of professional careers in organizations. To determine and recommend what practical strategies will be essential in promoting positive social change.

Although there have been various research and discussions on the underrepresentation and career advancement opportunities of women in organizations over the years, there is still a gap in the existing literature. Ghanaian women leaders have a long history of experiencing underrepresentation in senior-level positions. Therefore,

presenting information on the perceptions of Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers will provide corporate and HR personnel with the resources. To review and reconsider the effectiveness of their policies, strategies, and programs for potential career improvements and representations to senior-level positions. As a result, the organization's promise of corporate social responsibility in sustaining a competitive advantage will be achieved. This qualitative phenomenology methodology was appropriate because it resulted in a detailed and rich understanding of the Ghanaian women leader's shared lived experiences. Chapter 5, focuses on several elements to conclude this study, including interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications of the study, and conclusion.

Interpretation of Findings

I organized the interpretation of findings around the eight themes that emerged from the research question and the 15 participants' experiences stories. The study's findings laid out information that confirms the existing literature and knowledge on Ghanaian women leadership pursuing professional careers to the top leadership positions. Findings of the study show that the Ghanaian women leaders confirmed that underrepresentation and career advancement opportunities limit their pursuit of professional careers to senior leadership positions.

Throughout the interviews, the participants made statements describing how the underrepresentation and career advancement opportunities affected their pursuit of senior positions without organizational support. The findings also extend the existing knowledge by providing new insight into the phenomenon of study. The findings

highlighted many challenges Ghanaian women leaders' face while carrying out their leadership roles. These findings agreed with Davis and Maldonado (2015). They found that despite the challenges they encountered, these Ghanaian women leaders perform skillfully in organizations where they continuously have to prove themselves. The comparison of these findings with the existing peer-reviewed literature on Ghanaian women leadership helped bring about the development for positive social change in increasing women's representation, improving career advancement opportunities in Ghana, and identifying areas for future studies.

Gender Discrimination

The theme relating to gender discrimination emerged as the most relevant finding in the study and in existing literature where different researchers had widely studied and explained but still little is known on how to increase representation and improve career advancement opportunities for Ghanaian women leaders (Ngunjri, 2016; Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). As documented in this study and other existing literature, women leaders find it challenging to have their voices heard during meetings. They wonder if their ideas would be taken seriously, and most importantly, they worry about being denied advancement opportunities (Agadjanian, 2015). Sossou, (2011) agreed with this finding in the study that gender gap or gender discrimination in Ghana is multifactorial and deep-seated in organizations that have existed for generations. Additional findings of this study indicated that unlike Ghanaian men leaders, the women leaders experienced cultural bias, stereotypes, or prejudice when pursuing leadership positions because of gender.

Concerning the gender discrimination that is noticeable in organizations, Adongo et al. (2013) confirmed with the finding that with these negative cultural attitudes, stereotypes, and underrepresentation of women, it would be challenging for Ghana to achieve sustainable development in organizations. This finding also corroborates with Bulley et al. (2017), who indicated that although men and women are considered equal under the Ghanaian law, women still face discrimination in organizations. This finding is also supported by Gyekye (2013), who documented that despite women's rights and interests, gender gaps and cultural barriers continue to affect their lives negatively.

Opportunities

Lack of opportunities disfavor Ghanaian women leaders and hinders their ability to prove useful in their leadership roles. As evidence from this study, Ghanaian women have limited or lack career advancement opportunities to senior leadership positions in organizations. The study's findings confirm that men advance faster in organizations than women despite their high education. They are seen as incompetent leaders when they have not been allowed to prove themselves in leadership roles due to organizational culture and gender (Boateng, 2018).

Additional findings of this study indicate that Ghanaian women leaders enter the workforce with aspiration and confidence to progress in their careers. However, when they face the challenge of fewer career opportunities, they lose hope and confidence in achieving their goals. The finding extends knowledge that a lack of career advancement opportunities hurts women's ambitions (Darko & Seibu, 2016). The finding also corroborates with Abakah (2018), who indicated that underrepresentation and the lack of

equal opportunity continue to inhibit women leaders' ability to participate even in politically elected positions.

Promotions

The participants' experiences revealed that a few or lack of promotions keeps Ghanaian women leaders' from advancing into senior leadership. This revelation indicates that promotions for women in organizations are undoubtedly processes that can improve women's desire and boost their excitement for reaching or achieving their goals, and organizational objectives. This study's findings indicated that most women endured a lack of promotion but are still optimistic about performing their leadership duties. Concerning promotions that are obstacles for women leaders in organizations, Abakah (2018) confirmed with the finding that although women struggled with their leadership promotions, they eventually become successful and reliable in the position is promoted. These findings also support Cook and Glass (2014), which indicated that closing the gender gap in promotions improve the retention of skilled and talented women, enhance morale, stimulate efficiency, and provide advancement opportunities, which can benefit the organization's performance.

Mentoring and Role Modeling

The theme mentoring and role models emerged as a challenge but essential in organizations in securing promotions; it increases a leader's responsibility and helps individuals learn and grow within an organization. This finding revealed that a woman assuming a senior leadership position places her in the subordinates' eye. However, everything she does is questioned by the men counterparts who try to despise her actions

due to stereotyping or prejudice in organizations. This finding of the study supported existing literature regarding the importance of mentoring, and role modeling, which indicated that lack of mentors and role models are the biggest challenge to women leaders' success (Yousaf & Schmiede, 2017). According to Catalyst (2018), various studies show that a lack of mentoring and role modeling opportunities is a common barrier to women's success.

The study's finding also indicated that most women leaders use mentoring and role modeling to enhance their leadership development and advocacy. Atingah et al. (2017) agree with the views expressed in this study that mentoring in organizations is not just because of the knowledge and skills leaders can learn from, but also develop strategies for dealing with both personal and academic issues, which in turn increases their confidence. An existing literature agrees that to increase Ghanaian women leaders' representation, mentoring, and role modeling are important. However, due to the underrepresentation of women at senior leadership positions, women have not benefited much from mentorship and role modeling in their careers (Adom, 2017).

Work and Family Life Balance

The participants' experiences revealed that women face enormous challenges on family and work balance that policymakers, HR personnel, and their men counterparts do not understand. The participants' stories indicated that work and family balance are the toughest challenges women encounter in the workplace, especially when they have to travel. The information obtained indicated that women play multiple roles as mothers and

wives and thus have various responsibilities. However, some organization's policies are still designed as if women have no family liabilities.

The finding is similar to previous studies on the support of work and family life balance for women without consequences in organizations (Dako-Gyekye & Owusu, 2013). The finding is also in accordance with Boateng (2018), who found that many women face challenges and hostility in their careers after having children. The findings confirm Barron (2019) and Charles (2017), who indicated that due to the policies, some of the women prefer middle management rather than the senior position, which is rooted in Schein's OCT. The finding disconfirmed with Lennon et al.'s (2013) study that rejected the idea that women are underrepresented in senior leadership positions because they cannot balance their life and work.

Wage Gap

The theme relating to the wage gap emerged as a challenge for all participants. They confirmed and expressed bitterly that the wage gap is a significant issue in an organization. The findings have shown that Ghanaian women are more accepting but afraid to speak up for wage negotiation because they felt the men would ignore their ideas and petitions due to their gender. The additional finding shows that women leaders fear being rejected or excluded from their roles; however, confidence and respect are achieved when their voice is heard, and presence is known. Al-Mansara (2013) agreed with this finding that women must speak up with confidence, regardless of the negative attitude they face from their counterparts to accomplish their career goals.

The finding also revealed that the wage gap is a harsh reality for women. They are paid less than men, and it gets worse as a woman's career progress. The finding confirms Davis and Maldonado (2015). They indicated that the wage gap in organizations would not end soon due to the vastness of the gap and the slow pace of organizational change in Ghana. The finding also corroborates with Boateng (2018) that indicate that there is a severe underrepresentation of Ghanaian women in leadership roles and are paid less than men. Evidence from this study suggests that using a fair remuneration act will bring the needed change, and these women will move on to perform with ease and satisfaction. The finding agreed with Murray and Chua's (2014) findings that the wage gap is a contributing factor to women's job dissatisfaction, affecting organizations' performance. They concluded that there should be a way to mitigate this wage gap disadvantage associated with women.

Education and Experience

The research participants were all educated and have over ten years of experience in both management and leadership. One hundred percent of the participants felt that their prior leadership experience enhanced their ability to lead, build capacity, confidence, and strength to succeed in their careers. Eighty percent of them held leadership positions before being promoted to senior-level positions. These participants stories indicated that education and experience are closely interlinked in leadership and can help in career growth and organizations' performance. The participants' stories confirm Tagoe and Abakah's (2015) conclusion that indicated that women leaders gain leadership experience mostly in middle management positions. The study's finding confirms Anigwe (2014)

findings indicating that education and experience solidified the leaders' persona and prepared them to learn more and adapt to the changing environment.

This finding extends knowledge on the role of early leadership experience in Ghanaian women's career advancement to senior leadership positions (Catalyst, 2018). Additional findings indicate that lesser educated and experienced men leaders instead receive preferential treatment compared to the women counterparts in promotions. This finding might serve as a basis for organizational programs to help leaders grow and might add to limited research on the role of education and experience in women's pursuit of senior leadership positions. This finding is in accordance with Rincon et al. (2017) findings, which indicate that supporting women progression to senior positions, measures involving access to education and training should be considered.

Networking

The participants in this study have different perspectives on networking. Ninety percent of them shared this sentiment as the most successful part of their pursuit of professional careers. However, ten percent of the participants never tried it. They explained that although networking is not at the top of every leaders' list, it is a vital tool for most successful leaders in building a reputation. The participants' stories revealed the importance of their networking as a career advancement tactic, allowing them to be visible, which provided them the opportunity to interact with different executives from the various departments who advocated for them.

The findings from the participants' experiences on networking and career advancement confirm Charles (2017) findings, which revealed that networking

opportunities are credible in improving reputations and moving a career forward. This finding confirms Adom (2017), who expressed that networking will help you attain a position faster, and it will give you a competitive edge throughout your career. Additional findings indicate that networking provides exclusive knowledge of job opportunities, emotional support, and protection, which could be critical in career development and advancement. These findings support other scholars who believe networking must be supported by organizations (Adu-Oppong & Arthur, 2015; Bulley et al., 2017; Tagoe & Abakah, 2915). The study's findings could serve as a basis for organizational support to help Ghanaian women leaders up the career ladder.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this qualitative descriptive phenomenological study required other measurable factors to ensure the study's trustworthiness. The first limitation was the sample size, which included only the 15 participating Ghanaian women leaders; thus, the data and conclusion may not be generalizable to all women leaders in Ghana. Although saturation was achieved, the sample size did not include all organizational leaders.

The second limitation was the limited organizations utilized, which included only five organizations across Ghana. Due to limited finances, time of the study, and the participants' work schedule, the study was only conducted in the Greater Accra region. Although enough information was provided, the data collected, analyzed, and conclusion may affect the results. Responses from excluded participants from other organizations could likely have led to different results.

The third limitation that may skew the results was the research bias, which can eventually cause distorted results and wrong conclusions. Research bias found in this study was recognized, acknowledged, and documented. To guard and limit the bias, I used Moustakas (1994) *epoche* to bracket my own experience as much as possible. Taking a fresh perspective on the participants' experiences through their authentic voices by reevaluating their responses via the extensive handwritten field notes, replaying the audio recorded interviews over and over again, and finally applied the member checking to ensure accurate interpretation to enhance the credibility of the study.

Although it was interesting to hear the positive experiences of the Ghanaian women leaders, it was also hard for me to listen to the negative aspect of their experiences encountered, which reminded me of my own leadership experience both in Ghana and outside Ghana. Based on that, I used *epoche*, which is a process in blocking biases and assumptions to explain the data collected in their meaning, which is the requirement of trustworthiness.

Recommendations

Underrepresentation and career advancement opportunities are vital for an organization's performance. Therefore, much work still needs to be done about it. Ghanaian women leaders with comparable skills as their men counterparts should have the same opportunities and rights in their pursuit of professional careers. Instead, they remain less visible to policymakers and HR personnel in their career advancement to senior leadership positions.

This qualitative descriptive phenomenological study focused on the lived experiences of Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers in organizations. The study's goal was to gain a rich understanding of the participants' experiences in their career advancement. The conceptual framework, which was Eagly and Karau's role congruity theory of prejudice and Scheim's OCT, allowed me to gain a detailed understanding of the study's phenomenon. The stories shared by the participants were vital. They could be useful to policymakers and HR personnel in understanding women leaders' challenges and what might improve the situation in valuing them during the promotion period. Adu-Oppong and Arthur (2015) explained that if women have the same career opportunities to contribute to innovation and change in organizations, they will transform the future of organizational practice, culture, and belief towards a more inclusive and progressive society.

From a personal perspective, this chapter has discussed the findings from the study with other literature on women and leadership. The knowledge gained from conducting this study indicated that Ghanaian women leaders still do not have the same career advancement opportunities compared to their men counterparts. This finding is a confirmation of gender discrimination in organizations. Thus, there is still some work to be done as it relates to underrepresentation, career advancement opportunities, and understanding the value of women's pursuit of professional careers. Another new knowledge obtained from the participants was that some of the Ghanaian women leaders have a plan of action to speak up for their rights. They do not have to be in the senior

leadership position to challenge the status quo and champion others who may be struggling to raise their voices.

Based on these findings, the first recommendation is to enact law by policymakers to create an environment where every woman will feel comfortable speaking up to discuss a promotion or career advancement opportunities and negotiate wage gaps. The second recommendation is for the policymakers and HR personnel to implement gender sensitivity mentoring and networking funded programs designed to increase women's development. This kind of program would benefit the less experienced women leaders and the men counterparts in eliminating or reducing stereotypes or prejudice and creating open-mindedness on Ghanaian women.

The third recommendation is for policymakers and HR personnel to offer and implement policies on flexible work schedules to help accommodate the needs of working Ghanaian women leaders who struggle to balance their careers with family responsibilities. This implementation will bring about job satisfaction and less stress on women. These new recommendations mean that Corporate leaders and HR personnel must demonstrate their commitment to valuing Ghanaian women's perspectives in their pursuit of professional careers and revisit the organization's policies in increasing women's representation and improving their career advancement opportunities.

Future Research

This qualitative descriptive phenomenological study revealed the experiences of Ghanaian women and leadership. Based on the findings, policymakers and HR personnel contributes to the unfair treatment of women in organizations with men contributing

immensely to gender discrimination. Due to this study's uniqueness, I was able to uncover why women are viewed and treated differently in organizations, which affects their representation in senior leadership positions. A future study is needed to understand how both men and women perceive career advancement in organizations in Ghana. Therefore, this study provides an opportunity for other researchers to replicate the study in various ways using different research designs and methods.

Concerning the study's limitation, which was the small sample size and only women in limited organizations, a replication study with larger sample size and more organizations may be conducted using the same research design and method to compare the findings of this study. Another replication of the study may be the use of mixed methods involving both Ghanaian men and women leaders to compare gender roles with a better understanding of why women are mistreated in their pursuit of professional careers. This future recommendation's basis is to determine if everyone experiences stereotyping or bias throughout their jobs regardless of gender.

Researcher's Reflections

As I reflect on this study's process, the conceptual framework with the role congruity theory of prejudice and the OCT guided the research and helped uncover how Ghanaian women are viewed and mistreated and its impact. I acknowledged that there was much to learn not only for the study but as a native Ghanaian woman with similar experience from the 15 participants. After listening carefully to each woman expressing their feelings, I immersed fully in their views, which made it hard to remain unbiased throughout the interviews.

The most exceptional experience I got from conducting this study was the education offered and obtained from the participants' shared stories. This experience and feelings became more visible as I began to listen to the audio recordings repeatedly, which allowed me to reflect on their lived experiences and vulnerabilities as a Ghanaian woman leader in men-dominated organizations without any judgment. However, I was able to set aside preconceived ideas and remain open to listening to the participants' shared experience stories, which allowed an accurate interpretation of the study's phenomenon. Completing this study, I felt honored to have gained detailed understanding, new knowledge, obtained trust from the participants' and experience of interviewing these great women leaders in Ghana. To provide practical recommendations for improving this situation in organizations.

Implications

This section of the study describes the potential impact for positive social change under (individual, family, organizational, and societal policy), conceptual framework, and organizational practices as appropriate. Positive social change aims to produce a transformation that leads to effective outcomes toward organizational performance and the well-being of humans or the nation. This study focused on the lived experiences of Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers.

The study is critical for corporate leaders and policymakers. It provided an understanding of how Ghanaian women leaders can be successful if appropriate measures such as career advancement opportunities are implemented. This revelation could help human resource personnel, and corporate leaders understand the challenges women face

in their pursuit of senior leadership positions. The results highlighted the importance of raising gender awareness to bridge the gap, increasing women's representation, and improving career advancement opportunities. This awareness may lead to positive change in attitudes and behaviors of both policymakers and men and women leaders in organizations.

The implication for positive social change from this study is that corporate leaders or policymakers and HR personnel could use the study's results to revisit and reconsider their organizational programs' effectiveness. Including policies, and strategies for promotions, career advancement opportunities, increase representation, and improve working conditions in the organizations for women leaders. This revelation can provide information on continuous improvement to enhance the career advancement experiences of Ghanaian women leaders from an individual perspective. As a result, increasing the organization's performance can reduce stress and increase job satisfaction for women heads of households from a family perspective.

Another implication for positive social change from this study may be ensuring that other organizations in Ghana will get access to the study's result. To implement the same procedure in improving career advancement opportunities throughout the nation. This procedure, if undertaken, can enhance the relationship between both the community and organizations, which will address career concerns in Ghana.

The implication to the practice of this study could provide prospective involvement of policymakers and HR personnel toward attracting, retaining, supporting, and motivating Ghanaian women leaders. Policymakers have considerable responsibility

in organizations, reflecting on the impact of organizational performance (Kramer, 2014). With the limited number of women in senior leadership positions, policymakers must consider promoting, recruiting, and retaining talented women without any judgment but with benefits.

As explained by the study's participants, several Ghanaian women struggle to balance their work and family responsibilities, which hinders them. Thus, policymakers should create and offer a flexible work schedule to help accommodate the needs of the women. By implementing this flexible work schedule, there is the potential to positively affect their everyday relationships in balancing their work and family life.

For the less experienced leaders, policymakers should develop mentoring and funded networking programs designed to increase women's career development with affirmative action policies aimed at reducing gender discrimination. This study's uniqueness sheds light on organizations' implementation of women's inclusion in senior leadership positions. The increased representation of Ghanaian women leaders contributes to positive social change because their voices will be heard, and their ideas will be noted. Restructuring the organizational policies and programs requires policymakers and HR personnel to have the means to mitigate women's underrepresentation. Improve the organization's culture and practices toward sustaining a competitive advantage and keeping organizational social responsibility (Bruktawit & Beyene, 2018; Frimpong, Li, & Wang, 2017; Sharma, 2016).

The conceptual framework for this study was the role congruity theory of prejudice and the organizational culture theory. This framework guided this unique study

and allowed the uncovering of how Ghanaian women leaders are underrepresented, treated unfairly, and viewed differently in their pursuit of professional careers. Based on this framework, I understood how women's beliefs, expectations, and goals are affected negatively in their career journey. This revelation allowed me to communicate the useful, practical recommendations that policymakers and HR personnel could use to improve organizational performance, increase women's representation, improve career advancement, and treat everyone fairly in Ghana.

Conclusions

This qualitative descriptive phenomenological study focused on Ghanaian women leaders' lived experiences in pursuit of professional careers. The study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of why women are underrepresented and treated unfairly in senior leadership positions and their pursuit of professional careers in Ghana. The findings fulfilled the purpose of this study by uncovering how stereotypes or prejudice about women affect Ghanaian women leaders' career advancement opportunities. The participants' stories revealed that several challenges hinder women's progress to senior leadership positions.

As the results confirmed, Ghanaian women leaders' level of participation in top leadership positions is low, signifying that women are genuinely underrepresented in senior leadership positions in organizations. Apart from organizational policies and structural challenges, it also showed that socio-cultural factors contribute to the underrepresentation and unfair treatment of Ghanaian women leaders. These challenges and factors also affect women who are already occupying executive positions in Ghana.

Finally, I believed that the results of this study contributed knowledge to increasing women's representation and improving career advancement opportunities and hopes it will assist policymakers and HR personnel in valuing Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers in organizations. Additionally, these findings and their implication will assist in facilitating further research on Ghanaian women and leadership because the reason for women's underrepresentation in senior leadership roles in organizations remains unknown. As Adu-Oppong and Arthur (2015) mentioned, when women are allowed to lead, they will transform the future of organizational practices, culture, and belief toward a more inclusive and progressive society. So, are we leaders ready for this change in the organizations?

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Appendix A: Letter of Introduction and Recruitment

Dear Potential Research Participant,

I am Dorothy Appiah, a doctoral candidate in the Management program at Walden University, conducting a research study on the lived experiences of Ghanaian women in leadership pursuit of professional careers in organizations. The purpose of this study is to adequately explore, describe and understand the lived experiences of Ghanaian women leaders regarding their pursuit of higher leadership positions, and what can be done to improve the situation.

I am kindly seeking Ghanaian women in leadership positions in public, private, and political sector organizations to participate. The participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. The study is completely anonymous and tagging A-T will be used in place of names. The eligibility for participation in this study includes the following criteria: (a) Ghanaian women leaders with at least 10 years of past or present experience in leadership.

Your contribution to this study will be of great importance to assist in positive social change in organizations. You are ensuring that Ghanaian women leaders are receiving support in their pursuit of career advancement that might benefit the future generation of women leaders aspiring to leadership positions.

If you would be interested in participating in this study, kindly review and return the signed consent form which is attached to this email. Please feel free to contact me if you would like additional information via this email.

Respectfully,
Dorothy Appiah,
Doctoral Candidate, Walden University.

Appendix B: Social Media Recruitment

Dear Prospective Participants,

I am Dorothy Appiah, a Ph.D. candidate at Walden University, studying Leadership and Organizational change in Management. I am conducting a research study on the Lived Experiences of Ghanaian Women in Leadership. The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of Ghanaian women leaders' pursuit of professional careers, due to the less value received from Corporate and Human Resource personnel in organizations.

I am kindly seeking Ghanaian women leaders who have at least ten years of experience in management or leadership positions in public, private, and political organizations to participate in a face-to-face interview. But with the Covid19 pandemic, the use of telephone or Skype will be appropriate. The interview timeframe may last between 45 to 60 minutes. At any time during the interview, participants can decline to move forward if uncomfortable with the process. This study is strictly voluntary and confidential. There is no penalties or risk associated with the process and no compensation for participation.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval number from Walden University for this study is xxxxxxxxxxxxx. If you are interested, please contact me.

Sincerely
Dorothy Appiah
Ph.D. in Management Candidate
Walden University
dorothy.appiah@xxxxxxx.edu
(xxx) xxx-xxxx

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study that seeks to explore, describe and understand the lived experiences of Ghanaian women in senior-level positions in public, private, and political sector organizations. The researcher is inviting Ghanaian women leaders with 10 years of leadership experience in the past or present. You are qualified to be a participant in this study because of your knowledge and expertise on the phenomenon of the study. I obtained your contact information via LinkedIn professional platform. This participation form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to read, ask questions, and understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Dorothy Appiah, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to adequately explore, describe, and understand the lived experiences of Ghanaian women in senior-level positions in public, private, and political organizations, regarding their pursuit of professional careers, and what can be done to improve the situation.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in a semi-structured face-to-face interview that will last approximately 60 minutes. Unless any unfortunate situation occurs, the researcher may use phone or skype as a plan B.
- Answer questions related to the phenomenon of the study and your experience, including your successes and challenges.
- Agree with your permission to handwritten field notes in conjunction with audio recordings during the interview to avoid any misinterpretation and misquotation of your responses.
- Within 72 hours after the interview, you will receive a copy of the transcript to review and edit what the researcher did not capture accurately. This procedure is called member checking, which ensures the accuracy of your responses and the credibility of the study. This can take about 20-30 minutes of your time.

Here are some sample questions:

1. How would you describe your experiences in a senior-level position as a woman?
2. How do you describe the lack of women leadership in organizations in Ghana?
3. What are your perceptions on how career development policies and programs in your organization support women leaders?

Voluntary Nature of Study

This study is entirely voluntary and confidential. Everyone will respect your decision on whether or not you choose to be in the study. No-one will treat you

differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may withdraw from the study at any time.

Risk and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Although it is anticipated that there is no specific risk associated with this study, being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue, stress, and anxiety. Being in this study would not pose a risk to your safety or wellbeing.

This study is important, although, there are no benefit to an individual participant, the outcome of the study could improve the representation of Ghanaian women in senior-level positions, reduce gender gap, and increase equal opportunity, which has prevailed for years in organizations. The social change impact of the study may benefit organizational performance, the future generation of Ghanaian women aspiring to leadership positions, and women leaders will have the ability to effectuate social change.

Payment:

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, there will be no payment or reimbursement for being part of the study.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal data for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Tagging A-T will be used in place of names. All electronic data will be kept secured by password protection and data encryption. Data will be kept for a period of at least five years and will be destroyed as required by the university.

Contact and Questions:

If you have questions now or at a later time, you may contact the researcher via email at dorothy.appiah@waldenu.edu.

If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the Research Participant Advocate at my university at 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 04-30-20-0589140 and it expires on April 29th , 2021.

Please print and keep a copy or save this consent form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

If you feel you understand, please indicate your consent to participate by replying to this email with the words "I Consent."

Signature of Researcher _____ Date _____

Thank you,

Dorothy Appiah

Ph.D. Candidate, Walden University

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Date: _____

Time of Interview: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Interview Questions:

1. Tell me more about the challenges you encounter in pursuit of your professional career as a women leader?

2. Can you describe how Ghanaian women leaders view their opportunities in key leadership position and decision making?

3. How would you describe a woman leader compared to a man leader?

4. What factors do you believe encourage or discourage Ghanaian women in key leadership positions in any of these organizations?

5. Can you describe how learning or education heightened your ability in deciding to pursue a senior-level position?

6. If you knew then what you know now in leadership and career advancement, describe any decision that you would change and why?

7. Can you describe how you feel about work dynamics, task, wages, time flexibilities, and promotions in these organizations?

8. What resources or support do you think can be implemented that would contribute to improving women's progression to all leadership positions?

9. Do you intend to stay at your current position and organization in the long-term if there is an improvement in the situation?

10. Is there anything else you feel like discussing with me that has not been captured or addressed under this topic?

Closing Statement

Thank you for your time and effort to make this interview a success. I will send a copy of the transcription to you for the accuracy of all information given. I will also send you a completed copy of the research study once it is finalized.