



Source: Field data, 2016

Lack of personal drive

Most of the study participants expressed that, women who are assertive and confident, and are not frightened to say what they believe in, have moved up the career ladder into senior leadership. Participants expressed that sadly, some women lack the drive to pursue higher career heights. One participant admitted that, some women ‘really don’t come up to speed’ when it comes to exhibiting leadership traits. Some women lack the aspiration, confidence, and commitment to achieve higher heights. One participant stated emphatically that “most women don’t believe in themselves, they do not have confidence and do not have the vision of being at the top”. To support this, another participant blatantly confessed that, “if I should aim at becoming the CEO of a bank, am I not being too ambitious”? Participant perceived that women with high career dreams are tagged by others within the society as being too assertive and aggressive in the negative way. For the fear of being stereotyped as unfeminine, some women

within the Ghanaian society will not want to step out to display leadership traits that lead to leader emergence.

Women lack the confidence and the boldness to determine and aspire for greater height as far as society is concern. Colbert et al, (2014) described individuals who are emotionally unstable, lacking great sense of security, and being overly anxious or distracted from their work as those high on neuroticism personality trait, and not qualify for leadership roles. Women have been observed to be scoring higher scores on personality traits that inadvertently undermine their leadership emergence and appointment. Additionally, from participants' experience some women exhibit low conscientious and extraversion traits at the workplace making women unfit for leadership roles. Sheerin (2012) however established that an individual's personality traits, either inherent or of a learned nature has greater positive effect on occupational choice than cognitive ability. Thus women who do not display personality trait that are congruent with leadership traits do not stand a chance for higher leadership roles and higher career prospects (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Livingston, 2013).

Lack of leadership characteristics

Participants of the study shared that some women do not display characteristics needed for higher leadership roles. Participants expressed that, women perceive themselves as substandard and subservient to men, and therefore feel they 'cannot' stand up to the leadership task; however women with the willpower, high sense of independence, and confidence in their own ability to be successful at tasks are able to take higher challenges of leadership roles. Participants asserted that the acquisition of higher leadership roles in the corporate world is dependent on the individual. One participant stated this: "I think acquisition of leadership role boils down to the individual; it boils down to the mindset". Another participant expressed that "if

as an individual, you see yourself as capable, as competent ... people will react to you accordingly”. According to Colbert et al, (2014), conscientious individuals with the passion for hard work and performance-driven are considered as high performers. Thus individual women who lack conscientious traits of competence, commitment and hard work are not viewed as emerging leaders for higher leadership roles.

The inability to discover one’s potential, is perceived as a distinct factor that inhibits career progression. Study participants shared that some women are afraid to display their potential for fear that they would be tagged as “unfeminine”. In addition, participants shared that most women do not take up challenging roles for fear of failure, women are considered as risk averse than the male counterparts. Participants described the corporate leadership as “male-dominated”; thus, the discovery of one’s potential, and taking up challenging tasks is suggested to be the key to unlocking women’s potential to break through the ‘walls’ and ‘glass ceiling’ into higher senior leadership roles. Consistent with previous literature, Sheerin (2012) described an individual’s self-efficacy as an individual’s perception and belief in their own ability to be successful at a particular task or their belief or perception regarding their career success.

Lack of strategic planning

Women in the corporate world are faced with the challenge of balancing the family life and the demands at the workplace. Combining demands of the family life and the demands at the workplace place a toll on a woman’s career ambition. Participants expressed that “having the right exposure” through training helps women in developing themselves for senior leadership roles. Participants further expressed that ‘education is a given’ and ‘goes beyond the academics’; thus, it is imperative for women to be trained academically and professionally for higher career prospects. Study participants shared that women who strategically plan for career growth,

continuously train themselves for the job, and pursue higher education, are those who easily make it into higher leadership roles. Consistent with literature, Colbert et al, (2014) stated that individuals who are high on openness to experience, and open to new ideas, are better suited to adapt to the more dynamic environments typically found in leadership roles. Thus, individual women who seek to continuously upgrade knowledge and skills are better suited for leadership roles.

In summary, study participants expressed that women are limited by their inability to expressed leadership personality traits such as conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism and openness to new ideas at the workplace. From participants' perspectives, attaining leadership positions must be strategically planned as an objective, and not left to chance. Thus key traits required for leadership emergence and effectiveness to close the persistent gap in gender leadership are to be displayed for recognition and consideration at the workplace. In conclusion, study participants observed that women are found to be protective of their image, and would not wish to sacrifice personal comfort for career heights that might lead to backlash and double bind (Livingston, 2013).

Conclusion and Practical Recommendations

Given the few opportunities available for leadership position in the corporate world, women are expected to develop the leadership traits required for leadership roles, and focus on promoting themselves for recognition. Participants recommend that women in the corporate world must display the passion for leadership roles at the workplace. Women are to go the extra mile and take up higher challenges to beat the competition at the workplace for recognition and promotion. Participants observed that women in the banking sector, on daily basis, go through the unconscious biases at the workplace, and these biases limit their abilities to display the drive

that is congruent with leadership characteristics. The obvious implication is that women who are in leadership positions had to display the requisite leadership traits such as assertiveness, confidence, responsible and productive and with high levels of aspirations to meet expectations for higher leadership roles (Colbert, et al., 2014).

In addition to developing personal characteristics, study participants perceived that women who make it to senior leadership positions are those who are able to set right priorities through careful planning and determination, and continuously train themselves academically and professionally for higher roles. Given the dual roles women in the corporate world play, planning personal career life to set clear career visions, allocating appropriate resources for career growth, and working at achieving set goals could help women to move from the lower levels of career into higher leadership roles. Ganguli, Hausmann, and Viarengo (2014) supported that higher educational attainment allows women to increase their expected lifetime labour force participation. In addition, Jackson (2009) established that continuous and higher education develops confidence, broadens one's perspective, communication, and leadership skills. Thus, women in leadership must trained themselves and aspire for higher roles to help in closing the gap in gender leadership.

The study believes that these practical recommendations will raise and unleash the leadership potentials in women aspiring and pursuing leadership careers, and to close the persistent gap in gender leadership. The study observed that personality traits only serve as contributing factors, and not as the sole predictor to leadership emergence and effectiveness (Ozer, & Benet-Martinez, 2006; Sheerin, 2012). Thus, the study findings provide opportunities for further research into the phenomenon of gender gap in leadership.

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