

**MAINSTREAMING THE FUNCTIONAL CONCERNS OF FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN  
BASIC SCHOOLS IN THE AKUAPEM SOUTH MUNICIPALITY OF GHANA:  
ASPECTS OF PERFORMANCE AND CHALLENGES IN A MALE DOMINATED  
CULTURE.**

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**ABSTRACT:** This research conducted in Ghana suggests that the world is witnessing an emerging trend in increased female leadership abilities in predominantly male dominated environments, which tends to inhibit the development. This article addresses issues that give rise to this phenomenon using data collected through survey and interviews in a sequential and explanatory mixed method approach, and administered in the Akuapem South Municipality of Ghana. The researchers used purposive sampling to select 50 female leaders, and they analysed the data quantitatively and qualitatively using percentages and themes respectively. The study started with the theory that, prejudices associate female leadership in basic schools in the Akuapem South Municipality with attendant stereotyping, name calling and finger pointing, and these present challenges that affect the performance of female heads. The study sought to identify and mainstream the performance and challenges of females in educational leadership in the context of male oriented cultural environment. The results show that female heads have ability to work as leaders to achieve goals on equal terms as their male counterparts. There is evidence however that female heads have some peculiar challenges as in: male dominance, threats and harassments from men, discrimination and interference from domestic responsibilities. These are generally expressed in acceptance and support problems from family, subordinates and other school administrators.

**KEYWORDS:** educational leadership; gender inequalities; gender mainstreaming; task-oriented leadership; female prejudices; cultural biases.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The dictates of the social structure of Ghana makes women under-represented and not very well

acknowledged in policy making and leadership roles at the national level. In the Akuapem South municipality, male dominance has characterized educational policy making and leadership. This phenomenon has been sustained by the traditional patrimonial inheritance culture of the Akuapems.

This situation puts female heads of schools in the municipality at a disadvantage especially as the Ghana Education Service (GES) does not formulate management capacity programs to develop the capacity of heads of schools to handle the challenges in administration which require leadership capabilities to deal with. Thus, some of these heads until now have been functioning purely in management and administrative capacities devoid of any meaningful leadership training.

In Ghana however, some women have acquired leadership potentials through formal education. Yet gender inequalities still exist in the Ghanaian society, especially among the Akuapems where this phenomenon thrives on culture. These gender inequalities, especially the exclusion of females from undertaking certain duties and responsibilities inhibits them from discovering their leadership potentials, and functioning effectively at this role. The discrimination exist in unequal access to education, employment, unequal payment for equal work, unfair prerogatives in favor of males irrespective of parental authority as well as unbalanced access to leadership positions, and the associated derogatory comments about the few females who attain leadership positions (see Kusi & Mensah, 2014; Mensah, 2007).

The discussions and arguments in this paper deals with these enervating phenomenon and they point to the everyday issues and problems that female heads of schools face in the performance of their duties as leaders of their various schools in a male dominated profession and culture, such as stereotyping and finger pointing.

Existing knowledge on gender is replete with wide information that threads almost on cultural relativism. This paper however takes the flip side of this huge subject and seeks to factor an appreciation of cultural belief systems from a generic point of view into the gender debate. This is a phenomenon that is discounted in the debate or sometimes muted due to the sensitive nature of the subject. For this reason, some societies are not open for discussions on it. Under these circumstances as pertains in the Akuapem South Municipality of Ghana, the gender-related cultural practice upholds the patrimonial system of inheritance as discussed previously. This means for example that females cannot inherit from their fathers directly. A younger male sibling would directly inherit from the father and his views on family issues take precedence over the older female sibling. Besides the children of the elder female sibling do not inherit from the mother's family and neither are their views on family issues counted. The dynamics of this mode of inheritance permeates every aspect of social life, including the socioeconomic status of females. Both males and females grow in this cultural environment and are groomed to see these beliefs and practices as a norm and therefore do not raise questions.

Thus, in spite of the educational achievements of females, certain societies still have some prejudices against their professional abilities, and culture accounts for these prejudices. But the efforts of governments of these societies to change this phenomenon have not been adequate in

terms of coming up with legislation that will actively stem these prejudices along the lines of affirmative action in the U.S. or Equal Opportunity laws or Health and Safety Regulations in the U.K.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Are men simply better and more natural leaders, or are women's career compromised by their responsibility at home? These functional concerns of female leadership constitute the central theme for this study, as it seeks to investigate these issues facing women in educational leadership in the Akuapem South Municipality of the Eastern Region of Ghana. In recent times females have increasingly been given a good representation in leadership positions. The number of women in managerial or administrative positions has risen from 18% to 46% in the last thirty years (Eagly & Carli, 2003). There is also ample evidence to show that women play a very significant role in the socio-economic and political development in nations of the world over. Examples can be drawn from Angela Merkel as the German Chancellor, Christiana Lagarde from the International Monetary Fund, and Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, the Argentine President. Like their male counterparts, female office holders come from all parts of ideological spectrum and depend on support from diverse and often divided people (Jaquette, 2000).

In spite of this view, arguments abound regarding the effectiveness of females in leadership. Cultural beliefs and stereotypes still prescribe that males are more capable of being effective leaders than females. Females are then looked down in the context of claims that females are greatly vulnerable than men. This attitude has been the result of a universally accepted belief that has persisted since the early 1900s as first discussed by Havelock Ellis (1894), and still perpetuated in certain parts of the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In the Akuapem South Municipality, for instance, there are females who play key roles in the educational sector as compared to men, but it is perceived that females in the educational sector are underrepresented in leadership positions as argued similarly by Kusi and Mensah (2014) in their study of the Sunyani municipality. The sources of this belief run deep in the traditions and cultural heritage that cannot be easily assuaged and eradicated. Consequently, several advocacy activities on gender mainstreaming have taken place in Ghana. The most prominent of which is the 1995 Beijing Action Platform, agreed upon at the UN's Fourth World Conference on women (Hawkesworth, 2006; Dean, 2006). In spite of these advocacy activities, it is still difficult to find solution to the problem of male dominance due to its roots in the culture and traditions of the society. So the problem that underpins the current study is that *despite the numerous gender advocacy programmes, female prejudices still associate female leadership in basic schools in the Akuapem South Municipality with its attendant stereotyping, name calling, and finger pointing. These present challenges that affect the performance of female heads.*

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework for the study centres on:

#### **Gender Differences and Leadership**

Eagly and Johnson (2003) have claimed that women, more than men manifest relatively interpersonally oriented and democratic styles. They argue also that men manifest relatively task oriented and autocratic styles more than women in their respective

approaches to leadership. They claim further that male and female managers do not necessarily differ in their tendencies to manifest interpersonal and task oriented styles. However, in a study of managers by Maccoby and Jackline (1978), these researchers have argued that women manifest more democratic (or participatory) style, and a less autocratic (or directive) style than men in leadership. Eagly and Johnson (2003) sum up their position by claiming that among managers, sex differences are detected only in a fairly narrow range of leadership behaviors that can be assessed by measures of autocratic–democratic tendencies. This meta-analysis associates some autocratic–democratic assumptions about sex differences such as:

- a. the greater social skills of females may have facilitated their collaborative, democratic leadership behavior, and
- b. such behavior might have been especially advantageous for women because it tends to placate subordinates and peers who might otherwise have been resistant to female leadership.

This issue of whether women differ from men in their leadership styles is addressed mostly in organisational studies. Vecchio (2002) has questioned the value of such research because he believes that these differential leadership styles are not regulated by job descriptions. This therefore leads to problems of measurement. Contrary to this position, Eagly and Carli (2007) believe that such research is important because it leads to the development of insight and understanding of the issues. These issues include perspectives on:

**a. leadership and gender differences**

Task-oriented leadership is a behavioral approach in which the leader focuses on the tasks that need to be performed in order to meet certain goals and standards. Burke, Stagl, Klein, Goodwin, Salas, & Halpin, (2006) have theorized that, groups that perceive their leaders as more task-oriented achieve higher levels of task accomplishment. Most research are conducted to distinguish between task-oriented style or initiation of structure and interpersonally oriented style or consideration. A second strand of distinction relates to inclusion and exclusion of subordinates by leaders in decision making.

Examining sex differences and similarities in these styles, Eagly and Johnson (2003) reviewed 162 studies that yielded comparisons of females and males on leadership styles. Approaching their study from an exploratory frame, Eagly and Johnson (2003) analysed their data on the presence and absence of sex differences. Their findings showed that leadership styles were somewhat gender-stereotypic but they also agreed that the effectiveness of these leadership styles depends on the context of the activities (see also Foels, Driskell, Mullen & Salas (2000); Fondas (2000) & Gastil (1999)).

**b. cultural Biases**

Although the demand for education is generally high for both sexes, preferences for educating boys still persist. This preference reflects traditional stereotypes of women's role, and the perception that boys have greater prospects for formal-sector employment than girls. Women bear a larger share of domestic chores than men do, and the perception

that these everyday household chores are womanly still persist. Consequently mothers usually assign domestic tasks to their daughters than to their sons. For example, Van Engen (2001) has observed that teenage girls in Ghana work longer hours than boys, whether or not they are enrolled in school. But it is important to note that heavy domestic responsibilities interfere with schooling, impact negatively on performance and in extreme cases, lead to school withdrawal.

Grant and Hallman (2008) have also noted that pregnancy can also precipitate the exit of females from school. Pregnant primary and senior high school students are expelled from school, and they might experience difficulties re-enrolling after giving birth. Although female students at institutions of higher learning are not expelled from school when they get pregnant, they are nonetheless often subjected to penalties like losing their boarding house privileges. It is important to note that male students are not punished for impregnating these girls. These accounts underpin the differential treatment and perception of females and males which premise the assumptions contained in research question.

### **Challenges of Women in Leadership**

The assumptions of research question 1 (see below) as discussed above, leads to the examination of the theme on the challenges of women in leadership which is also captured by research question 2 (see below). Zame, Warren & Respress (2008) have argued that heads of basic schools lack professional preparation in leadership because the GES does not formulate management capacity programs to develop the leadership skills of heads of schools, and this is a major challenge to administration. As a result like males, women in leadership positions face a number of challenges. Lynn Banis (2011) has highlighted some issues that women need to pay attention to as the will to delegate and negotiate, balancing emotions with some peaceful interludes, getting help, confidence for being heard, and appropriate cultural style.

The fact that women tend to face more obstacles on their way up the ladder has been established by Ruderman and Ohlott (2002). Their research shows the unique challenges women face as they develop as managers and leaders. After conducting 61 interviews and collecting 276 surveys, they discovered 5 themes characterizing the challenges facing female managers, but which are vital for female developmental needs. These are: authenticity, wholeness, self-clarity, connection and agency. Among the many career barriers women encounter at all levels are prejudice, resistance to women's leadership, leadership style issues and family demands. For organisations that are keen to develop female leaders, these obstacles women face must be addressed (see Eagly & Carli (2007)).

### **Purpose**

The main purpose of this study is to *identify and mainstream the performance and challenges of females in educational leadership in the context of male oriented cultural environment*. This places the gender debate in the context of cultural belief systems with a rationale to establish the extent to which the phenomenon of female prejudices as product of culture stifles the performance of female leaders in educational administration and management.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of this study are to:

- a. assess the performance of females in educational leadership against perceptions of leadership abilities of men in the Akuapem-South Municipality.
- b. determine the challenges which female school heads face in their leadership of schools in the Akuapem South Municipality.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- a. what is the nature and level of performance of females as opposed to the performance of males in educational leadership in the Akuapem North Municipality?
- b. what challenges do female school heads face in their leadership of schools in the Akuapem North Municipality?

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research used both quantitative and qualitative methods to ascertain the effectiveness and challenges of women in educational leadership in basic schools in the Akuapem South Municipality.

### **The Research Design**

From the submission above, this study used the sequential and explanatory mixed method approach in conducting the research because it is far more comprehensive and exhaustive than dealing with the research questions with a single research method. Thus, from the point of view of the research methods used for this study, and the aim of this research, the researchers used the quantitative and qualitative research approaches. These approaches were underpinned by a survey and interview methods respectively. The researchers used the survey data as the baseline whereas the interview data was used to support the issues as they emerged. The qualitative approach also led to an in-depth investigation into the phenomena of female leadership in a male dominated culture (see Hoepfl, 1997).

### **Population and description of the study area**

The study was done in the Akuapem South Municipality which is one of the twenty-one districts in the Eastern Region of Ghana. It comprises two constituencies, two electoral areas and two paramount traditional areas. The municipality has a total population of 123,501 which consist of 60,907 males and 62,594 females, with an estimated annual population growth rate of 2.1% per year, using the Eastern Region figures (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). Besides, agriculture is the major occupation of women in the municipality followed by occupations in education, health, social work and finance. The area has 146 public basics schools comprising 62 Junior High Schools (JHS) and 84 primary schools.

The target population for this study comprised all the women who occupy leadership positions in both public primary and junior high schools in the Akuapem South Municipality. The population consisted of 50 headmistresses and 30 assistant headmistresses of public basic schools in 7 circuits

of the municipality (see Table 1 below). These include Adoagyire ‘A’, Adoagyire ‘B’, Nsaba, Nsawam Central, Pakro, Djankrom and Aburi.

Current Job Position	Frequency	Percent (%)
JHS Headmistress	19	38.0
JHS Assistant Headmistress	10	20.0
Primary Headmistresses	11	22.0
Assist. Primary Headmistresses	10	20.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Fieldwork (2013).*

**KEY:** JHS – Junior High Schools

**Table 1: Current Job Position of Respondents**

Table 1 gives information on the current job positions or schedules of the respondents. Nineteen (38.0%) of the respondents were headmistresses in junior high schools whereas, 10 (20.0%) of them were assistant headmistresses. Likewise, 11 (22.0%) headmistresses and 10 (20.0%) assistant headmistresses were leaders in primary schools. These figures support Jaquete (2000) who stated that, there is ample evidence to show that women play a significant role in the socio-economic and political development of a nation.

### **Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

The researchers used purposive sampling to select a total number of 50 women in leadership positions which included female heads and their assistants in basic schools within the municipality (see Seidu, 2007). This comprised 30 female head teachers and 20 female assistant head teachers. The sample can further be divided into 23 females from JHS and 27 females from primary schools (see Merriam, 2001).

### **Research Methods and Instrumentation**

The research methods used for this study are interviews and survey. Structured questionnaire and interview guide were constructed and used as the research instruments to collect data (see Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Greeff, 2002). The researchers also used semi-structured interview to gain in-depth information on participants’ perceptions of female leadership in the schools in the municipality. Also as part of the instrumentation, structured questionnaire was used because the entire population was highly literate or well-educated.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

For face validation, the instruments were given to colleague lecturers to scrutinize them. Regarding content validation, the instruments were given to experts in the area including retired head teachers, female lecturers, and people with adequate knowledge in gender issues. Thereafter, the researchers visited the various schools and administered the questionnaires which were collected back between 1.00 p.m. and 2.00 p.m. when most of the respondents in the sampled schools had almost closed from classes. In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the

research instrument, the test and re-test method was used to determine the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire instrument at an interval of one month between the first and second. This produced reliability coefficient (r) of 0.752 indicating that the instrument was relatively reliable.

## **Data Presentation and Analysis**

The data is presented and analysed under two basic themes. These are:

### **Comparison between female and male performance in educational leadership**

This theme is derived from the research question: *what is the nature and level of performance of females as opposed to the performance of males in educational leadership?* The data for this question was obtained from responses to the questionnaire used for the study. Qualitative data from interviews are used to support the quantitative data. The data that was collected to answer this research question which is represented in Table 2 (below) shows that female school heads do and can work under pressure in comparative terms with their male counterparts. Furthermore, a majority of the respondents hold a view that female leaders have equal achievement capabilities just like their male colleagues. The data from the interview supports this view by expressing it thus:

We are known for our emotional involvement everywhere, and that encourages individual women to share responsibility and contribute to goals. It all depends on the type of matter and situation. Female heads who are sensitive always achieve better results" (Assistant Headmistress 9).

It can be argued from this data that male school heads are not better administrators than female heads. When this theme was extended to include administration and management the data was not very consistent with the view expressed earlier. That is, a good number of respondents 9 (18%) agree, and 8 (16%) were undecided that male heads are better than females at educational administration and management. However, a greater number 25 (50%) held the view that male heads are not better than females in this area. The interview data expressed this view as: "certainly, some women leaders are more strategic, forward-looking when it comes to management and administration. They really show their competitiveness" (Headmistress 3). Then, another said, "women are ahead of men with regard to ability to think analytically, strategically and creatively" (Assistant Headmistress 1).

Table 2 below illustrates this comparison between the abilities of female and male leadership in education.

<b>Statement</b>	<b>S A</b>		<b>A</b>		<b>N</b>		<b>D</b>		<b>SD</b>	
	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>MUPF</b>	0	0.0	1	20.0	4	8.0	33	66.0	12	24.0
<b>MAGF</b>	0	0.0	5	10.0	6	12.0	36	72.0	3	6.0
<b>MBAF</b>	0	0.0	9	18.0	10	20.0	24	48.0	7	14.0
<b>MBEAM</b>	0	0.0	9	18.0	8	16.0	18	36.0	7	14.0
<b>MELF</b>	12	24.0	10	20.0	4	8.0	18	36.0	6	12.0

**Source:** Fieldwork (2013)

(N = 50)

### **KEY**

*SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree.*

MUPF = Males work under pressure than females

MAGF = Males achieve goals than females

MBAF = Males are better administrators than females

MBEAM = Males perform better in educational administration and management

MELF = Males are better educational leaders than females

**Table 2: Comparison of female-male performance in educational leadership**

Thus both the survey (48.0% to 90.0% of the respondents), and the interview deprecated the idea that male leaders surpassed female heads in educational administration and management or leadership. It has also been found that female heads could equally work under pressure and achieve goals. These findings are in consonance with Wallace (2008) who found in his study that, many women leaders are very passionate and are not too emotional to be effective. This also corroborates Goleman's (2006) assertion that most women just seem to have better emotional intelligence than men. Other studies by Eagly et al. (2003) revealed that, compared with male

leaders, female leaders are more transformational, and engage in more of the contingents reward. The findings also affirm Wilson's (2001) claim that men are autocratic.

### **Challenges of female leadership of schools**

This theme explored the research question: *what challenges do female school heads face in the leadership of schools?* The data reveals that female school heads face difficulties in gaining acceptance and support from their subordinates. A large number of respondents, 38 (76%) agreed that female school heads face difficulties in gaining acceptance and support from other administrators. One respondent in the interview indicated:

I encounter some problems in dealing with my subordinates. The men who work under me feel I'm a woman. At times they don't take my instructions. The day that I will complain about their attitudes towards work, the next day it will be worse (Headmistress 3).

The interview data indicated further that "some male subordinates do not cooperate whenever I delegate duties to them. They sometimes boldly tell me that they cannot do it. In fact, they make my work very difficult" (Headmistress 5). And another respondent added that "some of the subordinates are the pull her down type. Most of the time, the men prevent us from functioning effectively. At times, they resist us because they wish a man should be a leader" (Headmistress 7).

The study showed that the lack of family support and interference from domestic responsibilities is another key challenge to female heads. This is reflected in statements like:

there is a conflict. I don't have enough time to perform duties as a homemaker. As a woman at childbearing stage, I am concerned about catering for my children. Most husbands do not compromise when it comes to the performance of roles such as cooking, cleaning the house and caring for the children (Assistant Headmistress 7).

Another interview revealed that "there is always a problem at home with my husband when I came back from school. I always came home late. It is unacceptable because I am a woman coming from a place where cultural values and practices are deeply rooted" (Assistant Headmistress 6). Assistant Headmistress 4 also indicated that "sometimes, I get late to school even though I wake up early. I take care of chores and the children before going to school." Then also "sometimes you may have an important meeting to attend, but you have to do your work at home as a wife. It is even worse when a child is sick. This is really problematic. I won't deceive you. It has not been easy at all" (Headmistress 2). Another respondent also revealed that "my husband was against the woman leaving the home to even further education so I was suppressed for nineteen years. I believe the home making procedure conflicts with women's leadership roles" (Assistant Headmistress 5).

The data reveals the third challenge as stereotyping and discrimination from males. Again, the data shows that, 30 (60.0%) respondents admitted that women in educational leadership faced male dominance, threats and harassment from men. However, the survey data showed further that financial problems and lack of mentors are not really a challenge to female heads, but one respondent indicated in the interview that "without a mentor or role model, you cannot dream and

aspire to high position. I always listen to my mentors for advice to make some decisions. I wouldn't have been where I am without guidance from my mentor" (Assistant Headmistress 3). Similarly, the lack of professional training or preparation is not perceived as a major challenge to female heads as 28 (56%) respondents supported this view. Consequently, 40 (80%) respondents perceive no real or peculiar challenge to female heads in administration and management of schools. The data revealed that relocation is a challenge to female heads with 29 (58%) respondents supporting this. Table 3 below show the challenges of female heads in the Akuapem South Municipality.

<b>Statement</b>	<b>S A</b>		<b>A</b>		<b>N</b>		<b>D</b>		<b>SD</b>	
	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>A &amp; S sub.</b>	1	2.0	32	64.0	7	14.0	6	12.0	4	8.0
<b>A &amp; S ad.</b>	8	16.0	30	60.0	8	16.0	2	4.0	2	4.0
<b>FS &amp; DR</b>	6	12.0	29	58.0	3	6.0	11	22.0	1	2.0
<b>Disc. males.</b>	7	14.0	30	60.0	3	6.0	6	12.0	4	8.0
<b>Male DTH</b>	8	16.0	22	44.0	1	2.0	10	20.0	9	18.0
<b>Fin. Prob.</b>	0	0.0	16	32.0	1	2.0	33	66.0	0	0.0
<b>Lack of GM</b>	0	0.0	2	4.0	3	6.0	40	80.0	5	10.0
<b>Relocation R</b>	9	18.0	20	40.0	5	10.0	14	28.0	2	4.0
<b>Lack PL</b>	9	18.0	8	16.0	5	10.0	20	40.0	8	16.0
<b>Absence PC</b>	7	14.0	3	6.0	1	2.0	36	72.0	4	8.0

**Source: Fieldwork (2013)**

**Key**

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree.

A & S sub.	= Acceptance & support from subordinates
A & S ad.	= Acceptance & support from administrators
FS & DR	= Family support & domestic responsibilities
Disc. Males	= Discrimination from males
Male DTH	= Male dominance, threat & harassment
Fin. Prob.	= Financial Problems
Lack of GM	= Lack of good mentors
Relocation R	= Relocation to other regions
Lack PL	= Lack of preparation for leadership
Absence PC	= Absence of peculiar challenges

**Table 3: Challenges of female heads in the Akuapem South Municipality (N = 50)**

Thus, the survey established that male dominance, threat and harassment from men, discrimination, and interference from domestic responsibilities limit women in educational leadership. A significant number of 29 to 38 (58.0% to 76.0%) respondents held same views. The data also revealed that, female school heads lacked acceptance and support from family members, subordinates and other school administrators. It is also evident from the data that, female school heads have peculiar challenges. The headmistresses and the assistant headmistresses expressed similar sentiments during the interview. The data is consistent with Emory's (2008) observation that, many women lose their drive to excel due to the many obstacles met along the path of becoming a manager or leader. According to Emory (2008), these obstacles include discrimination, stereotyping, prejudice, family demands and lack of opportunities. Ruth (1987) also observed that, a married woman who works outside the home actually carries two jobs. There is evidence to show that most of the household labor is done by an adult woman (see Baxter, 2002).

These challenges compound the problem of female prejudices as captured by the data from research question 1, and thus makes it difficult for female leadership. Hence, it may be argued that given a level playground, female heads may perform equally well as their male counterparts if not better.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study has revealed the following:

- a. female school heads could equally work as leaders to achieve goals just as their male counterparts in the Akuapem South Municipality.
- b. female school heads in the Akuapem South Municipality have peculiar challenges. They face male dominance, threat and harassment from men, discrimination, and interference from domestic responsibilities.
- c. some female school heads in the municipality experience lack of acceptance and support from family members, subordinates and other school administrators.

However, from these key findings, the study concludes that leadership is not a preserved task for only men. Female leaders equally have the qualification, ability, the competence, commitment, confidence and the motivation for leadership roles. Thus, the data gathered confirms the focal theory for the study which postulates that the performance of female heads in the Akuapem North Municipality is impeded by a host of challenges. The data that was collected for the study unraveled a number of these challenges. Given a scenario where these challenges are removed, it is the conclusion of this study that female heads may even perform above the standards of their male counterparts even in a male dominated culture. This claim is made especially in the light of some aspects of the qualitative data that argues that female heads possess certain administrative qualities that are difficult to find in male heads. Some of these qualities include emotional intelligence, self awareness, humility and sensitivity. Argued thus, women should be given equal opportunities for leadership positions.

From the analysis and discussions that has ensued thus far, the paper makes a contribution to the gender debate on the subject of female prejudices at the work place but in the context of cultural belief systems. The study has shown that, in spite of how hard female leadership in basic schools in the Akuapem South Municipality work, their efforts are challenged by the society's cultural norms and practices. The associated idea is that it will take proactive efforts of both society and government through instruments such as legislation and citizens' education programmes to ultimately remove female prejudices, especially in a culturally typical male dominated environment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

- a. gender-based organizations, traditional institutions and the media in Ghana should campaign and work towards a cultural shift to encourage women to aspire for leadership positions.
- b. the Ghana Education Service and gender-based organizations should periodically organize leadership training programmes for women to prepare them professionally for leadership positions.
- c. women in leadership positions in Ghana including female school heads should institute mentorship scheme or program for school girls and a debriefing programme on male dominance for school boys. Such programmes will propel women to attain leadership positions and at the same time change male attitudes towards female leadership over time.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited in two ways. First, some respondents were newly appointed heads and were not therefore very experienced. Second, the population for the study is solely female heads of basic schools in the Akuapem North Municipality. This has important implication for the validity of the data, and therefore also for the conclusions drawn due to respondents' bias. This implies that the data is skewed to female views without any perspectives from their male counterparts. In another strand of this argument, the sample size did not cover female school heads in second cycle and private educational

institutions in the municipality. These limit the extent to which the conclusions reached in the study can be generalized even for the municipality.

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