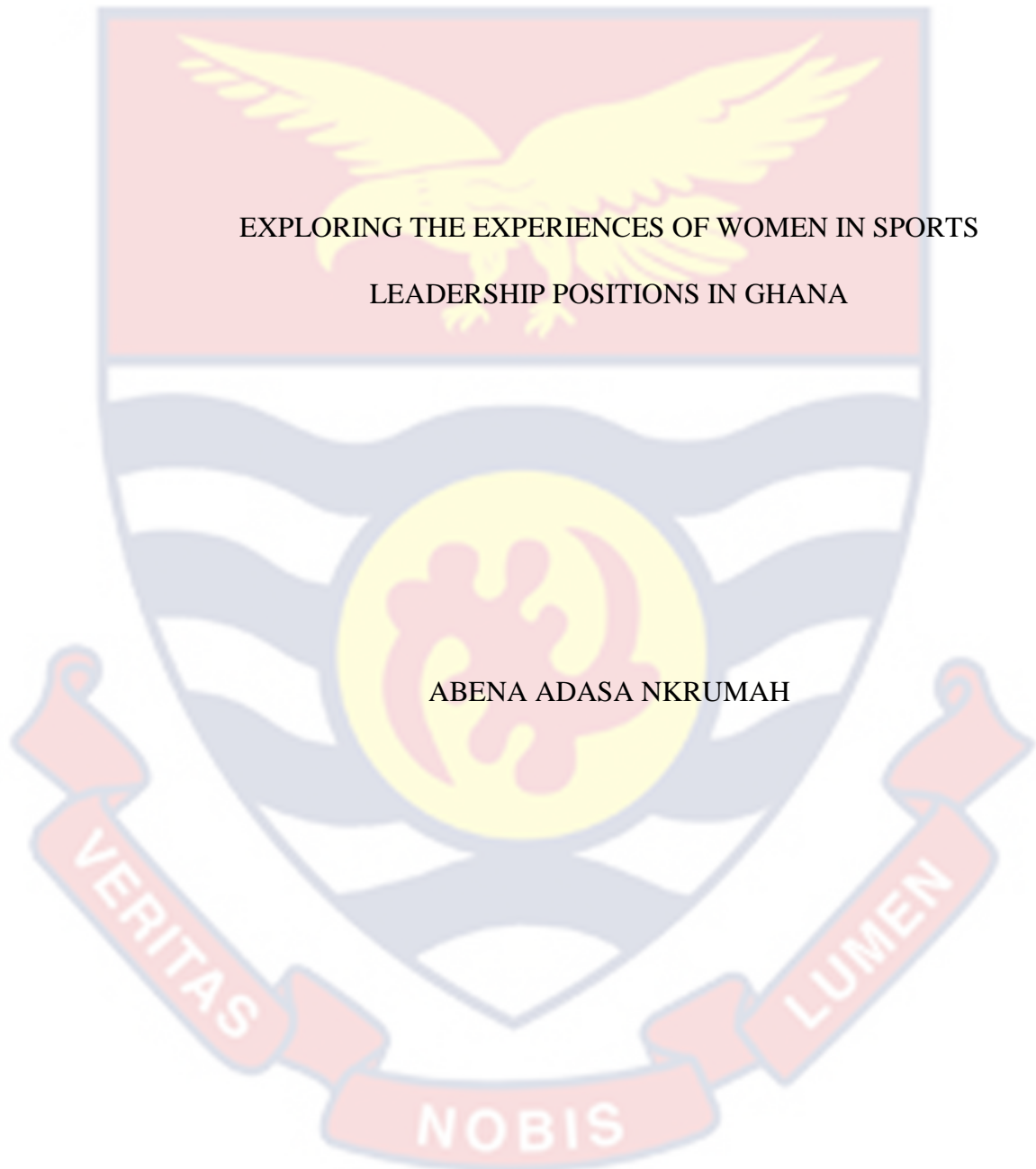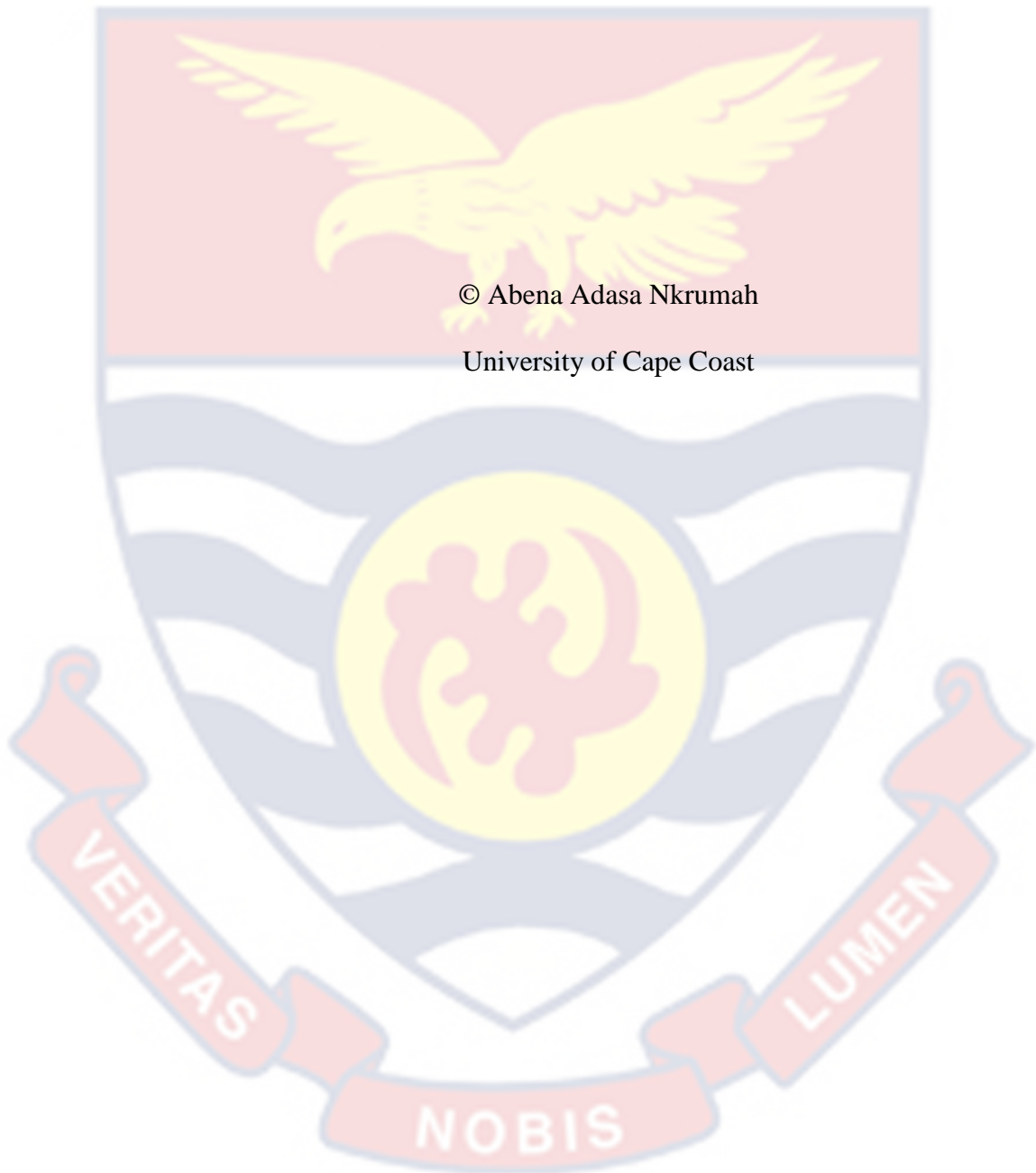UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

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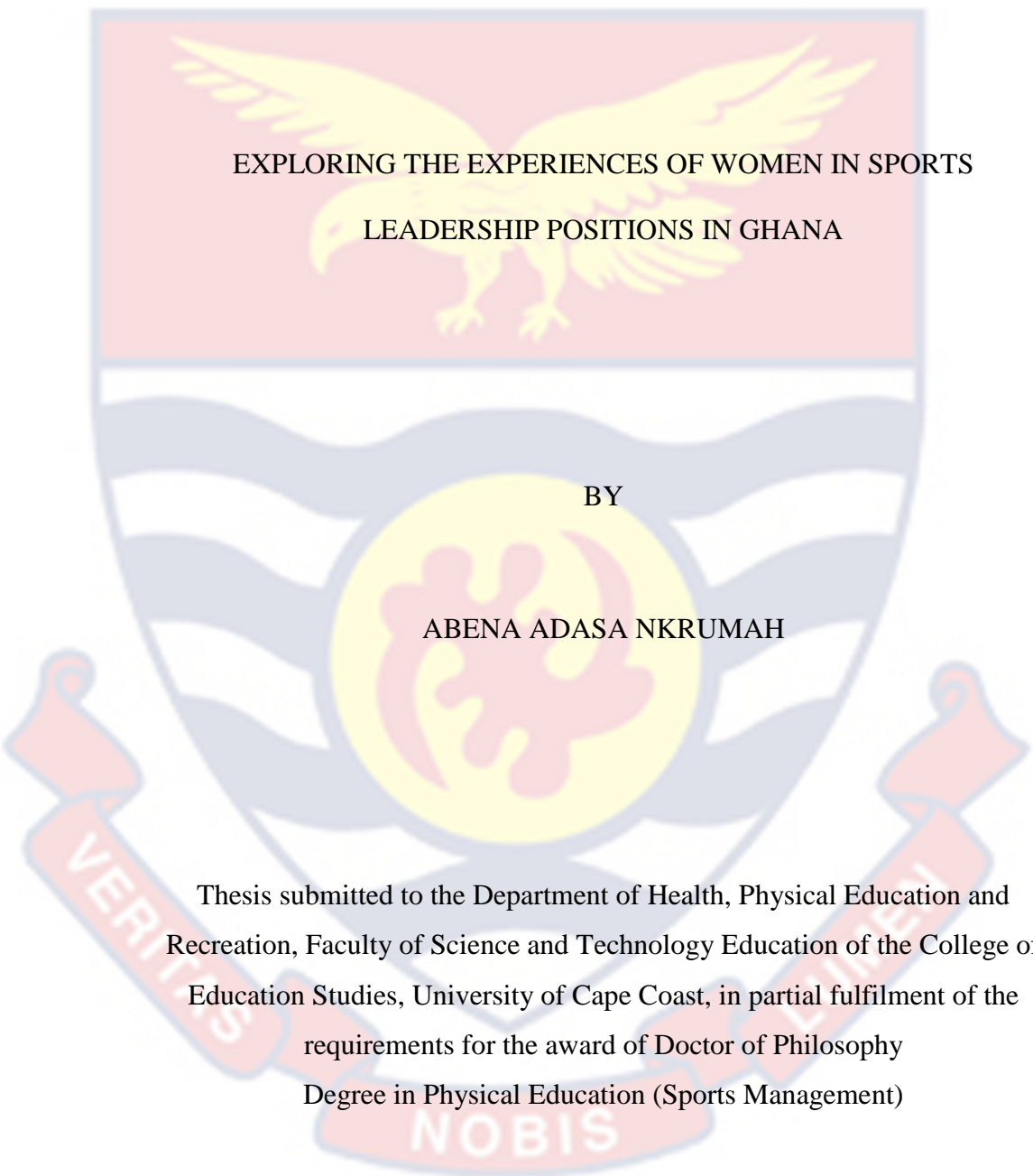
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EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN SPORTS

LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN GHANA

BY

ABENA ADASA NKRUMAH

Thesis submitted to the Department of Health, Physical Education and
Recreation, Faculty of Science and Technology Education of the College of
Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy
Degree in Physical Education (Sports Management)

NOVEMBER 2022

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature………………………   Date…………………

Name: Abena Adasa Nkrumah

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature………………   Date…………………

Name: Prof. Daniel Apaak

Co-Supervisor's Signature………………………   Date…………………….

Name: Dr. Prosper Narteh Ogum

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the experiences of women in sports leadership positions in the Ghanaian sports industry. The study adopted an interpretive research paradigm. The study further adopted the use of the phenomenological research design framework. A total of 13 respondents were selected using purposive, and snowball sampling approaches for the in-depth interviews. Eight participants were selected for the focus group discussions via convenience sampling. The data was collected using interview guides and analysed with the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). First, the data analysis identified that the barriers affecting women's involvement in sports leadership are individual mindsets, structural barriers, and institutional barriers. Again, the study found that determination, work-life balance, access to opportunities, socio-cultural stagnation, and role incongruity characterise the nexus of personal, socio-economic and cultural factors that influence women's participation in sports leadership. It was also realised that transcending perceived barriers of involvement, positive professional experiences, and career development opportunities sparked interest and inspired current Ghanaian women sports leaders. The proposed strategies to improve women's participation in sports leadership include leadership training, and development, organisational support for leadership diversity, equal access to opportunities, and social support that targets youthful leadership in sports. The study recommends that policymakers should create a new National Sports Policy that capitalizes on the strengths of contemporary evolved sports culture, and current gender issues to mitigate the loopholes and concerns raised in past policy and legislation.
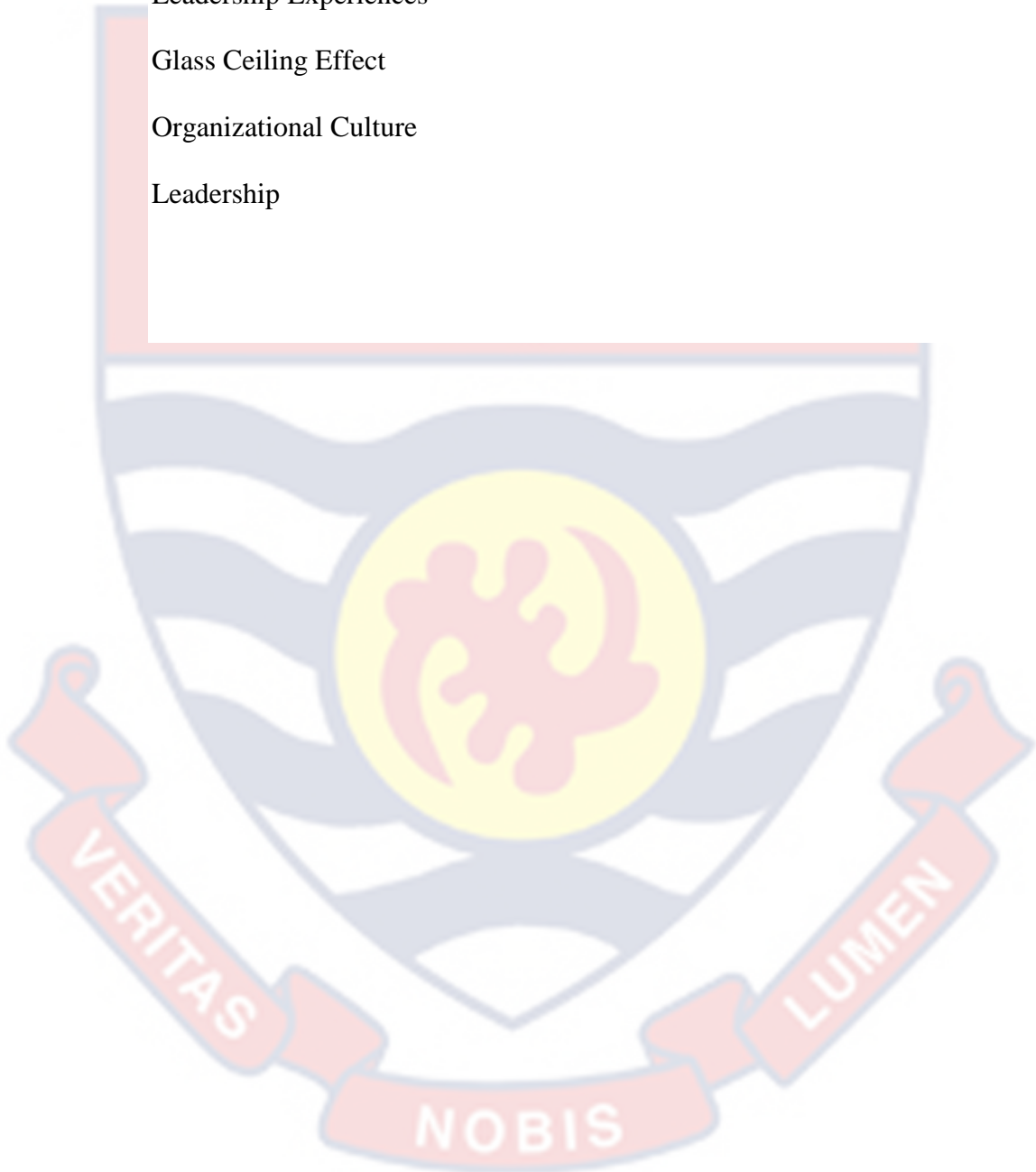
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KEYWORDS

Leadership Growth

Progression Approaches

Leadership Experiences

Glass Ceiling Effect

Organizational Culture

Leadership

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DEDICATION

To Mary Afful of blessed memory

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Throughout history, women from diverse backgrounds have faced significant challenges in their efforts to attain equality in society, particularly in the realm of sports (Tsikata, Rodriguez & Ampofo, 2015). The struggle for parity has been intense and persistent, which is unsurprising considering that, for many decades, women encountered restricted legal rights and fewer career opportunities compared to their male counterparts. Traditionally, cultural, religious, and other social constructs within the Ghanaian context have constrained women's rights and roles, making it challenging for them to break through and assume leadership positions in settings beyond the domestic sphere (Pippa & Inglehart, 2003; Tsikata & Ampofo, 2015).

The historical challenge of gender inequality in sports involvement and leadership positions traces back to ancient Greece, where organized sporting activities for women were nonexistent (History of Women in Sports, 1997). Even at the inaugural ceremony of the first modern Olympic Games in 1896, women were notably absent, and they were not afforded the opportunity to compete (Deborah & Walker, 2008). The official inclusion of women in the Olympic Games took an extended period, reflecting the slow progress in recognizing their role in sports. This reluctance to embrace women's participation also extended to leadership roles, with the first appointment of a woman to the International Olympic Committee occurring in 1981, nearly a century after its establishment (Mwisukha & Rintaugu, 2013). The prolonged struggle for women to secure leadership positions in the sports industry

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indicates that their concerns were only acknowledged by those in power after several decades. Consequently, Ghanaian women face a formidable challenge in breaking through these barriers to attain leadership roles in the field of sports.

Even though there are several studies over the years that have documented females in leadership positions and how leadership is enacted and experienced, there are still more questions than answers (Burton, 2015; Njororai, 2015; Njororai & Mwisukha, 2003; Pfister, 2010; Pippa & Inglehart, 2004; Tsikata & Ampofo, 2015). This is not surprising because the sporting world throughout history has been labelled as a male-dominated or mainly a masculine endeavour (Pfister, 2010). In effect, the current sporting industry is a gendered space that often privileges men and masculinity, and this privilege is often perpetuated through forms of objectification of females in sports (Burton, 2015). By implication, equity within the sporting world is one-sided.

Despite the increased opportunities for girls and women to participate in sports, there is still a noticeable lack of representation in leadership roles, as noted by Burton (2015). This assertion aligns with Shaw's (2016) argument that women face underrepresentation across various levels of sports, including management, media, commercial activities, coaching, and decision-making at local, national, regional, and international levels. The persistent underrepresentation is not surprising given the historical context of women being in subordinate roles to men in sports. It is likely that addressing this issue may require policy initiatives, such as affirmative action, to boost the presence of women in leadership positions within the sports industry.

The research conducted by the Global Association of International Sports Federations in 2013 supports this claim. The study involved 94 full members and 21 associates, revealing that out of 107 leadership positions within various international sporting organizations, only 18 were held by females. This included 12 (11%) female General Secretaries and 6 (6%) female Presidents. Additionally, out of a total of 1,550 executive committee positions, males overwhelmingly occupied 1,342 (87%), while females held only 208 (13%). These statistics underscore the existing gender disparity in leadership roles within the global sports community.

The study findings of Njororai and Mwisukha (2003) and Njororai (2015) in Kenya suggest a similar trend regarding the under-representation of females in sports. For example, the composition of the national sports organisationals executive committees in Kenya showed that a majority of men (91.9%) than women (9.1%) sit in those committees. It is evidence from the findings that there is an imbalance between males and females regarding leadership positions. Masteralexis, Barr, and Hums (2012) state that it is difficult to keep track of data on women in leadership positions in the sports sector on a worldwide scale. There are not many women in national leadership roles in sports, according to a gender analysis research by Friedrich & Mason (2018) and the Institute of Local Government on political appointments in Ghana through 2017. This absence is seen to have the potential to strengthen males in decision-making, which would impede the progression of women into leadership positions in sports. VyasDoorgapersad and Surujlal (2018) carried out a research looking at gender equality in the South African sports industry to support this claim. The results of the survey show that there is a

lack of female representation in leadership and governance roles, and this is linked to the belief that sports are primarily a male-dominated industry.

While leadership appears to be an "entitlement" for men, women have to work hard to fight through several factors to prove their leadership abilities. The role of culture, school, and parents is critical in orienting women into sports leadership (M'mbaha, 2012). Similarly, marriage and motherhood have also been seen as detrimental to the progress of women into sports leadership (Robertson, 2010). Women turned to be overburdened with multiple roles (childbirth, household chores, parental control, caretakers), leading to family-work conflicts (Eddy & Cox, 2008). Other studies have equally outlined factors, such as the hiring process, promotion bias, exclusionary tactics employed by the dominant group, lack of self-esteem, interest level, and pay disparities as causal factors. It can be discerned from these afore-mentioned studies, the multiplicity of factors that appear to be militating against the quest of women to be re-assertive regarding leadership positions in sports. In essence, for women to reassert themselves and claim leadership positions in a male-dominated sports leadership environment, pragmatics steps are needed.

This explains why diverse ingenious mechanisms, such as seminars as awareness creation tools, complemented by the provision of scholarships to women who are intellectually sound, associations formed to motivate and encourage women, have become a common practice. This is not surprising because it empowers females to intellectually compete with their male counterparts at various levels of leadership positions.

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In the Ghanaian setting, Tsikata's (2009) policy document serves as a guide for empowering women across various social, political, and economic spheres. This blueprint offers women an opportunity to showcase their capabilities in all aspects of life, contributing to a collective effort in nation-building. Despite the importance of this empowerment initiative, there is limited knowledge about its impact on the involvement of women in leadership roles within the field of sports in the Ghanaian socio-cultural context. Consequently, there is a necessity to investigate and understand the extent to which the empowerment process has influenced the participation of women in sports leadership positions.

Statement of the Problem

In Ghana, the female population surpasses that of males, significantly impacting the country's socio-economic development (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). However, a noticeable trend emerges in leadership roles where men predominantly hold positions. This underrepresentation of women in leadership can be ascribed to gender inequality in accessing leadership opportunities or the challenges women encounter in striving for leadership roles (Harris, 2019; Leung, 2018; Konrad & Kramer, 2006; Singh & Naidoo, 2017). Consequently, this phenomenon results in many women with leadership potential hesitating to pursue such positions.

Implicit in the argument is that women possessing leadership qualities and actively engaging in decision-making processes have been empirically demonstrated to enhance decision-making to the same extent as men in comparable roles. Sossou (2011) contends that for society to function optimally, equal representation of both men and women in development

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processes, public policy-making, political participation, and decision-making is essential. Consequently, various organizations, including feminist groups, are taking initiatives to empower women for active involvement in decision-making across diverse domains (Burton, 2015). Recognizing this need, several nations, Ghana included, have taken strides to establish ministerial portfolios, gender desk portfolios, and mainstream gender issues. These endeavours aim to reshape perceptions about women and address impediments to their development (African Center for Women/Economic Commission for Africa, 1998; Dzradosi, Agyekum & Ocloo, 2018; Republic of Ghana, 1992). Nonetheless, despite persistent efforts to empower women in decision-making, particularly in sports, challenges endure at all levels within the sporting domain.

Supporting this assertion, a research investigation undertaken by Mwisukha and Rintaugu (2013) proposes that the problem of the underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles is particularly widespread in African nations. The key inquiry arising from this observation is whether the imbalanced gender ratio in such positions can be attributed to factors such as competence, academic qualifications, intelligence, and personality distinctions. The gender gap study conducted by the World Economic Forum in 2015 and Prize in 2008 offers concise responses to this inquiry. Their research outcomes disclosed that despite a higher proportion of both women and men possessing university degrees, women consistently surpassed men in academic accomplishments. Several researchers, including Brackett, Rivers, Shiffman, and Lerner (2006); Costa, Terracciano, and McCrae (2001); Epitropaki (2015); and Zopiatis and Constanti (2012),

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consistently found that traits associated with effective leadership, such as extraversion, openness to experience, empathy, emotional intelligence, and conscientiousness, are more prevalent in women than in men.

In the context of sports in Ghana, the eligibility for leadership roles is not exclusively determined by academic qualifications in sports management. Any individual expressing interest, actively participating, or being a member of a sports association at any level is considered eligible to vie for a position within any sports organization (Mensah, 2019). Despite the fact that academic qualifications are not a prerequisite for holding leadership roles, the representation of women in senior leadership positions is notably low (Wise, 2019). Gourmania's (2019) study, which evaluated various organizations, revealed that a relatively small percentage of women occupy higher leadership positions, particularly in coaching, at district, regional, polytechnic, university, or national association levels.

There is no female representation in the decision-making bodies of many of these organisations. The majority of men who occupy administrative and management roles create an unequal power dynamic between the sexes in sports leadership. As Burton (2003) noted, it is expected that this discrepancy will affect sports' ability to grow sustainably. This disparity makes sense since women are more suited to manage certain women-related problems than males are. They may draw on their personal experiences and sophisticated knowledge to tackle issues that are intimately tied to women. These problems are more likely to be effectively addressed and remedied when women take on leadership positions.

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The extraordinary contributions made by women in sports organizations worldwide are remarkable. Numerous studies conducted both in Western societies and Africa, including works by Adriaanse & Schofield (2014), Burton (2015), Cosentino (2017), Masteralexis, Barr & Hums (2011), Moore, Parkhouse & Konrad (2001), Mwisukha & Rintaugu (2013), O'Neil & Hopkins (2015), O'Neil, Hopkins & Bilimoria (2015), Pfister (2010), and Shaw & Frisby (2006), consistently demonstrate the significant influence of women in decision-making roles within sports organizations. However, in Ghana, there is a lack of research exploring the role of women in leadership positions and their impact on decision-making and related issues. This absence in the literature suggests a gap in our understanding of this aspect in the Ghanaian context. It is against this backdrop that this current study intends to fill the gap in question. This current study seeks to explore the experiences of women holding higher leadership positions in Ghanaian Sports.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore experiences, leadership growth, and progression approaches adopted by women working within higher professional sports leadership organisations in Ghana. The study employs a hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative research approach to explore the phenomenon in question.

Research Objectives

The research objectives seek to

1. Examine the barriers that prevent Ghanaian women's involvement in sports leadership positions.

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2. Explore the nexus of cultural, socio-economic, and personal factors that affect women's participation in sports leadership in Ghana.

3. Determine the professional experiences, leadership growth, and progression approaches adopted by women working within professional sports organisations in Ghana.

4. Examine the strategies that can help to improve women's participation in sports leadership positions in Ghana.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the barriers that prevent Ghanaian women's involvement in sports leadership positions?

2. How does the nexus of cultural, socio-economic, and personal factors affect women's participation in sports leadership in Ghana?

3. What are some of the professional experiences, leadership growth, and progression approaches adopted by women in uppermost leadership positions working within professional sports organisations in Ghana?

4. What strategies can help improve women's participation in sports leadership positions in Ghana?

Delimitations

The study was delimited to women holding top and middle-level leadership positions in sporting organisations in Ghana and not those who held low-level administrative positions. Nonetheless, submissions made by high and middle-level leaders about those in low-level leadership positions, deemed salient to the research, were captured and examined accordingly.

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Limitations

The study lacked the observation of quantitative variables that otherwise could have been used to statistically explain the nexus effect between personal, cultural and socio-economic factors and women's participation in sports leadership. To overcome this challenge, the study adopted Attride-Sterling's organizing theme to establish the nexus qualitatively.

Definition of Terms

Highest Leadership Position: President and Secretary General of an association or federation.

Glass Ceiling: An unacknowledged barrier that hinders career women from progressing to top managerial positions.

Old Boys Links: Old students' relationships/students from the same school/ college/ university favouring themselves.

Organisation of the Study

The thesis was structured into five chapters. Chapter one was the introduction and focused on the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, and research questions. Other issues under Chapter one presented the scope of the study, the significance of the study, and the organisational of the study. Chapter two looked at the review of related literature to the research area undertaken. It discussed major concepts in sports leadership and major theoretical underpinnings. Chapter three discussed the research methodology with discussions on the study area, research design, data sources, target population, and sampling procedure and size. It also presents the methods of data collection, methods of data analysis,

and ethical considerations. Chapter four was based on the results and discussion. This was done according to the specific objectives of the study. Chapter five dealt with the summary of major findings, conclusions, and policy recommendations and implications.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present a review of the literature relevant to this study. The main sections of this chapter include:

A. Conceptual Review

B. Concept of Leadership

C. Types of Leadership

    i. Autocratic Leadership Style

    ii. Bureaucratic Leadership Style

    iii. Charismatic Leadership Style

    iv. Democratic Leadership Style

    v. Laissez-faire Leadership Style

    vi. People-oriented Leadership/Relations-oriented Leadership

D. Theoretical Framework

E. Empirical Framework

F. Importance of Leadership

G. Women in Leadership Positions

H. Hindrances to Women's Aspirations to Lead

    i. Administrative Structure

    ii. Lack of Administrative Support

    iii. Financial Support

    iv. Hiring Practices

    v. Organisationalal Culture

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    ix. Cultural Roles, Identity and Expectations

    x. Gendered Professions and Gendered Characteristics

    xi. Lack of Counsellors / Mentors /Role Models

I. Strategies for Overcoming Barriers

    i. Discussion on Sensitive Issues and Workshops

    ii. Policies and Initiatives on Equal Opportunities

J. Summary of Literature Review

Conceptual Review

The conceptual review outlines the main concept of the study. In this case, it classifies leadership as the main concept and discusses types of leadership like autocratic, bureaucratic, charismatic, democratic, laissez-faire, and relations-orientated leadership styles as sub-categories of the concept of leadership.

Concept of Leadership

Known for its numerous definitions, the concept of leadership has been described by Forde and Torrance (2020) as a complex term to assign a definite meaning. Mowat and McMahon (2018) argue that having a universal definition for the concept of leadership is a challenge for various researchers who employ a definition of a context that best fits their field of study. For example, Alberto (2016) defines the concept of leadership as an interactive process amongst a group of people where an individual or a group of individuals manages to instil a vision and drive in other members of the group, resulting in the fulfillment of the goal or vision. This definition agrees with the assumptions of Mowat and McMahon (2018) that depict leadership as a

qualification based on the number of followers an individual is able to command.

For Forde and Torrance (2020), the concept of leadership can be defined as an interaction premised on one's ability to influence and persuade for the purpose of having a significant influence on the lives of other people in the relationship. This definition of leadership places emphasis on the charismatic ability of individuals who are able to dictate, direct, and generally control the actions of the other members of the group for the purpose of actualizing a set vision. Also, in defining what leadership is, Alberto (2016) explains that four key factors must be present to clearly establish what leadership means. These factors are a leader, followers, communication, and a situation or a phenomenon. The leader represents the individual or group of individuals who establish and seek to instil a vision or a goal in the other members of a group.

The followers represent the members of the group who are willing to commit abilities and resources for the purpose of furthering the set aim of the group as suggested by the leader. Communication represents both the verbal and nonverbal acts that both the leader and follower employ to convey and influence ideas, decisions, and actions for the purpose of bringing about an intended result. The situation refers to the context that necessitates actions and decisions to bring about change. From these explanations of the factors, it can be inferred that leadership involves a process through which a leader successfully communicates vision and intended goals to the followers in a group and is able to influence them to take actions that result in changes in a situation that requires address (Alberto, 2016).

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For this study, leadership is defined as the ability of an individual or a group serving in the capacity of a leader is able to iteratively and interactively influence other members of a group to contribute to the successful actualization of a shared vision and the addressing of situational issues which in turn results in positive impacts in the lives of the members in a group.

The Types of Leadership

This section of the thesis identifies the main styles of leadership. The types of leadership styles highlighted are autocratic, bureaucratic, charismatic, democratic, laissez-faire, and relations-oriented leadership.

Autocratic Leadership Style

This type of leadership is the same as the authoritarian leadership. A key feature of authoritarian leadership is that there is a need for leaders to have total control over every action and the decision-making process, with little to no input being allowed from members of the group (McCleskey, 2014). This style of leadership assumes that quality decisions are based on the opinions and discretion of a single individual, with leaders described as 'dictators.' In terms of the benefit of this style of leadership, it has been described as being convenient for fast decision-making in situations of uncertainty, providing structure to how organisations are run, and also giving a sense of direction (Salehzadeh, 2017). In terms of weakness, this leadership style is known for demotivating followers, stifling group interest towards the achievement of set goals, creating a rigid and strict working environment, facilitating mistrust, discouraging creativity, and also excluding the inclusion of expert opinions in the organisational processes of groups.

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Bureaucratic Leadership Style

This type of leadership is explained to mean an approach that is guided by a hierarchical structure and clearly delineates duties (Bhaduri, 2019). This leadership style requires that leaders adhere to specific regulations in accordance with a preset structure and arrangements between the various departments in an organisational. It leverages a chain of command to assign roles, responsibilities, and information and uses the chain of command as a means of ensuring accountability between followers and leaders. Salehzadeh (2017) posits that this leadership style is particularly ideal for the working environment of governmental organisational. A key downside to this style of leadership is its propensity to make use of an inflexible system that does not encourage ingenuity in the decision-making process. On the other hand, this leadership style is known for ensuring effective division of labour for task completion, placing emphasis on collective outputs, and as against individual interests and contributions (Mowat & McMahon, 2018).

Charismatic Leadership Style

The charismatic leadership style places emphasis on the innate abilities of the leadership. According to McCleskey (2014), charisma implies the quality of influencing people with innate abilities for the purpose of transforming set goals into tangible results. Thus, charismatic leadership relates to a leadership style where individuals with potent personality traits and communication are able to convince other members of a group to complete tasks and keep them involved even in difficult situations (Samanta, 2018). A key feature of this leadership style is in its usage of the emotions of followers to create a conducive environment necessary for working against a

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democratic one. In terms of strengths, the charismatic leadership style requires leaders to develop good listening and communication skills that are used in creating a collaborative work environment with a high sense of camaraderie. On the other hand, this style leaves room for narcissism, may result in self-serving leaders and is viewed as disingenuous.

Democratic Leadership Style

It is also referred to as the participative leadership. A democratic leadership style is regarded as an approach to leadership where members of a group take an active part in the decision-making process. This style of leadership allows every member of a group the chance to participate, share ideas, and discuss issues without any limitations (Bhaduri, 2019). In this case, the leader's role is to provide much guidance, and control the decision-making process as against dictating roles and responsibilities. In comparison with the other styles of leadership, McCleskey (2014) considers the democratic leadership style to be the most effective style that results in high returns and high participation of group members. Also, this style of leadership is earmarked for resulting in high moral in group members and commitment to the actualization of group goals. Yet, in situations where unskilled persons are involved in the decision-making process, this leadership style may result in low-quality decisions, information leaks, disregard for the opinions of minorities, and communication failure (Samanta, 2018).

Laissez-faire Leadership Style

The term 'laissez-faire' is a French phrase that implies 'leave it alone.' According to Nielsen, Boye, Holten, Jacobsen and Andersen (2018), the laissez-faire leadership style adopts are relaxed approach to leadership by

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allowing others maximum freedom in the decision-making process. Although leaders make available the necessary resources and tools to be effective, followers are largely engaged in the decision-making process. Per Samanta (2018), the laissez-faire leadership style enables workers to improve upon their decision-making process and creativity to actualize organisational goals without leadership having to micromanage firm functions and delineate roles and responsibilities.

In terms of its prospects, the laissez-faire leadership style provides numerous learning opportunities to employees and enables employees to put their skill sets to efficient use and grow in the usage of their skills (Samanta, 2018). Also, given that this approach does away with micro-management of personnel, and organisational activities, employees have the requisite freedom to spontaneously respond to challenges that may arise in the execution of their duties. On the other hand, in a situation where employees lack the competencies and experience regarding peculiar problems, adopting the laissez-faire leadership style may fail. Also, the little guidance provided by leadership that employs this style may generate confusion in the execution of business functions since roles may not clearly be defined (Salehzadeh, 2017). Also, low accountability and passivity may result in low motivation and failure to meet set targets.

People-oriented Leadership/Relations-oriented Leadership

This is often employed by organisations. The people-oriented leadership style centres on developing interpersonal relationships in a group or an organisational with the intention of better such relationships for the purpose of creating better working conditions and maximizing organisational outputs,

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according to Nielsen, Boye, Holten, Jacobsen and Andersen (2018) approach to leadership appreciates and uses recognition and rewarding employee achievement to motivate them to make significant contributions to the cause of organisations. Also, this leadership style is known to place more emphasis on relationships, effective and open communication, and coaching as against task completion, given the assumption that better relationships would automatically result in better outputs. In terms of perks, this style leads to improved employee focus and work-life balance that translates into high job satisfaction.

This also builds employee loyalty to the set aims of an organisational, decreases expenditure in recruiting new employees, and creates an experienced workforce. In spite of this, the people-oriented leadership style is that it would require a substantial amount of time to achieve the desired organisational culture. Also, this approach that necessitates those ranks is clearly stated to avoid any situation of disrespect since building interpersonal relations with employees may result in employees being familiar with their superiors. Bhaduri (2019) explains that in such situations, leaders are forced to be authoritarian, which in turn may be counterproductive in actualizing organisational goals.

Importance of Leadership

There are many significant benefits that leadership confers to organisations management that are able to effectively leverage it. For example, Bhaduri (2019) postulates that leadership allows for motivating personnel to give out higher outputs when given a task. For Nielsen, Boye, Holten, Jacobsen and Andersen (2018), efficient leadership allows leaders to leverage their authority and combine it with their ability to influence personnel to

achieve set goals. This makes it distinct from the concept of management that has been argued to mainly rely on the use of authority. Per Imran, Ilyas, Aslam and U (2016), if management is not effectively paired with competent leadership, organisations would be handicapped in their resourcefulness and initiative generation for achieving their goals.

Another relevance of leadership to various firms is its ability to ensure the maintenance of the integrity of an organisational and management of the crisis. Alberto (2016) defines integrity as the trait of being sincere. In the opinion of Sfantou et al. (2017), quality leadership is able to instil in followers the required discipline and integrity and also assist followers to maintain these competencies. This is primarily through the accountability practices leaders put in place in organisations and groups they belong to assess follower outputs in relation to the set goals and vice versa.

For crisis management, McCleskey (2014) explains that the tricky nature of crises necessitates that firm managers and heads of organisations demonstrate objectiveness in their decisions and actions. Leadership competencies allow organisational leaders to efficiently assess situations, come up with effective solutions, and communicate them with their subordinates (Salehzadeh, 2017)**.** Sfantou et al. (2017), with leadership firms, are able to leverage crises to innovate and improve their functionality.

Leadership is also known for its contribution to defining organisational vision, planning, resource mobilization and innovation. Per McCleskey (2014)**,** leadership clearly delineates the purpose and vision for which a firm was set up to demonstrate the direction in which an organisation is headed to also the roles and duties each member is to play to actualize the vision. Having

defined the vision clearly to the members of an organisation, leadership essentially drafts structured and competent programmes and plans of action that detail all the necessary actions that lead to the fulfilment of organisational goals (Hartzell & Gilbert, 2018). This provides a blueprint by which organisational activities are guided and directed towards profitable actions as against detrimental ones (Imran, Ilyas, Aslam, & U, 2016). Also, competent approaches to completing tasks that ensure that resources are efficiently utilized.

Further, leadership is noted for being able to assist organisations in identifying the requisite resources needed for various tasks from various sources, how to acquire them at a low cost and utilize them efficiently for the benefit of their organisations and groups (Forde & Torrance, 2020). In the view of Hartzell and Gilbert (2018), these identified abilities of leadership create the enabling condition that allows followers to work towards actualizing set goals and objectives.

Women in Leadership Positions

Several studies, such as those by Bass and Avolio (1994), Burton (2015), and Pfister (2009), have demonstrated the feasibility of implementing gender equality policies in the realm of sports. Ironically, according to some researchers like Shaw and Penney (2003), many organizations adopt gender equity policies primarily to secure funding. Institutions that do implement these policies sometimes do so merely as a way to use it for political posturing, attempting to safeguard their public image rather than genuinely believing in gender equality (Hoeber & Frisby, 2001).

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The organizational structure and culture within sporting entities can significantly impact the experiences of women working in such organizations. Often, sporting organizational cultures are oriented toward masculinity, leading to the marginalization of women (Cunningham, 2008). A positive outcome is observed when organizational leaders prioritize gender equality, as highlighted by Spoor and Hoye (2013). They found that top management genuinely committed to gender equity has a consistently positive impact on the psychological relationship of both male and female employees with the organization, in contrast to equality only in human resource management practices. The persistent challenge of workforce imbalances underscores the need for a practical investigation into the experiences of women in sports leadership positions in Ghana.

A supportive workplace and familial environment can enable individuals to stay and progress in their jobs without feeling compelled to resign (Dixon & Bruening, 2005). Nevertheless, not all employers and families endorse this notion, and diverse perspectives may lead to conflicting opinions. Cunningham (2008) posits that many women in organizational settings may choose not to compete for higher positions, contributing to the formation of predominantly male candidate pools. Additional research suggests that women frequently face challenges in contending for leadership roles, as these positions are perceived to demand stereotypically masculine traits and behaviors (Cunningham, 2008). Women occupying prominent leadership positions are often perceived differently, and their actions are sometimes viewed as deviating from socially prescribed gender roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

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In certain organizations, women might be excluded from specific social activities due to connections with male alumni, leading to unequal social support and activism compared to their male counterparts (Aicher & Sagas, 2009; Hoffman, 2010). Success in the sports industry requires essential elements such as sound judgment, self-awareness, and effective relationship-building. Lieberman and Shaw (2012) propose a modification in the curriculum of sports management programs to cultivate skills in relationship-building and self-awareness, fostering more effective interactions. The limited number of women reaching high leadership positions often encounters subtle biases (Hewstone, Rubin & Willis, 2002). Overcoming these biases demands persistence, diligence, and the ability to assert oneself in challenging situations. Unfortunately, such women are sometimes perceived as outsiders, leading to avoidance and exclusion. These preconceived biases contribute to the implementation of policies that inadvertently disadvantage certain individuals. Lieberman and Shaw (2012) observe that both men and women occupy middle management roles in sports; however, women remain notably underrepresented in higher-level positions. This observation mirrors the situation in Ghana, where no woman has ever held the highest position at the Ghana Football Association, prompting the need for further investigation.

The effects of perceived role incongruity and the double bind significantly impact the advancement of women from one organizational level to another. Many individuals hold certain beliefs regarding the expectations of a leader, often influenced by gender stereotypes (Koenig, Eagl, Mitchell & Ristikari, 2011). Women are anticipated to demonstrate communal qualities, such as friendliness, helpfulness, and sympathy, while men are expected to

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exhibit agentic qualities like aggression, ambition, and self-reliance (Eagly & Carli, 2007). When women manifest communal traits in leadership roles, they might be perceived as lacking strength. Conversely, if they display agentic qualities, they risk being seen as overly forceful (Heilman, 2001; Koenig et al., 2011; Ridgeway, 2001). This incongruity, termed as injustice in Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders, contributes significantly to the challenges faced by women in leadership roles.

This theory posits that prejudice against women arises from the perceived mismatch between traditional female gender roles and leadership positions. This bias manifests in two ways: (a) a less positive assessment of women's leadership potential rooted in stereotypical beliefs associating effective leadership with masculinity and (b) a less favorable evaluation of actual female leadership based on the perception that behaviors exhibited by women are less desirable (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The perceived incongruence between the female gender role and leadership roles results in women leaders being viewed less favorably than their male counterparts, potentially making it more challenging for women to attain leadership positions and succeed in them. This situation creates a double bind for women, as conforming to communal expectations may undermine their perceived leadership capabilities (Catalyst, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2007).

However, if women demonstrate the assertive qualities typically associated with men, they struggle to conform to societal expectations regarding traditional female gender roles. In either scenario, women encounter a double bind, continuously grappling with the stereotypes associated with female leadership. In the Ghanaian context, there is a prevalent belief that

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women are incapable of handling dual responsibilities, which contributes to the limited involvement of women in leadership roles within the realm of sports. This underscores the need for a comprehensive study on the role of women in leadership positions in the field of sports, as highlighted in Catalyst (2007) and the work of Eagly and Carli (2007).

Hindrances to Women's Aspirations to Lead

Most women aspire to lead in various arenas: industry, politics, commence, religion, and sports. These aspirations slowly grow from time to time. Women, like men, require the support of others to aspire to leadership positions. Generally speaking, women face a lot of constraints/hindrances as they aspire to lead. Some of these hindrances end up cutting short the journey of women to leadership positions. Wentling (1996), Cunningham (2007) and other researchers identified these hindrances as administrative structure (lack of administrative support, financial support, organisational culture, hiring practices), organisations resistance to change, women's' own barriers, cultural roles, identity, and expectations, gendered professions, and gendered characteristics, lack of mentors/ role models.

Administrative Structure

Administrative structure in this study will refer to things related to decisions taken administratively, the culture of an organisational, and its policies. Hindrances related to the administrative structure include lack of financial and administrative support, hiring practices, organisational culture, resistance to change, and power (Abney & Richey, 1991; Wentling, 1996).

Lack of Administrative Support

A study conducted by Wentling (1996) through a face-to-face interview with middle management women revealed that obstacles that hindered women's careers as managers were superiors who did not inspire the career advancement of women, gender discrimination, and lack of political shrewdness on behalf of the women. Based on those results, it is clear that for change to occur, the administration of an organisational needs to support equal and fair opportunities for all represented groups. Abney and Richey (1991) explored obstacles to black women as athletic administrators and/or coaches in the USA, considering race and gender and came out with inadequate salary, lack of support groups, and being a woman, hindrances to women in leadership positions both in black and white institutions do occur. These researchers (Abney & Richey) went ahead to categorically state that employer discrimination and low expectations by administrators were predominant in black institutions while lack of cultural and social outlets in the community was blockage predominate in white institutions. The researchers attest that, indeed, women lack administrative support that can aid them in vying for and achieving leadership positions. In the Ghanaian setting, however, there are little or no scientific research findings on constraints to women leadership in sports. Hence, this calls for a pragmatic study of the experiences of women in sports leadership positions in Ghana.

Financial Support

The disparity in salaries of coaches by gender was revealed by a study conducted by Jacobson (2001). He did an evaluation of coaches' salaries on a gender basis in all The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)

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divisions and revealed that male coaches were unswervingly paid more than female coaches. Although equal salaries are not a requirement of the NCAA, the disparity in wages has been an issue of much debate as it may be a cause for women to be pensioned off from coaching and other leadership roles (Cunningham, 2007). In a qualitative investigation conducted by Quarterman, Dupree, and Willis (2006), an examination of the significant hurdles faced by female intercollegiate athletic directors and directors overseeing women's intercollegiate athletic programs in NCAA member institutions unveiled a range of issues related to financial and resource support, influencing those involved in women's programs.

The most predominant subject that emerged from the responses was related to budget and financing. The other factors in relation to the respondents' responses included insufficient resources, incredibly low budgets, organisational and programme changes, inadequate facilities, lack of administration support, "good old boys" network, lack of recognition by peers, stereotypes of women in leadership roles, sexism, and sexist attitudes, and career development issues. Problems that emerged from Quarterman, Dupree and Willis (2006) study were part of the factors that compelled women working in such programmes to quit. Support gained from administrative staff is very key in attaining and retaining women or any under-represented group in an organisational.

Without administrative commitment, the hiring process, in addition to low wages, may serve in various forms as a blockage in joining an organisational. Other researchers also identified these practices as contributing greatly to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in sports

(Heilman, 2001; Miller, Whisenant & Pedersen, 2007; Stangle & Kane, 1991; Welch & Sigelman, 2007). From the researchers' findings, there seem to be more constraints to women leadership in sports, especially in varying sociocultural environments, which need to be researched.

Hiring Practices

The existence of women in leadership positions in sports is of great value, considering that their occupation in a leadership position impacts the gender diversity of coaches in that sports organisational or department. A particularly common theme among studies was the practice of hiring based on similarities. This practice was found in different divisions of the NCAA. Programmes of Divisions I, II, and III had scarce female coaches (43.9, 32.2, and 45.2%, respectively) when the athletic director was male than when the athletic director was female (50, 38.9, 49.3%, respectively). Furthermore, when there are no females in the administrative structure, the percentage of female coaches was 30.6%, 29.7%, and 45.8%, 15% respectively (Acosta & Carpenter, 2008). These results suggest that similarities based on gender tend to influence the choice of the candidate to be hired. Miller et al. (2007) investigated how possibilities and obstacles in interscholastic sports are communicated to potential job seekers.

Specifically, the authors sought to study gender bias in job postings. Using a sample of 301 job postings studied for sports administrative positions, 73% required the applicant to coach a boy's sport, and 68% of postings required the applicant to serve as head football coach. This requirement discreetly limits applicants to men in different ways. On the contrary, women may automatically shy away from positions that require them to coach a boy's

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sport and the few women that may be confident enough to apply may encounter a series of questions regarding their physical skills and mental strength to coach boys compared to men who may apply. The job posting that requires the person to be the head football coach automatically disqualifies women since a minuscule number of women play football at a level that may give them the bare qualifications to enter the pool. The authors Miller et al. (2007) concluded that responsibilities of job positions are embedded with bias by gender at the interscholastic level. Furthermore, this practice contributes to the underrepresentation of females in leadership positions. Welch and Sigelman (2007) sought to explore probable explanations for the scarcity of female coaches in NCAA Division I institutions (N= 329).

According to the information gathered from websites and documents on file, larger, more affluent institutions with more resources directed towards women's sports hired a significant number of female coaches. These institutions tended to have more visible sports programmes, which may, in turn, put pressure on them to diversify staff. Also, larger programmes tend to have more resources available to hire the most qualified and successful female coaches. This practice is recognized as a commitment from the administration to a diverse workplace. Additionally, Welch and Sigelman (2007) point out differences in hiring and promotion practices in sports when compared to other firms and companies. In law firms or other businesses or companies, women tend to be hired and/or promoted by less prestigious, smaller firms, while men dominate the best-paying, higher-status positions.

In the realm of sports, particularly within NCAA Division 1 institutions, the prevalence of women coaches is notable, particularly in the

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most prominently visible women's sports. This hiring trend can be potentially attributed to certain factors. One possible explanation is that larger and more prosperous institutions, such as those affiliated with the NCAA, may exhibit greater diversity and a heightened interest in bolstering the representation of women in prominent leadership roles. Another rationale, as identified by Welch and Sigelman (2007), suggests that these institutions possess the necessary resources to offer robust support services for gender and racial diversity. This includes the presence of affirmative action offices, dedicated multicultural support services, and proactive human resources departments.

Furthermore, the likeability of a female coach has been identified as a factor influencing hiring decisions, as indicated by Heilman (2001). Heilman's investigation delved into the examination of the presence of women in high-ranking positions within organizations. This exploration involved a comprehensive review of prior studies that explored the impact of gender stereotypes on evaluations and the progression of a woman's career.

Heilman reported that it is important for women applicants to be liked by the group in which they wish to be promoted. More important than the skills the candidate may bring to the organisational is the importance of her personality and collegiality. A woman may be qualified, but if she is not liked, she will probably experience resistance to obtaining a promotion. Promotion within the organisational may allow women to influence its organisational culture. This can occur in organisations with weak structures and low levels of accountability. In any case, organisations may differ in hiring process and promotion policies that may check power abuse.

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Organisational Culture

Every single organisational has its environment and its way of conducting business. This includes what is valued and respected, whether publicly as in written documents or silence and the true practices of the organisational. Accordingly, researchers sought to analyze how a woman, or more specifically, a gender, is accepted and managed within certain sports organisations (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2007; Pfister, 2006). The appreciation for women and the perceived value of having a woman on the board of the sports organisational was of interest to researchers. Claringbould and Knoppers (2007) examined a woman's physical fitness levels as a candidate for board membership of national sports organisations by means of semi-structured interviews with 12 male and 12 female board members of Dutch national sports organisations.

Additionally, the authors sought to determine if board members reinforced and challenged gender in their sports organisations. The study used the concepts of "do gender" and "gender undone." "Do gender" refers to stereotypes or sex-typed behaviours reinforcing gender differences, and "gender undone" refers to behaviours or decisions that disprove traditional gender preconceptions. Results of the study revealed that men, by affirming and/or ignoring affirmative action policies, can control and manipulate the recruitment and selection of new members, which in turn protects and purports the male-dominated culture. According to the authors, it became apparent that those on gendered-skewed boards justified the lack of women as normal in the sports environment.

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It was reported that women were scarce because they did not want to become board members. Research studies have found the inclusion of women on boards of sports organisations to be insignificant to the dominant group (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2007; Hovden, 1999). The need for women was disregarded by the understanding that not having a woman on the board was not a problem, and the board was not missing out on anything. Claringbould and Knoppers found that it was expected for women on these boards to perform gendered tasks, such as pouring coffee and cleaning up after sessions. Participants thought board membership fit men better than women. This cannot be the case, considering several women in leadership positions who have excellently distinguished themselves in various fields of endeavour.

Another way in which gender was reinforced within the board was that women were expected to accept and comply with traditions and symbols, including failure to address issues such as sexual harassment. Claringbould and Knoppers (2007) also reported that gender-balanced boards differed from gender-skewed boards in task assignments in Holland. Females in Claringbould and Knoppers' study expressed an appreciation for the cultural environment of the board and the emphasis placed on content and accomplishments instead of wasting time on power games and macho behaviour. An organisational culture led by power and prestige conflicts was found to influence women to leave the organisational (Pfister & Radtke, 2006). The length of terms men spent serving on the board, however, was identified as a limiting factor for women.

The lengthy occupancy of men in board positions does not allow others the opportunity to serve (Pfister & Radtke, 2009). In addition, Claringbould

and Knoppers (2007) found that the frequency of men acquiring top positions on boards gave the perception that men are better suited for board membership than women since they constantly occupy these positions. Another organisational culture barrier is gender hierarchy. Pfister (2006) studied reasons for the existing gender hierarchy in Danish sports organisations. Questionnaires were sent to all 874 senior women officials and a random sample of 692 men officials above club levels. The questionnaire inquired about the structure and culture of their organisational regarding gender relationships, attitudes, judgments, barriers, and opportunities in leadership positions in addition to demographics.

Findings revealed that 38% of men, as compared to 21% of women, were entrusted with leadership responsibilities. The author concluded that female officials were a very adaptable minority among members of executive boards. The higher the leadership position, the lower the occupancy of women in these positions. In addition, 6% of the women started their careers as committee chairpersons as compared to 12% of men. In fact, women in this study expressed strong commitment and self-confidence as did males in the study. The author found that organisational culture played a role in the disproportion of numbers between men and women in the form of the expectations of an ideal leader. This was attributed to the large amount of time invested at work that appeared to affect women more than men because it left less time to spend with family which is primarily a woman's responsibility (Pastore, 1991).

The election system and lack of regulation regarding the length of time a person can hold an office served as a barrier because it limited opportunities

for new candidates to have access to executive bodies. According to the data, involvement in sports seemed to be socially inherited. Women in the study seemed to have more family involvement (their mother volunteered and/or the child served as an assistant instructor) within sports than the males. Organisational culture impacts practices within an organisational. Resistance to change, however, perpetuates traditional practices regardless of their practicality and the effect they may have on the organisational and/or its members.

Organisational's Resistance to Change

Resistance to change often becomes a barrier to women who are trying to climb the hierarchical ladder within their sports organisations. Hoeber (2007) studied how organisational members made sense of meanings and practices of gender equity as an organisational value in Canadian universities. The investigator used three sources: a) document analysis, including mission statements, operating budgets, and policy documents and how it was reflected in resource allocations and promotions; b) observations of team practices and competition; and c) semi-structured interviews with 14 women and 14 men who were either athletes, coaches, or administrators. The researcher found that equity was related to different sports. Swimming and basketball teams seemed to have an equal allocation of resources for both men and women; however, that was not the case in the sports of ice hockey and rugby, where findings of the study revealed numerous inequities, including staffing, facility access, and budgets.

Results that emerged from this study were that a majority of respondents, both male and female, tolerated gender inequity as "just the way

things are" (Hoeber, 2007). Most participants claimed that there had been some advancement for female athletes. Inequities were expected as natural or normal and not worth challenging. Over one-third of respondents suggested gender inequities were not a problem. Some female participants in the study were not aware of the degree of inequities.

Further, gender inequities were explained by attributing them to factors such as marketability and popularity of teams. Administrative barriers, like those shared above, most served to reinforce the common practice and close the doors to change. Although the hiring process of some sporting organisation has been seen to be biased in other countries, it might not be the same in the Ghana context. This creates the need to investigate for much insight within the Ghanaian setting.

Women's' Own Barriers

In contrast to previous studies related to administrative structure and its effects on an organisational, the following studies identified barriers that have been imposed by women themselves that prevented them from gaining leadership positions in sports. These barriers were created through a lack of action, determination, confidence and/or communication from the same women who are negatively affected (Marback, Short, Short & Sullivan, 2005). Identified within the literature were obstacles that were self-imposed by the population under study. These included self-identity, lack of self-confidence, cultural roles and expectations (Cui, 2007; Marback, Short, Short & Sullivan, 2005; Sartore & Cunnigham, 2007; Walseth, 2006)

The hindrance of women in attaining leadership roles in sports has been linked to a deficiency in self-confidence. A study conducted by Marback

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et al. (2005) involved a survey of 187 intercollegiate coaches to gauge their confidence in coaching. The findings revealed that female university coaches exhibited lower confidence levels compared to their male counterparts, particularly in areas like game strategy efficacy, coaching during competition, knowledge of strategies and tactics, and the ability to motivate athletes. Notably, gender disparities were identified in performance-oriented coaching responsibilities, with males expressing higher confidence levels in tasks crucial for successful team performance, such as strategizing and motivation. Conversely, women reported lower levels of confidence and a sense of accomplishment in these areas.

The authors suggested that a person's confidence will impact their intention to apply for a job, resign from a job, and their motivation while on the job. According to a statement made by Ghana Olympic Committee (GOC) president Ben Nunoo Mensah at the Women in Sports Colloquium 2019, Ghana has few women sports leaders. He said this problem could be attributed to their self-imposed barriers, such as lack of self-confidence, time, home chores, and self-identity (Mensah, 2019). Although his statement might be true, there has not been any study to ascertain it, thereby creating the need for a study into this phenomenon.

Cultural Roles, Identity and Expectations

Culture and the roles and expectations it uphold influence internal and external factors. Culture influences how people think and their beliefs. Consequently, those people work within organisations and establish an organisational culture that is influenced by the culture in their society. Therefore, decisions and actions taken by people who are part of

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administrative structures are influenced as well. An important aspect of culture is the family and the influence the family has on each member. Stakeholders in every organisational are influenced by values embedded in their upbringing, such as family responsibilities and feminine traits (Bari, 2005; Yartey, 2012). Cui (2007) examined positions held by women in three Chinese National Sport Organisationals (NSO). Data were obtained through individual semi-structured interviews with 5 male and 9 female sports administrators from the State Sports Commission.

The Department of Sport Policy of the State Sports Commission, sports conferences and symposia proceedings, as well as official websites of governmental and non-governmental organizations, provided additional data for the study. The investigation revealed that Chinese cultural influences contributed to the underrepresentation of women in high-level managerial roles within sports organizations. According to the research conducted by Cui, the cultural context discourages the development of assertiveness and toughness in girls, traits deemed crucial in coaching and athlete development. Survey participants expressed that within Chinese culture, prioritizing the pursuit of a suitable husband took precedence over obtaining a graduate degree. Cui's analysis concluded that women in this cultural setting face stereotypes and are often perceived as inferior to men.

The characteristics that women contribute to organizations—traits like caution, attention, and care—came through in the interviews; they are not qualities that are considered for leadership roles. According to the author, Chinese NSOs utilise this as a justification to keep women out of senior executive positions. In NSO, women held weak roles that were often

associated with certain genders. Likewise, there is a belief that women who coach will not survive long since they will marry and have kids. If a woman's devotion is called into doubt because of her family obligations, it might hurt her chances of landing a coaching job (West, Green, Brackenridge & Woodward, 2001).

Another study regarding an individual's identity effect on sports involvement was that of Walseth (2006). The researcher sought to study the relationship between the source of identity and involvement in sports and physical activity among young Muslim women living in Norway. Participants' ages ranged from 16 to 25 years and were sampled through sports club or their former status as pupils at one elementary school. After analysing interviews of 25 participants, there was evidence that their participation in physical activity was related to their source of identification (e.g., ethnicity, religion). For a Muslim woman whose sense of identification is ethnicity, participating in sports is not appropriate since the behaviour in which one engages in performing sports goes against what is regarded in her culture as ideal feminine behaviour.

Results of Walseth's study (2006) revealed that engaging in behaviours not accepted by the participants' culture (i.e., jogging or playing football or having friends who are in the dominant culture) may lead to harassment or sanctions by those who uphold different boundaries for behaviour related to ethnicity or religion. On the contrary, when the Muslim women's sense of identification was religion (e.g., Islam), they viewed health and physical activity as important and involvement in those activities was accepted by their

parents. Accordingly, a person's source of identity may influence a person's decisions and actions (Sherwin et al., 2014).

From a socio-cultural perspective, the universal phenomenon of women holding subordinate status to men exhibits variations in the nature and extent of this subordination across different countries. Gender role ideology not only establishes a dualistic framework for femininity and masculinity but also arranges them in a hierarchical manner where the female sex is generally regarded as less valuable than the male sex due to socially assigned roles in the reproductive sphere. The persistence of the gender status quo is evident in the limited allocation of resources for women's human development by the state, society, and the family. This is reflected in social indicators that highlight varying levels of gender disparities in education, health, employment, ownership of productive resources, and political participation across all nations. Moreover, gender dynamics are influenced by factors such as class, caste, and ethnicity, which shape access to resources and opportunities. The socio-cultural reliance on women is a significant hindrance to their involvement in the public political domain.

Women face challenges in engaging in politics due to the limited time available to them, stemming from their dual roles in both productive and reproductive spheres. Juggling primary responsibilities as mothers and wives, along with competing domestic duties and caregiving responsibilities, leaves them with minimal time for political participation (Bari, 2005). These challenges are often considered a significant factor when analyzing women's opportunities to enter elected offices. Traditional views still emphasize women's primary roles as homemakers and mothers, perpetuating a strong

patriarchal value system that reinforces these gender-segregated roles. The intricate combination of women's responsibilities in the domestic sphere, encompassing motherhood and wifely duties, further complicates their engagement and involvement in the public sphere (Yartey, 2012).

When a woman becomes a public figure, she is seen as an extraordinary or super person and given all sorts of names by the members of society (both men and women) because she has been able to defile that socio-culturally assigned roles (Ansah & Nketsiah, 2019). Traditional culture in this 21st-century generation still militates against the advancement and participation of women in leadership positions by dictating the role of women as housewives and mothers (Ansah & Nketsiah, 2019; Fayomi & Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2006). Although there have been a lot of studies attesting to culture as a barrier to women's advancement in leaders high positions, all of them have concentrated on politics and chieftaincy, creating a gap in the world of sports.

Gendered Professions and Gendered Characteristics

When a certain job is gendered and considered a man's or woman's job, barriers are automatically created for those other than the expected ones to attain the position. Thus, others may encounter difficulties if they intend to enter a career that has been gendered to the opposite sex. Gender stereotypes assume women's management behaviours to be nurturing and service-oriented instead of tough and achievement-oriented. Characteristics identified with women are not associated with leadership (Heilman, 2001). West, Green, Brackenridge and Woodward (2001) explored female underrepresentation in sports coaching roles. Qualitative data regarding participants' experiences as

coaches were gathered by means of the Witz Model of Occupational Closure, in-depth interviews from female coaches in the United Kingdom (N= 20) coaching at different levels (e.g., high school, college).

The results of the study revealed that women's access to coaching roles was limited because it is gendered as a masculine role. Female participants in the study may have been excluded because of their home responsibilities. Gendering the coaching profession as masculine may limit the access to networks for women. Hovden (2000) examined the meanings of gender as it relates to the selection process of candidates for elected positions in the Norwegian Confederation of Sport and how these meanings influenced organisational gender structure.

Hovden (2000) also gathered pertinent information through participation, observation, and field notes at board meetings and general assemblies or annual meetings. Group interviews with election committee career in sport (Acosta & Carpenter, 1992; Drago, Hennighausen, Rogers, Vescio & Stauffer, 2005). The sports industry is associated with long hours, unpredictable schedules, travel, and extreme stress. This is especially true for positions in coaching and athletic administration. Consequently, responsibilities and commitments that come with those positions are under study as issues that may contribute to the low representation of females in those positions. The CAGE Project conducted focus group discussions with athletes to assess their perception regarding a coaching career. Researchers of the CAGE project found that extreme workloads of head coaches and athletic administrators contributed to the decline of females occupying such positions (Drago, Hennighausen, Rogers, Vescio & Stauffer, 2005).

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The same study tied extreme workloads as a contributor to the family-unfriendly perspective of coaching and athletic administrative positions. Responsibilities that play a part in the family-unfriendly nature of coaching and athletic administrative positions were identified as the timing of practices, games, recruiting trips, and institutional cultures (Pastore, 1991). These findings may explain why females do not consider entering coaching as well as the high overturn of women in the field. Similarly, Acosta and Carpenter (1992) identified work schedules, such as long hours and evening and weekend work, as barriers to women seeking a coaching position or that of athletic director, primarily because it interfered with their family responsibilities (Pastore, 1991). Additional realities that made the work unattractive, as proclaimed by women, were that the salary was not equal to time/work commitment, dealings with the "old boy network," and that athletics took over their lives.

Lack of Counsellors / Mentors /Role Models

A trail of issues has been earmarked as barriers to women underrepresentation in sports leadership positions. The lack of women serving as role mentors or models to their fellow women is also seen as one of the barriers that need to be looked at. Women seem to be lagging when we peruse through executive positions in institutions and organisations throughout the world (Jakobsh, 2012). This has restricted the number of mentors available to the increasing number of women participating in professional sports and fostered the mindset that male-dominated executive teams in sports organisations have consistently maintained (Konan & Kramer, 2006).

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Mentoring is a situation in which an individual possessing expertise and understanding in a specific field actively guides and provides assistance to foster the learning or growth of another person. Typically, this arrangement involves a person in a leadership role offering support to someone in a less senior position. Although corporations and higher education institutions acknowledge the significance of mentoring for employee development and have established formal frameworks to facilitate this, mentoring predominantly informally takes place. Due to the historically prevalent old-boy network influencing men's mentoring and career progression, women have traditionally encountered fewer mentoring possibilities compared to their male counterparts.

Female executives emphasize that the absence of mentorship among women has had a negative impact on their advancement in the corporate hierarchy (Burton, 2015). Generally, men occupy the highest leadership roles, putting them in influential positions to facilitate opportunities for those with lower status. This poses a significant obstacle to the progress of women. As patriarchy has historically been structured around men's interactions with other men, fostering a similar unity among women proves to be an effective strategy for challenging institutional structures and norms that predominantly exclude women. Ansah and Nketsiah (2019) note that women in leadership roles serve as a source of inspiration for young women and their peers. Observing their colleagues in leadership positions motivates them to aspire to similar roles, contributing to narrowing the gender gap in leadership positions, particularly within the realm of sports.

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The above studies were conducted in developed countries where it is presumed they have a lot of women leaders, but on the contrary, their findings review that they do not have enough role models, which makes it more interesting to find out if this same problem persists in the developing countries. This study threw more light on the need for role models to come out to train and advise the youth in that direction.

Strategies for Overcoming Barriers

Strategies and initiatives that help women overcome barriers they encounter in climbing the hierarchical ladder of their organisational were discussed in this final section of the literature review. There is not much literature on the barriers women face when they ascend or occupy leadership positions in sports. However, just as important are strategies that helped women enter the sports field and achieve leadership positions. These are communicated in the form of recommendations or as organisational initiatives in the following section. Networks and female administrative representation relationships, communication, and commonalities are all related to networks. The following studies have identified networks as an important factor in opportunities and growth in any field of work (Lovett & Lowry, 1994; Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000; Pastore Meacci, 1992; West, Green, Brackenridge & Woodward, 2001).

Networking is at the core of entering the sports field, professional growth, and promotions. Therefore, not having access to networks was detrimental because it may (a) deprive the person of developing professional relationships with people in high places who do the hiring in their organisational, (b) limit access to information that is shared only through

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networks, as well as (c) limit the opportunity for others to get to know those are leadership positions. In fact, women's exclusion from informal coaching networks was seen as disadvantageous since those occupying influential positions of appointing coaches are mostly male (West, Green, Brackenridge, & Woodward, 2001). Acosta and Carpenter (2006) stated that coaches and administrators perceived the success of the "old boys club" network as having perpetuated the dominance of males in leadership positions in sports.

Furthermore, female lack of support systems, such as the failure of the 'old girls club,' further contributed to the diminishing presence of females in leadership positions in sports. In light of the effectiveness of the "good old boys" club, which consists of men in powerful administrative positions, it is important to have women in administrative positions so that they may influence certain decisions. Lovett and Lowry (1994) sought to study representation in coaching by gender as it relates to the gender of the administrative structure. The study had a sample of 1,106 public secondary schools in Texas and two types of administrative structures (two-person and three-person administrative structures). The data revealed that when a two-person administrative structure was all males (Principal; Athletic Director), coaches in the athletic programme would be mostly male. If the two-person administrative structure had at least one woman, then the majority of coaches (including all sports teams) were likely to be females.

The three-person administrative structure (Principal, Athletic Director for men's program, Athletic Director for women's program) had more female coaches only if the athletic director was female. If the athletic director was male, then the majority of coaches were men. The authors concluded that

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women occupying high administrative positions, especially that of athletic director, facilitated female presence as coaches. Another advantage that stems from having female administrative representation is the commitment to a diverse staff. Pastore and Meacci (1992) requested two-year college administrators from the National Directory of College Athletics, males (n = 117) and females (n = 19), to evaluate the effectiveness of recruitment and retention strategies regarding women as head coaches with a five-point Likert scale survey.

The approaches deemed successful (with agreement or strong agreement exceeding 50%) included administrators proactively seeking females for coaching roles (men: 82%; women: 85%), expanding opportunities for women to gain practical coaching experience (men: 76%; women: 95%), actively recruiting female athletes for coaching positions (men: 74%; women: 72%), colleges/universities implementing coaching programs (men: 62%; women: 74%), and boosting the frequency of coaching workshops/clinics (men: 56%; women: 63%). Women in the study also chose to recruit female athletes for the coaching profession as a necessary strategy with 85%.

Discussion on Sensitive Issues and Workshops

Just as important as having diverse representation in management positions is the openness to discuss issues that benefit under-represented groups. Webb and Macdonald (2007) interviewed seventeen teachers (7 males and 10 females) for their study on power and the under-representation of women in leadership positions in athletics. The researchers suggested the adoption of normalized discourses as a way to open conversations that would eventually facilitate women's entrance into leadership positions. Strategies to

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address the underrepresentation of females in leadership positions were flexible work arrangements, support systems for new leaders, and increased awareness of underrepresentation.

They concluded that it was crucial to address issues related to both men and women in discussions. This, in turn, could foster a more aware and positive atmosphere for everyone. The literature provided valuable insights that could assist women in overcoming common barriers to attaining leadership roles in sports (Abney & Richey, 1991; Kilty, 2006; Wentling, 1996). Kilty recommended the ongoing provision of opportunities for female coaches to learn from each other and develop skills to navigate the current social context more effectively. Additionally, she suggested restructuring the work environment to promote cooperation, collaboration, trust, and mutual learning. Finally, Kilty proposed supporting female coaches in managing career and life transitions through mentoring and leveraging collective power to advocate for change.

For these recommendations to be implemented, there must be male and female administrators and/or veteran coaches who are committed to the cause. Abney and Richey (1991) addressed the issue of gender and race. They offered recommendations for black women to overcome obstacles in coaching or athletic directing. These included utilizing support groups, formal and informal mentoring programmes within governing bodies, and exercises to improve personal characteristics. Personal characteristics include enhancement of confidence, competence, determination, perseverance, positive sense of self, ability to meet challenges, qualifications necessary to compete for leadership roles at all levels, and involvement in sports associations,

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organisations, and committees. To break through barriers that keep women underrepresented as leaders in sports, women must find opportunities to get involved in sport-organizing bodies, which may lead to overcoming leadership stigmas attached to gender (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2007). Networking and mentorship have been recommended as important for the professional growth of underrepresented groups (O'Brien & Janssen, 2005).

Policies and Initiatives on Equal Opportunities

It is also important for organisations to make policies that put in place a fair and safe environment for all involved. Findings of the CAGE Project (Drago, Hennighausen, Rogers, Vescio & Stauffer, 2005) suggested four broad policies to ameliorate the decline of women coaching women's collegiate athletic teams. These policies included;

1) Increase the number of women in the coaching pipelines at all levels of athletics.

2) The importance of formalizing hiring practices, decision-making processes, training and development, and the career paths of coaches. The policies mentioned above would provide women a better chance at coaching and athletic directing positions. In regard to the environment of athletic departments, two other suggestions stand out:

   i) Make coaching and careers in athletic administration more welcoming and flexible in relation to family commitments.

   ii) Foster a more diverse and inclusive atmosphere within athletic departments, across various sports teams, and in organizational settings to welcome women, people of color, and individuals with non-traditional sexual orientations. The authors additionally

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propose that the athletic industry and departments adapt to embrace contemporary trends and values.

International sports governing bodies acknowledge the significance of having women represented. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has been consistently incorporating women's sports since 1912. The Olympic Movement has highlighted that, despite the growing participation of women in sports, there remains a considerable gap in achieving equality in leadership roles within sports administration (International Olympic Committee and the Institute of Sport & Leisure Policy, 2004). Additionally, the IOC has introduced policies to address the percentage representation, aiming to enhance the presence of women in decision-making positions within their organization. The implementation of these policies is expected to contribute to an increase in the overall female representation.

Parental Influence

During a person's formative years, the environment that surrounds him or her influences his or her beliefs and future decisions. Support from parents and role models frequently influences our decisions to pursue career goals. As pointed out by a recent study, parental influence can never be underestimated. Dixon, Warner and Bruening (2008) interviewed 17 female head coaches of NCAA Division 1 to examine the influence their parents had on their continued participation in sports. Researchers used NVivo7 software using an ongoing coding process with a method of agreement. Throughout their interviews, various themes emerged as having influenced participants' sports involvement. The first theme was that parents served as strong role models, as almost all participants had one or both parents participate in competitive

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sports. Participants shared that they became interested in sports because their parents participated in sports. Therefore, being involved in sports was a "normal" family activity.

The authors point out that the family environment is important to consider because just as societal culture influences what is appropriate for a woman, family culture influences a person's self-confidence, identity, and drive to overcome obstacles. A theme that emerged from the study conducted by Dixon, Warner and Bruening (2008) was that the parents of the participants also served as supporters of their children's experiences in sports. Sports support came in the form of attending games (the most frequently mentioned), coaching or managing sports teams to which they belonged (usually done by fathers), or providing transportation (usually done by mothers).

Another theme that emerged from the study was how parents gave meaning to the experience of sports. The meaning given to their sports experience was communicated in the form of values, appropriateness, and the importance of sports participation. Within the interpretation of sports experience was gender appropriateness and encouragement without pressure. Dixon and colleagues defined gender appropriateness as the meaning that participating in sports was acceptable and desirable for women. On the other hand, encouragement without pressure was referred to as parental support without demands. Decisions regarding their participation were made by them not their parents. According to the results, it was apparent that parents influence the participants' long-term involvement in sports by normalizing their sports experience or making sports part of their everyday lives.

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The sports environment in which the participants were raised was one where a sport was not a gendered activity, and participants decided their involvement. According to the authors, regardless of the intensity of parental involvement, sports participation became part of women's social identity. These studies identified what may help or positively influence opportunities for women to reach a leadership position in sports (Abney & Richey, 1999; Claringbould & Knoppers, 2007; Dixon, Warner & Bruening, 2008). The ability to network with people who influence hiring and/or promotion decisions, whether they be men or women, who occupy administrative positions can help overcome barriers.

Women in administrative positions can also serve as mentors to those who are starting in the field and pass on important life lessons. Also, environments that support the discussion of issues that may be sensitive to an underrepresented group are necessary. This may give a chance to address some unfair issues and give supportive and fair opportunities for professional growth and involvement to underrepresented groups. Finally, a supportive and encouraging environment may influence a woman's confidence. Hence, their decisions to be involved in sports professions may be determined by themselves and not by the barriers they face. A lot of strategies have been earmarked to help deal with women participation, development, and progress to the highest leadership positions in spheres of life; however, there might be others that have not yet been revealed within the Ghanaian context.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher employed Liberal Feminism, Cultural Libertarian Feminism, Maslow's Hierarchical Needs Theory, Albert Bandura's Self-efficacy and Motivational Theory and Eagly and Karau's Role Congruity Theory to frame the current present study.

Liberal Feminism

Advocates of liberal feminism believe that there is no biological foundation for gender differentiation regarding women and men. In essence, it is not true that women are less intelligent (Szymanowicz & Furnham, 2013; Briston, 2006). Cusack, Akpalu, Mensah-Kutin and Obeng-Ofori (2005) argue that the jobs women are assigned to in traditional settings suggest that they are expected to merely focus on their daily bread rather than demanding wages for work done to improve their socio-economic status. To some extent, equal roles and responsibilities should be assigned to women and men whenever there is a need to do so. A case in point is the right to education, governance, inheritance and leadership. The concept of liberal feminism is perpetuated by certain customary and legal constraints that impede its implementation (Cudd, 2006).

Even though fundamental human rights and freedom are enshrined in the constitution of Ghana and require that equal rights of women must be respected, attempts by successive governments to promote this in corporate governance and leadership are nothing to write home about. Apparently, women do not contest for positions when it comes to elections to compete with their male counterparts, and this does not promote gender parity. Several organisations are now focusing on activities targeted at gender inclusivity.

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Trends regarding affirmative action in developing countries such as Ghana show that several women are joining the armed forces; countless women are nurses and gynecologists. There is some appreciable number of women in parliament and many other women too are farmers. This development supports a study's finding, which revealed that affirmative action is a practical step in solving issues relating to all forms of discrimination. In essence, affirmative action empowers all citizens to own the right to equal access to personal growth and development (Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, 2004).

The purpose of liberal feminism is to highlight the depth of discrimination against women (Brake, 2004; Smith, 2004). Globally, the campaign on affirmative action is an encouragement to women to actively participate in decision-making. Eventually, when this is achieved, more women will perhaps be in leadership positions that can serve as an inspiration to the youth, especially young females, to aspire to greater heights, such as governance and education. Women are touted as better managers due to their perceived experiences in taking care of the home and family despite the challenges of individual differences and demands of home-keeping (Højlund, 2012; Tsikata, 1989).

Several studies in the US have established that liberal feminism has enabled women growth in perceived male-dominated professions, legalised abortion and created equal remuneration for work (Brief, Buttram, Riezenstein, Pugh & Callahan, 1997; Crosby, Iyer, Clayton & Downing, 2003).

Cultural Libertarian Feminism

Cultural libertarian feminism also believes that restrictions placed on an individual's freedom from government, religious organisations, traditional ancestral deities, and other civil institutions reflect the patriarchal nature of society, which oppresses women (Young, 2007). Cultural libertarian feminism recognizes that the sources of women oppression are culturally deep-rooted in societies that assign cultural roles to the sexes (Johnson, 2012; Presley, 2015). This theory is relevant to this study because women in most African countries do not realize their full potential because of culturally carved roles assigned to them.

Most women wish to be at the helm of affairs in associations, politics, and other top managerial positions currently occupied by most men. Others hide and shy away from such opportunities because they have culturally been made to understand that such positions are for males. In Ghana, women are culturally placed in positions such as child-bearing, cooking, keeping the home, carrying loads from farms, and doing menial jobs rather than vying for leadership positions. These culturally assigned roles have rendered a lot of women docile and prevented them from taking up challenging roles. Patriarchal culture, religion and male-dominated societies are seen as interlocking structures that harass women in Ghana from taking up leadership positions, especially in sports (Mensah, 2019).

Women need to independently develop themselves to oppose and fight societies authorities who perpetuate a patriarchal culture in order to be liberated and think for themselves (Johnson & Long, 2005; Presley, 2015). This is the time that Ghanaian women have to equip themselves, resist these

culturally assigned roles, and pursue their careers to the highest level to realize their full potential. Cultural libertarian feminists also claim that there should be consensual relationships and institutions in which there is an equality of authority and opportunities for both women and men to realize their visions (Heckert, 2004; Long, 2001).

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchical Needs Theory

Abraham Maslow, in his exploration of human development, proposed that individuals should gradually and sequentially fulfill basic human necessities such as air, water, food, and procreation to attain the highest level of personal development (Maslow, 1943). According to this theory, all other aspirations should be set aside or rejected until these fundamental needs are met, progressing up the pyramid until individuals reach the pinnacle.

This theory holds relevance in the context of this study due to the challenges faced by women involved in leadership roles in sports at local, school, and district levels. Many of these women encounter difficulties in advancing to leadership positions at national and international levels. This hindrance can be attributed to the necessity of fulfilling basic needs at the grassroots level, where barriers like lack of education, financial constraints, discrimination, and the glass ceiling effect impede their progress. The application of Maslow's theory helps illuminate the hierarchical nature of these challenges, emphasizing the importance of addressing foundational needs before aspiring to higher levels of leadership in sports organizations.

In alignment with Maslow's theory, Bandura (1997) introduced the concept of self-efficacy, asserting that it involves confidence in one's ability to organize and execute the necessary steps to achieve specific goals.

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These convictions significantly influence the ability to persevere through challenges, maintain determination in the face of obstacles, adaptability to risks, and the level of accomplishment attained. The self-efficacy theory is intricately connected to learning and developmental contexts, encompassing considerations of external, internal, and social factors. Bandura characterizes it as a blend of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, where both internal and external influences converge to facilitate success across various domains of human endeavours.

Human behavior is often influenced by both internal and external motivations, playing a crucial role in determining success or failure. Sports, ideally, should serve as a source of motivation for individuals pursuing it. Unfortunately, in Ghana, there is a lack of encouragement for female participation in sports despite the presence or absence of motivational factors. Women in the sporting realm primarily hold leadership roles, such as chaperones and gender representatives, with competitive positions, such as president, vice president, or general secretary, predominantly occupied by their male counterparts. This stems from the perception that sports are inherently male-dominated, leading to significant barriers for women expressing interest and hindering their aspirations to attain higher positions. Burton (2015) identifies these barriers as socio-economic, cultural, and indicative of a glass ceiling effect. In light of these challenges, the researcher aims to explore the experiences of women in top leadership roles within sports and understand the factors contributing to the lack of inspiration among women to pursue leadership positions in the sporting domain.

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Role Congruity Theory

Eagly and Karau's (2002) Role Congruity Theory is grounded in social role theory, which examines the content of gender roles and their role in reinforcing behavioral differences between sexes (Eagly, Beall & Sternberg, 2004). However, this theory extends beyond social role theory by assessing not only the content of gender roles but also the quality of alignment and appropriateness of these roles assigned to sexes, particularly within a leadership context. Gender roles are considered widely accepted beliefs about the characteristics associated with men and women (Eagly, 1987). These roles are categorized into descriptive norms, representing consensus beliefs about what a specific group of sexes can do, and injunctive norms, which capture consensus beliefs about what a group of sexes should ideally do or typically do (Eagly, 2007). Gender roles are often linked to expectations of assertive and controlling behaviours, traditionally associated with men. Prejudice against women leaders stems from the perceived incongruity between the characteristics attributed to women and the perceived requirements of leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Women's bias against their fellow female leaders and future leaders is influenced by descriptive and injunctive norms (Eagly, Beall & Sternberg, 2004; Eagly & Diekman, 2005). Prejudice toward potential female leaders is rooted in descriptive stereotypes, wherein these prospective members of a group are presumed to possess the stereotypical traits of that group. Consequently, they may face barriers in being selected for specific roles. Biases against current female role occupants are also based on prescriptive stereotypes, wherein individuals must defy these stereotypes by taking on

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roles incongruent with societal expectations. The repercussions of role incongruity are notably discriminatory, particularly in the realm of sports, making it challenging for women to aspire to leadership roles. This phenomenon elucidates why societal attitudes toward male leaders tend to be more positive than those towards female leaders (Eagly, 2007).

Female leaders who adopt a leadership style traditionally associated with masculinity often face disapproval from their male subordinates, while those who embrace stereotypically nurturing and feminine styles also encounter disrespect from male subordinates (Kawakami, White & Langer, 2000). According to Heilman (2001), women who succeed in roles traditionally reserved for men may experience social penalties, resulting in dislikes and negative perceptions. Research indicates that despite similar competencies and abilities between men and women in authoritative positions, the prevailing image of leadership remains predominantly masculine (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Schein, 2001). Specifically, executive leadership is often linked with masculine traits, establishing male leaders as the norm (Collinson & Hearn, 2000; Willemsen, 2002; Wahl, 2014).

Moreover, Berthoin, Antal, and Izraeli (1993) argue that stereotypes associating leadership with masculinity, especially in hierarchical organizations, provide advantages to men due to the inherent alignment between masculinity and leadership. Ridgeway (2001) also noted distinctions between masculine and feminine gender norms, contributing to social status differences that favor men in established institutional hierarchies. Certain leadership positions are inherently more masculine, and not all professions project images consistent solely with masculine gender norms. Women have

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achieved success in roles focused on managing people, particularly in leadership positions within human resource departments and middle-level management (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, Karau & Makhijani, 1995). In the context of sports, these entrenched masculine gender roles are particularly evident.

Shaw and Hoeber (2003) investigated organizational records and interview transcripts involving 35 employees across three national sports organizations in England. Their findings indicated a significant prevalence of discourses associated with masculinity in senior management roles, aligning these roles with characteristics traditionally attributed to men and highly esteemed within sports organizations. In contrast, roles held by women and associated discourses of femininity were linked to positions that were undervalued within these organizations. Eagly, Klonsky, and Makhijani (1992) suggest that evaluation bias becomes particularly noticeable when female leaders adopt an autocratic or directive leadership style, as such styles may not align with the stereotypical expectations of female behaviour. Rutherford (2002) further emphasized that women tend to receive negative evaluations when they exhibit leadership traits typically associated with men, such as being task-oriented, directive, or displaying autocratic behaviours.

These attributes are often deemed unsuitable for women, and when women exhibit characteristics similar to those typically associated with men, they frequently face criticism for being perceived as 'masculine' (Rutherford, 2002). Essentially, when women aspire to advance into senior and leadership roles, they are more prone to negative assessments based on a perceived 'lack of person-job-fit.' This is primarily because senior and leadership positions

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have traditionally been viewed as male-dominated domains (Lyness & Heilman, 2006). This lack of fit categorization for women in roles considered traditionally male-oriented contributes to a tendency for their behaviour to be undervalued (Lyness & Heilman, 2006).

Schein's Model of Organisational Culture

Schein's Model of Organisational Culture is a theoretical model that academic and professional researchers employ to demonstrate how the concept of culture plays a significant role in shaping an organisational and its functionality (Schein, 1996)**.** An organisation's culture is responsible for how it relates to its internal personnel and external parties necessary for its growth and the way it develops its business. Schein's model of organisational culture was introduced in the 1980s by the distinguished MIT professor Edgar Schein in an attempt to give reasons as to why different behaviours are demonstrated in organisational settings (Schein, 1990)**.** According to Cotter-Lockard (2016)**,** Edgar Schein deduced that a key element of culture is its ability to evolve for the purpose of accommodating the various aspects of human traits and functions within and outside an organisational.

This eventually results in an interconnected and patterned set of beliefs that inform functionality, human relations, and performance within an organisational. As per Cotter-Lockard (2016)**,** organisational culture was defined in the context of the model to imply the basic assumptions that a group has developed to manage issues of external adaptation and internal integration. These basic premises have, for a period, been beneficial to such firms and have been passed on to new members of the group in relation to the problems that inform their assumptions. The model identifies three levels that affect the

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culture of any organisational. These are Artifacts and Behaviours, Espoused Values and Assumed Values.

The artifacts and behaviours represent the obvious aspects of an organisational culture. It represents the visible aspects of an organisational culture that is easily noticed by parties external to the organisational (Schein, 1985). While these are visible, it does not necessarily imply that anyone can easily comprehend them. Schein (2004) explains that the artifacts can be difficult to appreciate by an observer who may employ common stereotypes and labels in an attempt to understand them. This often manifests in the form of physical artifacts, language, stories, myths, adopted technologies, and traditions. The physical artifacts can be seen in the arrangement of the physical space and architecture.

The manner of communication, the slogans, and the technical expressions demonstrate the language. The stories and myths are demonstrated in the descriptions and rumours that concern actions perceived to be heroic, the approach for addressing certain types of situations as well as what actions are not to be taken. The traditions displayed at various ceremonies depict how organisations distinguish their internal operations and actions from other organisations. Technology plays a key role in culture since it shapes and reflects the notions and values of personnel through its usage.

With respect to espoused values, it is less visible to an observer as compared to the artefacts and behaviours. Values represent the mutual opinions of members regarding how things should be done (Cotter-Lockard, 2016). Schein (1996) defines such opinions as how these members consider a situation as desirable or undesirable and how they may react to these

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situations. The values define the meaning and connections through which behavioural patterns and artefacts can be deduced, reflects how members of an organisation represent the organisation and themselves to other parties and provide a basis for members to envision their future selves (Schein, 1993)**.** Although values may be clearly stated in order of priority, they rarely lead to the basic assumptions. As such, observers can only recognize and establish that there are no existing patterns, inconsistencies and contradictions with values and observed behaviour.

The third level is the underlying assumptions or values. This reflects the values assumed by employees that cannot be measured but make a significant difference in the prevailing culture of an organisational (Schein, 2004)**.** These are the mutual beliefs that are concealed from the observer and yet play an important role in the state of an organisational's culture. They are noted to be very difficult to change (Cotter-Lockard, 2016)**.** With this, organisations are seen to go along with certain actions which are clearly and distinctly understood and yet undiscussed. This leads to the fact that these assumptions are difficult to explain and can only be appreciated by those who have worked within a particular organisational culture over a set period.

The utilization of Edgar Schein's Three Levels of Organizational Culture was beneficial in comprehending how the established organizational culture influences the experiences, either positive or negative, of female leaders within prominent professional sports leadership entities in Ghana. This study focuses on investigating the strategies employed by women in their leadership development and progression within these organizations. The model would enable the study to analyse the obvious aspects of the culture of

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the study organisations and how these aspects have shaped the experience of women in leadership positions. Also, the model would allow for examining whether the values of the study organisational are consistent with their observed behaviour when it comes to female leadership.

Thirdly, employing the use of this model would enable the study to understand the underlying organisational assumptions that influence the female leadership experience in the selected study organisations. This would assist the study to better understand the practical experiences and growth opportunities conferred to women in professional sports organisations, the barriers that challenge Ghanaian women involvement in sport leadership positions, the nexus between individual, and organisational factors and women participation in sports and the strategies that can be used to improve women participation in sports leadership positions in Ghana.

Expectancy Disconfirmation Model

The expectancy disconfirmation Model (EDM) was developed as a way to explain customer decision-making (Oliver, 1980), but the theory has been applied and confirmed in public management. The EDM is premised upon three core relationships, as depicted in Figure 1.

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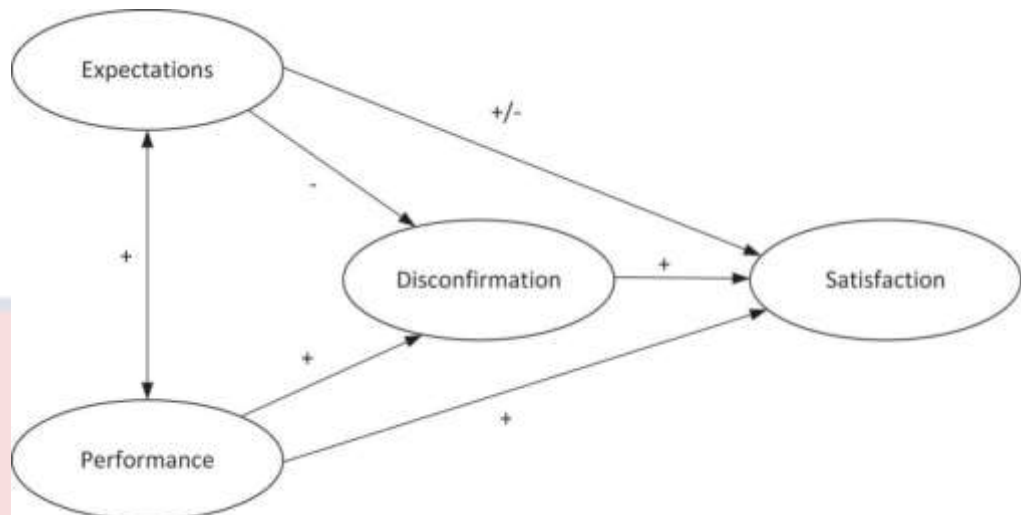
Figure 1: Expectancy-disconfirmation Model (Van Ryzin, 2013).

The initial focal association concerns how evaluations of performance directly influence citizen contentment, a relationship that is generally straightforward and typically faces minimal opposition within the model. Numerous previous investigations have consistently validated this direct correlation, which remains unaffected by anticipations and disparities (Morgeson, 2012). The second connection anticipates a direct impact of anticipations on contentment. This linkage is not immediately evident and necessitates clarification. Anticipations might exert a favorable direct influence on contentment since individuals may use their anticipations as a benchmark for forming judgments about governmental services (Van Ryzin, 2013). These anticipations could independently shape the judgment of contentment.

The central aspect of the EDM model is the third relationship, which revolves around disconfirmation. The concept posits that elevated performance enhances the likelihood of positive disconfirmation, while heightened expectations reduce the probability of positive disconfirmation but elevate the chances of negative disconfirmation. Consequently, positive

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disconfirmation results in increased satisfaction, whereas negative disconfirmation results in diminished satisfaction. Put simply, if performance is exceptional, it is more prone to surpass expectations, leading to heightened satisfaction. Conversely, heightened expectations are less likely to be surpassed, even in the presence of superior performance. As a result, elevated expectations can result in negative disconfirmation and reduced satisfaction.

Empirical Review

This part of the second chapter details empirical studies that have been conducted by other researchers on the same or similar variables studied on this subject. These empirical studies serve as a guide into the research methodology, findings, and conclusions that can be employed in this study to make generalizations and contributions to existing literature on the subject of women and leadership in the context of organized sports.

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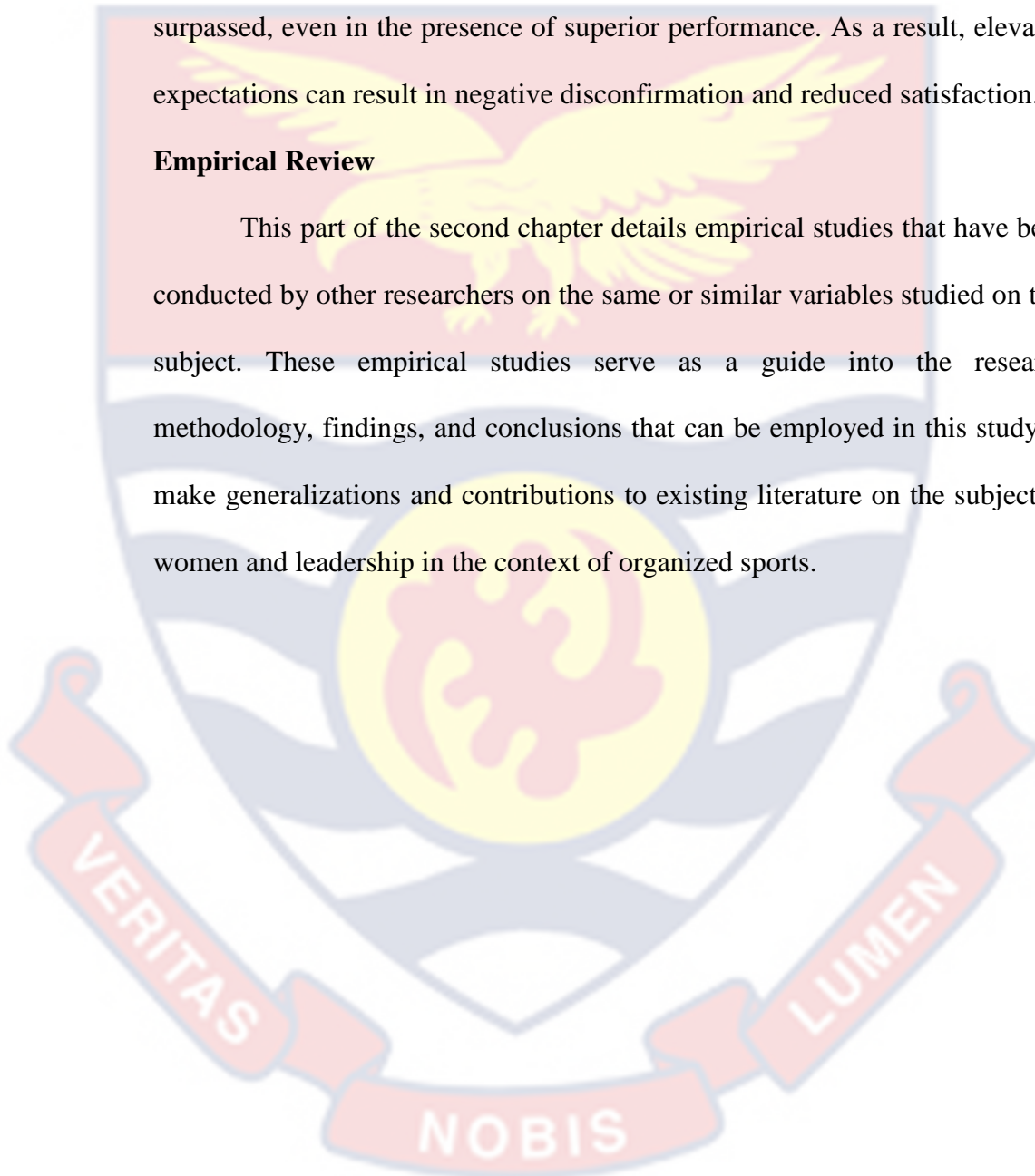
Table 1: Empirical Studies on the Barriers that Prevent Women Involvement in Sports Leadership Positions.

Author(s)	Title	Context	Methodology	Key Finding
Stephanie, Laura and Raymond(2015)	The Experiences of Female Athletic Trainers in the Role of the Head Athletic Trainer	Leadership in athletic training	A qualitative study involving 8 female athletic trainers serving the role of head athletic trainers	While the female athletic trainers did not actively seek leadership positions in their organisations, the study revealed that those who assumed such positions identified wok and social life balance and parenting as the main barriers to attaining leadership positions.
Laura (2015)	Underrepresentation of women in sport leadership: A review of research	Women representation in sports leadership,	Literature review on the under representation of females in sporting positions	At a macro level, leadership stereotyping, cases of discrimination and highly gendered organisational culture serve as a barrier to women engaged in leadership positions in sporting institutions. At the micro level, the expectations of women in leadership positions, turnover decisions, and symbolic interactionism on the advancement of the career of women in sports were identified in the study as barriers to having a high female representation in sporting positions.
John and Deborahj (2016)	Leader Self-Efficacy of Women Intercollegiate		The study employed a qualitative method and survey a total	The study discovered that developmental challenges, such as females not familiar with their assigned responsibilities, difficulty in handling

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	Athletic Administrators. A Look at Barriers and Developmental Antecedents		sample of 692 women in leadership positions in institutions registered by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in the United States.	personnel with different social and intellectual backgrounds, lack of experience in completing specific aspects of their job requirements and managing responsibility at a high level impeded women's chances of participating effectively in leadership positions. In addition, the absence of support for women and work-life balance difficulties were identified as barriers.
Meg and Mary (2016)	A "leaky pipeline"? Factors affecting the career development of senior-level female administrators in NCAA Division I athletic departments.	Female representation is sporting organisationals at multiple levels.	A qualitative method was used in assessing the responses of 20 assistant and associate athletic directors via the use of interviews.	While interpersonal relationships with supervisors and mentors and access to professional development programmes contributed to women advancing in leadership roles in sporting institutions, perceptions of gender and inconsistency in the perception of the professional value of women affected their choice of career and its advancement.
Janelle and Shannon (2017)	Intentions to be an Athletic Director: Racial and Gender Perspectives	Career development	The study employed a mixed method in analysing responses from survey and	In relation to barriers to female leadership, occupational segregation was identified as a key challenge, which limited the ability of women to access to opportunities for the purpose of

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			interviews from athletic administrators.	assuming leadership positions (Athletic Director)
Elizabeth and Robin (2016)	Female NCAA Division I Athletic Directors: Experiences and Challenges		Qualitative Method	The study thematically identified the absence of role models, lack of qualification to manage football programs, women lacking experience in sports management and intercollegiate experience as the main barriers to women engagement in sports leadership positions.
Hindman and Walker (2019)	Sexism in Professional Sports: How Women Managers Experience and Survive Sport Organisational Culture	Women experience in sports organisations		The study identified the open and subtle culture of sexism in sports organisations and the sports industry in general having a negative impact on the ability of women to progress their careers, especially when it comes to sports leadership. This affects women emotionally and professionally, and forces them to employ various survival strategies in order to practice their chosen professions in sports.
Mary and Nicole (2018)	An Examination of Intercollegiate Athletic Directors' Attributions Regarding the		A survey of college athletic administrators	In this study, female respondents highlighted institutional discrimination as a main barrier to female inclusion in the leadership of intercollegiate athletic directors. For the male respondents, they highlighted work-life balance as

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	Underrepresentation of Female Coaches in Women's Sports			a main barrier to women being significantly represented in such positions. In addition, the study revealed that the inability of women to apply for such positions contributed to their low representation in such leadership positions
Canan and Pinar (2015)	Gendered perceptions about female managers in Turkish sport organisations	Perspectives and attitude of employees on their preference for male or female sports managers.	The research adopted a quantitative research design using a sample of 244 female employees and 494 male employees.	The findings from the study indicate that the stereotypical nature of such sports institutions as a masculine dominated profession allow for employees to prefer male managers as against female managers. It is assumed that such institutions require strong character and experience, which are often attributed to men. Hence, females assuming leadership positions are viewed negatively.
Melanie and George (2012)	Explaining the Under-Representation of Women in Leadership Positions of Sport Organisations: A Symbolic		Symbolic Interactionist Perspective on Women in Leadership	The finding based of the symbol interactionist perspective model, identified the roles associated with gender and sports ideology and social stereotypes played a crucial role in capping the ability of females within sports institutions to assume and excel in leadership positions. In addition, women viewed themselves as inadequate leaders, and thus, did not assume

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	Interactionist Perspective			sports positions.
Fink (2016)	Hiding in Plain Sight: The Embedded Nature of Sexism in Sport	Sexism		The finding of the study demonstrates how activities connected to sexism in sports organisations challenges the opportunity of women to develop in leadership capacities in sporting institutions.
McDowell and Carter-Francique (2017)	An Intersectional Analysis of the Workplace Experiences of African American Female Athletic Directors		Face to face interviews with 10 African American Women.	The study identified that the working environment of sport institutions which were laden with occupational and societal stereotypes related challenges relating to hiring women leaders and their execution of their authority.
Victoria (2016)	Leading with their hearts? How gender stereotypes of emotion lead to biased evaluations of female leaders		Literature Review	The study revealed that gender stereotypes of emotions impact the chances of female leaders to progress and succeed in leadership positions. Females are required to overcome questions relating to the type and extent of emotion to demonstrate when leading a sports organisational. On the other hand such criteria are not presented to men.

Source: Author's Construct (2022)

Table 2: Empirical Studies on the Nexus between Cultural, Socio-economic, and Personal Factors and Women Participation in Sports Leadership

Author(s)	Title	Context	Methodology	Key Finding
Nida, Holly andJustin (2020)	Building cultural diversity in sport: a critical dialogue with Muslim women and sports facilitators		Focused group discussion using a sample of 38 Muslim women and 14 sports facilitators.	The study highlighted how awareness of culture and the relevance of sporting organisations organizing multicultural training are able to alleviate barriers to women belonging to cultural minorities and their ability to ascend the corporate leader when it comes to sport leadership.
Kristin (2006)	Muslim women identity and their involvement in sort ad physical activities		Interview involving 21 women of immigrant backgrounds residing in Norway.	The study demonstrated that the ethnic and religious identity associated with women impaired their ability to actively engage in all manner of sports activities. Further, in situations where such individuals are able to overcome the challenges presented by their cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds, have to deal with social discrimination. It is therefore inferred that culture plays a key role In terms of the extent of participation women are allowed when it comes to sporting activities and leadership.
Geoff (2012).	Out of Bounds: Cultural Barriers to Female Sports Participation in Qatar		A qualitative study of women engaged in sporting activities	While female participation in sporting activities and leadership is increasing in Qatar, the rates of participation are comparatively low when

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			in the gulf region.	juxtaposed to other region of the world. The study attributes it to the cultural limitations imposed on women and how this impacts their ability to function in leadership roles currently and in the future.
M'mbaha and Chepyator-Thomson (2018)	Factors influencing career paths and progress of Kenyan women in sport leadership	Career Choice Factors	Semi structured interviews with participants from various schools and sports organisations.	The study pointed to the relevance of leadership development programmes to provide women in sports with the necessary skills that would permit them to leverage their high educational qualifications and intelligence and assume leadership responsibilities in sporting institutions. Also, it highlighted how patriarchal expectations can be harnessed and used for the purpose of retaining women in leadership positions. t is necessary
Sotiriadou and Haan (2019)	Women and leadership: advancing gender equity policies in sport leadership through sport governance	Gender equality	Interviews. A multilevel framework for determining the role of board members in advocating for gender equality policies in	The study revealed that when the changes are implemented in organisations, it advocated for the acceptance of women in leadership positions and allows for women to feel valued in such leadership positions

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			leadership positions	
Symeon and Tansin (2006)	Comparative study of Muslim women's experience of Islam and physical education in Greece and Britain	Young Muslim women's experiences of Islam and physical education in Greece and Britain		In Britain, cultural elements played a key role in women participation in sporting activities and management. On the other hand, women belonging to cultural and ethnic minorities in Greece faced less problematic situations when it comes to women participation in sports and leadership. This was attributed to the historical, social, cultural, and different stage of acculturation.
Gaston, Blundell and Fletcher (2020)	Gender diversity in sport leadership: an investigation of United States of America National Governing Bodies of Sport	Gender Diversity	The study made use of Kanter's Theory of Critical Mass to assess the diversity and inclusion scorecard of the USOPC's	The prevailing culture of sports organisations does not encourage women to partake in sports leadership. Organisations that promote gender diversity and women inclusion at board levels see improvements in women engagement in the sports sector
Maxwell, Stronach, Adairand Pearce (2017)	Indigenous Australian women and sport: findings and recommendations from a parliamentary inquiry. Sport in Society		Qualitative content analysis on the 53 submissions from indigenous sporting representatives,	The study revealed that the provision of culturally suitable conditions, leadership development paths, female support and female centred sports programmes improved the participation of indigenous women in sporting activities and sports

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			sporting organisations, community agencies, academic and industry experts.	leadership.
Taylor (2016)	Investing in the development of young female sport leaders: an evaluation of the 'girls on the move' leadership programme	Girls on the Move Leadership Programme	The study employed a pre and post course surveys and interviews.	Per the data analysis, the study concluded that young women who did not consider their capability to assume leadership roles in sports found such opportunities to be attractive. Also, upon completing the training course these females are able to positively contribute to the local economies they belong to and also help in reducing social injustice.
Sartore and Cunningham (2012)	Explaining the Under-Representation of Women in Leadership Positions of Sport Organisations: A Symbolic Interactionist Perspective		Symbolic Interactionist Perspective on Women in Leadership	The study highlighted the important role organisational culture played in determining the extent to which females are allowed to partake in leadership and decision-making in sports organisational. If such environments promote stereotyping of women when it comes to leadership, it is likely to limit their ability to function as leaders. The study also highlights how the self-limiting opinions women have about themselves

				impacts their ideological meanings and leadership identity formation.
Wicker, Feiler and Breuer (2020)	Board gender diversity, critical masses, and organisational problems of non-profit sport clubs.	Gender diversity and female representation in leadership.	Longitudinal study, measuring women involvement in sports leadership positions between 2009 and 2015	Organisational culture that promote gender diversity in their leadership experience visible improvements in human resource and finance-related problems

Source: Author's Construct (2022)
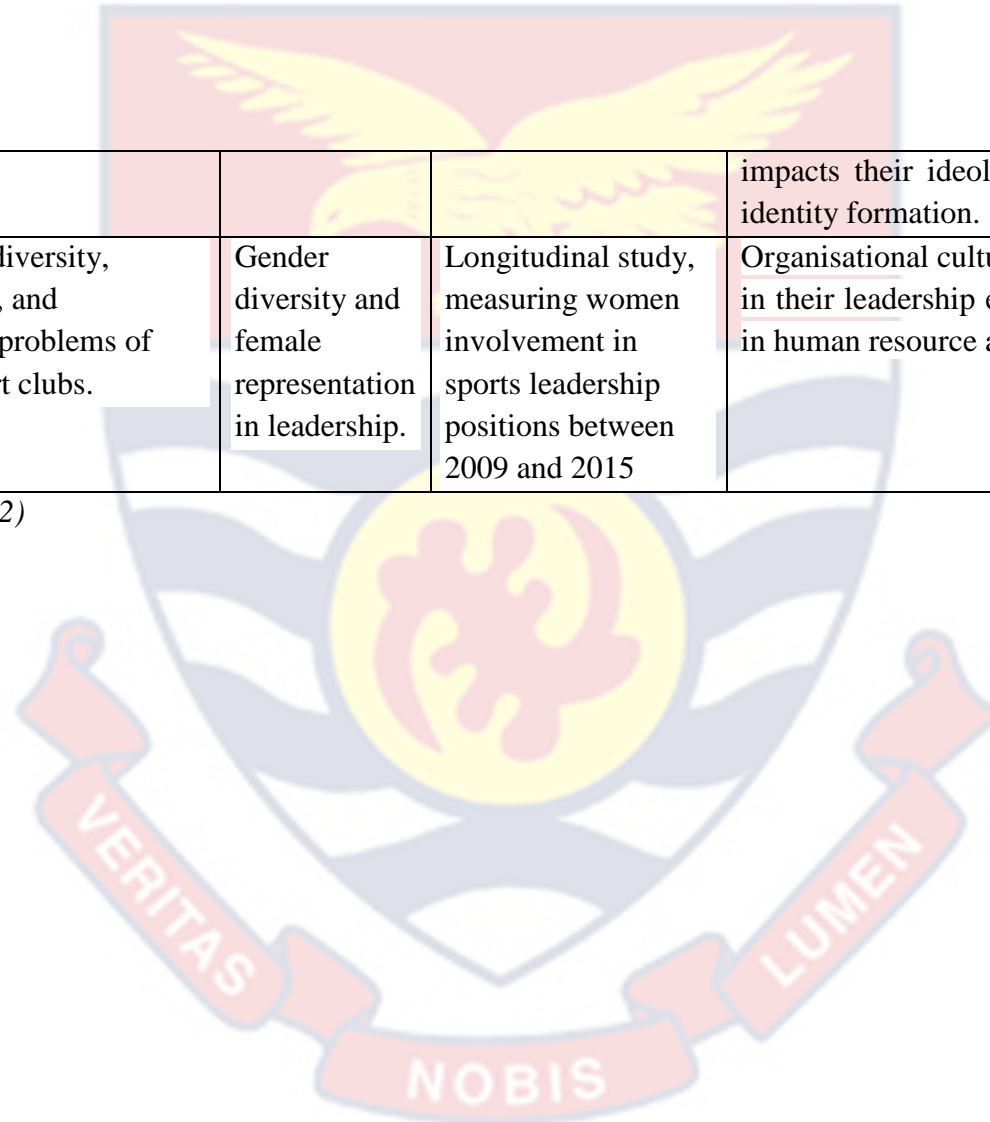
Table 3: The Professional Experiences, Leadership Growth, and Progression Approaches adopted by Women in Uppermost Leadership Positions Working within Professional Sports Organisations

Author(s)	Title	Context	Methodology	Key Finding
Baumgartner and Schneider (2010)	Perceptions of Women in Management: A Thematic Analysis of Razing the Glass Ceiling.		Thematic Analysis	The study revealed that female leaders working in multiple organisations have to overcome stereotyping, achieving work life balance and contentions with their male counterparts in order to climb the corporate ladder in their respective fields. As a strategy, women have to choose their personal leadership advancement aspirations, develop their own leadership style, and select mentors to guide them in their leadership journey if they are to rise to prominence in their respective fields.
Pfister and Sabine (2009)	Sport, women, and leadership: Results of a project on executives in German sports organisations		Survey of both male and female representations of sports organisations and an in-depth semi structured interview with 24 respondents	The study revealed that unlike females in the sporting sector of Germany, the leaders had more expectations on the ale leaders. Meeting these demands had a link with the rate of career progression and job 'drop out rates'.
Oakley (2000)	Gender-based Barriers to Senior Management Positions: Understanding the Scarcity of Female		Literature review	The study identified women having to experience gender stereotypes, the difference in gender socialization and linguistic styles, the experience gap contributing to women having the presence of old boy networks in the

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	CEOs.			work place and tokenism at the work place. Such experiences were identified as being able to cap the progression of women in managerial positions.
Fapohunda (2018)	The Glass Ceiling and Women's Career Advancement		Semi-structured interviews with 16 female participants.	The study revealed that while concerns for including females in leadership positions in FIFA were raised in its reformation, the continuance of development programmes had issues with the glass cliff effect since regardless of their competencies, most women have not been sought for higher leadership positions in football.
Galloway (2012)	The Glass Ceiling: Examining the Advancement of Women in the Domain of Athletic Administration	Glass Ceiling	Literature review	Most women who aspired for leadership position in professional sporting organisations, they experienced discrimination and gender gaps that hampered their ability to advance to senior managerial positions.
Sotiriadou and de Haan, (2019)	Women and leadership: advancing gender equity policies in sport leadership through sport governance	Gender equity and organisational change.	In-depth interviews	Male leaders can challenge the stereotypes in sporting organisational that would allow for female leaders to have positive leadership experiences. This confirms that the power of equity allows for change in organisations and for women to develop their leadership abilities in their respective organisations.
Gray, De Haan and	Coaching the 'ideal worker': female leaders	Gender difference in	An exploratory qualitative design	Women who have had coaching in relation to their jobs is shown to have an impact on their ability to progress in

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Bonneywell (2019)	and the gendered self in a global corporation	leadership		their careers as leaders
Ohlott , Ruderman and McCauley (1994)	Gender Differences in Managers' Developmental Job Experiences.	Gender experiences in leadership	Survey of male and female managers	Although male leaders of organisational experience greater task related developmental challenges when it comes to leadership, when have greater challenges that have to do with both their sex and job description.
Sabharwal (2015)	From Glass Ceiling to Glass Cliff: Women in Senior Executive Service Glass Ceiling and Glass Cliff		Employee Viewpoint Survey	The study revealed that women are more likely to experience glass cliffs in the workplace. Also, in cases where women have control over decision making, perceive empowerment and experience equity in the organisational, there is a less likelihood of them falling off the glass cliff.
Carli and Eagly (2016)	Women face a labyrinth: an examination of metaphors for women leaders	Women's Leadership, Glass Ceiling, Sticky Floor and Labyrinths	Literature review on the status of women leaders	Whilst women have been described as facing challenges in leadership positions, women have been able overcome their leadership challenges and rise to high leadership positions
Knoppers, Spaaij and Inge	Discursive resistance to gender diversity in sport		Semi-structured Interviews with	Female leaders are restricted by the justification of board members that national sports organisations advocate for

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(2021)	governance: sport as a unique field?		sports organisational board members	a merit based approach to leadership advancement. On the other hand, evidence suggest that notions of neoliberalism, passivity, and resistance to gender balance through board member habits and sport capital are used in side-lining women from leadership positions.
Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer and King (2017)	Benefits of Multiple Roles for Managerial Women		Quantitative Method	The approaches adopted by female leaders in balancing their private and work life, empowers them to demonstrate competent interpersonal skills and leadership that makes them very competent in managerial roles. Also, the extent to female managerial skill sets are developed determine the degree of influence they wield in managerial position.
Ely, Ibarra and Kolb (2012)	Essays, Dialogues and Interviews Taking Gender Into Account: Theory and Design for Women's Leadership Development Programs	Female leadership	Interviews with female leaders	The study pinpointed that gender plays a key role in the selection of leaders in organisations. The study also highlighted how female leaders operating in the various cultural set ups of organisations have to experience gender bias as part of advancing their careers in such positions. Leadership programmes play a key role in assisting women to advance into senior positions in their organisations.

Source: Author's Construct (2022)

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Table 4: Empirical Studies on the Strategies to Improve Women's Participation in Sports Leadership Positions.

Author(s)	Title	context	Methodology	Key Finding
Holder, Jackson and Ponterotto (2015)	Racial microaggression experiences and coping strategies of Black women in corporate leadership.	Racial Micro-aggression and Coping strategies of Female Leaders	Phenomenological methodology and Semi-structured interview of 10 former senior level corporate professionals	Religion and spirituality, accessing a support network, mentorship and sponsorship and selfcare were identified as the chief strategies employed by respondents in an attempt to improve their participation in their positions.
Kossek, Su and Wu (2017)	Opting Out" or "Pushed Out"? Integrating Perspectives on Women's Career Equality for Gender Inclusion and Interventions	Career equality	Literature Review	By developing a fairness, talent leveraging and workplace support, the study proposes that there is the likelihood of female leaders in various organisations to have a positive leadership experience.
Lee and Chelladurai (2017)	Emotional intelligence, emotional labour, coach burnout, job		Quantitative study of 324 coaches	The study recommends that the expression of sincere emotions and deep acting improves job satisfaction and goes a long way to benefit both male and female sports coaches

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	satisfaction, and turnover intention in sport leadership			and the organisations they operate in.
Rosener (2011)	Ways Women Lead. In: Werhane, P., Painter-Morland, M. (eds) Leadership, Gender, and Organisational	Leadership, Gender and organisations		The study concludes that female leaders who employ a transformative collaborative model of leadership are able to effectively play their roles, especially in the context of large organisations.
LaVoi and Dutove (2012)	Barriers and supports for female coaches: an ecological model	Barrier and support for female coaches	Literature Review	The study argues that education can be used by sporting organisations to eliminate barriers and improve support for female coaches. This would contribute to change in organisational policy and create opportunities for females to assume leadership positions as well as improve their working environment.
Budworth and Mann (2010)	Becoming a leader: the challenge of modesty for women	Modesty and access to leadership	Literature review on modesty and personality	The study argues that, women should focus on developing their feminine traits, such as modesty and their leadership personality, as against attempting to adopt the behaviours that are successful for their male counterparts when it comes to leadership.

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Nielsen and Huse (2010)	The Contribution of Women on Boards of Directors: Going beyond the Surface		Survey of 201 Norwegian Firms	Increased board development activities, reduction in organisational conflicts and efficient board strategic control facilitate women participation in leadership of organisations.
Dezsö and Ross (2012)	Does female representation in top management improve firm performance? A panel data investigation		Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis of 15 years of panel data on the top management teams of the S and P 1,500 firms	The adoption of an innovative strategy that inculcates social benefits of gender diversity and behaviours in accordance with women in management, results in improved female participation in leadership.
Matsa and Miller (2013)	A Female Style in Corporate Leadership? Evidence from Quotas.	Gender Quotas	Comparative studies	The study revealed that efforts are being put in place to engage female leaders that demonstrated intellectual prowess and skills that align with the organisational goals, to be part of the board members and partake in decision making.

Baumgartner and Schneider (2010)	Perceptions of Women in Management: A Thematic Analysis of Razing the Glass Ceiling.		Thematic Analysis	As a strategy, women have to choose their personal leadership advancement, aspirations, develop their own leadership style, select mentors to guide them in their leadership journey if they are to rise to prominence in their respective fields.
Carol, Kaatz, Lee and Carnes (2017)	An Educational Intervention Designed to Increase Women's Leadership Self-Efficacy		Survey of 30 participants and a qualitative text analysis.	Employing competent firm strategies that identify and address the effects of gender stereotypes plays a key role in leadership self-efficacy in the early stages of their leadership career.
Al-Ahmadi (2011)	Challenges facing women leaders in Saudi Arabia.	Women and leadership	A survey of 300 respondents randomly selected from the IPA database	The study concludes that female leaders should be given flexibility and autonomy in the decision making process for the purpose of supporting them to achieve their objectives. Also, female leaders should be assisted to have an appreciation of their capacity, and work towards improving it.

Source: Author's Construct (2022)

Summary

From the review of literature on the experiences of women in sports leadership position, the major issues raised by the various writers or researchers include hindrance, which could be administrative, women's own barriers policy initiative, cultural roles, gendered characteristics, as well as suggested strategies for overcoming them.

The literature revealed that most women want to aspire to leadership positions in sports in various arena, including sports. However, these aspirations are cut short due to constraints in the form of administrative and financial support, cultural roles, lack of role models, and organisational culture.

There is a general perception that women are their barrier to success and it has been heightened by some researchers who sought to indicate that women lack self-identity, self-confidence, self-determination to take up leadership positions in sports. The influence of culture has been identified as an important constraint that sets women back in the quest to lead. This has become strong constraint due to how it is imprinted and made to be part of the societal norm.

The nature of the career in sports saw women not well fit to take up leadership roles and its inherent challenges. These challenges include working long hours into the night and at weekends, which could affect their family life. In addition, individual women in sports leadership have not been able to tell their experiences for other women to learn. In this case, there is seemingly a lack of or no mentoring for women who want to aspire to leadership positions.

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Strategies to overcome the constraints have been seen to be good to go. These strategies include policies on equal opportunities for both sexes to lead, positive parental influence, and provision of opportunities for women to realize their leadership goals. These strategies will help with women aspirations to occupy leadership positions in sports.

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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This research aims to investigate the experiences, leadership development, and advancement strategies employed by women occupying high-ranking leadership roles in professional sports organizations in Ghana, utilizing a qualitative research methodology. The chapter discusses the research philosophy, research design, study area, population, sampling procedure, data collection instrument, data collection procedures and data processing and analysis.

Research Design

Saunders et al. (2007) define research design as the overall strategy that the researcher employs to achieve the research goal and objectives. The research design serves as a roadmap that the researcher utilizes to methodologically direct the data collection and analysis. Creswell (2003) argues that the research design could further illuminate the methods and techniques that the research uses – be it quantitative or qualitative methods or probability or non-probability methods; the research design could predict these factors. Creswell (2003) also explains that multiple research design frameworks exist, including action research, phenomenological qualitative research, descriptive research, survey research, secondary research and case study research.

This research adopted a phenomenological strategy in its qualitative inquiry. This qualitative research method aims to explore the firsthand experiences of individuals from their unique viewpoints (Ogah, 2013). Rooted

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in paradigms of personal knowledge and subjectivity, this approach underscores the significance of personal perspectives and interpretations. Additionally, it was instrumental in uncovering specific truths, concentrating on phenomena through the lens of participants' viewpoints. Phenomenological methodology stands out as a potent tool for comprehending subjective experiences, gaining insights into individuals' motivations and behaviours, and cutting through the complexities of unquestioned assumptions and conventional wisdom (Lester, 1999; Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2010).

The phenomenological method is suitable for this study because it enabled the participants to provide informed knowledge as they have lived, and experienced it regarding the phenomenon of women in sports leadership positions. By implication, the qualitative approach to research focuses on the lived experiences of the participants. This is not surprising because it requires the researcher to gain insight into the perspectives of participants regarding the issues under investigation.

The research philosophy characterizes the way of thinking or beliefs that a researcher has about the world, consequently guiding the way data collected is examined and interpreted (Saunders et al. 2007). Like Saunders et al. (2007), Creswell (2003) suggests that a research paradigm or philosophy constitutes the values and abstract beliefs a researcher holds, which in turn shapes how they perceive the world around them. Therefore, it can be inferred that the research philosophy determines how the research will be undertaken – the worldview of the researcher would dictate the appropriate methodology to employ to arrive at the desired research goal. For instance, a person who

understands the "truth" of the world through a mono-paradigmatic lens, like one who seeks and acknowledges only objective truth, would adopt a positivist paradigm. According to Saunders et al. (2007, 2019), the main types of research philosophies are interpretivism, positivism, realism, and pragmatism. This study adopted the interpretive paradigm.

Creswell (2007) argues that the research philosophy of qualitative studies comprises interpretivist, humanistic, and naturalistic qualities. While according to Saunders et al. (2007), qualitative studies adopt an interpretive and constructivist worldview because the key components of methodology are influenced by the researcher's effort to produce knowledge from their subjective view of observed phenomena based on either their experiences or the recorded experiences of others. The current study seeks to gain insight into the issue of Ghanaian women's participation in sports leadership from the perspectives of female Ghanaian sports leaders. By implication, the study adopts an interpretive research philosophy.

Justification of the Interpretivist Research Philosophy

Unlike the positivist and post-positivist research philosophies, the interpretivist philosophy appears not to seek to objectively determine reality. Interpretivists believe that truth is determined through participant's narratives regarding their lived experiences. By implication, from the interpretivist stand point, the knowledge of the world is gained through the understanding of the meaning humans tie to their actions. It can, therefore, be discerned that the study's findings are likely to be informed by the researcher's values, perceptions, or understanding of phenomena.

In this thesis, despite the availability of various research philosophies, an interpretive approach is employed. The decision to embrace this philosophy is driven by the researcher's aspiration to recognize and interpret the experiences lived by the study participants. Essentially, the aim is to achieve a profound comprehension of crucial aspects that shape the experiences of the participants, including their leadership roles, progression, leadership styles, and other pertinent factors. The data gathered from the participants sheds light on numerous issues that characterize the involvement of Ghanaian women in sports leadership. Consequently, both the researcher's perspectives and the respondents' views, values, and opinions significantly influence the outcomes of the dissertation, aligning with the principles of the interpretivist paradigm.

Consistent with the views of Lincoln and Guba (1985), each research philosophy comprises certain elements- epistemology, ontology, methodology, and axiology. Again, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) also discuss three elements of research philosophy as: ontology, axiology, and epistemology, stating that these elements guide the way research procedures are carried out. The elements in question define the basic assumptions, values, and norms each philosophy holds and are imperative components required to fully harness the advantages of a research philosophy.

Epistemology

The epistemology of the research is vital to the entire research process as it aids in the establishment of 'faith' in the data collected, analyzed, and presented. The epistemology affects how knowledge is constructed with the social context under investigated. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) submit that epistemology focuses on the nature of human knowledge and understanding

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that the researcher can acquire to deepen understanding in that particular field. Further, Mouton (1996) states that research done in the epistemological dimension is regarded as the pursuit of valid knowledge (truth). Epistemology is, thus, the relationship of researchers to reality and the road that is followed in the search for truth (De Vos, 2002). Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) also assert that the epistemology of a pragmatic philosophy is relational; that is, relationships of variables are best determined by methods deemed appropriate to uncover the truth.

This study explored the "truth" of Ghanaian women's participation in sports leadership. By implication, it aims at searching for the "truth" linked to the phenomenon under investigation. This is in sync with the philosophy that defines the interpretivist philosophy. This is not surprising because the interpretive philosophical stand point provides room for the appreciation of truth from multiple perspectives.

To gain insight into the issue under investigation, the interpretivist epistemology tends to focus on issues such as "what is the state of the leadership role of Ghanaian women in the sports industry?", "what is known about Ghanaian women's participation in sports leadership?" and "how was this knowledge about Ghanaian women's participation in sports leadership acquired?" The answers to these questions are likely to bring to the fore the state of affairs regarding women's participation in sports leadership within the Ghanaian context.

Ontology

Scotland (2012) contends that ontology, as a facet of philosophy, encompasses the foundational assumptions guiding our perceptions of what is

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real or coherent. It forms the essence of the social phenomena under examination, delving into beliefs about the fundamental nature of existence. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), ontology facilitates the conceptualization of the nature and structure of reality, encompassing what is understood about that reality. In making sense of gathered information, ontology, with its embedded assumptions about reality, assumes a crucial role. These assumptions not only guide the comprehension of the research problem but also contribute to shaping its significance and the approach taken to address it for potential solutions.

The non-singular reality ontology that the interpretivist philosophy exhibits presents the notion that there is no single reality and that all individuals have varying interpretations of reality. This is to say that the reality of people is based on what they believe to be real or makes sense based on certain assumptions. As a consequence, an understanding of women's leadership roles within the sporting industry will be informed by the thoughts of individual participants regarding the issues under investigation.

Axiology

Axiology is directly linked to ethical issues that need to be made when planning qualitative research. Finnis (1980) asserts that axiology is a philosophical element that relates to the making of decisions of value or the right decisions when carrying out research. It further entails the evaluation of the concepts of right and wrong behaviour in the course of conducting qualitative research. This explains why the identity of the participants of the study should be anonymous. By implication, this study addressed issues such

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as confidentiality, biases, moral issues, cultural issues, and the goodwill of participants in the course of collecting data.

According to Saunders et al. (2007), the research approach is influenced by two primary forms of reasoning: deductive and inductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning begins with specific observations about a population, usually acquired from the preliminary investigation. Subsequently, data is collected and analyzed to establish patterns related to the specific observations (questions and objectives) and the general population. Trochim (2006) suggests that researchers who aim to contribute to the development of theory and general academic debates employ inductive reasoning. Alternatively, deductive reasoning adopts a more scientific premise as observations are derived from existing theories or conclusions, which are tested to further confirm or reject the original conclusion. Trochim (2006) defines deductive reasoning as a reductive process whereby a range of assumptions are eliminated until only a single conclusion remains. Thus, unlike the inductive approach, deductive reasoning begins with a pre-existing idea from which hypotheses or prepositions are formed.

Inductive reasoning is at the helm of this thesis research approach. The adoption of inductive reasoning is evident in the formulation of research objectives and questions based on preliminary secondary research. Accordingly, the study utilized an inductive thematic analysis to observe patterns within the data to contribute to general academic debates and practice surrounding women leadership in the Ghanaian sports industry. This is in line with Trochim's (2006) submission that qualitative studies tend to align with inductive reasoning. Arguably, a fragment of deductive reasoning exists in the

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research approach–the research largely depends on the use of a theoretical framework underpinned by multiple theories from numerous disciplines. These theories shaped the primary arguments of the study and influenced the formulation of the study objectives and questions. Essentially, this means that tenets of the deductive reasoning are subtly present within the study. Thus, in agreement with Trochim (2006), this study dispels the idea that deductive reasoning is solely meant for quantitative research and the natural sciences, while qualitative research is only associated with inductive reasoning.

Research Area

Figure 2: Location of Key Participants in the Regional Context (Ministry of Regional Reorganisation and Development, 2020).

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Ghana is a country located in the southern part of West Africa, sharing boarders with three countries: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo, in the North, West, and East, respectively. The southern boundary of Ghana is the Gulf of Guinea. The total land mass area of the country is measured to be 238,533 square kilometers. Ghana is on latitude 7.946527 and longitude 1.0231939999999895 on the Globe (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010).

Ghana's land scape is made up of low-line areas as well as areas of high altitude. The highest altitude in Ghana is in Akuapim Togo rangers link. Research has shown that altitudes have an impact on inhabitants of such areas. High altitude affects oxygen concentration and the development of red blood cells, which caters to oxygen deficiency, whereas low altitude areas also improve oxygen concentration and affect the development of red blood cells. These altitudes give Ghanaian citizens the opportunity to participate in all kinds of sporting activities (Games and Athletics). The athletics abilities of Ghanaian citizens can be attributed to the altitude and latitude factors that define the country (Gonzales, Alarcon-Yaquetto & Zevallos-Concha, 2016).

Ethnically, Ghana has five main ethnic groups, namely Akan, Ewe, Mole-Dagbane, Guan, and Ga-Adangbe. There are about 47 spoken languages, which makes the country multi-lingual. The people of Ghana are involved in so many sporting activities, of which soccer is the most popular. This is due to the fact that soccer has produced many great personalities on the continent and the world at large. Ghana soccer team has played in the world cup three consecutive times [2006, 2010, and 2014] (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010)

While the study participants were distributed across the country, a majority resided in Accra, the national capital. This location is significant as it

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houses the head offices of numerous sporting associations, providing participants with the chance to assume leadership roles on national sporting platforms. Their consistent involvement in activities at both national and regional levels contributes to the enrichment of their experiences in sports leadership.

Population

According to the National Sports Authority (NSA), there are forty-four (44) legally registered Associations/Federations under its umbrella. There are also three tertiary institutional sports associations in Ghana (Ghana University Sports Association (GUSA), Colleges of Education Sports Association (COESA), and Ghana Technical Universities Sports Association (GHATUSA); hence, the total Sports Associations in Ghana stands at forty-seven (47). Currently, according to NSA, there are 85 women holding executive positions in the various associations/federations in sports.

Sampling Procedure

The researcher used both the purposive and convenience sampling procedures to select 13 participants out of the 85 executives. The 13 participants were selected for the study due to the confirmed availability of those women leaders. The purposive sampling technique permitted the researcher to focus on a particular characteristic of the population (women executives from legally registered associations under the NSA), which aided in answering the research questions relating to the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2015). The purposive sampling procedure also allowed the researcher to identify the initial points of inquiry, being the first 8 respondents, following which snowballing and convenience sampling were used in conjunction to

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identify other leaders who were available. Snowballing enabled the researcher to mitigate the challenges associated with the absence of sufficient and reliable publicized contact information of the executives by connecting the researcher to another available executive through a prior executive interview. Convenience sampling permitted the researcher to select the snowballed participants who were available.

Subsequently, a focus group discussion initially involved a group of 8 participants. This choice adhered to the recommendation made by Akyıldız and Ahmed (2021), suggesting that a focus group ideally consists of around 5 to 8 individuals. The criteria for participant selection prioritized considerations of availability and accessibility. The discussion was conducted in a virtual setting, necessitating participants to have access to a reliable internet connection and proficiency in using video conferencing platforms. Additionally, individuals whose schedules clashed with the designated date for the focus group discussion opted out of the interview. As a result, 5 participants remained, meeting the specified criteria.

Data Collection Instruments

A modified version of the interview guide created by M'mbaha (2012) was employed for this current research. The questions were formulated as open-ended to enable participants to express their thoughts freely, facilitating the sharing of experiences and allowing the researcher to acquire comprehensive information (following the approach suggested by Tod, 2006, and Stuckey, 2013). To capture the interview, a voice recorder was utilized.

Before administering the interview, research experts in sports leadership, academia, and qualitative studies were contacted to check the face and content validity of the interview items.

The interview guide contained two main sections. The first section examined the demographics of the respondents. Respondents were asked about their age, marital status, position, religion, and educational level. The second section examined questions that pointed out some barriers preventing Ghanaian women involvement in sports leadership positions (cultural, socio-economic, personal factors), the professional experiences, leadership growth, and progress of these women, and strategies that can encourage women to climb up, and become leaders in the sporting world. The respondents' opinions of the factors that might have contributed to their career achievements, as well as the challenges facing women in management, were also captured.

The interview guide was subsequently modified to create a focus-group interview guide, which was used to provide useful insights on the topic.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher acquired an introductory letter from the Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation at the University of Cape Coast, facilitating her introduction to the interviewee as a student of the Department. Additionally, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Cape Coast, adhering to the university's research regulations, which approved data collection.

Initially, letters were dispatched to all participants, seeking their consent to partake in the study and elucidating the study's objectives. The

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interviews took place at locations where the interviewees felt at ease, either at home or the workplace. Considering the participants' locations, the researcher anticipated completing the interviews over two months, each session lasting between 1 to 1.5 hours. For the focus group discussion involving 5 respondents, the researcher utilized Zoom, a virtual conferencing platform, due to challenges related to the respondents' commute and scheduling constraints.

Data Processing and Analysis

All the data that were gathered for the research questions were processed and analyzed through the same procedure. The data that were gathered from the interviews were transcribed, coded, themed, and triangulated before being analyzed. The data were organized in different data files to facilitate easy retrieval (Boeije, 2010; McLellan, MacQueen & Neidig, 2003). The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was utilized to transcribe the interview. The first stage of IPA, which is transcribing and coding, was performed by listening to the audio recording of the interview, which was replayed several times for clarity. This was followed by writing out the conversation verbatim. The researcher read out the document and listened to the audio to ensure that validity was enhanced. Also, member-checking was used for accuracy and meaning with the participant's experiences. The written document enabled the researcher to code common words, concepts, and suggestions stated by the participants.

IPA's second stage involves bracketing and phenomenological reductions. It is required that the recording of the interview, followed by the researcher adhere to the phenomena, as stated by participants as a true

reflection of their experiences. The ideas of the participants were facts about what had happened as lived experiences, which the researcher must indicate without any reservation (Mumuni, 2017).

In continuing the phenomenological process, concepts need to be combined and organized into key themes. These themed keys enabled the researcher to clearly bring out the defined objectives from the main ideas given and set a pathway for the analysis of the issues mentioned by the participants as to what similarities, differences, and indifferent views have been experienced with the support of literature (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Davies & Dodd, 2002; Stenbacka, 2001; Torrance, 2012).
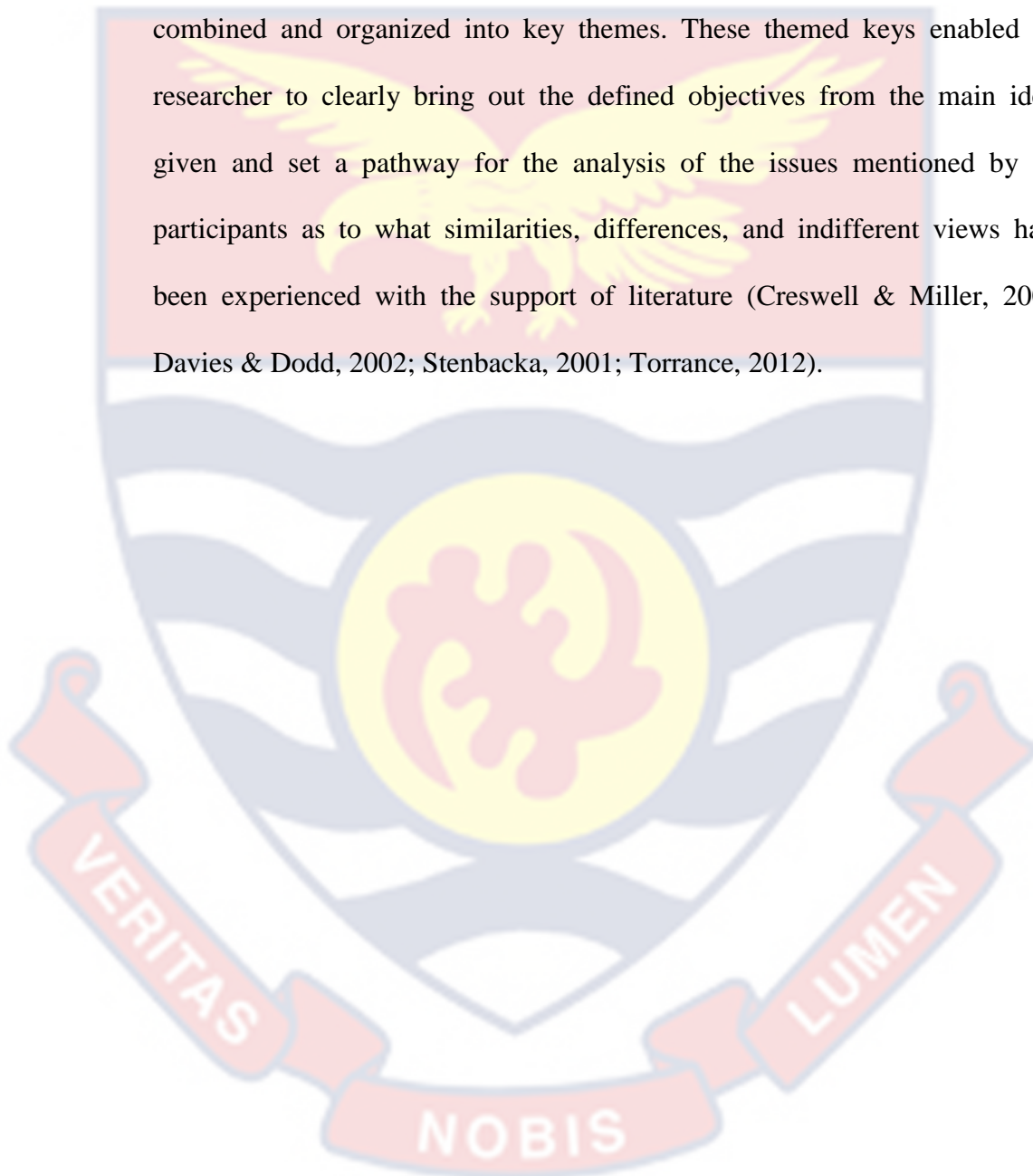
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This research aims to investigate the encounters, leadership development, and strategies for advancement embraced by women employed in senior positions within professional sports leadership organizations in Ghana. The study utilizes a qualitative research approach employing hermeneutic phenomenology to delve into the mentioned phenomenon.

The previous chapter presented the methodological approach of the study, explicitly detailing the use of thematic analysis as the most appropriate way to dissect and interpret the intricate patterns within the data collected. The thematic analysis presents the themes, codes, code descriptions, sample illustrations, frequency, and saliency. The themes were an abstract and subjective categorization of the combined codes. The codes represented linguistic features, such as topical transitions, metaphors or keyword connectors that repeatedly emerged within the extracts. Further, the code descriptions were created to define the codes in general, intelligible language because they were created based on the researcher's judgment.

Sample illustrations were captured from the extracts to emphasize the code descriptions and provide more accurate representations of the data from which the codes were generated and the themes formulated. Again, the frequency was used to identify the number of respondents from whom the codes were generated. Finally, saliency, according to Buetow (2010), represents a subjective means to determine the level of significance of a code to the focus of the study. Although repeated ideas were identified, not all of

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them bore significance to the research objectives; hence, the saliency analysis was used to eliminate the insignificant codes to ensure consistency and reliability in the data.

Research Question 1: Analysis of the Barriers that Prevent Ghanaian Women Involvement in Sports Leadership Positions

Women in sectors, such as healthcare, academia, and even sports, are beset by an almost intransigent obstacle to their leadership aspirations. The accepted term commonly used to describe this plight of women in the work force is the "glass ceiling", which refers to the invisible barrier that many women face as they advance through the ranks of their chosen professions, but they are able to progress only so far before stymied in their efforts to reach the upper echelons. Barriers that prevent women from accessing leadership positions have been extensively discussed in both grey and academic literature and have been reported in numerous professional disciplines. The sports industry in Ghana is no exception. A myriad of issues prevents or discourages aspiring women leaders and women in mid-management positions from breaking the glass ceiling and climbing the rungs. The thematic analysis identifies 3 central themes in this regard: structural barriers, institutional barriers, and individual mindsets. These themes have been outlined and discussed in Table 1.

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Table 5: Barriers that Prevent Ghanaian Women Involvement in Sports Leadership Positions

Theme	Code	Code Description	Illustrative Quote	Frequency	Saliency
Structural Barriers	Ineffective policy and legislation	Sports policies and legislation that have been created from 1974 to 2016 have done little to facilitate women's inclusion and participation in leadership.	There is a major backlog when it comes to women sports leadership. The policies that are there to facilitate this progress are old and do not go anywhere. Even the new ones do not help us [leaders]	7	High
	Less developed leadership networks	Rising professional women tend to lack access to the same level of formal networks as their male counterparts	Although we as female leaders tend to socialise and help one another, we are constantly in a game of catch-up so some of our mentors and more experienced leaders hardly have the luxury of training or assisting emerging leaders	4	High
	Work vs family balance	Women tend to have a lion's share of the household responsibilities preventing them from sustaining leadership positions	I have to ensure that my house is in order and the children are ready for school every morning, and well taken care of every evening. Our culture demands it. So, imagine a mother who is now thinking about taking up leadership roles in a challenging industry like this [Sports], she would be deterred despite her capability.	9	High
	Low access to informal networks	Women leaders are not sufficiently engaged informally by male leaders	…sometimes they go to events, and even meet up informally to discuss issues but do not engage us because they prefer the company of other men	6	High

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Institutional Barriers	Role incongruence	Women are negatively evaluated as sports leaders because of the stereotype that women are incapable of participating efficiently as sports leaders.	It will surprise you to know that some of the males I train do not even value my suggestions because I think they believe I am too feminine in a masculine role…. They disregard my expertise because I am a woman.	10	High
	Expectancy-disconfirmation	There is a difference in what is expected of women leaders and what is produced.	…. So, I ensured that I changed the system since the previous coach, who was a male, left a lot of loopholes. Even though I saw an increase in performance, I was told not to revert to what was done because that is what all the past leaders did, who were males if I may say. The system is not progressive.	3	High
	Leadership behaviour vs agentic behaviour	People tend to associate leadership behaviours with stereotypical masculine traits like dominance, aggression, independence, competitiveness and self-reliance.	Women in this country often have to walk a fine line between acting like a male leader and exhibiting female traits, and these opposing expectations create conflict for women who obtain leadership positions… and it ends up discouraging others.	8	High
Individual Mindsets	Socialisation pressures	The position's attractiveness is seen to be constrained by the social pressure that accompanies it.	We should consider that women don't like that pressure that goes with being a leader because people will expect you to be as charged and competitive as most male leaders, ignoring the fact that women lead differently.	6	High
	Desire to avoid	Women choose to avoid such positions of power due to the	Because of the alleged political ties that go along with such positions of authority, women tend to	7	High

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	politics	perceived political ties associated with them.	shun them.		
	Valuing a work-life balance	The difficulty in sustaining a work-life balance when occupying sports leadership positions discourages women involvement.	Caregiver roles are prioritised by most women. Yes, these choices are not negative but I consider them barriers because they are significant contributors to the leadership gender gap.	12	High
	Risk-aversion	Sports leadership tends to favour more risk-prone behaviours which are expected to appeal more to the male demographic.	Like I said, women are less interested in putting themselves in situations where they might be pressured to make decisions that will affect tens of people. That is what most of us as leaders are challenged with. We have the home to cater for so imaging putting many people at risk with a false decision and thinking about your children and husband too.	4	High
	Lack of confidence	Sports are often seen by women as being more male-centric, which makes the women doubt their leadership potential in the male-dominated industry.	Some of my friends who are within the same industry sometimes confess to me that they cannot do what I do because it is a man's job to make the big calls, especially in this male-led field…	9	High

Source: Field Data Collection (2022)

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The first theme highlighted in Table 1 is *Structural Barriers*. Structural barriers, according to Samad (2016), are defined as impediments that together have a disproportionately negative influence on a group and continue to sustain glaring gaps between marginalized and more privileged social groups. Samad (2016) states that many authors make the common mistake of defining structural barriers as having everything to do with policy limitations and little to do with cultural and social frameworks, which is not the case. The reality is that structural barriers also affect access to the formal and informal networks and the resources that enable a system to function.

For instance, just as structural barriers to employment would encompass access to job training and preparation, the structural barriers to leadership entail a lack of regulatory frameworks that foster gender-parity in organisational leadership. It is not surprising that the coded responses revealed that the legislative frameworks that should motivate the engagement of women as chief participants of sporting activities and leaders of athletes and sports associations or clubs are ineffective; hence, the code *ineffective policy and legislation*. This is not to say the policy is ineffective in its entirety but as the code description indicates, its ineffectiveness resides in the absence of significant considerations for women leadership in sports.

The second code, *less developed leadership networks*, highlights the inadequacy of formal networks in women's sports leadership. According to Papafilippou et al. (2022), the presence of networks within leadership has been consistently undervalued, especially in women's leadership. Both internal and external networks have been proven to empower emerging women leaders in a variety of ways and have been considered a useful force for change.

Interestingly, the analysis presents a similar idea that women who are emerging leaders in the Ghanaian sports industry lack access to the same level of formal networks as their male counterparts.

Additionally, some cultural and ideological structures negatively affect emerging women leaders' access to informal networks; hence, the code has *low access to informal networks*. The analysis revealed that potential women leaders are treated like other women employees by male leaders – they are not adequately engaged on an informal level, like being asked to attend functions that could be a good ground to network. Potential male leaders, on the other hand, easily develop strong informal networks and tend to be shunned if they are reluctant to engage.

Finally, another structural barrier, and perhaps the biggest structural threat to Ghanaian women's engagement in sports leadership, is *work vs family balance*. This structural barrier is rooted in societal expectations, cultural ideologies, and the absence of structures that facilitate women's ability to lead and take care of the family at the same time. It demonstrates that aspiring women leaders are consistently plagued with the dilemma of prioritising their families over their work. This dilemma primarily stems from societal expectations and traditional gender roles that perpetuate inequality in domestic obligations. This significantly contributes to limiting the career advancement of sports women and solidifies Marilyn Loden's metaphor of a glass ceiling in women's leadership.

'Institutional Barriers' were identified as the next theme. Role incongruence, expectancy-disconfirmation, and leadership vs. agentic behaviours make up this theme. *Role incongruence* has been a recurring

talking point in the literature on women's sports leadership primarily due to the longstanding stereotype that sporting activities should be male-led (Jensen et al., 2019). Ten respondents alluded to the misconceptions about women leaders and how they have impacted their capacity to lead or their efforts to advance their status as leaders.

The *expectancy-disconfirmation* code represents the comparison between what women leaders are expected to do and what they actually do. According to the analysis, discrepancies frequently arise that are either beyond the control of aspirant leaders or as a result of the system impeding women's performance. Due to these inconsistencies, women are not held in high regard, and the myth that men are better suited to leadership positions in Ghana's sports industries is accentuated. Although a low frequency of 3 responses was detected, the code was considered to be highly important in achieving the study's objective; hence, the high saliency.

The code *leadership vs. agentic behaviours* explicates how women are expected to exhibit both leadership characteristics typical of women and agentic behaviours that align with common male traits. Interestingly, any actions that inform this paradox Zheng et al. (2018) refer to as a double bind, usually trigger the false conception that women are not fit to lead. This does not only halt the advancement of current leaders who occupy mid-management positions but also discourages aspiring leaders from engaging in them. The high frequency of 8 responses reveals how prominent this observation is amongst the female higher-ups in the Ghanaian sports industry.

The individual attitudes define the final theme. This theme is characterized by the personal desire to avoid politics, socialisation pressures,

risk aversion behaviour, and value a work-life balance. The most prominent of these codes is *valuing a work-life balance* with 12 responses. The code symbolizes the perceived challenge of striking a balance between the demands of leadership and domestic responsibilities. Women usually find themselves wedged between the expectations of their culture (tied in with traditional gender roles) and role incongruence (which would justify the false stereotypes held against them). To avoid any work-life imbalance, most women shy away from sports leadership roles.

Further, aspiring female leaders are constantly put under pressure to interact with peers and subordinates in the same way that male leaders do. Women in the sports industry who have the skills and qualifications to lead but are more reticent and modest tend to overlook their suitability for the role out of concern that they will be under pressure to socialize in the same way that male executives do.

A less reported but salient finding was characterized using the code *risk-aversion*. Four respondents attested to the idea that since sports leadership favours people willing to take risks, it appeals more to aspiring male leaders than their female counterparts, who perceive themselves to be more risk-averse. Despite the low frequency of this finding, it was assigned a high saliency because of its clear connection to gender stereotypes and implications for reinforcing the glass ceiling that prevents women from advancing to leadership positions. Again, a similar yet more controversial observation is categorized by the code *lack of confidence*.

Interestingly, this code was reported by a large number of respondents (9 responses) and reemphasized in the course of the focus group discussion

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despite being contested by other respondents. The code explicates the perception that some women have about sports leadership as disproportionally male-centred and male-led and that women would find it difficult to "make the big calls" that the male leaders do. This lack of confidence has fundamental implications for changing the structural and institutional hurdles that prohibit women from engaging and participating in sports leadership, in addition to a significant disincentive to women's participation in sports leadership.

Research Question 2: Analysis of the Nexus Effect of Cultural Factors, Socio-Economic Factors and Personal Factors on Women's Participation in Sports Leadership

This section of the study explores how the relationship between cultural, socio-economic and personal factors impact women's decision to participate in sports leadership. Originally the basic themes were used to analyse the themes based on the coded responses, and subsequently, the organising theme was used to explain the nexus effect on women's participation. (see table 6).
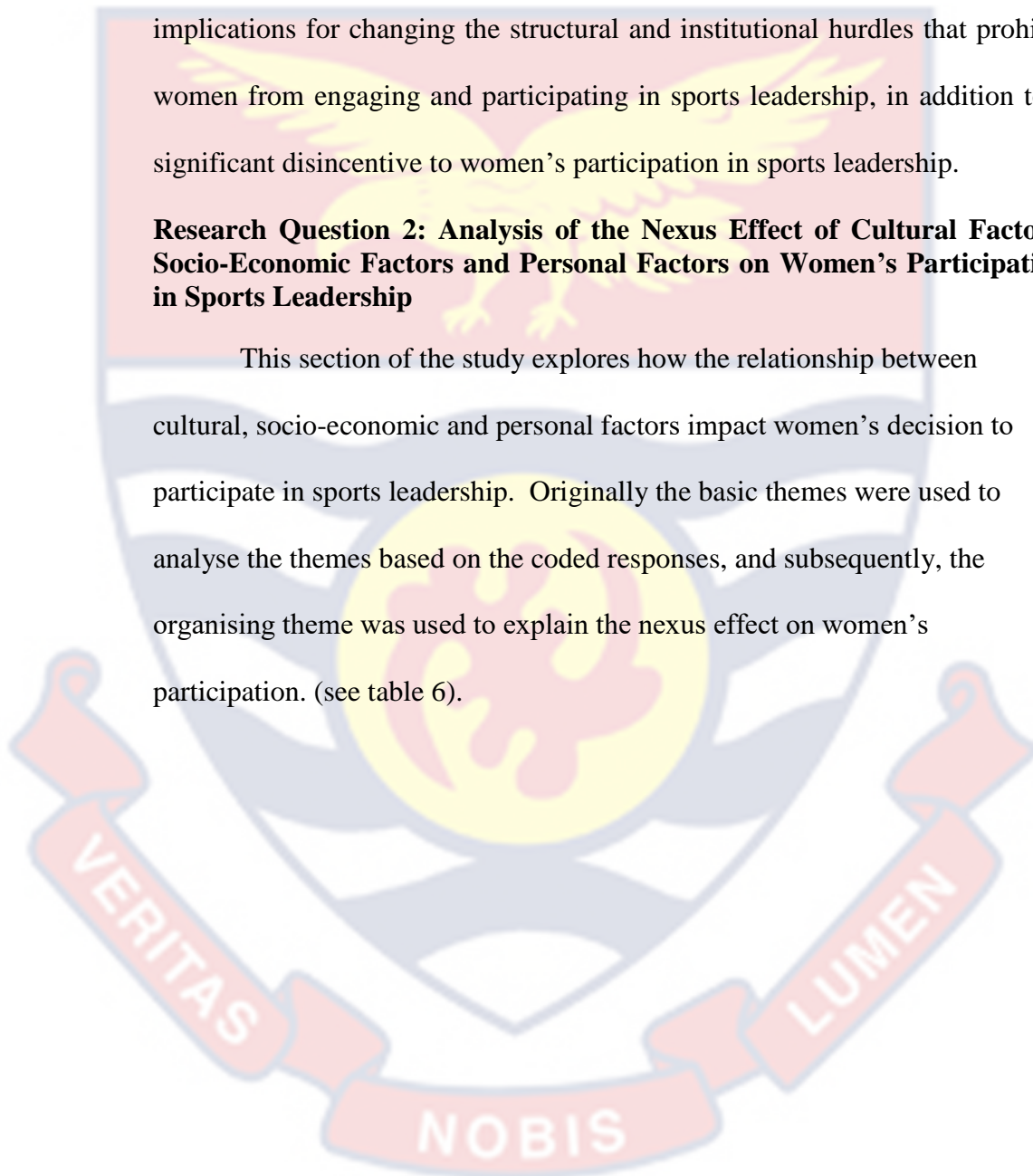
Table 6: Analysis of the Cultural Factors, Socio-Economic Factors and Personal Factors on Women's Participation in Sports Leadership

Theme	Code	Code Description	Illustrative Quote	Frequency	Saliency
Personal Factors	Self-confidence	The confidence women display in the workplace influences their opportunities to participate as women leaders.	… it is not true; we are very meticulous and more focused on tasks at hand. How can you lead if you do not believe in yourself? Do you think me sitting here, I do not believe in myself?	10	High
	Networking capacity	The capacity to network affects the access to leadership positions.	…connections are very important to push you up in this industry	9	High
	Intrinsic motivation	Women are intrinsically motivated to occupy leadership positions or participate in leadership training.	… becoming a big part of the national youth authority was a personal goal…	3	High
	Discrimination	There is discrimination towards women in management positions and aspiring women leaders.	It will surprise you to know that some of the males I train do not even value my suggestions because I think they believe I am too feminine in a masculine role	12	High
	Empowerment	Women decide to participate in leadership when they feel empowered and when doing so would also empower other women.	… it helps other people, especially the younger girls, know that this [leadership status] is not an impossible achievement.	8	High
	Leadership knowledge	Women take on leadership roles when they feel they possess the necessary knowledge and abilities.	… and people would think you do not have the requisite knowledge meanwhile you have worked extensively in that field and you know more than them.	8	High

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Socio-economic Factors	Level of education	The level of education is believed to translate to a greater access to training and experience, and eventually, leadership.	Yes, I am of the belief that if you have access to good education, you will have a better chance of excelling in your department and later having a shot at big roles.	11	High
	Access to equal leadership opportunities	Women lack access to equal sports leadership opportunities.	… some of us are used as scape goats; we will be giving the good opportunities and it will be televised and put in newspapers but when you check the facts, I am sure you will find that majority of us do not have the same platform with other men.	8	High
	Socio-cultural lag	Some socio-cultural norms are deeply gendered, traditional and obsolete.	… sometimes at a family function I have to leave to address a few work-related issues and the way people would even look at you and judge you because it looks like you are always putting your work first. My husband does it too but no one would say anything. You see where I am coming from?	12	Moderate
	Work vs. family	Women are trained to prioritise their families, whilst males are taught to prioritise their career.	I have to ensure that my house is in order and the children are ready for school every morning, and well taken care of every evening. Our culture demands it. So, imagine a mother who is now thinking about taking up leadership roles in a challenging industry like this [Sports], she would be deterred despite her capability.	9	High
	Income differences	Female engagement in leadership is influenced by the disparity in pay	…most men earn more than us. Even, the person who occupied this position before me	8	High

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		between male and female leaders.	and has retired and gone earned more.		
	Family motivation	Women leaders are encouraged or motivated by family to take up leadership positions	My husband does not deter me from progressing in my career. He is a very ambitious man… He is very encouraging of my profession	4	
	Expectancy-disconfirmation	Women are reluctant to take on leadership roles since what is expected of them undermines their performance.	Males are the central authorities in our culture; that is what we are all brought up to understand. Therefore, no matter how well a woman leads, it is seen as insufficient and unsuccessful.	7	High
	Leadership differences	Women use different leadership styles than men	We [women] lead differently than the men. But our approach is often chastised because it does not conform to the norm.	5	High
Cultural factors	Traditional social arrangement	The Ghanaian culture traditionally places men in positions of power and women secondary to them.	Anywhere you go in this Ghana, you will see a man leading unless the role looks like a female one. Then they will shy away and give it to women.	8	High
	Domestic duties first	Ghanaian culture mandates that women place domestic duties above everything career-wise.	Caregiver roles are prioritised by most women…	7	High
	Cultural lag	Some cultural mandates are deeply gendered, traditional and obsolete.	I was brought up to look up to men to lead. Honestly, regardless of my schooling, if a lot of these women outside and here had not started active feminist movements and opened my eyes, I would have still had that idea and possibly never upgraded myself.	13	High

Source: Author's Construct (2022)

Per the study's objectives, three predetermined themes were developed, namely personal factors, socio-economic factors, and cultural factors. According to Nowell et al. (2017), this means the theme generation was deductive where predefined themes are produced and assigned codes to explain them. From these themes, coded responses that fit the framework of the themes were identified from the transcripts. The theme of personal factors comprised 6 key codes–self-confidence, networking capacity, intrinsic motivation, discrimination, empowerment, and leadership knowledge–that characterized the individual behaviours, experiences and skills influencing women's participation in leadership. Self-confidence was used to identify the belief women have in their capabilities to lead, regardless of structural and institutional barriers. A large proportion of the respondents (10) made statements that aligned with the notion that most women leaders, including themselves, discard self-limiting thoughts and behaviours and the negative voices of society.

Again, 9 respondents talked about networking as essential in building a solid foundation on which to lead in the sports industry. This finding corroborates that of Javillonar (2021), who identifies a positive relationship between social and organisational networks and leadership. In this study, however, the capacity to network was at the helm of most responses as opposed to the availability of the networks. This also aligns with Zheng et al. (2018) study that suggested that most people in West African countries heavily rely on social capital (implying the availability of networks) yet find difficulty in harnessing the benefits of the accompanying social influence it

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offers. Based on similar discoveries in the analysis, the code networking capacity was developed.

Three respondents noted that women are intrinsically motivated to engage in sports leadership. In spite of the low frequency of responses, the code intrinsic motivation was deemed of high significance to the study's objective. Additionally, several respondents (8) noted that when women are given the proper support, mentorship and training to lead, it improves their confidence and self-perception and even enables them to create their leadership style. Consequently, the code empowerment was generated. Finally, submissions made by 8 respondents pointed to a relationship between women's leadership knowledge and participation in sports leadership. Unlike code empowerment, leadership knowledge specifically centres on how the accumulation of knowledge, skills and resources by occupying leadership positions outside or within the sports industry has enhanced women's capacity to participate in sports leadership presently.

The next predetermined theme is socio-economic factors. The social elements where characterized by codes like level of education, access to equal leadership opportunities, cultural lag, and work vs. family balance, while the economic element was primarily the income differences between male and female leaders. The level of education was the most predominant response, exemplifying the longstanding ideology that access to education enhances the prospects available to potential women leaders and significantly influences participation in sports leadership positions. Similarly, access to leadership opportunities was coded to capture the responses that highlighted an absence

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of equal leadership opportunities for women which negatively influences their participation in sports leadership.

Further, the code work vs family, as highlighted by 9 respondents, represented the idea that societal expectations have created this longstanding career or family dilemma that working women are constantly challenged with. Conversely, an interesting observation presented by 4 respondents indicated that the presence of family is not a deterrent but a motivator to advance in leadership. The high significance of this find to the study's objectives, regardless of the minimal response, resulted in its identification as the code motivation by family.

The analysis also found that there is a socio-cultural lag that affects women's ability to participate in leadership; 9 respondents implied that despite the industry and societal progression, the socio-cultural status of women has remained stagnant as gendered norms and false social perceptions consistently limit them. It is no surprise, therefore, that another primary finding was income differences (8 respondents), particularly regarding the pay differences between males and females in the same or similar leadership positions. However, the code socio-cultural lag feeds into and embraces some cultural elements that are subsequently explored as cultural factors. Nonetheless, it was still given a moderate saliency because it brings to light the subtle linkage between social and cultural elements that influence women's participation in sports leadership.

Also aligned to the socio-economic factors are the cultural factors. The cultural factors encompassed codes like domestic duties, leadership differences, and traditional social arrangements. Numerous studies assert that

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comparable ideas in the description of socio-economic variables and cultural variables tend to confuse academics and practitioners alike; consequently, it is crucial to note that for this analysis, socio-economic factors represent access to resources and one's position in a social hierarchy while cultural factors represent the influence of the way of life, habit patterns, and lifestyle on women's access to leadership positions.

However, the analysis revealed that codes within the social, personal, and cultural themes were intertwined throughout the investigation, emphasizing the existence of a nexus. For instance, codes like empowerment correlated with education level since it is believed that having more access to leadership training and experience is correlated with having a higher education level. While codes like cultural lag and traditional social arrangement bore similarities as well. The following sub-section analyses the presence of the nexus using Attride-Sterling's (2001) organizing theme.

Research Question 3: Analysing the Organizing Theme using a Personal, Socio-economic and Cultural Factors Nexus

An organizing theme, according to Attride-Sterling (2001), is a middle-order theme that combines key concepts from a basic theme or demonstrates the connections between several basic themes. In this instance, the organizing theme is employed to examine the factors that affect women's participation in leadership through the lens of socioeconomic, cultural, and personal variables. The organizing theme, "determinants of women's involvement in sports leadership," comes from examining the nexus of individual, socio-economic, and cultural issues that affect women's decision to participate in leadership. Figure 1 depicts the analysis of the organizing theme.

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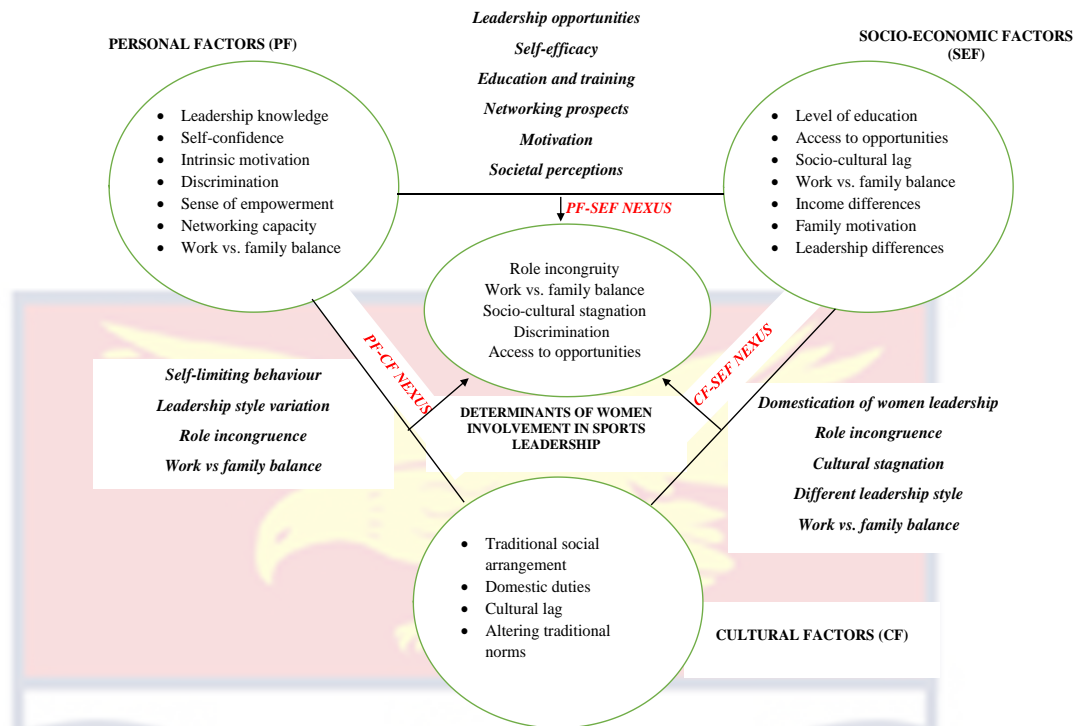
Figure 3: Organising Theme of the Study

Source: Author's Construct (2022

Research Question 4: Analysis of the Professional Experiences, Leadership Growth, and Progression Approach Adopted by Women in Uppermost Leadership Positions Working Within Professional Sports Organisations in Ghana

This section of the thematic analysis details the basic themes and codes derived from analysing the collected field data in connection to the third objective: examining the professional experiences, leadership growth, and progression approach adopted by women in uppermost leadership positions working within professional sports organisations in Ghana. Based on the information presented in Table 7, the analysis outlines three main themes: (1) The opportunity for career development in leadership positions, (2) Transcending perceived barriers to advancement (3) Positive professional experiences.

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Table 7: The Professional Experiences, Leadership Growth, and Progression Approach Adopted by Women in Uppermost Leadership Positions Working Within Professional Sports Organisations in Ghana

Theme	Code	Code Description	Illustrative quote	Frequency	Saliency
The Opportunity for Career Development in Leadership Positions	Career limitations	Obstacles that limit the ability of women to operate effectively as leaders in sporting organisations in Ghana	It is understandable to see most of our female leaders not having faith in themselves to assume powerful leadership positions where they can influence the industry"	11	High
	Mentorship and sponsorship opportunities	The availability of opportunities for women to develop their leadership capabilities.	"I owe my current professional progress to the investment the three sports managers I worked under made in me."	11	High
	Networking	The chance to develop impactful relationships in the sporting community of Ghana, would benefit female leaders in sporting organisations.	"Numerous opportunities to connect with resourceful individuals whose experience, guidance, and assistance have added to my efficacy as a leader"	5	Low
Transcending Perceived Barriers to advancement	Work-life balance	How do female leaders manage their corporate and social life effectively	"I have had to juggle between my responsibility as a family woman and my responsibility as a senior manager in my sporting organisational"	9	High
	Social issues and perceptions	The various social constructs that influence the organisational perception of female leaders in sports management positions.	"Not everyone in our organisational is fully sold on the idea of having a woman occupying the topmost position."	11	High
	Hiring	How sports organisational recruitment	"One striking thing you will observe is	11	High

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	Practices	favours or discriminates against women.	how different the structure and duration of the contracts issued to male employees are from their female counterparts."		
Positive Professional Experiences	Relevance of sponsors and mentors	The significance of individual sponsors and mentors to the development of female leaders in sporting organisations in Ghana	"I have received inspiration from various female role models to demonstrate competency in my field of work."	11	High
	Interest in sporting activities	Examines the relevance of interest in sporting activities to assuming leadership in sports organisations	"I have had an interest in sports since my high school days. During that time, I was elected as the main sports prefect responsible for overseeing the sports development of the students in my school"	6	Low
	Training and capacity development	Opportunities for developing intellectual and physical capabilities to meet the demands of the leadership positions available in sporting organisational	"For others to reach the level we have gotten to; it is required that they undergo the training we underwent."	9	High
	Available career advancement pathways	The available structures and systems that have been implemented to guide women to assume positions of power in sports organisations.	"We have had formal meetings and informal discussions on how to develop a clear structure to facilitate the young women we have identified as having the potential to lead like women."	11	High

Source: Field Data Collection (2022)

The study's third goal was to determine the professional experiences, leadership development, and advancement strategies used by women in senior leadership roles in professional sports organisations in Ghana. The thematic analysis identified three key themes which boarded on the various approaches and experiences women in upper sports management have employed in their careers. Table 7 states the Opportunity for Career Development, Transcending Perceived Barriers to Advancement, and Professional Experiences as the principal themes obtained from the analysis of the collected data. Studies conducted by Fapohunda (2018)**,** Knoppers, Spaaij & Inge (2021)**,** and Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer and King (2017) on the professional experience and leadership potential growth and development highlighted similar components as being key to the professional experience of female leaders in the sporting community across the globe.

The theme "Opportunity for Career Development" was derived from the analysis of codes that they relate to the opportunities and challenges to career advancement that female leaders in sports organisations in Ghana faced. Codes like "Career Limitations," "Mentorship," "Sponsorship, and "Networking" demonstrated their experience with leading sporting organisations in Ghana. For the code *Gender-*Based Career Limitations, its analysis concluded with a high saliency. Per Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer and King (2017)**,** it is typical for the culture of most organisational workplaces to be tailored to discriminate against women. If women in powerful positions can identify these limitations and overcome them, they are seen as highly talented and can progress in their careers. Similar to this assertion, all the respondents

affirmed the existence of such limitations and their need to overcome these challenges in their careers as female leaders in sporting organisations.

For the second code, "Mentorship and Sponsorship," 11 of the respondents asserted operating in multiple organisations in the sporting industry of Ghana where they received support. They outlined the essence of receiving sponsorship in various forms to assist with career advancement when a female is allowed to occupy an important leadership position in a sporting organisational. In line with the opinion of Knoppers, Spaaij & Inge (2021), it can be concluded that sponsorship opportunities in the form of educational scholarships, career advice, and career recommendations play a key role in assisting women to excel in leadership positions in any organisational. This code was regarded as having a high saliency.

The third code, *Networking,* was identified to have a low saliency. While this code was realized in the thematic analysis, the researcher's opinion of the code sided with the assertion of Pape (2020). According to Pape (2020), there are cohorts of female leaders who have had positive experiences in their leadership tenure due to their ability to leverage their connections with other key stakeholders within and outside their organisational in the completion of their duties. Respondents highlighted how their network of resourceful individuals facilitated their access to developmental opportunities that helped in their achievements as leaders. However, this seems to contradict previous submissions about networking issues being the major barriers to female involvement in leadership.

The second theme that was identified in the thematic analysis of the data collection was Transcending Perceived Barriers to Advancement. All the

female respondents described the various constraints they had to overcome in the course of their careers. These responses were consistent with the descriptions given by Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer and King (2017) and Aly and Breese (2018) regarding the experience of female leaders in sporting organisations. The codes, Work-Life Balance, Social Issues and Perceptions, and Hiring practices were identified as informing the theme.

For the code, Work-Life Balance, study participants highlighted how their duties to their families often demanded a lot of their working time. The study respondents described this as being unwelcomed by their male counterparts. Despite this, the respondents posited the presence of male leaders in their organisations who demonstrated understanding in such situations and were willing to accommodate them. On the other hand, respondents explained that other less fortunate women did not receive such leverage and, as a result, withdrew from their leadership positions and opportunities to advance their careers. The study identified this code as having a high saliency.

The code Social Issues and Perceptions, which was identified from the analysis to have a high saliency, played a key role in the ability of women to advance their careers. The respondents explained that in addition to the self-limiting belief sections of female leaders have of themselves, the sociocultural perceptions that are transmitted through the socialization process in the Ghanaian context give credence to males being fit to lead an organisational at various levels. This plays an important role in determining the extent to which respondents were able to advance their careers as leaders.

For the code, Hiring Practices, it was highlighted from the thematic analysis that the nature of hiring practices employed by the human resource management of sporting organisations played a crucial role in the professional experience and leadership growth opportunities of female leaders in Ghanaian sporting organisations. The analysis revealed that sports organisations in Ghana had a preference for masculine leadership practices as against allowing females to demonstrate feminine leadership traits. This code received a high saliency, given that all the respondents extensively discussed such experiences.

The third theme identified under this objective was the Positive Professional Experiences. Respondents explained the various factors that played a key role in their having a decent experience as female leaders in sporting institutions. The thematic analysis identified the *Relevance of Sponsors and Mentors* as being important to have a positive professional experience as a female leader in a sporting organisational in Ghana. For this code, each of the 11 respondents highlighted how relevant the mentors and sponsors they encountered in their career progression contributed to their development as leaders. They explained how the individuals advocated, groomed, and assisted in positioning them as strong contenders for senior leadership roles in their sporting organisations.

According to Holder, Jackson and Ponterotto (2015), a direct correlation exists between females who have a keen interest in various sporting activities and the probability of them rising through the ranks to occupy mid-level and senior-level management positions. Concerning this study, the code Interest in Sporting Activities was discussed by six out of the

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eleven respondents as playing a contributing role to their positive professional experience as leaders in sports management positions. They explained that this helped them to develop the passion and knowledge for propelling their respective sports to higher heights, given the number of respondents who talked extensively about this subject. This code was given a low saliency.

For the code, Training and Capacity Development was given a high saliency. Out of the total number of respondents, nine of them with experience in other industries before taking up full-time roles in sporting organisations discussed the need to possess diverse technical abilities to operate as leaders in the sporting industry. It was revealed that these experiences, coupled with training and development opportunities in the sporting organisations they worked for, afforded them the needed knowledge to vie for senior roles in sporting organisations and execute their duties accordingly.

The code Available Career Advancement Pathways was given a high saliency since all the respondents extensively discussed it. From the data analysis, it was revealed that in the sporting organisations, there existed a bias in favour of male sports leaders when it comes to opportunities to advance careers. The respondents largely attributed this to the assumption that the sports industry is expected to be a male-dominated arena despite efforts to develop women's engagement in all aspects.

Analysis of the Strategies to Help Improve Women's Participation in sports Leadership Positions in Ghana

Having discussed the professional experiences, leadership growth, and progression approaches adopted by women in uppermost leadership positions working within professional sports organisations in Ghana in the previous

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subsection, this section focused on the key themes identified from thematically analysing the collected data relating to the fourth objective. The themes have been demonstrated using the matrix. The matrix contains information on the basic themes, the codes relating to the theme, a brief description of each of the codes, the frequency of the responses, and the saliency of the responses gathered. The frequency of the codes in this section shows the number of respondents who extensively touched on this subject during the interviews. The saliency posits how relevant the various codes employed in thematically analysing the data relating to this objective have significant relation to the aim of the objective.

Also, the parameters 'low' and 'high' were used in measuring the saliency of the codes to the objective in focus. Under this objective, three main themes were identified, regarding the various approaches. Previous write-ups by Aly and Breese (2018) and Evans and Pfister (2021) similarly identified these subjects as important in improving female participation in sports leadership positions in the context within which their studies were conducted that can be adopted to improve women's participation in leadership positions in sporting organisations in Ghana. Table 8 highlights Leadership and Leadership Style, Organisational Support, and Social Support as the main themes in analysing data relating to the fourth objective.

Table 8: The Strategies to Help Improve Women's Participation in Sports Leadership Positions in Ghana

Theme	Code	Code Description	Illustrative quote	Frequency	Saliency
Leadership and Leadership Style	Developing feminine traits in leadership	Assesses the need for female leaders in sporting organisations in Ghana to retain and demonstrate their femininity while occupying leadership positions	Imagine a woman behaving like a man in our culture. To be frank, this would not rub off well with our people, especially with how our culture dictates that women should act	11	High
	Adoption of effective leadership styles	Assess the need for the utilization of competent leadership styles that foster collaboration and teamwork	Approaches like the democratic and participatory leadership styles should be encouraged amongst our ladies who assume leadership in our sporting organisations	11	High
	Assessment and development of leadership capabilities	Examines the need to identify and improve the leadership competencies of women for leadership positions.	I suggest that we come up with a streamlined test that allows for a detailed assessment of the competencies and deficiencies of women	9	High
	Engagement in sport-related decision-making	Assess the need to allow young women in Ghana to freely participate in sporting activities	Exposing some of these young and aspiring female leaders in our occupation to leadership and decision-making settings would eventually nurture in them leadership abilities like critical thinking and good decision making at a suboptimal level.	10	High
Organisational Support	Gender diversity	Assesses the contribution of organisational policy towards ensuring gender diversity in the	If women would increase their representation in leadership roles, it is necessary for women-friendly policies to be rolled out in these	11	High

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		leadership of sports organisations.	sporting organisations.		
	Change in organisational culture	Assesses the contribution of an inclusive organisational culture to increasing female representation in leadership positions in sports organisations in Ghana	If women would increase their representation in leadership roles, it is necessary for women-friendly policies to be rolled out in these sporting organisations"	10	High
	Equal access to leadership opportunities	Examines how granting equal opportunities to leadership would contribute to the increase in female representation in the leadership of sports organisations in Ghana	Although then men easily rise through the ranks, competent females must be allowed to demonstrate their leadership abilities.	10	High
Social Support	Girl-child education	Demonstrates the role of educating young girls towards increasing female representation in sports organisations in Ghana.	I would suggest that grooming the young ladies in our various private and public schools early with a leadership centred curriculum, will be beneficial to the future state of women in sports leadership	10	High
	Intensive inclusion of females in sports	Explains how allowing females to participate in sports significantly contributes to improving their representation in sports leadership in sports organisations in Ghana.	If a female is to be recognized as fit for such a position, it is dependent on her active involvement in the sports and subsequent recognition by her peers	7	Low

Source: Field Data Collection (2022)

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The first theme, Leadership and Leadership Style was derived from assessing codes that are connected to leadership approaches that allow women to operate effectively as sports leaders. Codes such as *Developing Feminine Traits to Leadership*, *Adoption of Effective Leadership Styles*, *Assessment and Development of Leadership Capabilities*, and *Engagement in Sport-related Decision Making* were identified with this theme. For the first code *Developing Feminine Traits to Leadership*, the study accorded it a high saliency due to all the respondents extensively discussing it. It was understood from the data analysis that while most sporting organisations preferred their leaders to demonstrate male-dominated leadership styles, there is ongoing advocacy for female leaders to retain and express their femininity as leaders without having to adopt strong masculine leadership traits. This is in line with the view of Aly and Breese (2018) which suggests that female leaders who adopt feminine approaches to leadership can achieve better results as opposed to female leaders who are compelled to demonstrate masculine traits in their leadership experience.

The second code, *Adoption of Effective Leadership Styles,* its analysis, concludes with the need for organisations to assist female leaders who are rising through the ranks to be acquainted with the best and most effective leadership styles that ensure that their potential as female leaders is realized. This suggests that adopting effective leadership styles can contribute to increased female involvement in top managerial positions in sporting organisations in Ghana, and by that can help improve female participation in numerous sporting activities (Burton, 2015)**.**

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For the code, *Assessment and Development of Leadership Capabilities*, it was realized that it had a high saliency with the import of the objective. Pape (2020) asserts that it is essential that women be assessed on their capabilities to hold leadership positions and proceed to develop these capabilities for both their benefit and the benefit of the organisations they work. Similarly, the data from the interviews pointed to the examination and improvement of the leadership capabilities of young women who aspire to hold a leadership positions in such sporting organisations in Ghana.

High saliency was attributed to *Engagement in Sport-related Decision Making* since all the respondents who participated in the interviews shared an opinion on this subject. In the opinion of Aly and Breese (2018)**,** modern organisational culture requires that women be actively engaged in organisational decision-making if their leadership relevance is to be associated. The thematic analysis collectively highlighted how the interviewed women leaders in sporting organisations in Ghana advocated for more women to be represented and actively involved in the decision-making process in such organisations.

The opinions of Burton (2015) and Pape (2020) reveal that the provision of adequate support to women was necessary for their active participation in sports leadership. The data analysis deduced codes, such as *Gender Diversity, Change in Organisational Culture, Equal Access to Leadership Opportunities,* and *Girl-Child Education Programmes,* as having a bearing on the deductions of Burton (2015) and Pape (2020). This allowed for these codes to be grouped under the theme of *Organisational Support.* These codes implied that developing the right working conditions in the various

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sports organisations in Ghana goes a long way in creating convenient conditions for females to thrive as leaders in such organisations in Ghana.

The code *Gender Diversity* was developed with high saliency. The responses indicated that for women to be actively engaged in sports leadership and management, it is required that organisational policy be geared towards balancing and including more women in high managerial positions. The responses indicated that while most of these institutions were dominated by men, increasing female participation eliminates bias in sports decisions that mostly favour males.

According to Evans and Pfister (2021), the impact of organisational culture on the perception of female leaders cannot be ignored. The thematic analysis identified the code, *Change in organisational Culture,* as crucial in increasing women's participation in the various leadership positions available to them in sporting organisations in Ghana. Per the data, it was revealed that if such organisational switch from a discriminatory culture and a culture that promotes situations of the glass ceiling for women to an inclusive culture, there is likely to be an increment in the number of women that would occupy senior leadership positions in these institutions in Ghana. Also, the responses indicated that access to such managerial positions in the sporting industry of Ghana was skewed in favour of males as against females.

According to Knoppers, Spaaij and Inge (2021), this often results in male leaders rising through organisational ranks more quickly than their female counterparts. Respondents advocated for equal opportunity in leading organisations as it would give women a chance to prove their ability to help sporting organisations advance. This code had a high saliency. The importance

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of current female leaders mentoring the next generation of female leaders has been stressed in literature (Adam & Pfister, 2020; Ababneh & Athamneh, 2018). It was evident from the data that interview participants viewed the roll-out of female-led mentorship programmes as crucial in getting more females interested in taking up leadership positions in sporting organisations in Ghana. Since five out of the six respondents extensively discussed this subject during the interview, the code, *Girl-Child Education Programmes,* was given a high saliency.

The publications of Fapohunda (2018) and Holder, Jackson and Ponterotto (2015) associate the ability of young females to rise to leadership ranks in various organisations with the various forms of social support that are given to them. The theme, *Social Support,* implied that the various structures existing in Ghanaian society could play a key role in encouraging women to take up leadership positions both in the short-term and the long-term within these sporting organisations present in Ghana. The codes, *Girl-child Education* and *Intensive Inclusion of Females in Sports* were associated with this theme.

With current global attention given to the importance of girl-child education, its role, according to Matsa and Miller (2013), in shaping the future of female leadership in the sporting industry cannot be downplayed. The code, *Girl-child Education,* was accorded with a high saliency. According to the thematic analysis, all the respondents talked about the relevance of the educational systems and reforms empowering females to aim for leadership positions in various careers, including careers in various sports organisations in Ghana.

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In various sections of the world where cultural norms are stringent on the extent to which females are allowed to actively partake in sporting activities, it has been recommended that room be created for females with a passion for sporting activities, to actively engage in such activities and build profitable careers in such areas. The interviews with three female managers operating in the tertiary institutional sports associations in Ghana revealed the need to get more young females engaged in the various sporting activities that are currently practised in the country. The code, *Intensive inclusion of Females in Sports,* was given a low saliency due to the frequency of respondents who discussed it.

Discussions

Barriers that Prevent Ghanaian Women's Involvement in Sports Leadership Positions.

This section discusses the barriers that prevent Ghanaian women involvement in sports leadership positions and ultimately proposes a redefinition of the notion of the glass ceiling effect.

Structural barriers

Structural barriers are one of the most notable elements that hinder women's involvement in sports leadership positions. According to Babic and Hansez (2021), historical sexism and gender bias have prevented women from climbing the rungs of the corporate ladder. In Ghana, past sports policies and legislation arguably possess hints of historical sexism and gender bias. The formalization of Ghanaian sports in the colonial era via the Sports Council Ordinance No. 14 of 1952 and the Sports Act Supreme Military Council (SMC) Decree 54 of 1976 (LI 1088) during the precolonial era did not provide

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adequate consideration to matters of gender inclusivity in sports. However, literature reveals that the 1992 Constitution sparked interest in increasing women's involvement while significantly eliminating gender disparities and discrimination in sporting activities via the National Sports Policy (NSP) of 1994, the overwhelming support given to the "Black Stars" image at the time overshadowed other pressing matters like women's engagement (Charway & Houlihan, 2020).

An assessment of the Sports Act 2016 (Act 934), which was expected to modernize Ghanaian sports to include contemporary trends and meet global sports standards, has little to show since the Ghana Statistical Service (2018) SDG report still show that women are generally underrepresented in a wide range of professions including sports. These findings corroborate reports from the UNDP's (2018) Gender Inequality Index (GII), which rates Ghana 131st of 161 countries (Charway & Houlihan, 2020).

Although the foregoing findings are mainly linked to women's general involvement and participation in national sporting activities and less about their leadership prospects, accurate deductions about the structural barriers towards women sports leadership could be inferred from the study's extracts. The interview excerpts again hammered home the ineffectiveness of laws and policies that erroneously claim to provide significant consideration to women's involvement. For instance, according to an extract from the focus group discussion:

> *Most of the time, the policies do not work to put the women*
>
> *in power; the men in power are the ones who facilitate*
>
> *women to be placed in top positions to add to the mirage*

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that women have equal opportunities to lead when it comes

to sports. The truth is that when you look at these sports,

the women heads are mostly women-related sports that men

have no interest in heading; even with that, you sometimes

see some men in the lead because the policies are not

encouraging other women to step up.

Another respondent described the Sports Act 2016 (934) as "compromised" since it originally sparked interest and hope for gender equality in sports engagement and leadership, particularly since the Act centres a lot on the appointment of leaders in the sports industry, but it seems as though the subject of women engagement garnered less governmental attention since no direct provisions for gender equality in appointments were stipulated. Another significant point of interest was emphasised by a respondent from the WOSPAG who suggested that:

Gender-themed issues tend to be lumped with issues

regarding the youth and the disabled, which ends up

affecting matters of prioritization.

It is further highlighted that on matters of disability, concrete policy guidelines for the recognition and implementation of the rights of women, girls and female children with disabilities to participate in para-sports "falls short of the expectations of the UNCRP, and fails to reflect the promises of the Person's with Disability Act 715".

A major question the analysis brought to the limelight is why there is a recurrent theme of low considerations for inclusivity and participation in policy and legislation for women in sports in general, and how this is a barrier

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to women's leadership. The study assumes that the answer to this question resides in the expectancy-disconfirmation model; when women are given significant opportunities to participate in the sports industry, they gather the experience, networks and awareness required to lead others within the same or similar fields of sports. Given that sporting activities are largely practical, and leaders in sports lead best when they have adequate practical experience, the expectations of women to lead are not only high but untainted by social stigma.

These women who are expected to lead, aware of the present system and moulded by mentorship and adequate training, have already confirmed their ability to lead through past performance. Therefore, there is an expectation and a confirmation of perceived performance, ensuring that they are fit to lead. However, when policies and legislation do not facilitate the engagement of women leaders, the Male Sportsmen who would have been given the opportunities to gain sufficient experience would be placed in roles that sports women could have easily occupied should they have been adequately involved. Yet, because they have not been sufficiently trained or involved significantly in any form of sports leadership, there is an expectancy-disconfirmation that stirs disengagement in leadership. A respondent attests that:

> *The system does not help us show what we are capable of…*
> *yes, the policies have those common phrases we are all*
> *aware of gender equality, participation of women, and the*
> *like, but honestly, we as women do not really appreciate it.*
> *There are women who, might I say, can lead better than*

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some of the men but do not see us because the system

throws women into the background.

Another major structural barrier that is perceived to hinder women's involvement is the absence of developed formal leadership networks. The historical dominance of men, and the cultural and gender bias that encircles leadership in Ghana, have affected the nature and dynamics of organisational networks. This is equally evident in the case of the Ghana sports industry. Surprisingly, the study discovered that while aspiring male leaders easily network with the men who officially "call the shots," they are able to easily access several forms of sponsorship, mentorship or even leadership roles. A respondent indicated that:

... you [an aspiring female leader] could tell him [the male

leader] the same thing another man [seeking a leadership

position] would tell him, and he will ignore you and

support the man. That is how it is, not just here but

everywhere else.

This may be attributed to role incongruence since some male leaders may believe these opportunities are better suited for males who are naturally believed to be better for the job.

Furthermore, a respondent highlighted that:

As a woman leader, you are looking to benefit everyone,

low or high, so you will be forced to network with

everybody, but mostly the low-level employees since they

are more.

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Likewise, research by Amanet al. (2019) showed that since women are perceived as welcoming and considerate, they are usually approached by lower-level employees. While this may be visualized as a positive trait, it rather reinforces the stereotype that women are "too nice" that most male leads look down upon, adversely affecting the formal ties that aspiring leaders would hope to develop. The formal networks developed by female mid-level management in the Ghanaian sports industry tend to be with their peers in mid-level management. Considering that ascending the leadership ranks in the Ghanaian economy, particularly in the public service domain, relies heavily on the formal networks one establishes, it becomes difficult for mid-level women leaders to move forward.

Moreover, another respondent emphasized that networking with male leaders requires some confidence that many female leaders lack. She outlined that some women were constrained by self-doubt and by limited faith in their abilities to make valuable contributions to their networks. The men, in contrast, were described as "radiating with confidence" and "eager to advertise their capacities". A complete contrast to the lack of confidence was also identified; other respondents noted that most sports women they have been in contact with felt like it was disingenuous to develop a connection if the motivation to connect was purely self-advancement. The respondent noted that building "honest and authentic relationships" or "a strong collaboration for a cause" was the focus of most women who aspired to hold high-level management positions in the sports industry.

Consequently, their networking initiatives were motivated by building personal relationships rather than instrumental motives to help their careers.

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Albeit this may seem idealistic, the self-efficacy theory adequately explains this finding in that the women who approach networking as a personal endeavour believe that they have the leadership capacity necessary to exert control over their social environment; therefore, they do not require strategic alliances to move forward. Sadly, structural and institutional barriers that exist within the industry do not support this approach, adversely influencing the opportunities for women to obtain promotions or leadership advancement opportunities.

Similar to formal networks, women who struggle to develop informal networks within or outside the workplace are stuck below the glass ceiling or even fail to obtain any opportunities to advance into leadership positions. Al-Twal and Cook (2021) study explains the power of informal social networks, outlining favouritism in hiring and promotion as one of the less cited but vastly prominent outcomes. Interestingly, this study identifies a similar issue where high-level male leaders mainly invite mid-level or other high-level male leaders to events, neglecting the eager-to-engage female leaders or aspiring leaders. The focus group agreed to the submission of a respondent that:

> *...sometimes, they go to events and even meet up informally*
>
> *to discuss issues but do not engage us because they prefer*
>
> *the company of other men...*

Of course, given that this issue is tied to informal networking, one could argue that it would not be appropriate to critique the decision to associate with men more than women; however, issues of such nature mainly emerge because some men perceive women to be "occupied with childcare," and "unavailable for most of these activities that occur in the evenings."

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Indeed, the conflict between the work dynamic and family obligation was identified as another structural barrier. Some of these informal get-togethers organized by members of relatively higher-level management positions, who tend to be male, are typically scheduled after working hours, which creates conflicts for women with family obligations. As the structure of leadership in the public service sector is mainly middle-age dominated, the likelihood of female leaders having family obligations like childcare is high. Additionally, the cultural system mandates that women bear the majority of the domestic activities, which requires them to prioritize household duties. Since most sports leadership requires active duty and presence in events, its demanding nature becomes a deterrent for women who aspire to become leaders.

Institutional barriers

A potential for prejudice exists when social perceivers hold a stereotype about a social group that is incongruent with the attributes that are thought to be required for success in certain classes of social roles. It is well known that women are falsely perceived as unfit for some leadership positions, including sports leadership, and this case is reportedly higher in developing countries. In the context of the Ghanaian sports industry, the study identified that the majority of the interviewees are of the belief that the sports women who possess the relevant qualifications to occupy leadership positions within the industry are not only looked down upon by some male superiors but by male colleagues or employees as well. This may stem from women being culturally perceived to be the weaker sex and, therefore, being aligned to activities that do not involve any sporting pursuit, especially at the management level (Aman, Hanapi, Yusof, Razali, & Dev, 2019).

According to Women and Girls Empowered (2022), in developed regions in Africa, there are strong social perceptions that dictate that women are best fit for subordinating roles. Despite the vast resources and time dedicated to promoting gender equality, the cultural hurdles that encircle women in leadership still exist, and it is no different in the Ghanaian case. There are claims that some males do not "believe in the capacity of women to lead," and others that "males are naturally perceived as heads, so a woman in the lead seems very unusual to them." Another respondent attributes the role incongruence to the upbringing of the males and even most females in society. The respondent pointed out that:

> *If you are brought up to consider women as secondary to men, in most roles that demand authority, like from childhood you are taught that the man is always in charge, you will definitely see men as fit to lead in all situations and the woman as his supporter or even his subordinate. And I am not blaming men for anything; women teach young girls the same; that is just how our society is set up.*

Although this has cultural connotations, it reveals how deeply rooted the negative cultural perceptions lie and that since it is a longstanding belief that was incepted in a person's childhood, it would be difficult to change with "a simple conversation about gender equality, and how like men, women are equally as efficient." Clearly, there is a collective perception that regardless of the numerous discussions on the elimination of gender bias and stereotyping in the workplace, the issues remain unresolved because of the mindset that most men and women are brought up with. Consequently, some women avoid

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positions of power regardless of their competence since they believe they will be viewed as incompetent to lead.

It is important to note, however, that not all women held this notion. A respondent and member of WOSPAG noted that assertiveness, competitiveness and exuberating domineering behaviour like men get others to perceive you as adequate to lead. She expressed her disdain, saying, "this is not who I am, but since it gets the job done, I do it." A similar view from another respondent was that:

> The men, and even other women in the industry, value you
>
> as a leader when you act like the men they are used to
>
> seeing lead.

Sadly, this does not only push women to the point where they alter their leadership styles, but also puts them in a paradox. De Keyser et al. (2019) defines a paradox as a person or a thing that combines contradictory features or qualities. In this case, the women who aspire to lead attempt to combine their natural leadership qualities with the agentic traits of male leaders because it is expected of them. The result is a paradoxical leadership style where female executives are expected to be warm and nice, as well as tough and stern or demanding, yet laissez-faire. One respondent attested to being passively called "too soft" and by someone else "too hard" or even sometimes "presumptuous."

This notion is similarly held by Zheng et al. (2018), who studied how women executives in corporate settings manage gendered norms within leadership by interviewing 64 female CEOs from 51 organisations throughout the US. Four core paradoxes were identified in which women combined their

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natural leadership styles with agentic behaviours notable with male leads. The women were expected to be tough but caring, authoritative but participative, advocating for themselves yet serving others, and being approachable, yet maintaining distance. Despite the stark difference in both the US and Ghanaian contexts, the women in both cases expressed displeasure with the societal expectations that shaped their approach to leadership.

Women who disregarded the need to be agentic also revealed that it was tough to lead using their own leadership styles. A respondent noted that:

Before I joined the sports industry I worked at [company A]. There, I was a quiet and decisive person. I would make very good decisions but I did not talk much. But here, when I started, I was always being told that I am too quiet and if I do not speak up, I will not progress.

Moreover, another interviewee highlighted that:

.... So, I ensured that I changed the system since the previous coach, who was a male, left a lot of loopholes. Even though I saw an increase in performance, I was told not to revert to what was done because that is what all the past leaders did, who were males, if I may say. The system is not progressive.

These submissions fall in line with the expectancy-disconfirmation model primarily because women leaders are expected to perform in a certain way (which is mainly dictated by men), and going contrary to that disconfirms your suitability as a leader. Studies like Babalola et al. (2021) and Babic and Hansez (2021) highlight comparable issues where women leaders are treated

unfairly at the workplace, particularly during evaluations, because they do not behave the way they were expected to per the standard criteria, which favours male leadership more. Not only does this deter further engagement of women as female leaders, but it creates a domino effect that involves a solidified male-dominated upper rung that subsequently strengthens the stereotypes and gendered norms in leadership at the workplace.

Individual mindsets

The most prominent feature within this theme is the value associated with a work-life balance. The respondents were impressed with the essence of finding a balance between work and the demands of childcare and family. In this context, the valuing of a work-life balance has been captured as a barrier because of the systems in place that do not adequately support sports women leaders. Again, the interviewees largely expressed difficulty in sustaining a work-life balance because the cultural layout of a Ghanaian home requires that the man becomes the bread winner and the woman (Women and Girls Empowered, 2022) the caretaker of the home. Irrespective of attempts to break this gendered norm by encouraging and supporting women to pursue professions, the matters at home have hardly been displaced; women are still considered caretakers. The situation worsens when there are children involved.

In such cases, women are not only performing professional duties but also taking care of the home and looking after children. This challenge is exacerbated when the women bear some form of leadership responsibilities. Since leadership within the public service is dominated by the middle-age and aged cohorts, there are several instances where female leaders have families and children. In tandem with the inadequacy of diversity and inclusion in most

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policies and practices at the workplace, women are expected to perform just as effectively as men regardless of the work-life conundrum they face. Trading the family life for leadership positions that, to them, would be bound by gender stereotypes anyway seems to be counter-intuitive and illogical. Therefore, women in mid-level leadership positions are disincentivised to advance, while the electrified aspiring female leaders eventually become dispirited when they realise the reality the culture demands.

Stewart et al. (2021) point out the stark difference in the cases of the developed world where societal expectations of women are becoming more progressive, and gendered norms are being broken; in multiple cases, men and women care for the home together, and more recently, the concept of 'stay-at-home dads,' is becoming more apparent. Women in such situations are able to willfully pursue leadership roles with few demands. As appropriately indicated by a respondent:

> *Breaking the chains that bind us [women] to this demeaning behaviour will start when men look within and realize that they must do more to help women.*

Another major observation the study made was that women limit themselves in two major ways – lack of confidence and avoidance of socialization pressures. This self-limiting behaviour is contrary to the self-efficacy theory in that instead of women believing that they possess the requisite skills and competencies to perform adequately, they believe the opposite; that men would perform the role better or the roles demand too much that they do not believe they can commit. Comparable findings were made by

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Aman et al. (2019), who found that some women in sports leadership are not bold enough to promote themselves regardless of their qualifications.

Like Adam and Pfister (2020) research, this study discovered that when women with the right ability to lead are offered the roles, they "would think twice or thrice before accepting it". Sometimes, these women would not even come out to compete for the position. The study did not find any concrete evidence of whether this perception is a result of cultural or societal influences or an individual's disbelief in their capabilities. However, the fragmented submissions can be filled with literature from Aman et al. (2019), who indicate that women believe they do not have a voice in the workplace, and their competencies will be overshadowed by men who would definitely be perceived as more adequate for a sports leadership role.

Additionally, Matotoka and Odeku (2021) support this finding by highlighting thoughts women have that sports leadership is "rigged" to favour men and that if a woman were given a leadership position, it would be second to a man who will overburden her to free himself. Although these submissions have been presented in different contexts by different people, they could be appropriately contextualized to this case. For instance, some of the interviewees were impressed by their inability to outdo men in social situations, emphasizing the value of networking, which is always tilted in favour of men since they are more confident in social settings. Other interviewees state that women in professional sports settings are generally not confident because:

> Sports are often seen by women as being more male-centric, which makes the women doubt their leadership

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potential in the male-dominated industry.'' which is not the case.

An additional finding corroborates the personal opinions some women have about their unsuitability for the leadership position. The belief is that the sports leadership position is ill-suited for women because it is prone to several physical and mental risks that women are not ready to take. An interviewee interestingly ties this in with the work-life balance by suggesting that since some women are technically the keepers of the home and mothers to children, they would avoid taking up leadership positions in physical sports that may be risk-prone. Such groups of women would appeal for forms of sports leadership that are more administrative and less engaging in physical activity, hence the surreal dominance of male leadership in physical sports in Ghana. Although the reality on the ground may contest this logic, the Ghanaian women's national football team coach is a woman – Mercy Tagoe. Nonetheless, these instances are rare.

Redefining the Glass Ceiling

The concept of the "glass ceiling" was first introduced by Nora Frenkiel in Adweek in March 1984. It serves as a metaphor to elucidate the subtle, unseen challenges that women encounter once they reach mid-management positions (Babic & Hansez, 2021). Although women make strides to ascend to the pinnacle of middle management, they encounter a barrier they cannot surpass. Despite prevalent media and contemporary messages proclaiming the shattering of this glass ceiling, the harsh reality is that it persists. The term itself, "glass ceiling," symbolizes the idea that women can almost see and reach the top but face an insurmountable obstacle.

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However, this depiction inadequately addresses the underlying issues, as it implies a lack of awareness regarding these barriers.

Some authors, like Hyun (2005), have sought to redefine the term in light of these limitations. For example, Hyun proposes the term "bamboo ceiling," highlighting the tangible and evident discriminatory forces that hinder individuals of East Asian descent from reaching the uppermost levels of the organizational hierarchy. This redefined term reflects a more explicit acknowledgment of the obstacles faced, moving beyond the metaphorical "glass ceiling" to a more concrete representation of the challenges hindering professional advancement.

This study proposes the term "labyrinth" to signify the complex, and exhausting challenges that women have to navigate before achieving a place of power, as evident from the study's findings. In essence, the description of these hurdles as a labyrinth will appropriately highlight the fact that there is always hope that they will reach the top, yet they may come across a dead-end that would either stall their progress or take them in circles. For instance, cases highlighted sports women leaders who work through all the bureaucracies to achieve a mid-level management position but cannot move further either because of the expectancy-disconfirmation or family ties. The woman may still decide to progress, but navigating these social and institutional hurdles may take years. The notion of a labyrinth was primarily developed by Schwanke (2013), who indicated that the glass ceiling originally metaphorizes a single barrier, but a labyrinth contextualizes the numerous hurdles and stagnating challenges that women at the workplace tend to encounter. In line

with this notion, this study furthers the preposition that redefining the glass ceiling as a labyrinth to women's leadership growth should be explored.

Discussing the Nexus Effect of Cultural Background, Socio-Economic Status and Personal Experiences on Women's Sports Leadership

The main observation that can be made from examining the three-factor nexus through the lens of women's participation in leadership is that societal norms, individual perceptions, and cultural values collectively affect women's participation in sports leadership via cultural stagnation, work vs. family balance, role incongruity, access to opportunities, and determination. Essentially, the issue of culture reverberates throughout each of the variables, making it the most predominant influencer within the nexus. This finding is in line with Javillonar (2021), who states that naturally, culture extends beyond the individual acts and responses of the natives to include laws and norms governing the ecology of institutions as evident.

The cultural stagnation identified to impact women's decisions to participate in sports leadership is majorly aligned with the obsolete notion that the male gender is associated with leadership while women fall secondary to the man. The "stagnation" outlined in the analysis characterizes the persistence of this issue regardless of evidence in both industry and policy to address the matter for years, solidifying some claims by some respondents that policymakers and senior-level management feign concern for women leadership resulting in longstanding structural and institutional barriers. Other respondents attribute this pretense of concern to the fear of women's liberation from current socio-cultural norms that place the man in power, a dominant

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male alignment to patriarchy, and selective take on cultural conservatism – hence, cultural stagnation.

It was presented by a respondent that:

If the culture does not change, my sister, we will be going around in circles, trust me. Because these gender issues are being raised globally but still you can barely see anything being done…. How will a woman get up and be motivated to take up leadership when she is always told to obey the men in her family because they are the heads?

Additionally, another extract indicated:

… what baffles me is why there is no action being taken despite the fact that the issue [the glass ceiling] is known? Is it not clear? Because they [men in power] feel that the position of leadership is their birth right, they would not move an inch to solve the problem! We [women] have to do the heavy lifting ourselves.

Although the latter submission emphasizes the current cultural stagnation that inhibits women's active participation in leadership, it also highlights the determination they possess as a result of their intrinsic drive to reconfigure the leadership dynamic within the sports industry and act as pacesetters for other women to take up sports leadership positions, or demand equal opportunities. This finding is in line with Ababneh and Athamneh (2018) study that determined a statistically significant relationship between women's decision to participate in leadership and their desire to inspire others,

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while Yemenu (2020) also found a significant increase in training and performance monitoring for female employees when there was a female lead.

Another interesting find was that some women are motivated by their families to take up the mantle of leadership, thus informing their determination to pursue sports leadership positions. A respondent noted that:

Even though the woman is expected to take care of the home, nowadays, things are progressive; I have people to look after my house – a house help for example – and my kids are all adults, so I have no worries there. They rather inspire me to achieve more than I have now…

Members of the focus group noted similar ideas:

"My husband does not deter me from progressing in my career. He is a very ambitious man… He is very encouraging of my profession." (FG Participant 1)

"Having a family does not necessarily halt your ambitions; yes, sometimes it slows it down for most women like us, but we are able to pick it up and keep going." (FG Participant 4)

These submissions align with findings from studies like Yemenu (2020) and Aman et al. (2019) to further the notion that women's intrinsic motivation, individual sense of empowerment and family motivation that primarily emanate from PF-SEF nexus spark a determination to pursue leadership positions. On the flip side of the coin, the majority of the respondents believe that difficulties in combining career prospects and family

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duties affect women's participation in sports leadership. This finding is particularly important as it threads through the entire nexus (PF-SEF-CF).

The cultural element is present in the traditional social arrangement that places women as secondary to the male authoritative figure; the socio-economic element is apparent in the gendered norm that women are caretakers of the home; and the personal element stems from women's perception that they are expected to put the home before their professional ambitions. Due to the perception that leadership endeavours will inevitably come to an abrupt end, these forces not only prevent women from moving into leadership positions but also discourage any engagement in leadership roles. According to Women and Girls Empowered (2022), the socio-cultural issues and self-limiting ideas that African women are constantly challenged with, fostered by rising inequalities despite growing concerns for gender equality, have potentially impacted their productivity and performance.

Opportunity for career development

The first theme, opportunities for career development, details the perception of study participants on how easy it is for female leaders in sporting organisations in Ghana to assume higher leadership positions. This theme covered three codes, which are career limitations, sponsorship, and networking. With regard to career limitations, the data revealed that factors such as self-limiting beliefs and organisational culture played a key role in the ability of female leaders to advance into higher positions in the sporting industry of Ghana. About the self-limiting beliefs, Walseth (2006) explains them as the various perceptions and matters that individuals assume to be factual about themselves. These have been identified as being able to hinder

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one's ability to pursue set goals, fulfill one's potential, and reach self-actualization (Burton, 2015). As explained by a respondent from the focused group discussion:

> *To be honest, when you examine how things are structured in the industry and the leverage that is given to the men in some of our sporting organisations, it is understandable to see most of our female leaders not having faith in themselves to assume powerful leadership positions where they can influence the industry.*

According to Marback et al. (2005), the interview participants collectively emphasized the importance of females demonstrating confidence in the roles assigned to them and exposing themselves to various sporting environments to gain experience. In alignment with the findings of Claringbould and Knoppers (2007), there is a significant correlation between an organization's culture and the advancement, longevity, and overall well-being of its employees. In societies like Ghana, where cultural norms play a pivotal role in shaping individual roles and responsibilities, especially in the workplace, cultural libertarian feminism has underscored the adverse impact of these cultural norms on women's experiences in leadership roles.

The session with leaders of tertiary institutional sports associations in this study revealed that the prevalent cultural perspective in many sporting organizations tends to favor males in occupying crucial leadership positions. One participant from the tertiary institutional sports associations elucidated that, in general, there is a default cultural belief that males are better suited for important leadership roles:

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A keen observer will note that preference is given to male

leaders with the technical know-how in a particular

sporting field as compared to their female counterparts.

While this aligns with the arguments presented by Mensah (2019) and Johnson (2012) concerning cultural libertarian feminism, Hoeber (2007) has proposed that in certain sports-related scenarios, women have exhibited superior abilities compared to men. Thus, it can be deduced that if the organizational culture is designed to afford female leaders the same opportunities as their male counterparts, it is probable that they would deliver enhanced performance, leading to recognition and advancement in the sports corporate hierarchy.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory underscores the significance of fulfilling fundamental needs, as neglecting these needs would result in the dismissal of other aspirations (Maslow, 1943). For female sports leaders to have a favorable encounter with leadership, it is essential to have access to mentorship and sponsorship opportunities. The focused group discussion responses underscored that the availability of sponsorship and mentorship opportunities played a pivotal role in ensuring positive experiences for these female leaders in executing their responsibilities. As one participant highlighted during the focused group discussion:

My interactions with other females in our industry and key

sporting personalities have stressed the need for women to

be allowed to advance their careers by engaging them in

sports-related workshops, further studies, and overseas

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practical training sessions if we want to change the 'male

dominance in sports' narrative.

In addition, interview participants unanimously emphasized the crucial role sponsorship plays in fostering a positive environment for women in leadership roles within sports organizations in Ghana. Specifically, these individuals linked their achievements as leaders to having a mentor and emphasized the significance of female sponsors in ensuring positive leadership experiences for women. One interviewee, for instance, expressed that:

I owe my current professional progress to the investment

the three sports managers I worked under made in me. I

learned a lot, and this has helped me to be able to deal with

difficult situations, especially as a woman.

The results align with Pape's (2020) assertions. Pape (2020) suggests that by incorporating women-led sponsorship and mentorship initiatives into the organizational culture, sporting organizations can potentially motivate women employees to assume responsibilities, even in the face of prevalent gender-related obstacles.

Both professionals and academics have widely promoted networking as an effective strategy for fostering inclusion across various industries. Within the realm of sports, Senne (2016) emphasizes its significance in advancing the industry and supporting the career aspirations of individuals involved in such networks. Cultural libertarian feminism, particularly in the context of female leaders in sports, advocates for the establishment of meaningful relationships that empower women to enhance their skills and gain access to resources available to their male counterparts. The interview findings

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revealed that participants who were part of different professional networks had access to a range of resources, enabling them to operate effectively in their roles as female leaders. One participant, for instance, shared that:

> *With my years of experience, I have had numerous opportunities to connect with resourceful individuals whose experience, guidance, and assistance have added to my efficacy as a leader.*

During the focused group discussion, participants representing tertiary institutional sports associations emphasized a common requirement for women to have access to networking opportunities. This access would allow them to demonstrate their leadership skills and receive guidance on career development. This insight was gathered from the recorded discussions:

> *I find it essential to expose my female mentees to the various sports societies I belong to. These societies have been instrumental to my development as a leader in my position. I am of the view that this would position these aspiring female leaders to be able to function effectively in our male-dominated field.*

Transcending perceived barriers to advancement

The central focus of this aspect involved evaluating the viewpoints of female leaders within sports organizations in Ghana regarding perceived obstacles in the Ghanaian sports industry and how these challenges were overcome. The key themes identified in the collected data primarily revolved around work-life balance, social issues and perceptions, and organizational hiring practices.

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Concerning work-life balance, existing studies by Pfister and Radtke (2009) and LeRoux (2009) have highlighted the demanding nature of the sports industry in terms of time and energy. Assuming a leadership role in this sector often requires making additional sacrifices that can affect an individual's social life. In relation to the current research, all three participants in the focused group discussion conveyed the difficulties they faced in maintaining a robust equilibrium between their professional commitments and their social lives.

It was recognized as the primary factor preventing women from attaining leadership roles or progressing to senior management positions within sports organizations. The collected data aligns with the arguments made by Presley (2015) and Johnson (2012) regarding cultural libertarian feminism. According to these authors, culturally imposed expectations on women's roles have played a significant role in constraining their capacity to take on leadership roles. In a focused group discussion, a participant emphasized this point:

> From the start of assuming this position, I have had to juggle between my responsibility as a family woman and my responsibility as a senior manager in my sporting organisational. Whilst one may argue that it should not be a standard for women to play certain positions, our culture dictates that women execute the home keeping duties dutifully. This cripples their ability to fully immerse themselves in leadership advancing opportunities.

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One of the interviewees also mentioned feeling reckless if their job schedule required them to be away from their family. One of the interviewees clarified that:

With my experience in the field, I know female colleagues with the required capabilities to occupy leadership positions who opted out of such opportunities because they could not manage the demands of keeping their homes and their professional duties. Together with other female colleagues, we found out that there was an underpinning sense of irresponsibility, guilt, and incapability that drove these capable women from such positions.

In such cases, Lieberman and Shaw (2012) noted that the lack of assistance for these women resulted in their losing out on early-career leadership possibilities. Thus, it follows that significant social support would need to be given to women in order to help them in their duties if they are to advance in their professions as leaders and gain professionally from taking on leadership positions.

In relation to social issues and perceptions, Yartey (2012) and Bari (2005) observed that predetermined beliefs about the societal role of women, particularly in the African context, often lead to disapproval when women choose to take on leadership roles. Hielman (2001) supports this perspective through the role congruity theory, explaining how societal constructs influence behaviors and contribute to biased views against women who aspire to or have already assumed leadership positions. In accordance with these viewpoints, the thematic analysis indicated that many female leaders in sports faced

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various forms of prejudice and discrimination due to their decision to pursue leadership roles. Insights gathered from the interviews underscored the challenges these women encountered:

> *Not everyone in our organisational is fully sold on the idea of having a woman occupying the topmost position. Most opine that it would be best if leadership in these sporting organisations predominantly consists of men.*

Also, the focused group discussion revealed that:

> *There have been instances where fellow women have opposed the appointment of females for leadership roles. I assume it is because of their lack of self-belief in their abilities and their unwillingness to move out of their comfort zone to assume higher positions of power.*

These common experiences thus lead to the conclusion that, despite women's efforts to demonstrate their capacity for holding and succeeding in leadership roles, there are a number of societal norms that prevent women from achieving these positions, discouraging them from dedicating themselves entirely to the cause, and as a result, contributing to the underrepresentation of women in these roles in Ghanaian sports.

The research conducted by Heilman (2001), Welch and Sigelman (2007), and Miller et al. (2007) has illuminated the challenges faced by competent women in the context of hiring practices, particularly in the selection of females for leadership roles within organizations. In the course of interviews and focused group discussions, participants were questioned about their perspectives on the hiring practices of sporting organizations and their

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implications for female leaders. The thematic analysis uncovered that the hiring practices within sporting organizations in Ghana tend to favor the recruitment of highly skilled male candidates over their female counterparts. A participant in the focused group discussion representing tertiary institutional sports associations asserted this observation:

> *In my organisational, for example, it is very evident that male leaders completely outnumber the female leader, especially when you examine it from middle-level management upwards.*

Stapleton and Michelson (2021) characterize this occurrence as the "old boys club." This term refers to a scenario in which senior leadership roles are predominantly occupied by males, perpetuating itself through the continued appointment of more males. Furthermore, the interview brought to light that many of these leadership positions, dominated by males, were occupied by individuals with extended contracts, creating limited opportunities for women to democratically vie for these roles. As an illustration, one interviewee elaborated that:

> *When you hold an important position as a human resource manager, one striking thing you will observe is how different the structure and duration of the contracts issued to male employees are from their female counterparts. If we consider senior management, the gap becomes more staggering. It is something I have observed in the sports organisational I work with.*

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For women to overcome such occupational handicaps, Heilman (2001) argues that these women are required to put in extra work to achieve some of these benefits related to the hiring practices of their sporting firms.

The positive professional experiences

While engaging with the research participants, it became apparent that female leaders within the sports organizations based in Ghana have undergone varied professional journeys over the course of their careers. This overarching theme delved into the significance of robust sponsorship, mentoring relationships, and role models, as well as the participants' interest in sports activities, training and skill development, and the presence of clear pathways for career advancement. Regarding the significance of strong sponsors, mentors, and role models, all interviewees acknowledged the substantial influence that their respective mentors and role models have had on their professional growth as women leaders in sports organizations. As one respondent highlighted:

I have received inspiration from various female role models

to demonstrate competency in my field of work. For

example, I can vividly recall a call to action delivered by

the then minister of gender, which encouraged me to

pursue excellence as a woman in sports.

Also, another respondent explained that:

Early in my career, my mentor at my first workplace laid

bare to me the challenges I, was a female, would face when

it comes to balancing my work life with my family life. I

was further helped in devising a strategy to navigate these

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challenges. This has played a key role in my advancement

to this position.

Further, a leader of the tertiary institutional sports associations recounted how she got her first job in a sporting firm in Ghana through the recommendation of her supervisor, who also acted as her mentor:

Amongst the numerous candidates, I was recommended for

a middle-level management position. Since that time, my

career has taken an upward progression.

An additional significant finding derived from the gathered data indicated an increase in the participation of males who actively supported and facilitated the career advancement of females within diverse sports organizations. Scholars such as Burton (2015) and Sotiriadou and de Haan (2019) attribute this trend to enlightenment and the inherent motivation of these individuals to witness the success of their female counterparts. Furthermore, it has been contended that such instances underscore the role of men in challenging the prevailing narrative propagated by patriarchy, which traditionally discourages women from assuming leadership roles (Aly & Breese, 2018). As articulated by one participant in the focused group discussion, this trend signifies a positive shift in attitudes and actions:

I have had the opportunity to work in a sporting

environment where the two male leaders I reported to

demonstrated immense support for my sporting intellectual

development.

The literature indicates that individuals are inclined to pursue careers in specific fields when they have a strong interest in those areas. In the sports

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domain, the connection between interest and career choice is considered crucial for attracting and retaining top talent in different positions within the sports landscape (Pfister & Radtke, 2009). The analysis of the data revealed a parallel pattern regarding participants' career choices and their advancement into leadership roles in sports. The following is an illustrative explanation from a participant in the focus group discussion, exemplifying the career trajectory of a leader in tertiary institutional sports associations:

> *I have had an interest in sports since my high school days. During that time, I was elected as the main sports prefect responsible for overseeing the sports development of the students in my school. Upon completion of high school, I decided to take up a tertiary program in physical education. With all this knowledge and experience, I find myself working as the head of physical education for a large jurisdiction.*

According to this study's findings, which align with those of Claringboul and Knoppers (2007), a person's profession choice is significantly influenced by their level of interest in sports. In the end, it is typical of young athletes to pursue advancement in their chosen sport and eventually take on leadership roles.

The data collected from focused group discussions and interviews also indicated that training and capacity building are essential for women to assume leadership roles and carry out their responsibilities successfully. All of the participants believed that capacity building and training enhance their ability to lead as women and deal with issues related to their jobs within the

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business. For instance, the following claim was made during the concentrated group conversation:

> *For others to reach the level we have gotten to, it is required that they undergo the training we underwent. In these times, if we women would be able to assume the best leadership positions, it boils down to us demonstrating diverse competencies that surpass that of our male counterparts. This only results from training.*

In addition to this perspective, Darvin and Sagas (2017) contend that it is simple for women to overcome the glass barrier in their careers and contend with other deserving applicants for the highest positions if they have a portfolio that includes a variety of athletic experiences. Furthermore, the focused group discussion showed that some men in sporting organisations genuinely believe that certain positions in top management should be held by women, despite the fact that various theories, such as Liberal Feminism and Eagly and Karau's Role Congruity Theory, suggest that social constructs depict women as poor leaders. During the concentrated group discussion, a responder from the tertiary institutional sports organisations clarified that:

> *"There have been instances in my career where the men in my workplace have unanimously vouched for a woman to occupy the topmost position. They believed that choosing a female candidate with rich experience and confidence to oversee the role would yield positive results."*

Agreeing with the stance of Grappendorf and Henderson (2011), it can be inferred that with women gaining these training and competency

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development opportunities, they would be well-equipped to compete with their male counterparts for senior positions. This would help reduce situations where women are less represented at the decision-making levels of sporting organisations in Ghana.

About available career advancement pathways, respondents were quizzed on the availability of opportunities to advance their careers. It was evident from the data that in most sporting institutions, clear-cut career advancement pathways were almost non-existent for females when compared to their male counterparts. As recorded from an interview participant:

> *If you take out the efforts of mentors, supervisors, and role*
> *models, there is no definite pattern that has been set for*
> *aspiring female leaders to follow.*

The reason behind the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions within the sports sector, as highlighted in Aly and Breese's (2018) study on professional athletes, can be attributed to the prevailing assumption that men should take the lead in all aspects of sports and its management. Despite efforts to create pathways for women in this field, Burton's (2015) similar studies indicate a reluctance among current female leaders to actively contribute to the formulation of a comprehensive career development curriculum for women in sports. However, findings from focused group discussions suggest that female leaders in Ghana's sports arena are more inclined to support the establishment of such a framework, aiming to enhance the representation of women in existing and forthcoming leadership roles.

Discussing the Strategies can Help Improve Women's Participation in Sports Leadership Positions in Ghana.

Leadership and leadership style

Positive leadership has been shown to be correlated with a competent attitude to leading. The theme of "leadership" and "leadership style" suggests that organisations evaluate and enhance the leadership qualities of women, support the preservation of feminine characteristics in leadership, use effective leadership techniques, and enhance the involvement of women in sports-related decision-making in order to improve the representation of women in Ghanaian sporting institutions.

Evaluating and developing the talents of underrepresented groups is a crucial step toward enhancing their involvement. The status of women in leadership in Ghana is comparable. According to Lee and Chelladurai (2017), a capacity evaluation would highlight the strengths and limitations of women and help them take steps to strengthen their advantages. The interviews therefore emphasised the need of creating unique aptitude tests intended to assess women's present physical and cognitive capacities. According to a participant in the university-level institutional sports organisations:

Although adopting the general aptitude tests used in various job interview recruitment's. I suggest that we come up with a streamlined test that allows for a detailed assessment of the competencies and deficiencies of women. This would go a long way to assist in identifying the best role fit to associate with the candidates.

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Following the role congruity theory, Kawakami, White and Langer (2000) explain those female leaders who utilize masculine leadership styles and traits when they assume positions of power are susceptible to situations of bigotry and dislike by both their male and female counterparts. Confirming this situation, the data analysis revealed that leveraging a masculine approach to leadership has not supported the cause of including more women in sports leadership in Ghana. A respondent from the interview explained that:

> *"imagine a woman behaving like a man in our culture. To be frank, this would not rub off well with our people, especially with how our culture dictates women should act. There has been an advocate for fellow women to be much more flexible and relational in the execution of their duties. While some might argue this would increase instances of disrespect, it does not go to say that we are not advising fellows to be firm as well."*

Apart from eliminating too masculine behaviours in female leadership roles, Burton (2015) asserts that women in leadership roles should be encouraged to openly express their femininity and should use leadership philosophies that support these manifestations. Effective feminine leadership entails being able to organise a group of persons in an organisational to accomplish a goal without having to compromise one's identity as a woman (Rosener, 2011). During the concentrated group discussion, one member disclosed:

> *Adopting an autocratic leadership style would work against the whole aim of advocating for more females to occupy*

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leadership positions in sporting organisations in Ghana.
Even amongst males, there is a general dislike for
authoritarian styles and a preference for democratic
approaches to leadership. Should approaches should be
encouraged amongst our ladies who assume leadership in
our sporting organisations?

In a comparable investigation, Budworth and Mann (2010) suggest that women should employ leadership approaches such as democratic or participative styles, along with people-oriented leadership styles. These styles align with the philosophies that enable women to lead groups in different organizations with minimal challenges. Rosener (2011) further argues that adopting such approaches would promote alignment with their designated roles, reducing instances of bias and discrimination.

The thematic study also highlighted how women must be exposed to sports-related decision-making scenarios in order for them to understand the critical thinking needed to lead Ghanaian sporting groups. Literature has determined that exposing women to leadership contexts is essential. This would help students discover the many management abilities they would need to acquire and cultivate their desire to rise to positions of authority in sports. An individual from the post-secondary institutional sports leagues:

Looking at this approach from a behavioral science
perspective, exposing some of these young and aspiring
female leaders in our occupation to leadership and
decision-making settings would eventually nurture in them

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leadership abilities like critical thinking and good decision-

making at a suboptimal level.

In behavioural science, this phenomenon has been referred to as the exposure effect. Exposure effect results when an individual makes a familiar choice from a list of options due to previous experience with the chosen option. In effect, if women are exposed to leadership settings and situations where decisions are made, it is expected that career-wise, they would select pathways that will put them in similar positions.

Organisational support

Organisational support was a key recommendation for enhancing women's involvement in sports leadership in Ghanaian athletic groups. Respondents emphasised gender diversity, organisational culture reforms, and equal access to leadership opportunities during the interviews and concentrated group discussions as critical components of how these athletic organisations support women who want to or are currently in leadership roles in Ghanaian athletic organisations.

The policy instrument that informs the hiring practices, and the selection of leaders responsible for the operations of an organisational, are central to the extent to which female leaders are engaged in available leadership positions in sporting organisations (Dezsö & Ross, 2012)**.** In the opinion of Burton (2015)**,** such policies are reflective of the underlining assumptions that govern the operations of an organisational. In the context of sporting organisations in Ghana, respondents argued that overall, the policies informing the hiring practices are not friendly to female leaders. A participant of the interview:

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The hiring policies of most sports organisations in the country are not structured to consider female leaders. If the prevailing conversation is to encourage more female leaders to participate in board-level decision-making, for instance, policies ought to be reviewed to welcome women into leadership roles.

A respondent from the tertiary institutional sports associations stated that:

Most often, our attention is drawn to the social setting within which we find ourselves. We tend to hold social norms responsible for the situation women face when it comes to leadership roles. Let's not forget that organisations have internal cultures too, which one way or the other a shaped by policies. If women would increase their representation in leadership roles, it is necessary for women-friendly policies, to be rolled out in these sporting organisations.

It can be inferred from this that if these policies are responsible for defining the underlying culture of an organisational when it comes to hiring female practices, policies must be reformed to include the interests of female leaders and encourage sports organisational leadership that is gender diverse. This would help create an enabling environment where female leaders can thrive in these Ghanaian sports organisations and also encourage women to advance to such positions.

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Following this, respondents suggested that rigorous sensitization ought to be done to influence a change in organisational culture. This would contribute to encouraging more female leaders to occupy positions of power in Ghanaian sporting organisations and allow qualified applicants to vie for leadership positions without being discriminated against. While most of these organisations purport to have an embracing culture, a critical examination of these cultures reveals that they are opposed to allowing women to contest for specific leadership positions that have been designated for males only (Galloway, 2012). During the focused group discussion, a participant revealed that:

> *During public meetings and engagements, you are likely to get the sense that sporting organisations in Ghana are very welcoming to females taking up leadership mantles in them. From our experience, these things are very subtle and must be changed if we want to see more women in leadership positions.*

This sentiment aligns with Schein's Model of Organisational Culture, which identifies culture as an espoused value that is hidden from the eye but dictates the greater part of how an organisational function (Cotter-Lockard, 2016; Schein, 1996). Culture is significant to how members of organisations deal with internal and external situations; altering the biased culture of these sporting organisations in Ghana would significantly contribute to women indulging in sports leadership in the country.

With responses from the interviews and focused group discussion indicating that opportunities to lead sporting organisations were skewed in

favour of men as against women, the study participants collectively advocated for equal opportunity to be created in sporting organisations to allow for women to have the same chance to ascend to leadership. It was indicated by a participant during the interviews that:

> *It is quite clear that an effort is being made by the sports governing bodies in our country to comply with international agreements calling for more women to be granted the same opportunity as men when it comes to assuming leadership roles in sporting organisationals. Although men easily rise through the ranks, competent females must be allowed to demonstrate their leadership abilities.*

In addition to this, it was asserted by a respondent from the focused group discussion that:

> *We could employ a strategy that allows for women to be equally represented at leadership levels. For example, an equal number of seats at the board level can be designated to be occupied by both sexes.*

Social support

Society's contribution to positioning young girls and women early in their development cannot be understated. Proponents of Cultural libertarian feminism theorists like Szymanowicz and Furnham (2013), Cudd (2006), and Smith (2004) have suggested that replacing cultural limitations placed on females in societies with empowering actions, such as education and training, would result in women in male-dominated societies to develop themselves,

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realize their full potential, and effectively take up and execute challenging roles. With this, the thematic analysis revealed that to foster gender equality and increase female representation in the leadership of sporting organisations in Ghana, it is necessary to target and strengthen girl-child education at all levels and intensify the inclusion of females in sports. Under this theme, girl-child education and the intensive inclusion of females in sports were identified as key to improving female participation in sporting organisations in Ghana. Though these may not have an immediate impact on women's representation, in the long term, it is expected to result in a paradigm shift in favour of women's inclusion in sports leadership in Ghana.

Concerning girl-child education, participants gave high regard to the significance of educating young women to the propensity of them assuming future leadership positions. As stated by one of the participants from the tertiary institutional sports associations:

> *If we are examining things from a long-term perspective, I would suggest that grooming the young ladies in our various private and public schools early with a leadership-centered curriculum will be beneficial to the future state of women in sports leadership.*

Another participant from the interview added that:

> *I think it is important that we deliberately make efforts to formally and informally inculcate leadership knowledge and actions in our women at a young age. Particularly with sports, when we give them early exposure to leadership, I am of the view that by the time they advance to the top*

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*positions in the sporting organisations, they will have
accumulated the necessary experience to demonstrate their
competencies.*

By allowing females to go through intellectual training from an early age, LaVoi and Dutove (2012) argue that it would position them to accumulate vital knowledge and skills and give them equal leverage as their male counterparts when it comes to selecting qualified candidates to occupy leadership positions in sports organisationals in Ghana.

Regarding the intensive inclusion of females in sports, a study by Vora and Koch (2015) in the Gulf regions notified how cultural restraints curtailed the intensive inclusion of females in sporting activities and its related leadership management. While foreign female leaders were not restricted to holding leadership positions in sporting firms in the region, indigenes faced numerous cultural challenges in getting involved in sports for a long period and, subsequently, ascended to positions of power in sports organisations. In the context of the Ghanaian sports field, interview participants highlighted the need to encourage brilliant females to engage in sports-related activities, as this can catalyze the development of the desire to hold future positions in sports institutions. One participant belonging to the tertiary institutional sports associations explained that:

*Currently, in our schools, for example, there have been
sports positions created particularly for females to occupy.
If a female is to be recognized as fit for such a position, it is
dependent on her active involvement in the sports and
subsequent recognition by her peers. It is possible to adopt*

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such an approach in the selection of prospective female

leaders and to develop their capabilities for the future.

This notion aligns with the suggestions of Holder, Jackson and Ponterotto (2015). According to them, young females should be allowed to actively participate in various sporting activities in which they find interest. This would provide a 'natural avenue' for them to develop a thorough understanding of sports, foster healthy competitions, and freely express their leadership capabilities without restriction. Elling and Knoppers (2005) contribute to this by stating that such traits are important for developing competent leaders for the sporting community, who are responsible for organizing various activities that promote such sporting events.

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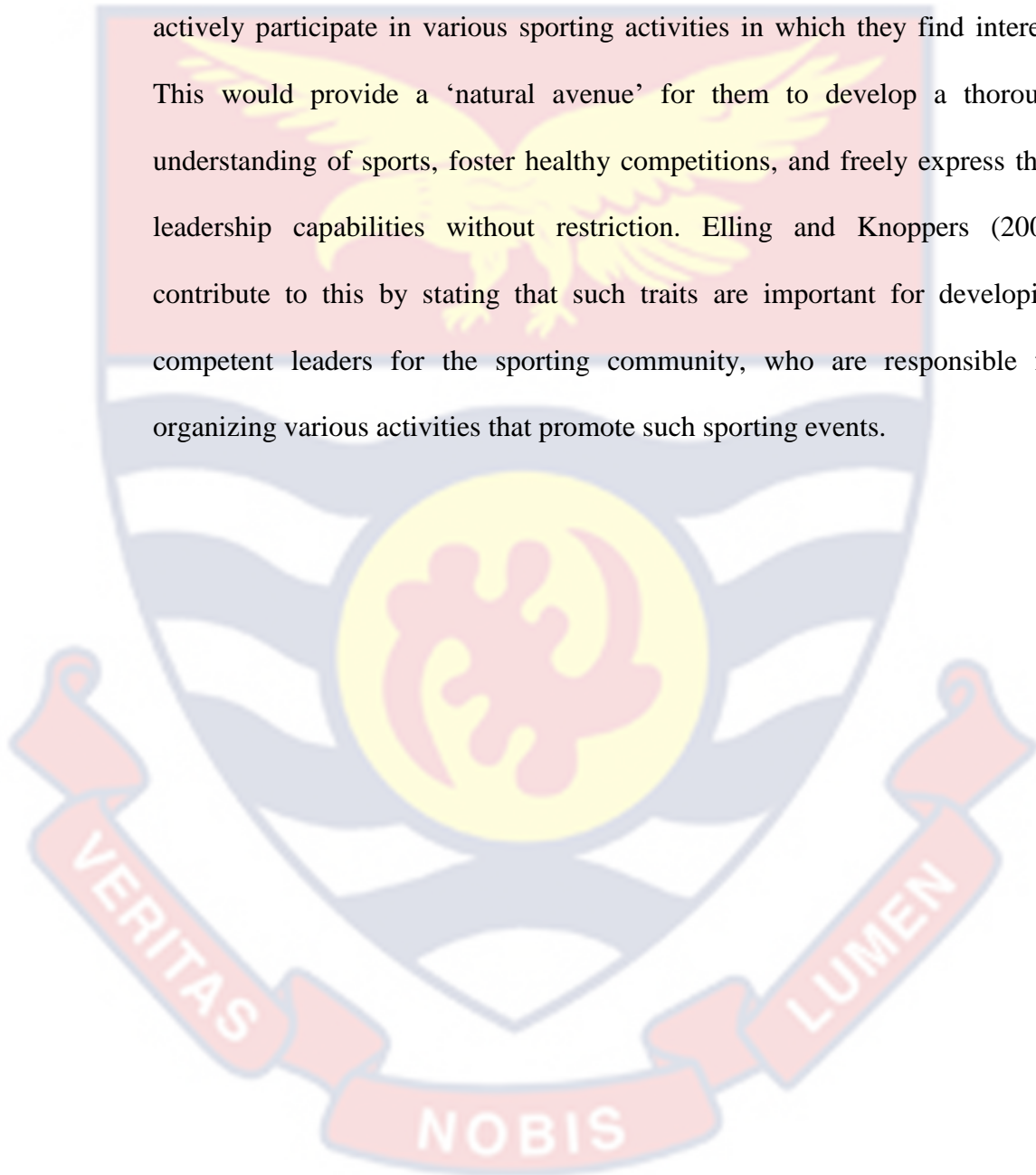
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Introduction

This research aimed to investigate the encounters, leadership development, and advancement strategies embraced by female professionals within higher-level sports leadership organizations in Ghana. The study utilizes a hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative research methodology to delve into the discussed phenomenon.

This chapter presents the summary of the study conclusion and suggests recommendations for key findings based on the research. The chapter subsequently provides suggestions for the research.

Summary

Women have been denied the opportunity to participate in and lead sports and their organisation from the ancient Greek era, where sports are said to have migrated from. They were not allowed to participate, nor were they permitted to watch. This issue of women non-representation stemming from the ancient era has impacted negatively on women zeal to involve themselves in leadership positions within the world of sports. Many feminist advocates worldwide have tried several times to advocate and empower more women to vie for sports leadership positions, yet the number remains low compared to men. The story is not different in Ghana; however, just like in the global community, some women have been able to overcome the odds and have become leaders in sports organisation, but not much is known about their experiences and pathways. This led the researcher to want to explore and get in-depth knowledge about the experiences of these women to have

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information that will help and encourage other women aspiring to become leaders in sports.

The study adopted the interpretive research philosophy in order to gain insight into the issue of Ghanaian women's participation in sports leadership from the perspectives of female Ghanaian sports leaders. The phenomenological approach to qualitative research was used to find out the lived experiences of women in sports leadership positions from their perspectives. Thirteen women who hold high leadership positions within the NSA, GUSA, COESA, and GHATUSA were purposely selected for the study. An interview guide designed by M'mbaha (2012) was adapted to suit this present study. Data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis to present the themes, codes, code descriptions, sample illustrations, frequency and saliency for the research objective one, which examined the barriers that prevent Ghanaian women's involvement in sports leadership positions, objective three, which helped to determine the professional experiences, leadership growth, and progression approaches adopted by women working within professional sports organisations in Ghana and objective four which also examined the strategies that can help to improve women's participation in sports leadership positions in Ghana. Attride-Stirling organisational theme was used to analyze research objective two, which explored the nexus of cultural, socio-economic, and personal factors that affect women's participation in sports leadership in Ghana.

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Main Findings

The research uncovered three key themes that were used to describe the obstacles women experienced while trying to obtain or participate in leadership roles in the sports industry, namely structural barriers, institutional barriers, and individual mindsets. The social and political structures that prevented women from holding leadership roles in sports were made up of structural barriers. These included a lack of formal networks for women to advance in management roles, the ineffectiveness of policies and legislation like the National Sports Policy of 1994 and the Sports Act 2016 in addressing the backlog of women involvement, and the absence of informal networks that stem from male authorities by isolating themselves from women outside of the workplace.

The outdated sports policies and current sports legislation do not significantly account for women involvement in sports leadership, although significant focus has been directed to women's participation in sporting activities. Since there is no strong policy mandate to promote women involvement in leadership, top-level management in the sports industry is saturated with male leadership while women still struggle to establish leadership parity in mid, and low-level management positions. Again, both formal and informal networks favour male employees more than female employees, consequently affording the men in the industry better opportunities to access mentorship and sponsorship. Again, since women in power are already constantly in a game of catch-up with central male figures in the sports industry, attention is unconsciously drawn from the mentoring perspective of female leaders unknowingly stagnating women's mid- and low-level positions.

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Moreover, the institutional barriers were deemed to be the most significant since they are the most apparent yet most neglected challenges. Institutional barriers stem from societal and cultural perceptions that women do not possess adequate capabilities to lead, especially in a sporting environment. One of the most fascinating discoveries from this challenge was that women's leadership techniques are still criticized, even if they yield positive results, simply because they deviate from typical male leadership tactics. This results in a paradoxical approach to leadership where women have to adopt leadership styles that do not only support the idea of what is expected of them as female leaders but also encompass male leadership qualities. Consequently, these female leaders have to conform to stereotypical leadership styles while displaying agentic leadership behaviours.

Next, the study identified that the individual mindsets of the women in sports professions hinder their involvement in sports leadership. The most prominent feature within this theme is that most women do not believe there can be a work-life balance when they take up leadership positions due to the associated increase in career demands alongside domestic and family duties at home. Another major observation the study made was that women limit themselves in two major ways – lack of confidence and avoidance of socialization pressures. This self-limiting behaviour is contrary to the self-efficacy theory in that instead of women believing that they possess the requisite skills and competencies to perform adequately, they believe the opposite – that men would perform the role better or the roles demand too much that they do not believe they can commit. There is also the belief that women themselves have that the sports leadership position is ill-suited for

them because it is prone to several physical and mental risks that they are not ready to take.

Accordingly, the study proposes that the word "labyrinth" is used in tandem or to replace the notion of a "glass ceiling" to describe the difficult obstacles that women must overcome before obtaining positions of power. In summary, comparing these obstacles to a "labyrinth" will effectively underline the fact that although Ghanaian sports women have been given hope through political and institutional mandates, there are still constant roadblocks at every corner, intentionally or unintentionally established, that would either slow their progress or send them in circles.

The study also identified that the nexus between cultural, socio-economic, and personal factors established that socio-cultural stagnation, determination, access to opportunities, role incongruity, and work versus family balance are the most central forces that affect women's participation in sports leadership. The most important finding was that, essentially, the issue of culture reverberates throughout each of the variables, making it the most predominant influence within the nexus. The role incongruity results from the traditional cultural view that women are subordinate to men and, as a result, are not well-suited to hold leadership positions. At the same time, women are frequently faced with the choice between family and career because they have been raised to believe that their place is in the home as caregivers.

Further, access to opportunities is majorly associated with the availability of formal and informal connections, which, in Ghana, have also been established to align with a person's cultural and ethnic background.

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The third objective of this study sought to examine the professional experiences of women in uppermost leadership sports positions. Furthermore, the study evaluated the leadership development strategies employed by individuals holding top leadership roles within various professional sports organizations in Ghana. In examining the professional journeys of women in prominent sports leadership positions, the research revealed a strong inclination towards the specific sport or organization they led. Notably, these women emphasized the significance of having mentors and sponsors and actively participating in mentorship and sponsorship programs. Their passion for a particular sport motivated them to pursue careers related to sports, enabling them to amass valuable knowledge and experience that positioned them advantageously to contribute significantly to the sports landscape in Ghana. These female leaders underscored the pivotal role played by sponsors and mentors in their career development, providing them exposure to pertinent sporting knowledge and facilitating their ascent to leadership roles in sports organizations in Ghana. However, the study also identified the challenge of achieving a satisfactory work-life balance as a notable hurdle for women in experiencing positive outcomes in leadership within sports organizations.

Many female leaders are expected to balance their professional duties with domestic responsibilities, unlike their male counterparts, who are not typically obligated to engage in household tasks immediately after work. The research also found that self-limiting beliefs influence women's reluctance to take on leadership roles in sports organizations. Even when women do assume leadership positions, many hesitate to advance in their roles, often feeling intimidated by the success of their peers, whether male or female.

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Additionally, within the cultural context of the study, where leadership is often perceived as more fitting for men, the research indicates that in sports organizations with a prevailing culture that discourages female leadership, women leaders may encounter challenges in effectively fulfilling their leadership roles.

Based on the analysis of the data, this concept also impacted the recruitment practices of such sports organizations. The findings revealed that entities with cultures that were resistant to female leadership typically favored the hiring of male leaders for roles in sports, in contrast to their female counterparts. Regarding strategies for leadership development and advancement, the availability of clear career progression routes, access to mentorship and sponsorship opportunities, chances for training and skill development, and involvement in networking were identified as significant factors influencing the progression of women in leadership roles within professional sports organizations in Ghana. The research demonstrated that women who have well-defined career advancement pathways generally find it more straightforward to assume leadership positions and progress in their roles as leaders.

Moreover, having access to mentorship and sponsorship opportunities provided women with a platform to demonstrate their existing expertise. This not only led to guidance that contributed to refining their sports leadership skills but also increased their knowledge and exposure to leadership opportunities within the sports community of Ghana. Additionally, the study emphasized the importance of recognizing the capabilities of female leaders and providing training to enhance these capabilities, which significantly

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contributed to their development and advancement as leaders. Furthermore, networking enabled female leaders to engage with other professionals in the Ghanaian sports community, facilitating the exchange of knowledge, and expertise and the identification of opportunities to gain leadership experience in professional sports organizations in Ghana.

The fourth objective of the study aimed at identifying the various strategies that can be employed in improving women's participation in sports leadership in professional sports in Ghana. Of this objective, adopting competent leadership styles, women receiving organisational support, and social support was identified as crucial in bettering women's participation in professional sports leadership in Ghana. Concerning the adoption of competent leadership styles, the study emphasized the need for women in leadership positions in sports organisations to adopt those leadership approaches that fostered inclusion, and encouraged teamwork as against leadership approaches that appear to be autocratic, and did not allow for opinion sharing and collaboration. The study discouraged women from attempting to adopt masculine approaches to leading their respective sporting organisations, as such approaches are not favoured by both males and females.

Rather, women are encouraged to demonstrate feminine attributes, such as empathy, and the ability to organize, and accommodate the opinions of others in their leadership styles if they are to see improved performance in the execution of their duties. The study also deemed it necessary to ascertain the leadership capabilities of females vying for leadership positions to identify their strengths and weaknesses, focus on improving these strengths, and replace these weak traits with other relevant abilities. In addition, for these

female leaders to be familiar with the leadership terrain of professional sports organisations, the study detailed exposing the female to sports-related decision-making settings. This would allow them to appreciate the skill-set, and knowledge required to lead sports organisations, and to know the required competencies to develop themselves to be able to lead professional sporting organisations in Ghana.

For the organisational culture, the study identified the need for a general change in organisational culture to enhance the number of women who are represented in leadership positions in professional sporting organisations. There ought to be mass education in the sporting community of Ghana on the importance of including female leaders in the leadership of such firms. Also, the study suggested that there should be organisational policy reforms, particularly in sporting organisations where males dominated in leadership. This would bring gender diversity in sports leadership in such organisations, and Ghana in general, and grant equal access to leadership opportunities in professional sports organisations to women.

In the case of social support, the study findings emphasized girl-child education as an instrument to improving female representation when it comes to leadership in professional sports organisations in Ghana. The study stressed the need to intensify sports-related education for females at all levels of the educational ladder of Ghana. In the long term, it is expected that such an approach would result in a shift in male-dominated leadership to one which equally favours women for steering sports organisations in the intended direction. Further, allowing brilliant females to actively participate in sporting activities, was seen as a key instrument that could be used in inculcating the

desire to pursue sports-related careers, and the prospective assumption of leadership positions in the future.

Conclusion

Presently, global conversations surrounding gender equality, and the engagement of women in leadership positions have sparked the interest of academics, and professionals as well. In the sports community, the notoriety of male domination cannot be understated, especially in developing economies like Ghana, where structural, cultural, and personal factors strongly influence women engagement in the sports industry. One of the study's main findings support the longstanding belief that the Ghanaian sports industry is plagued with significant barriers that affect women's engagement in leadership. An interesting finding was that alongside structural and institutional barriers rooted in national, and organisational policy, relations between current sports leaders – male or female - and aspiring women leaders do not inspire or actively support engagement.

Essentially, these barriers demoralize aspirants, and even, women holding middle-level management positions because they subconsciously fan the flames of traditional gendered norms, and cultural expectations that would otherwise see a male sports leader more fit to lead. In effect, the study argues that a woman's leadership journey is a *labyrinth* – or a maze – as opposed to a glass ceiling. This dispels the notion of a linear path to the top blocked by a symbolic invisible barrier that women encounter; the barriers are known, and almost palpable, yet the strategies implemented, and decisions made to steer the agenda in the right direction, are futile – much like a *labyrinth*.

It is possible that barriers exist because significant consideration has not been given to the factors that mainly influence women's decision to participate in sports leadership. The nexus of the cultural, personal, and socio-economic factors shows that holistically, discrimination, access to opportunities, socio-cultural stagnation, role incongruity, and a work-life balance affect the decision of women to participate in sports leadership. This means that a comprehensive strategy for empowering, and involving women, based on the fundamentals of leadership development, institutional or organisational support that promotes inclusivity, and diversity, and social support systems that inspire young female leaders, could significantly address barriers at their roots, and improve women's leadership in the industry.

Recommendations

1. The study recommends that policymakers in association with the relevant authorities like the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Gender and Children, and Social Protection should endeavour to create a new National Sports Policy that capitalizes on the strengths of contemporary evolved sports culture, and current gender issues to mitigate the loopholes and concerns raised in past policy and legislation.

2. Ministry of Youth and Sports and Ministry of Gender and Children, and Social Protection could liaise with the Ministry of Education to mandate educational institutions to assign the same attention to female sports as it does to male sports.

3. The Ministry of Education should also facilitate female engagement in international sports at the youthful level by encouraging sports

organisations like the National Football Association, and the Ghana Volleyball Association to actively engage female youth in international sports. This would expose the youth to newer and broader horizons that could inspire leadership qualities.

4. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and Ministry of Gender and Children and Social Protection, could invest in scholarships that would target promising female youth to encourage involvement in sports – including sports leadership events and activities.

5. Institutional policies should identify and consider the capacities of women in professional sports organisations who may be perceived as fearful, risk-averse, and having low self-esteem. This could be done thorough human resource assessments in sampled sports organisations. Such information can be used in determining how difficult, and skewed the leadership application process of professional sports organisations, is for some women. Further, professional sporting organisations in Ghana can utilize such knowledge to identify the motives for accepting or declining leadership opportunities, and to design training and mentoring programme that focus on instilling confidence in women to vie for leadership.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. It is suggested that qualitative and quantitative studies be made to understand how different the opinions and experiences of male executives in similar positions in sporting organisations. This would assist in producing a clearer picture of the qualifications, skills,

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knowledge, and experiences required for excelling in senior leadership positions in professional sporting organisations.

2. Also, the study recommend further studies of the approach collectively employed by male and female workers in professional sports organisations in Ghana. This may reveal how in the context of professional sporting organisations, networking tendencies of both males and females can be harnessed to advance the careers of females when it comes to leadership in sporting organisations, and the need to design different networking and mentoring programme for females at the various stages of their careers.

3. The study also proposes that subsequent studies that observe the same or similar phenomena should quantitatively explore the individual relationships between personal, socio-economic and cultural factors on women's participation in sports leadership. This may reveal the specific factors that have the greatest effect on women's participation in sports leadership.

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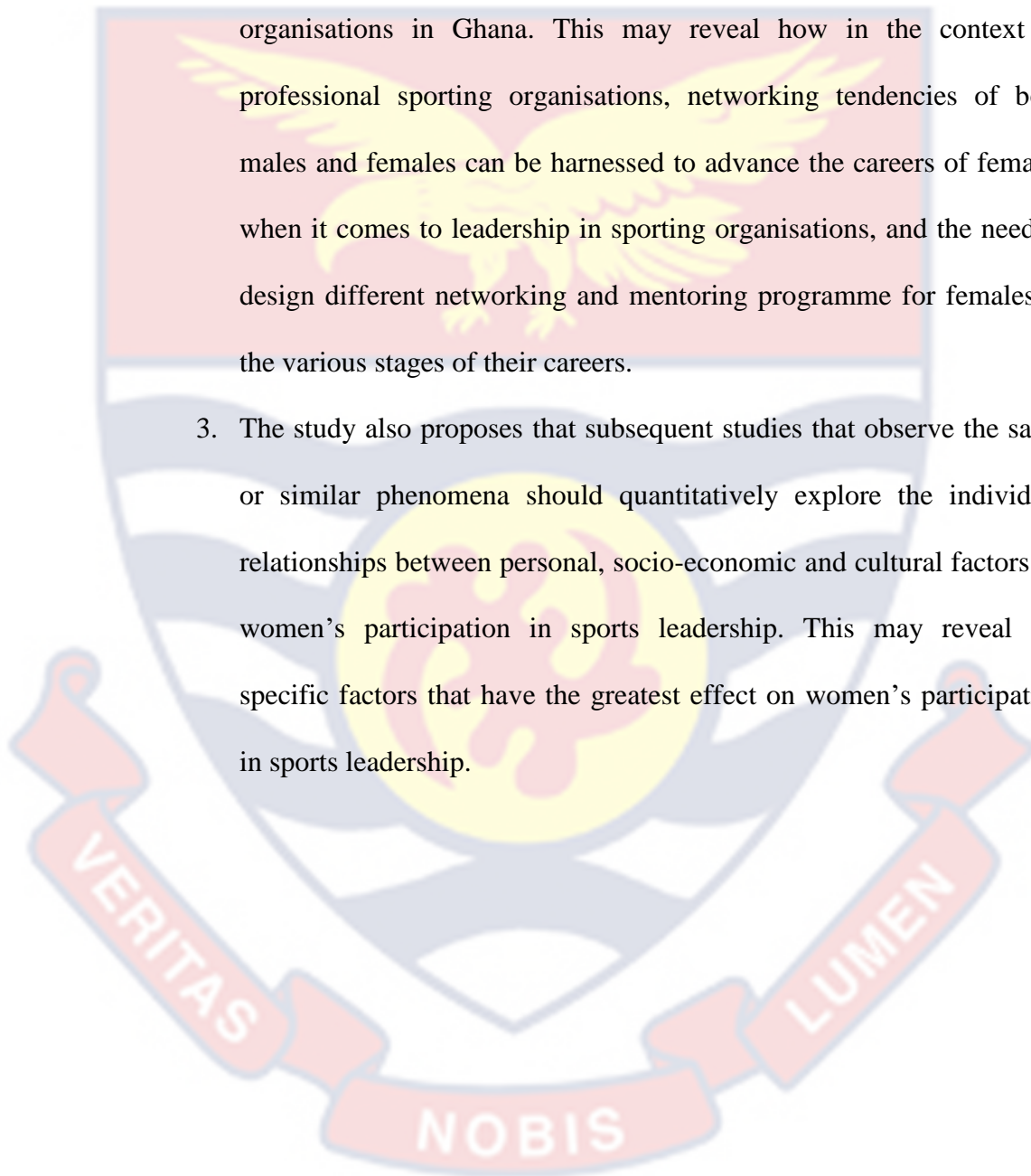
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE **FOR WOMEN IN SPORTS LEADERSHIP**

POSITIONS IN GHANA

I am Abena Adasa Nkrumah, a postgraduate student at the University of Cape Coast, pursuing a Doctorate Degree. This interview guide has been designed to enable me carry out research on the topic: **"Women in Sports Leadership Positions in Ghana".** The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences and barriers of women in sports leadership positions in Ghana. The data collected is for the purpose of research and you are guaranteed of secrecy and anonymity of the data you provide. Thank you.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

1. Your name (Pseudonym): _____

Current position: _____

Work or home address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

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INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Describe your path to leadership (How did you start; When did you actually decide you want to be a leader; what critical moments occurred to make you want to be a leader)

2. What are your roles and responsibilities in the organisational? (what are your assigned duties; to what extent are you involved in the decision making process)

3. What factors influenced your choice of a career in sports leadership?

4. What do you consider to be your leadership style? (How do you get people to do what you want them to do, particularly men).

5. What are your future aspirations or goals as a woman in sports leadership?

6. What do you think are some of the barriers that prevent Ghanaian women from involving themselves in sports leadership positions?

7. How do you think culture (the cultural background) influence women's decision to participate in sports leadership in Ghana?

8. How do you think socio-economic conditions like income level, education, etc influence women participation in sports leadership in Ghana?

9. How do you think personal conditions like self-esteem, work-life integration, etc influence women participation in sports leadership in Ghana?

10. What are some of the coping mechanisms you think women who want to become leaders in the sporting world should adopt?

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11. What are your thoughts on how women can be inspired to engage in

leadership positions?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

I am Abena Adasa Nkrumah a Postgraduate student at the University of Cape Coast pursuing a Doctorate Degree. This interview guide has been designed to enable me carry out research on the topic: **"Women in Sports Leadership Positions in Ghana".** The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences and barriers of women in sports leadership positions in Ghana. The data collected is for the purpose of research and you are guaranteed of secrecy and anonymity of the data you provide. Thank you.

INTERVIEW GUIDE:

1. How were you encouraged to engage in sports leadership? (Probe: is it possible to experience similar situations in today's sports industry?)

2. What challenges do you encounter as a sports leader? (Probe: How do you overcome these challenges; what strategies do you think can be put in place to deal with the challenges that affect women's participation in sports leadership)?

3. How do you think culture (the cultural background) influence women's decision to participate in sports leadership in Ghana?

4. How do you think socio-economic conditions like income level, education, etc influence women participation in sports leadership in Ghana?

5. How do you think personal conditions like self-esteem, work-life integration, etc influence women participation in sports leadership in Ghana?

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6. What are your thoughts on how women can be inspired to engage in leadership positions?

7. What are some of the coping mechanisms you think women who want to become leaders in the sporting world should adopt?

APPENDIX C

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

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6TH APRIL, 2022

Ms. Abena Adasa Nkrumah
Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation
University of Cape Coast

Dear Ms. Nkrumah,

ETHICAL CLEARANCE – ID (UCCIRB/CES/2021/67)

The University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board (UCCIRB) has granted Provisional Approval for the implementation of your research **The Experience of Women in Sports Leadership Positions in Ghana.** This approval is valid from 6th April, 2022 to 5th March, 2023. You may apply for a renewal subject to submission of all the required documents that will be prescribed by the UCCIRB.

Please note that any modification to the project must be submitted to the UCCIRB for review and approval before its implementation. You are required to submit periodic review of the protocol to the Board and a final full review to the UCCIRB on completion of the research. The UCCIRB may observe or cause to be observed procedures and records of the research during and after implementation.

You are also required to report all serious adverse events related to this study to the UCCIRB within seven days verbally and fourteen days in writing.

Always quote the protocol identification number in all future correspondence with us in relation to this protocol.

Yours faithfully,

Samuel Asiedu Owusu, PhD
UCCIRB Administrator

ADMINISTRATOR
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

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APPENDIX D

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION & RECREATION

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Cables & Telegrams:
UNIVERSITY, CAPE COAST

Our Ref: **ET/PED/18/0001/7**

2nd March, 2021.

The Chairman
Institutional Review Board
University of Cape Coast
Cape Coast

INTRODUCTORY LETTER: ABENA ADASA NKRUMAH (ET/PED/18/0001)

The above-named person is a student of the Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation of the University of Cape Coast. She is pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Physical Education. In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the programme, she is conducting a research for her thesis titled " **The Experiences of Women in Sports Leadership Positions in Ghana."**

She has defended her thesis proposal and has passed. I therefore kindly request that she is granted ethical clearance to enable her conduct the research.

Counting on your usual co-operation.

Thank you.

Dr. Daniel Apaak
HEAD

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