THE ROLES OF TRADITIONAL WOMEN LEADERS IN HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN THE SISSALA EAST DISTRICT IN THE UPPER WEST REGION OF GHANA

Dapilee Felicia, Dominic Alimbey Dery (PhD), Osei Yaw (PhD) and Rev. Fr. Alexander Bedekuru Nmaninyin

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[1*]Dapilee Felicia

Tumu College of Education, Tumu

Corresponding Author's Email: dapileef@gmail.com

[2]Dominic Alimbey Dery (PhD)

Languages and Liberal Studies Department, Tamale Technical University. Corresponding Author's Email: tysondery71@yahoo.com

[3]Osei Yaw (PhD)

Mathematics and ICT Department, Tamale College of Education Tamale- Ghana Mathematics Tutor and Development Studies Practitioner

Corresponding Author's Email: Nanaoseiyaw1976@yahoo.com

[4]Rev. Fr. Alexander Bedekuru Nmaninyin

McCoy College of Education, Nadwoli.

Corresponding Author's Email: bedelex2@gmail.com

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the study was examining the roles of traditional women leaders in human capital development in the Sissala East District.

Methodology: This was a descriptive survey since the topic dwelt on environmental experiences of the respondents. The study used closed –ended items on a five-point Likert-type scale questionnaire and interview to collect data to answer the key research questions on harboured perceptions with regard to human capital development.

Findings: The study revealed that traditional women leaders were active partners in human capital development in the Sissala East District (SED), since they asserted their roles expansively in human capital activities in the socio-economic transformation of the district. Despite this observation, their expansive activities in Human Capital Development (HCD), are yet to manifest desirable impact that would save the future human capital needs of the district.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: It is recommended that the leadership behaviours of TWL should comprise of work cantered leadership strategies. The National Council for Women Development should liaise with leadership consultants to trainwomen leadership in the various districts. The study provides a policy direction to the sort of leadership capabilities of Traditional women leaders.

Keywords: *Roles, traditional women, human capital, development and leadership*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Schultz (1961) defined human capital development as the aggregation of investments in activities such as education, on the job training and migration that enhance individual productivity in the labour market. Again, Sharpe (2001) sees human capital to include the innate abilities as well as knowledge and skills that individuals acquire throughout their lives. Deducing from these definitions, human capital denotes a matrix of potentials or trainable attributes embodied in an individual which make him/her productive in his or her human endeavours or fit in society. Attributes such as attitudes, aptitude (, talents, and skills) are innate and acquired through transformational processes to manifest and actualize productivity thus, through education. (Formal and informal, apprenticeship, mentoring, internship etc.).

Historically, women in the southern sector of Ghana have demonstrated renowned leadership abilities, by contributing to bring their societies to their current stage. Notable among such women were Yaa Asantewaa of Ejisu, who led the Ashanti kingdom in a war against the British in 1900 and Nana Hemaa Denkyira Ohemaa of Upper Denkyira Ashanti west district, during whose reign, for 38 years her people never experienced any chieftaincy disputes in her traditional area, (Boahene 2003). These two cases suggest the influencing abilities of these women leadership; hence women cannot be merely regarded as homemakers only but also as haven of peace – security in their communities which is a basic requirement for development and for that matter Human Capital Development (HCD).

Naturally, a woman anywhere is a woman everywhere thus, suggesting sameness. On the contrary, the Northern Traditional Women Leaders (TWL), particularly in the Sissala East District (SED), is seemingly perceived as not playing significant roles in the human capital development. A candid observation of the foregone perception might emanate from their daily strives to make ends meet hence their engagement in livelihood activities only to maintain the status quo of their families at the expense of significant human capital development activities as portrayed by their southern counterparts over the media.

On the face of human capital development activities of modern times, are HIV/AIDS education, immunization, and enrolment drive are rampant but yet no significant or impressive marks are registered among traditional women leaders in this district. It is worth acknowledging that women liberation movement such as NCWD, FOMWAG, FIDA, have persistently raised awareness among women in every facet of their lives, yet little is heard of traditional women leadership role in human capital activities amidst serious challenges in the SED.

The current state of affairs in the Sissala East District, therefore raises the question of what are the roles of traditional women leaders in the human capital development activities of the Sissala East District of the Upper West Region, a district faced with serious challenges in relation to HCD. Answering this question was therefore the main objective of this study.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of relevant literature was guided by an evaluation of the roles of traditional women leaders in human capital development activities in the district. Different experts have offered different opinions on how they perceive HCD. This study was however focus on Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Schultz (1961) definitions.

The concept of human capital development according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and development as sited in Marithumi, Lawrence, Ismail, (2009) "is referred to as

the knowledge, skills, competences, and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal and socio-economic wellbeing" P266. Schultz (1961), defined human capital development as the aggregation of investments in activities such as education, on the job training and migration that enhance individual productivity in the labour market.

Deducing from these definitions, human capital denotes a matrix of potentials or trainable attributes embodied in an individual which make him/her productive in his or her human endeavours or fit in society. Attributes such as attitudes, aptitude (, talents, and skills) are innate and acquired through transformational processes to manifest and actualize productivity thus, through education. (Formal and informal, apprenticeship, mentoring, internship etc.).

In effect, human capital attributes can be likened to sophisticated computers embodied in human beings that can perform complex roles in the attainment of socio-economic values. By character, human capital is expandable, thus making it distinct from mere human resources. Until human resources are treated or milled through education and training (human capital development) to unleash their innate potentials and add value they cannot to be described as human capital. Next is to consider the effects of Human Capital. Next to be considered is the examination of traditional human capital development practices in the Sissala East District.

2.1 Traditional human capital development practices in the Sissala East

Onwauchi (1972), asserts that in African societies of which the Sissala East traditional area is not an exception, children are educated by the process of life, through myth and traditional tales. Through these, elders teach the children moral and ethical codes of behaviour and social relationship. Again, through certain religious rituals and practices, communal attainment of spiritual ideas is established to lay the foundation for respect. African political institutions love respect and obedience and require children to show parents and elders just that.

Similarly, Forte (1957), believes that in Africa, after a child is weaned, it follows its older siblings and emulate their behaviour (social learning). For girls, their mothers remain the centre or their universe until marriage but ends sooner for boys, who must be attached to the trades of their fathers. At the age of 4-8 years, the child begins to participate in the daily events of the family and community through observation and mimicking of activities. Parents instil discipline and exert some authority over children. From seven years, children are eager to participate in the routines of life and they become more involved in it. This parent accomplishes the training of their children by giving them the simplest economic and household tasks, according to their sex.

Notable among some of the practices in the Sissala East traditional area in human capital development are child adoption after the death of a parent, or when the parents have too many children to raise. These inevitably affect the quality of life. Every mature adult is a teacher or a guardian wherever young one may be. He or she corrects and disciplines them when they go wrong and praises them when they do right. It is a customary practice by parents, to enquire through sooth Sayers, special attributes of a new born child, this is to enable them protect and nurture the child to realize his or her destiny with minimal challenges. Culturally, children are named after deceased relations who have excelled in life with the hope that, children will grow and perform like the late ones after whom he/she in named – wishful thinking.

In Sissala communities, child upbringing is shrouded in strict observance of moral values and there are strong beliefs of ancestral retribution against wrong doers. Furthermore, would-be leaders of a community are normally dispatched from home to distant communities for

internship for cultural inheritance. Additionally, children are grouped by the fire side during moon light for transmission or worthwhile moral values through stories. Children are also given to Mallams to teach in the 'makarantas' who mostly end up in child labour or begging for food to survive. Also, the elders out of compassion for respectful and hardworking youth, transmit worthwhile values through might mentoring with the elderly.

In a nut shell, human capital development activities are premised on the principles of purity, hard work and collective responsibility, imbued sense of ancestral retribution to manifest desirable behaviours. The next section discusses leadership and the concept of women's leadership behaviour.

2.3 Brief concept of leadership and women leadership behaviours

Contemporary leadership literature depicts the concept as highly elastic, thus; it is susceptible to numerous definitions. A scan through scholarly definitions indicates certain common trends worth noticing for academic considerations. Robbins (2003), defined leadership as the ability to influence a group towards the achievements of goals. Mcshane and Anne (2000:10), on their part defined "leadership as a process of influencing people and providing an environment for them to achieve team and organizational objective", whereas, Armstrong (1994), sees it "as achieving results through people" (p173).

From these definitions, the concept of leadership is explicitly grounded on the art of influencing individuals or groups in a given situation or in an organization. In other words, enticing followers to follow willingly in order to achieve given goals. From the above, it can be surmised that a leader denotes a person who tries to gain the commitment, morale or willing co-operation of members in the organization. In another dimension, a leader is one who challenges the status quo and inspires organizational members or unit – an agent of positive change. Eagly (2009), added that recent leadership approaches places leaders' role as a coach or a teacher.

Women groups have been in existence since time past, supporting in diverse ways to keep homes, families and communities. Women have in the past organized themselves in smaller groups, based on vocation in the informal sector, political, social or economic. In each were individuals who were replete with energy and zeal to carry others to achieve desired goals, as Robbins (2003), rightly describes it, "individuals who are ambitious, have high energy and desire to lead, have confidence, intelligence, have job knowledge and perceived as honest and trustworthy" p328. For the long survival of these groups implies enduring leaders which entails copying. What leadership behaviours have these persons demonstrated to perpetrate their existence?

From the behaviourist leadership approach, Robbins (2003), identifies several dimensions of leader behaviours and eventually narrowed it into two broad categories namely, the initiating structures and considerational leadership behaviours. According to this school of thought, initiating structured leaders organizes work relations and goals by; assigning group task, expects workers to maintain definite standard of performance, emphasizes the meetings of deadlines whereas, a leader who exhibits considerational behaviours manifest mutual trust behaviours - thus, respecting employees' ideas, and employee feelings. He/she also shows concern for followers' comfort, well-being, status, helps employees to solve personal problems. The said leader is friendly and approachable and treats followers as equals.   In the traditional political setting, to be called a functional traditional woman leader (magazia), connotes to some fears, especially to those who have interacted unfavourably with traditional women leaders.

They are perceived as exceptional (iron ladies). It is not normally thinkable for a woman to have exceptional abilities. This is normally associated with unfounded feelings.

In a gender leader studies, Eagly (2001), describes woman leadership behaviours as communal when they are welfare minded that is showing of affection, help, kindness, sympathy, inter – personal sensitivity, nurturing in their working situation. Communal behaviours manifest in speaking tentatively and not drawing attention to oneself, accepting others, directing, supporting others and contributing to the solution of relational problems. Eagly thus, classified behaviours such as assertiveness, confident tendencies --- such as aggression, ambition, and domineering. Others are, forcefulness, autonomy, daring, self- confident and competitiveness as a genetic (male behaviours) and hence in their working environment, they speak assertively, compete for attention, initiating by directing to assigned task and making them problems focused.

Evidence in Eagly (2001), in a quarterly magazine entitled Leadership advantage-An evaluation of evidence, she asserted that, the increase in female leadership has been accompanied by changes and practices in leadership. She added that whereas in the past, leaders' base authority mainly on their access to political, economic, military powers in the post -industrial society's leadership share power more and establish many collaborated relationships. To this end, what behaviours have traditional women leaders effected to perpetrate their existence in the human capital development in the SED? In evaluating the roles of traditional leadership in human capital development, it is necessary to discuss the roles of traditional women leaders in human capital development and their effects.

2.4 Roles of Traditional Women Leaders in Human Capital Development.

According to Mankoe (2002 p43), 'roles' are a psychological concept which deals with behaviour enactment arising from interaction with human beings. Owen (1987), Mescon et al., (1988) as cited in Mankoe (2002), defined ' role' as organized set of behaviours belonging to an office or position whereas, John (1988), cited in the same source above, also explains 'role' as a position in a group that has attached to it, a set of expected behaviours.

Poku (2011), revealed that queen mothers play significant roles such as ensuring discipline and obedience, advising women and children, encouraging wards to go to school, adopting children. Others are financing school bills, helping school drop outs to learn trade. According to the women manifesto for Ghana (2012), women play additional roles of financing health needs, school fees and in their families and contribute behind the scenes to take critical decisions in times of crisis. Evidence emanating from everyday happenings perceive traditional women leaders to be engaged in basic economic activities to fend for young ones. Others are mentoring brides through social occasions by magazia. What do Sissala traditional women leaders do in human capital development as demonstrated by their counterparts in the southern part of Ghana? That remains the main focus that his research intends to investigate.

The generally perceived low status of women particularly in developing countries might in a way have effects on their leadership effectiveness since there is a correlation with leader effectiveness and the nature of the followers according to situational theorist. In the quest for effective leadership amidst the notion that leadership can be acquired through training. Robin (2003 p355) said, that although much of the money is spent on training, it may provide dubious benefits and suggested that management must look for individuals' who have flexibility to change behaviours. And things which might be learned in leader effectiveness should include vision creation, implementing skills and content themes, trust building mentoring and

situational analysis and the trainee should learn how to evaluate situations and modify situations.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey was used for the study as a result of high levels of illiteracy, lack of documentations to rely on and the emotional nature of this topic. According to Key (1997), descriptive surveys are appropriate for assessing current practices and conditions and for making wise decisions and plans to improve upon them. Four main groups' namely women traditional political leaders, women in alternative livelihood and donkey traction groups, religious and Susu groups, totalling 878 constituted the target population of the study. A purposive quota sampling technique was used. In the ratio of 24:21:18:21 thus, 24 respondents for women in donkey traction, 21 alternative livelihood, 18 traditional political leaders and 21 for religious and susu groups thus, making a sample size of 84 respondents. Data were collected from both Primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected using self-administered questionnaire made up of closed –ended items on a five-point Likert- type scale and interview was granted to leaders National Commission for Women and Development (NCWD), in the district who preside over women issues in the district. Statistical Package for Social Science (16th version) was used for Data analysis: frequencies, means, percentages and standard deviation.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The discussion begins with background of the respondents. Tables (1- 5) depict the Demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by number of years in the organisation

Number of years in the group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
2 – 5	20	23
6 – 10	30	35.71
11 – 15	15	17.85
16+	19	22.61
Total	**8**	**100**

Source: (Field work, 2019)

Table 1 revealed that a significant number of respondents has been with their various groups to respond to the survey questions. The least number of years is two years that is 20%of the entire sample in the study.

Table 2 Distribution of respondents by marital status

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Married	50	59.52
Single	15	17.85
Divorced /separated	8	9.52
Widowed	11	13.09
Total	**84**	**100**

Source: (Field work, 2019)

Table 2 Indicated that 50, (59.52%) of the respondents were married and 34, (49.48%) had interference in their marriage. This suggest that they have lived the conditions that manifest human capital development and could therefore provide the required respondents in the survey.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by educational status

Educational status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Literate	46	54.76
Non – literate	38	45.23
Total	**84**	**100**

Source: (Field work, 2019)

Table 3, revealed a large number of literates participating in the survey that is 46 (54.76%) had receive some amount of reading, arithmetic, and writing skills. Equally worth acknowledging is significant number of uneducated fellows.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by frequency in functional and literacy training

Number of times Participated in training	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0	40	47.6
1	34	40.4
2	4	4.8
3	4	4.8
4	2	2.4
Total	**84**	**100**

Source: (Field work, 2019)

Forty respondents (47.71%) of on Table 4, have not received any form of training to improve both functional and literacy skills to have enabled them to actualize their roles in human capital development. This is to suggest that, what they did in human capital development could be more rudimentary and might not be highly sophisticated to turn the tables round in changing the human resource in the district.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents by position in the group

Position in the Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Chairpersons	28	33.3
Secretary	12	14.2
Organizer	4	4.8
Treasurer	2	2.4
Ordinary member	38	45.3
Total	**84**	**100**

Source: (Field work, 2019)

Table 5, indicated that a higher participation of ordinary members in the study, however a sizeable number of executive members did participate in the study--- A recipe for candid responses based on experience involvement**.**

On the question of the roles of traditional women leaders in human capital development.
"What predominant roles do traditional women play in the human capital development in the district"? The results are indicated in Table 6:

Table 6: Responds of respondents' perception by roles of traditional women leaders in human capital development

Roles	Strongly Disagree N %	Disagree N %	Neutral N %	Agree N %	Strongly Agree N %	Total	Standard Deviation
1	2	1	6	35	40		
	2.4	1.2	7.1	41.7	47.6	362	.84
2	2	0	6	36	40		
	2.4	0.0	7.1	42.9	47.6	364	.81
3	2	0	7	35	40		
	2.4	0.0	8.3	41.7	47.6	363	.82
4	37	7	0	0	40		
	44.0	8.3	0.0	0.0	47.6	251	1.94
5	0	0	4	38	42		
	0.0	0.0	4.8	45.2	50.0	374	.58
6	28	13	0	5	38		
	33.3	15.5	0.0	6.0	45.2	264	1.83

Source: (Field work, 2019)

Group mean: 327.41; Standard deviation less than one

Table 6: Responds of respondents' perception by roles of traditional women leaders in human capital development cont'd:

Roles	Strongly Disagree N %	Disagree N %	Neutral N %	Agree N %	Strongly Agree N %	Total	Standard Deviation
7	0	0	20	10	54		
	0.0	0.0	23.8	11.9	64.3	370	.85
8	17	20	2	1	44		
	20.2	23.8	2.4	1.2	52.4	287	1.73
9	21	16	7	0	40		
	25.0	19.0	8.3	0.0	47.6	274	1.75
10	0	0	7	29	48		
	0.0	0.0	8.3	34.5	57.1	377	.64
11	3	6	0	36	39		
	3.6	7.1	0.0	42.9	46.4	354	1.01
12	26	0	6	12	40		
	31.0	0.0	7.1	14.3	47.6	292	1.75
13	1	0	0	29	54		
	1.2	0.0	0.0	34.5	64.3	387	.62
14	1	0	8	16	59		
	1.2	0.0	9.5	9.0	70.2	283	1.67
15	18	13	13	0	40		
	21.4	15.5	15.5	0.0	47.6	283	1.67
16	29	14	0	0	41		
	34.5	16.7	0.0	0.0	48.8	262	1.87
17	0	14	30	0	40		
	0.0	16.7	35.7	0.0	47.6	318	1.21

Source: (Field work, 2019)

Group mean: 317 Standard deviation greater than one

Table 6, measured the perceived roles TWL play in human capital development using seventeen itemed scale on a five-point Likert type scale. Eight items registered means above the group mean and also registered standard deviation less than one. They are:

i.   TWL domestically ensure the raising of children
ii.   Pay their children school fees
iii.   Ensure the good health of their children and family
iv.   Counsel young ones in marriage
v.   Organize cultural activities for the young ones to acquire traditional values
vi.   Assist in taking crucial decisions
vii.   Render traditional attendant health services to women
viii.   Preside over divorce cases, child welfare matters in their communities

Results generated generally indicated more significant roles played by traditional women leaders in HCD. Table 6, also confirms to some extent similar roles of TWL in HCD between women leaders in the South and North so far as SED is concern, that is to say the both ensure the payment of their children`s school fees and render vital counselling service to young ones. TWL and SED were also perceived as financing health bills of their kids. This is also confirmed as indicated in the women manifestoes that women finance the health bills of their wards. Could this situation mean the prevalence of single parents of single parents, arising from separation, death of spouse? Socially respondent perceived TWL as presiding or divorce and child welfare cases thus to save marriages of spouses, which mostly truncate responsible child raising or breeds deviant behaviours thus wasting precious human resources.

Again, traditional women leaders were perceived to render services to expectant mothers by assisting pregnant women who were due to deliver their babies birth and hence render nursing services and advising young mothers on child health care. They were also perceived to be organizing cultural activities to preserve and sustain their identities of their communities and thereby instil worthwhile cultural values. Politically respondents perceive TWL as active participants in their communities, thus, they see them as taking part in taking critical decisions in times of crisis.

On the question of impact of traditional women`s leaders' roles in human capital development. Table 7 discusses the finding.

Table 7: responds of respondents' perception by effects of the roles traditional women leaders play in human capital development

Effects of human capital development	Strongly Disagree N %	Disagree N %	Neutral N %	Agree N %	Strongly Agree N %	Total	Standard Deviation
1	56	10	13	3	2		
	66.7	11.9	15.5	3.6	2.4	137	1.02
2	68	5	8	3	0		
	81.0	6.0	9.5	3.6	0.0	114	.80
3	9	19	11	25	20		
	10.7	22.6	13.1	29.8	23.8	280	1.34
4	18	10	13	22	21		
	21.4	11.9	15.5	26.2	25.0	270	1.48
5	73	3	7	1	0		
	86.9	3.6	8.3	1.2	0.0	104	.64
6	14	23	7	30	10		
	16.7	27.4	8.3	35.7	11.9	251	1.33
7	16	26	40	2	0		
	19.0	31.0	47.6	2.4	0.0	196	.81
8	31	19	14	20	0		
	36.9	22.6	16.7	23.8	0.0	191	1.19
9	22	26	22	6	8		
	26.2	31.0	26.2	7.0	9.5	204	1.22
10	14	27	31	12	0		
	16.7	32.1	36.9	14.3	0.0	209	.93

Source: (Field work, 2019)

Group mean: 195.6 Standard deviation less than one

On Table 7, out of ten items in scale to measure respondents' perception on the effects or impacts of the roles of TWL, three items (3, 4 and 6) were perceived within the margins of group average of 220.00 and standard deviation above one. These were;

1. More parents sent their wards to school.
2. Communicable diseases arising from poor sanitary conditions are on the minimal.
3. Citizens prefer their locally made items than imported ones.

Unperceived effects of the roles of TWL in HCD such as; well-groomed citizens, in their positions, reduction in HIV/AIDS prevalence, springing up of small-scale manufacturers, minimization of early marriages, sense of patriotism, increased in standard of living and minimization of kayaye in HCD activities of TWL. On the face of our developmental efforts, the above are key issues that government is endeavouring to minimize in society as stated in MDA goals. This also may seem to support recent perception of discussants of Ghana`s inability to achieve the MDG'S in certain sectors. Really, the impact of HCD activities is on low profile as respondents have indicated more unperceived effects. Nonetheless, respondents have also indicated some minima effects of HCD activities of TWL thus indicating preference of locally produced items. These findings agree with, Abdul Hamid (2003), who espouses on

high value, high morality and ethics, which certainly includes preference for locally made products by citizens.

Findings also did not exclude improvement of sanitary conditions which minimizes communicable diseases. This may also be attributed to intense campaigns by health directorates towards the attainment of the MDG`s. Respondents also perceived more parents sending their wards to school. This could be a positive impact for respondents did on table, perceived TWL in establishing "Makarantas" alongside secular education.

5.0 CONCLUSION

On the whole, traditional women leaders were evaluated as active partners in human capital development in the Sissala East District (SED), since they asserted their roles expansively in human capital activities in the socio-economic transformation of the district. Despite this observation, their expansive activities in Human Capital Development (HCD), are yet to manifest desirable impact that would save the future human capital needs of the district. Human capital development by traditional women leaders in the Sissala East District are expansive and highly rudimentary and hence have minimal impact.

There is an appreciable level of awaken consciousness in the people as well as a potential patriotic feeling by human capital activities of traditional women. Low skill levels and low access to credit and other resources are real impediments to the HCD activities of TWL in SED. Right leadership behaviours are not adopted considering the situational theories hence, the less degree of the impact of the activities of human capital development activities of traditional women leaders in the district.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

   i.   Traditional women leaders' group should be encouraged to be interested in their activities. This will help them to be able to gain the needed recognition by other bodies in the area.

   ii.   Small scale boards of the District Assemblies must promote small scale producers who are in the indigenous industries to produce quality local products for the markets.

  iii.   The National Council for Women Development should liaise with leadership consultants to train women leadership in the various districts.

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