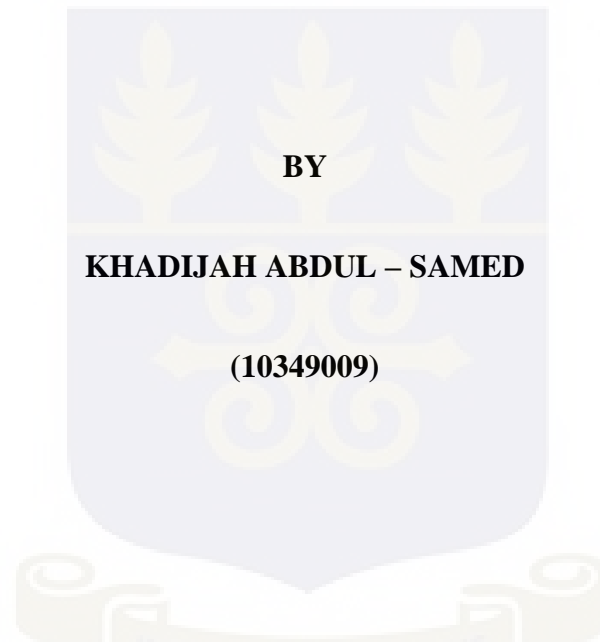


UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

**THE PARTICIPATION OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN ISLAMIC TELEVISION
PROGRAMMES IN GHANA**



**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MA
COMMUNICATION STUDIES DEGREE**

OCTOBER, 2017

DECLARATION

I declare that except for the works of other people that have been duly acknowledged, the work presented in this dissertation was done by me under the supervision of Professor Audrey Gadzekpo. This work has not been submitted either in part or whole to any other educational institution for the award of any degree or certificate.

Khadijah Abdul – Samed

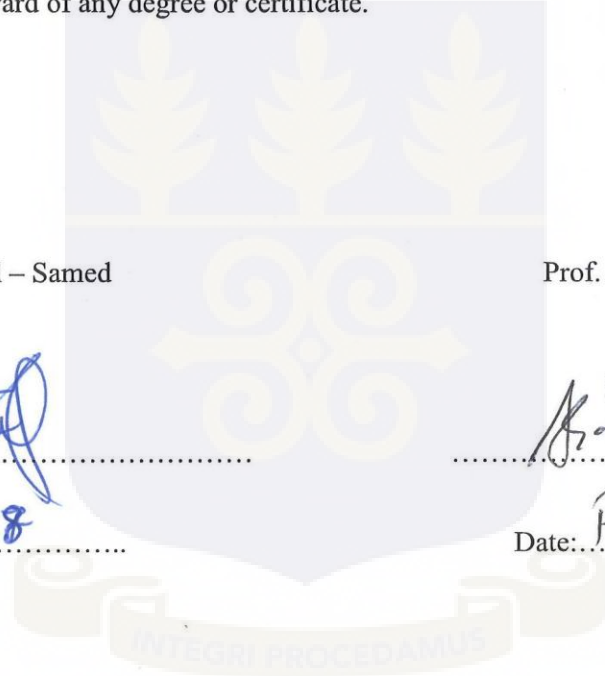
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Date: 09/02/18

Date: Feb 9, 2018



DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my late grandparents, Hajia Ramatu Iddrisu and most especially, Alhaji Muhammed Jagbo, whose unflinching desire was to see his first granddaughter complete her Masters programme and buy him a tractor. To the both of you, Allah has done it for us.



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I would like to say a special thank you to all hosts and producers of Islamic television programmes, particularly Alhaji Hamidu Chodi, a former show host of *Aqida* (now 'Islam and Life'), Hajj Adam Yunus of GTV's 'Islam and Life' and Mr. Abdul-Fateh of Guidance TV for choosing to share with me valuable information that helped me a great deal in completing this study. To all the Muslim women who voluntarily offered to share their insightful experiences with me, I pray Allah blesses you all abundantly.

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TABLE OF CONTENT

Declaration..... i

Dedication..... ii

Acknowledgements.....iii

Table of Contents.....iv

Abstract..... xi

CHAPTER ONE:.....1

INTRODUCTION1

1.1 Background to the Study..... 1

1.2 Political Economy of the Ghanaian Media.....3

1.3 Islamic Broadcasting in Ghana.....5

1.4 Women and the Public Sphere in Islam9

1.5 Women, Islam and the Media.....10

1.6 History of Muslim Women’s Agency in Ghana.....12

1.7 Muslim Women and Television in Ghana.....13

1.8 Problem Statement.....14

1.9 Objectives of the Study.....15

1.10 Research Questions.....	15
1.11 Significance of the Study.....	16
1.12. Organisation of the Study.....	16
1.13 Operational Definitions.....	16
CHAPTER TWO:	18
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW.....	18
2.0 Introduction	18
2.1 Theoretical Framework.....	18
2.1.1 Muted Group Theory.....	18
2.1.2 Standpoint Theory.....	20
2.1.3 Islamic Model of Communication	22
2.2 Related Literature.....	23
2.2.1 Muslim Women’s Participation in the Media.....	23
2.2.2 Muslim Women and Agency.....	26

CHAPTER THREE.....	29
METHODOLOGY.....	29
3.0 Introduction.....	29
3.1 Methodological Approach	29
3.2. Population.....	30
3.3. Sampling.....	30
3.4. Data Collection Procedure.....	31
3.5. Research Instrument.....	32
3.6 Data Analysis.....	32
CHAPTER FOUR.....	33
PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS	33
4.0 Introduction.....	33
4.1 Findings.....	33
4.2 Motivation for Muslim women participation in Islamic television programmes.....	35
4.2.1 A sense of Religious obligation.....	35
4.2.2 Realisation that Muslim Women’s voices are missing in Public discourse.....	37
4.2.3 Individual Agency	39
4.3 Issues Muslim women discuss on Islamic television programmes.....	40

4.3.1 Politics and Leadership.....	41
4.3.2 Women Empowerment and Education.....	43
4.3.3 Health.....	44
4.3.4 Religious.....	44
4.4 Advantages Muslim women gain by participating in Islamic television programmes.....	44
4.4.1 Challenge stereotypical views about Muslim women.....	45
4.4.2 Platform to promote their agenda.....	46
4.4.3 Role modelling.....	47
4.5 Challenges Muslim women face by participating in Islamic television programmes.....	48
4.5.1 Poor sponsorship of Islamic television programmes.....	49
4.5.2 Criticism of appearance.....	50
4.5.3 Having an Unsupportive husband.....	53
4.5.4 Limited spaces for Participation.....	55
4.5.5 Inadequate Time.....	57
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	59
5.0 Introduction.....	59
5.1 Discussion of Findings.....	59
5.1 .1 (RQ1) What motivates Muslim women to participate in Islamic Television programmes?	60
5.1.2 (RQ2) What main issues do Muslim women discuss on Islamic television programmes?.....	61

5.1.3 (RQ3) What advantages do Muslim women gain when they participate in Islamic television programmes?.....	63
5.1.4 (RQ4) What challenges do Muslim women face when they participate in Islamic television programmes?.....	63
5.2 Conclusions.....	65
5.3 Limitations.....	66
5.4 Recommendations.....	66
BIBLIOGRAPHY	67
APPENDIX	
Appendix 1 Respondent Consent Form.....	73
Appendix 2 Key Informant Interview Guide.....	74
LIST OF TABLES	
Table 1. Average share of TV audience in Greater Accra during the day (Quarter 2, 2017.....	9
Table 2. Profiling of Respondents	34

ABSTRACT

Islamic television programmes are avenues used by Muslims to counter misrepresentations of Islam. In Ghana, Islamic television programming has been significant in contributing to the enhancement of the image of Islam and Muslim women (Samwini, 2006). The liberalization of the airwaves in 1995 led to the proliferation of Islamic television programmes in Ghana, thereby increasing avenues which can be used by Muslims to present a true image of Islam. This study sought to examine how Muslim women in Ghana are taking advantage of the availability of Islamic television programmes to present their perspectives concerning issues in Islam. The study was specifically interested in finding out the motivation behind Muslim women appearing on Islamic television programmes, issues they discuss when they appear and the opportunities and challenges they encounter as a result of appearing on such programmes. In-depth interviews were conducted with 12 Muslim women who appear either as guests, hosts or serve as producers of Islamic television programmes that air in Ghana, specifically in Accra. The findings revealed that Muslim women who appear on Islamic television programmes tend to use such platforms as avenues to challenge and introduce new perspectives on discussions concerning the Muslim woman. It also revealed that poor sponsorship of Islamic programmes, criticisms of their appearance and having an unsupportive husband pose a threat to Muslim women participation in Islamic television programmes.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter begins with the background of the study and information relevant to what the study sought to achieve. The chapter also presents the research problem, objectives of the study, the significance of the study and a summary of how the study has been organised. The chapter ends with the operational definitions used in the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

The September 11 attacks in the United States (US), the actions of terrorists groups claiming to be Muslims such as Islamic State (ISIS), Al-Qaida, Boko Haram and Al-Shabab, together with the misrepresentation of Muslim women have continuously made it difficult for Muslims and non-Muslims to understand the true teachings of Islam. According to Darvishpour (2003), Muslim women are usually portrayed as submissive, oppressed, and backward. These representations, which Darvishpour (2003) attributes to the role the mass media has played in perpetuating, has made attitudes towards Muslims harsher in recent years.

Islamic television programmes are avenues used by Muslims to counter such representations of Islam especially in relation to women. “Sisters AM”, a programme that airs on the UK-based satellite channel Islam Channel is an example of an Islamic programme dedicated to discussing issues that affect Muslim women and to challenge and provide alternative views on the status of women in Islam. Islamic television programmes are also used to project the true teachings of Islam to both Muslims and non-Muslims and provide content that is “Muslim –friendly”.

According to Galal (2009), Islamic TV programming is ‘programming that embeds a specifically Islamic perspective on life and promotes a pious religious life-style as part of “Islamic identity politics” ’(p. 55). This means that such programmes may not necessarily be religious in nature, but that discussions are contextualised within Islamic principles. Discussions may therefore range from issues of health, education, politics, gender relations, marriage and other social issues. The use of “Islamic communication” is key when it comes to Islamic television programming. According to Muhammed Kamal al-Din (1984:2120), “Islamic communication is the act of transmitting *ma'lumat* (information, ideas and attitudes) which are true and accurate according to Islam.” Islam Channel, a UK-based Islamic-focused satellite channel, Peace TV, a United Arab Emirates based Islamic satellite television channel owned by Islamic televangelist, Dr. Zakir Naik and Guidance Television, a satellite Islamic television channel in Accra are examples of television channels that produce Islamic television programmes.

Sætren (2010), who refers to Islamic television programming as “preaching spaces” categorises it in to three forms. The first form of preaching spaces is the type of channels that advocate pluralism, openness towards the world, are business oriented and are more receptive to having female presenters appear on screen. Ghanaian based satellite television channel Guidance Television and UK based satellite television channel Islam Channel are examples of such channels. The second forms of preaching spaces are more conservative. They tend to advocate a particular Islamic ideology; most often *Salafism* and are very particular about importing television programme formats from the West. These channels are usually not receptive to having female preachers appear on screen. A classic example of such television channels is *Al Nas*, a television station in Egypt which does not permit female presenters on screen, even if they wear a face veil (Religious Broadcasting in the Middle East, 2010). The connection though, between

the first form and the second form of preaching spaces is that both ensure their content does not conflict with Islamic teachings. The third form of preaching space, which is more prevalent in Ghana, is the type of preaching space available on channels that are not Islam - oriented and thus such channels are more likely to broadcast content that contradict Islamic teachings. This relates especially to public as well as commercial television channels that seek to serve a diverse audience and not necessarily promote an Islamic agenda.

1.2 Political Economy of the Ghanaian Media

The return to democratic rule after years of authoritarian rule has had a positive impact on the growth of the Ghanaian media (Ninson, 1998). Liberalization and commercialization of the media, which resulted from the return to democratic rule also opened the space for religious broadcasting in Ghana, as it incapacitated the state from fully controlling religion and media and thus, the politics of representation (Meyer, 1998; 2006). Currently, the Ghanaian media is a big industry with a lot of privately owned electronic and print media functioning side by side with the state owned media (Mukhongo, 2016). Media ownership and management is largely male dominated, with only two female owners out of 25 monitored media companies (Media Ownership Monitor, Ghana Report, 2017). Audience concentration exists in the print and broadcasting (television) sector. Graphic Communications Group Limited, New Times Corporation (both of which are state-owned), Western Publications Limited and The Business and Financial Times Limited (both of which are privately owned) dominate the print sector. Multimedia Group Limited, Despite Group of Companies, Media General Ghana Limited (all of which are privately owned), and Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (state-owned) dominate the broadcasting (television) sector and have a considerable market position by operating several nationwide outlets (Media Ownership Monitor, Ghana Report, 2017). Ownership of the private

media in particular is majorly by politicians who seek to use them to push their party interests (Gadzekpo, 2008, Hasty, 2005).

Even though the broadcasting rules of Ghana do not permit the operation of religious broadcasting outlets for the sole reason of preserving diversity of religious media content, some private media outlets are owned by religious individuals. These individuals use such media outlets to project their religious ideologies. Examples of such media outlets are Guidance Television (an Islamic satellite based channel sponsored by an Islamic non-governmental organisation), Sunny FM (a Christian radio station), Sweet Melodies FM (a Christian radio station) and Healing Jesus TV (a Christian satellite based channel owned by Ghanaian Evangelist Dag Heward Mills). However according to De Witte (2008), Charismatic churches dominate the airwaves as they appear to have the financial resources to develop their own programmes and pay for airtime on radio and television. Because both private and state owned media outlets rely on advertising and sales revenue, Charismatic Churches in Ghana have enjoyed the 'monopoly' of religious broadcasting over Islamic and African traditional religious media content. Muslims on the other hand have not been able to compete in this regard. According to the Managing Director of Guidance Television, many Ghanaian Muslims seem not to have understood the importance of the media in propagating Islam and are thus reluctant to sponsor Islamic media content due to their belief that access to God's word should be *feesabeelil'lah* (free and easily accessible) (A.R. Toure, personal communication, June 14, 2017). Most Islamic television programmes airing on channels are slots that have been given out of the benevolence of the channel owners. This makes it easy for the programmes to be lost to when a client is ready to pay to have that slot (S. Ibrahim, personal communication, July 23, 2017). Commercialisation of the media has thus affected the diversity of religious content in Ghana (De Witte, 2008).

1.3 Islamic broadcasting in Ghana

Before the advent of television broadcasting, radio has been very influential in promoting Islamic teachings in Ghana. Prior to the advent of television, Radio ZOY, a wired relay station in Ghana was established in 1935 by Sir Arnold Hodson to relay programmes from the BBC (GBC 75th Anniversary Publication, 2010). In 1943, the Religious Broadcasts Department was set up under Radio ZOY, on which Islamic programmes such as “The Koran” and ‘Muslim Worship’ were broadcasted (GBC Golden Jubilee Publication, 1990). After Ghana gained independence in 1957, Radio ZOY became the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC). Two radio services were introduced under GBC: GBC Radio 1, which transmitted local language programmes and GBC Radio 2, which transmitted in English. Local language programmes, particularly Hausa and Dagbanli programmes that aired on GBC Radio 1 were known to have been used as avenues to promote Islamic teachings (Samwini, 2006). Those programmes now air on GBC Radio 2 (now Uniiq FM), after GBC Radio 1 went out of service due to the breakdown of its transmitters (GBC 75th Anniversary Publication, 2010). Uniiq FM has been airing Islamic programmes every Friday at dawn since independence till date (Samwini, 2006). As GBC opened radio stations across the country, more avenues became available for the propagation of Islam.

In 1965, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation Television (GBC-TV) was established. However, it was not until 1985 that Islamic television programming began with the introduction of a weekly magazine television programme called *Aqida*, which translates as ‘The Muslim Creed’ (Samwini, 2006). A former host of the programme mentioned that though the programme still airs, it was re-named to ‘Islam and Life’ after the September 11 attacks because some viewers were beginning to link the title of the programme to the terrorist group *Al-Qaida* (H. Chodi, personal communication, July 23, 2017). As is with many Islamic programmes, ‘Islam and Life’

has the basic objective of explaining what Islam is and dealing with social issues from an Islamic perspective. Issues such as Hajj, Islam and polygyny, as well as religious tolerance issues, are some of the issues that are discussed on the programme.

Media liberalization of the airwaves in 1995 opened up more opportunities for Islamic programming. In 1999, Metropolitan Television, a private television station introduced an Islamic programme called 'Islamic Perspectives' (Samwini, 2006). The current producer of the programme mentions that the programme is still on air, but now under the name "Islamic Belt" (S. Ibrahim, personal communication, August 28, 2017). Since then, the number of media houses, particularly television, has increased. According to the National Communications Authority (NCA), as at the fourth quarter of 2016, there were 93 authorized TV operators in Ghana (<https://nca.org.gh/industry-data-2/authorisations-2/tv-authorisation-2/>). Some of these television operators air Islamic programmes on their channels in order to appeal to the Ghanaian Muslim community, who according to the 2010 population census make up about 17.6 percent of the total population of Ghana.

Most of the television channels that air Islamic television programmes are located in Accra. Currently, there are 11 television channels in Accra that air Islamic television programmes. Four out of the 11 television channels are free to air. These stations are Ghana Television (GTV), Metropolitan Television (Metro Television), Network 2 Television (NET 2), and TV3. The rest of the eleven television stations are satellite based television channels. They are GTV Life, Amasaman Television (ATV), Faith TV, Cine Plus, Guidance Television, Muslim Television Ahmadiyya (MTA) and Kantanka Television (KTV). However, only six of the stations are consistent in the airing of Islamic television programmes: MTA, KTV, GTV, Metro TV, Cine Plus and Guidance Television. This is primarily due to lack of sponsorship of Islamic television

programmes. For example, *As Siraj* (The Path), an Islamic television programme on NET 2 Television does not air regularly due to lack of sponsorship. The same can be said for Faith TV's *Al Mu'raa* (The Women) and two of ATV's Islamic television programmes, *Irshad* (Guidance) and *As Sahawah* (The Awakening).

Guidance Television and Muslim Television Ahmadiyya are the only television channels that run programmes from an Islamic perspective, thus falling under the first category of preaching spaces acknowledged by Saetran (2010). Apart from Guidance Television and Muslim Television Ahmadiyya (MTA), other un-Islamic television channels provide a specific time within their programme schedule for the airing of Islamic programmes. Most of the un-Islamic channels choose to air Islamic programmes on Friday since it is the day Muslims attend *Jumuah* (the weekly congregational prayer). Islamic television programmes usually air in either English or most popularly, in Hausa and Twi.

Nonetheless, the availability of Islamic television programmes provides the opportunity for Muslim women in Ghana to gain access to more avenues that can help them contribute to the discourse regarding Muslim women in Islam.

Viewership ratings of Islamic Television Programmes

Viewership ratings of Islamic television programmes in Ghana are not readily available, as there are no records of such information kept by channels. However, most Islamic TV producers and hosts estimate viewership based on the time of the year Muslims are most likely to view Islamic programmes, the reach of the channel and the geographical location of contributors to the programme. Viewership of Islamic television programmes are usually high during the *Ramadhaan* (Month of the Muslim fast) period, *Eid* days (Muslim festive days) and the *Hajj*

(Major Pilgrimage) periods. For example, the Islamic Programmes Department of Faith TV introduced an Islamic television programme called ‘The *Ramadhaan* Show’ which ran specifically for the *Ramadhaan* period of 2017 (M. Lawan, personal communication, August 15, 2017). It is usually during these periods that both Muslims and non-Muslims seek answers to questions pertaining to the season at hand (S. Ibrahim, personal communication, July 23, 2017). The Head of the Islamic Programmes Department at Faith TV also indicates that occasional events such as the visit of a renowned Islamic Preacher to the country also increases viewership (M. Lawan, personal communication, August 15, 2017).

However, from statistics available from the Geopoll Media Measurement on audience share of television stations in the Greater Accra Region, for the first and fourth quarters of 2016, as well as the second quarter of 2017, only one out of the 11 television channels that currently air Islamic television programmes (GTV) appears to have significant levels of viewership. Table 1 shows the latest audience measurement of TV Viewership of TV stations in the Greater Accra Region by the Geopoll Media Measurement across the day during the second quarter (Q2) of 2017 (next page).

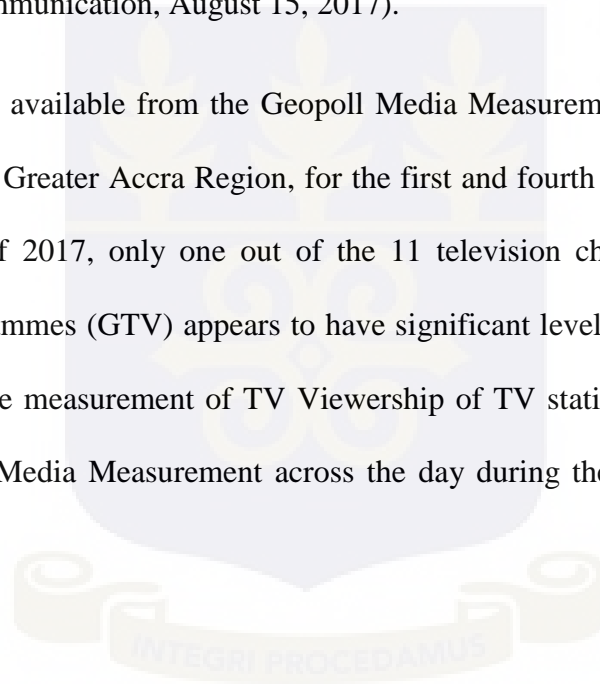


Table 1. Average share of TV audience in Greater Accra during the day (Quarter 2, 2017)

Q2, 2017 TV Audience Share _ Greater Accra Ghana	
Station	Share
UTV	18.8%
TV3	12.4%
Adom TV	10.6%
GTV	8.2%
Gh One	6.6%
TV XYZ	6.2%
Joy Prime	5.9%
Joy News	3.6%
Light TV	3.2%
Kwese Free Sports (KFS) / Viasat 1	3.1%
Other	21.4%

(Source: Geopoll Media Measurement. (2017), Ghana Quarter 2 Radio & TV Audience Ratings)

1.4 Women and the Public Sphere in Islam

The extent to which Muslim women participate in the media ties in closely with the discourse concerning the rights and duties of the woman in the public and private sphere. This discussion in itself has been quite controversial due to the differences of opinion regarding the issue (Orakzai, 2014). Some classical jurists and contemporary traditional jurists have used certain *Qur'anic* verses to justify inequality between sexes and superiority of men over women in the private (domestic) as well as the public sphere (Wadud, 1999). Other notable traditional Islamic scholars such as Mohammed Al Ghazali and Yusuf Al-Qardawi have encouraged the participation of women in the world of politics and work (Sidani, 2005). In addition, the juristic view that the voice of the woman is her *awrah* (not supposed to be heard in public) has been used to control women's participation in the public sphere (Ammah, 2015). In response to

opinions that limit the woman's role to the private sphere, Safi (2000) and Wadud (1999) maintain that there is no specific separation of the private (domestic) sphere and private sphere in Islam. Safi (2000) and Wadud (1999) argue that both men and women have been tasked with the responsibility of contributing to the development of society, of which both spheres are a subset. Thus, interpretations of Islamic texts that portray women as insignificant to promoting that course should be seen as misinterpretations of Islamic texts and not a ruling in Islam. These contrasting opinions have had implications for Muslim women's participation in the public sphere, which according to Habermas (1989) includes the media. For instance, whereas some media organisations such as 'Radio Islam' in its beginnings did not allow females to appear as presenters on the basis that Islam did not permit women to participate in public spaces (Haroon, 2010), other Islamic media organisations, such as Islam Channel (UK), Guidance Television (Ghana) and Muslim Television Ahmaddiya (Ghana) have engaged females as presenters of programmes that target Muslim women and the Muslim community at large. In the midst of the differences of opinion, Muslim women scholars and activists have resorted to re-reading of Islamic texts for themselves. Through this, Muslim women are able to determine their role in the public sphere (media) based on their own understanding of Islamic texts. According to Ammah (2013), this endeavour was responsible for the awakening of educated Ghanaian Muslim women on their obligation to contribute to the propagation of Islam and the development of society.

1.5 Women, Islam and the Media

Historically, the Western media have projected Muslim women as uneducated, oppressed, and women who need to be saved from oppressive men (Ayotte and Husain, 2005; Bilge, 2010; Cloud, 2004). Portrayals of women in the Middle Eastern media as being illiterate, of limited intellectual capability, weak and submissive housewives or inexperienced have helped to validate

such misrepresentations (Allam 2008; Rahbani, 2010). According to Rahman (2012), researches have shown that images of Muslim women projected by the Western media have been based on distortions and stereotypes which falsely represent the actual experience of Muslim women in the society. The use of such false representations have often been traced to orientalist who have used such images to establish the European culture as being superior and civilised to the 'Orient' culture (Said, 1977). Popular of such representations has been the portrayal of the *hijab* (veil) and *burqa* (long over-covering garment) as signs of oppression and a threat to liberal democracy and human rights (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Ayotte and Hussain, 2005; Pichette, 2011). The September 11 attacks further fueled negative Western media representations of Middle Eastern Muslim women who wore the veil and *burqa*, as they were often framed as insecure 'others' who needed to be saved from the Taliban (Fahmy, 2004; Falah, 2005). These increased representations of Muslim women have had implications for Muslim women's agency. According to Carlands (2011), many discussions spend more time putting Muslim women in the position of explaining issues on the veil, *burqa*, or a woman's right to wear them, which only helps maintain the Western media's image of Muslim women as being oppressed by a garment. Abu-Lughod (2002) argues that such framing of discussions treats Muslim women as a monolithic group and indirectly silences dissenting views of Muslim women who for instance, see the veil or *burqa* as a liberating garment. This produces content that fails to explore other significant dimensions relevant to the discussion. Closely related to this point is the argument by Mohanty (1984) that Western feminist discourse, by assuming women as a homogenous group which is placed in kinship, legal and other structures, defines third world women as subjects outside of social relations, instead of looking at the way women are constituted as women through these very structures. According to Mohanty (1984), this limits theoretical analysis as

well as reinforces Western cultural imperialism. These concerns tend to buttress the view that the narratives of Muslim women that maintain the image of Muslim women by the Western media are given more attention than narratives that contrast the Western media's images of Muslim women. Bilge (2010) for instance asserts that during the French headscarf debates, more media attention was given to French Muslim women who opposed the veil as compared to those who wore the veil because veiled women were seen to lack agency. Equally, (Dastgeer and Gade, 2016) observed that the usual visual frames of Muslim women as passive victims by Western media had shifted to portraying Muslim women as active participants during the Arab Spring because the women were acting to create social change that aligned with Western ideologies. Less focus was put on issues of the veil. In these cases, the Muslim woman is being 'spoken for' by the Western media, thus limiting the Muslim woman's agency. The misrepresentation and 'erasure' that Muslim women experience from the Western media highlights the key points Tuchman (1978) makes on the concept of 'Symbolic Annihilation of Women in the Media'. Tuchman (1978) argues that the stereotypical ways in which the media portrays women can render them invisible, thus socially disempowering them and erasing them from popular communication.

1.6 History of Muslim Women's Agency in Ghana

The lack of secular education and ignorance about Islam by Ghanaian Muslims has had dire consequences for women in both the private and public sphere (Sulemanu, 2002). Equally, the mixing of Islam with cultural elements further complicates the extent to which Muslim women participate in leadership and decision-making (Ammah, 2013). During the days of colonial rule, Muslim women were marginalised from leadership activities and propagating the message of Islam with the belief that such activities were the domain of men. When secular education was

introduced by Christian missionaries, many Muslims did not send their children to school for fear that their children would be converted. For the Muslim woman, focus was put on training her to perform domestic roles and engage in petty trading rather than sending her to school. Pellow (1987) asserts that it was as a result of the traditional exclusion of Muslim women from the 'world of men' that Muslim women began to form groups to support each other. Early of such groups was *Zumunci*, formed in 1968 (Pellow, 1987). However, in the early 1990's, Muslim women groups with the sole aim of empowering the Muslim women through education in both secular and religious knowledge began to emerge (Sulemanu, 2015). This is attributed to the conscious effort Muslim women made to understand the principles of Islam for themselves, together with the increase in their educational level (Ammah, 2013). The official inauguration of the Federation of Muslim Women of Ghana (FOMWAG) in 1997 then served the purpose of bringing all Muslim women groups under one umbrella so they could have a united voice and gain recognition in society (Weiss, 2002). Through the group, Muslim women have been able to take advantage of media spaces to educate their fellow Muslim women on their status in Islam and their role in developing society. They have also been able to secure representation on the Hajj Board in Ghana to oversee the organisation of Hajj in Ghana (Ammah 2015; Sulemanu, 2015).

1.7 Muslim Women and Television in Ghana

In Ghana, Muslim Women began appearing on Islamic television programmes through *Aqida* on GBC. This was not without the challenge of their appearance being met with apprehension from some Muslim male scholars (H. Chodi, personal communication, July 23, 2017). *Aqida* in particular is known to have been used as an avenue by the Federation of Muslim Women of Ghana (FOMWAG) to enhance the image of Muslim women. According to Samwini (2006), it

was influential in promoting the activities of Muslim women in Ghana, as it usually featured representations of Muslim women organisations. *Aqida* was therefore very significant in providing Muslim women the platform to voice their opinions on issues until the media was liberalized in 1995. Later in 1999 when Metropolitan Television was established, an Islamic programme targeting Muslim women called *An Nisa* (The Women) was developed. Ammah (2013) mentions how the programme when introduced allowed Muslim women to discuss issues related to them from an Islamic perspective and how it also contributed effectively to shaping the Muslim woman in knowing her roles and responsibilities, as well as enhancing the image of the Muslim women nationally and internationally.

Muslim women groups have served as a pool from which producers of Islamic television programmes contact suitable guests (H. Chodi, personal communication, July 23, 2017). Muslim women's groups such as the *Lajna Imaillah* (Maidens of Allah) and Federation of Muslim Women of Ghana (FOMWAG) are examples of women's groups that were and are still being featured on Islamic television programmes in Ghana.

1.8 Problem Statement

Religious authority in both historical and contemporary Islam has generally been held by men. There are a few notable exceptions to this trend (Abou-Bakr, 2003; Kalmbach, 2008; Hassan, 2011; Bano and Kalm-back, 2012), but by and large, men have taken up the role of religious authorities in the various Muslim communities. Islamic scholars, usually referred to as *ulamas* differ in their views about the woman and whether she should be allowed to participate in public activities such as the media and politics. For instance, whilst traditional *ulamas* are against women's engagement in public activities because it is seen as the 'male's sphere', modernist

ulamas hold that women should be encouraged to engage in political and labour participation where a certain amount of mixing between the genders should be expected and accepted (Sidani, 2005). Based on the perspective held by modernist *ulamas*, Muslim women are increasingly able to engage in public activities such as appearing in the media, specifically on Islamic television programmes. However, there is little information available on how Muslim women in Africa, particularly Ghana, are taking advantage of the proliferation of Islamic television programmes to contribute their perspectives to religious discourse in the Ghanaian context. It is based on this that the study sought to examine Muslim women participation in Islamic television programmes in Ghana.

1.9 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to examine Muslim women's participation in Islamic television programmes in Ghana. The study was specifically focused on identifying the motivation behind their participation, the issues they discuss and the opportunities and challenges that come with their participating in Islamic television programmes.

1.10 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What motivates Muslim women to participate in Islamic television programmes?
2. What main issues do Muslim women discuss on Islamic television programmes?
3. What advantages do Muslim women gain when they participate in Islamic television programmes?

4. What challenges do Muslim women encounter when they participate in Islamic television programmes?

1.11 Significance of the Study

This study primarily contributes to existing literature available on the participation of Muslim women in the media, particularly television. It also provides more opportunities for further research related to understanding how Muslim women in Africa are taking advantage of Islamic media programmes. Finally, it serves as a document that can be used to inform policy for Muslims as well as media operators on the participation of Muslim women in the media.

1.12 Organisation of study

This work is organised into five chapters. Chapter one contains the introduction to the study, the statement of problem, research questions and objectives, as well as the significance of the study. Chapter two contains the theoretical framework underpinning the study, as well as a review of studies related to the study. Chapter three contains the methodological framework that guided the study. Chapter four contains the presentation of the findings and Chapter five contains the discussions of the findings, conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

1.13 Operational Definitions

For the purpose of the study, the following terms have been operationally defined;

Dawah: An Islamic terminology that refers propagating the message of Islam.

Feesabilillah: Engaging in an activity with no expectation of monetary reward but for the pleasure of *Allah*.

Jihad: An Islamic terminology that refers to the effort an individual exerts in the course of obeying *Allah* (God).

PBUH: An acronym that stands for ‘Peace be upon him’. This is attached to the name of the Prophet Muhammed whenever mentioned by Muslims as a form of respect.



CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks that underpinned this study, as well a review of literature related to the study that has been done in some parts of Africa and the West. The theoretical frameworks used for the study are the Muted group theory, the Standpoint theory and the Islamic Model of Communication.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Muted Group Theory

The muted group theory was first discussed by Edwin Ardner and Shirley Ardener in 1975. The theory was later explored by feminist Charis Kramarae. According to Kramarae, “The language of a particular culture does not serve all its speakers equally, for not all speakers contribute in an equal fashion to its formation. Women and members of subordinate groups are not free or able to as men to say what they wish, when and where they wish, because words and norms for their use have been formulated by the dominant group, men” (Griffin and Ledbetter, 2006, p.487). Based on the pre-position that language is a “man-made construction”, the muted group theory looks at how the dominant groups in society control language, such that subordinate groups are not able to express themselves freely because their experiences have not been captured in the language constructed. Throughout history, men have been predominantly holders of power therefore language has been constructed by men and for men. Men are seen as the gatekeepers of language and thus, the language construction is from a male perspective. It argues that if men have predominantly been bearers of power, then the language was constructed for men. Thus, should

women speak, their intellect is challenged by the men because their perspectives do not align with the very interpretations in which their perspectives were excluded. The problems with man-made language according to the theory, is that because of the exclusion of the experiences of marginalized groups, it makes marginalised groups invisible, and puts men in privileged positions. This reflects clearly in Islamic feminist Fatima Mernissi's view that the fact that interpretations of Islamic texts have been male-dominated, women's experiences and views have been viewed from male perspectives, thus automatically muting the Muslim woman (1999). It does not necessarily mean the women will not be able to talk, but their not being able to express themselves freely and have to use the dominant group communication terms is an indirect way of muting them. Kramarae (2005) also mentions how women compared to their male counterparts, have to be more mindful of how they speak, and appear, as they are more likely to be judged. Men have the luxury to be direct, whilst women have to try not to be direct and choose their words carefully.

A critique of the theory comes from Deborah Tannen, the propounder of the Genderlect theory. Tannen criticizes feminists scholars like Kramarae for assuming that men are trying to control women. Tannen (1990) rather believes that men and women have different ways of communicating which can sometimes lead to imbalances of power which was not intended. Tannen warns readers that "bad feelings and imputation of bad motives or bad character can come about when there was no intention to dominate, to wield power" (Tannen, 2005, p 464). However, the muted the theory has helped shake up traditional patterns of communication between men and women (Griffin, 2009).

Situating the Muted group theory in the context of the Ghanaian Muslim woman, it is observed that Muslim women in Ghana who have tried to contribute their perspectives to Islamic public

discourse have been looked down on. For instance, Ammah (2015) mentions how some Ghanaian male scholars did not regard Muslim women as people who have the authority to be in the public sphere, talk little of appearing on television where they will be seen and their voices heard. However, Shaikh (2013) observes that Muslim women who gain higher levels of education tend to be more aware of their missing voices in the Islamic public discourse. Thus some Ghanaian Muslim women who have gained formal education learn to read Islamic texts for themselves so that they can use such knowledge to contribute to issues in the Islamic public discourse. Such women consider Islamic television programmes as one of the avenues they can use to present their perspectives on issues (Ammah, 2015). Using the preceding as a background, this theory is relevant to the study as it will help to find out whether Muslim women who appear on Islamic television programmes are able to express their perspectives freely or whether they reinforce the perspectives of male scholars.

2.1.2 Standpoint Theory

The Standpoint theory which derives its concept from Karl Marx's "exegesis of class relations in capitalism" was re-developed by feminist thinkers Dorothy Smith, Sandra Harding, and Nancy Hartsock in the 1980's. The theory analyses how patriarchy makes male and female divisions and women being subordinate to men as natural. Wood (2005) indicates that a core tenet of the theory is that the social position of men and women affect their perspectives and knowledge. Because culture is not experienced identically by all its members due to inequality, people in privileged positions are likely to have been exposed to different experiences that makes them see the world from different perspectives as compared to subordinate groups. Based on this, the theory argues that scholarly inquiry should start from the lives of subordinate groups, than privileged groups, as the perspectives of the less powerful tend to provide a better view of the

world than the privileged. Studies on Black Feminism have fed into the Standpoint theory to understand the multiple experiences of Black women in America and the dynamics of Black feminist movements. For instance, Hooks (1984) asserts that the marginality experienced by black women puts them in a better position to criticise the dominant hegemony of racism and all other forms of discrimination. Collins (1986) advances the view of Hooks (1984) with the argument that the experiences of slavery and racism faced by African American women gave them a better understanding of their marginalised position and how white societies oppressed them. Since historically, women have had to deal with marginalisation, Harding (1993) believes that “starting off research from women’s lives will generate less partial and distorted accounts not only of women but also for men’s lives and the whole social order” (p. 56). Though the theory provides another way of looking at how different social positions and experiences can affect various social groups, the theory has been critiqued for generalising all women as a distinct group. Heckman (1997) and Gill (1998) have argued that although the standpoint theory has been helpful in reclaiming women's experiences as suitable research topics, it contains a problematic emphasis on the universality of this experience, at the expense of differences among women's experiences. The theory has also been critiqued for presenting the marginalised as less biased than the privileged (Griffin, 2009).

Feeding from the Standpoint theory, Muslim women in Ghana encounter experiences which affect their status in society. According to Sulemanu (2015), historical circumstances of Muslims in Ghana greatly marginalised Muslim women and placed them in a lower position compared to their male counterparts. Muslim men have had access to opportunities that make them appear powerful than Muslim women. As pointed out by Ammah (2013), leadership institutions that claim to speak on behalf of Muslims in Ghana have all been the preserve of men and without the

active participation of women. As this theory argues that inquiry should begin from the marginalised group, the theory will serve as a foundation to examine what perspectives Muslim women bring to the Islamic public discourse which can be used to understand how Muslim women contribute to Islamic television programmes.

2.1.3 Islamic Model of Communication

According to Muhammed Kamal al Din (1984:2120), “Islamic communication is the act of transmitting *ma'lumat* (information, ideas and attitudes) which are true and accurate according to Islam.” Thus, the primary characteristic of Islamic television content is that it must be in line with Islamic teachings and principles. The Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH), known as *hadiths* are the two basic determinants of what can be considered as right content or inappropriate content. Islamic communication revolves around *Tawhid* (monotheism) which is the belief in the oneness of God. Kanakerl and Zulkiple (2015) mention objectivity, comprehensiveness, moderation and utilization of Islamic distinctive features as key characteristics of Islamic television content.

In the course of appealing to Muslims to engage in an action, Muslim speakers tend to use Islamic communication to enhance the acceptability of their message. For example, Ahmad, Harrison and Davies (2009) observed that the use of the key tenets of Islamic communication to encourage Muslims to engage in healthy health practices had a strong effect in promoting health communication in Malaysian Muslim societies. Ammah (2015) equally makes reference to how Ghanaian female preachers would refer to teachings of Islam to justify the important role Muslim women play in building the Muslim society.

2.2 Related Literature

Literature related to the study was reviewed in accordance with the objectives of the study.

2.2.1 Muslim Women's Participation in the Media

Alidou (2013) conducted two case studies on a Muslim Women's Magazine titled "*An Nur*" (The Light) produced in Nairobi and a Women's Radio programme called "*Ukumbi Wa Mamama*" (Women's Forum) aired in Mombasa. The aim of her study was to find out how Muslim women in Kenya have taken advantage of the media to advance religious and socio-political issues on behalf of Muslim women in particular and the Kenyan Muslim community at large. Alidou (2013) found that the Muslim women activists used the media as avenues to challenge prevailing orthodoxies that have defined relations between men and women in Muslim communities. She also found they used it to address the rights of Kenyan Muslim women within the Muslim community and the nation at large.

Carlands (2012) conducted in-depth interviews with five Australian Muslim women who appear in the Australian media as commentators. Her aim was to find out how Muslim women commentators are received by the Muslim and wider Australian communities and the women's motivations for appearing in the media. Carlands' (2012) findings revealed that the Muslim women appeared in the media to either challenge stereotypes of Muslim women or to counter some of the comments made by male Muslim commentators. She also found

t h a t though the Muslim women commentators were being received positively by a section of the Australian community, they were received negatively by some audiences either through personal threats, criticism of their appearance and only being invited to discuss certain topics. Carlands (2012) described that observation as a way of ‘silencing’ the Muslim women.

Bostan (2011) conducted interviews with Muslim women in Malaysia and Indonesia composed of career women, feminist activists, managers and workers of NGOs who worked in the field of women’s development. The objective of her research was to find out the role of women’s leadership development and the different strategies being used to empower and advance the position of Muslim women in Malaysia and Indonesia. Bostan’s research revealed that the Muslim women in the Malaysian and Indonesian media were portrayed in a very positive light, which the researcher attributed to the fact that the positions of editors and journalists was held by Muslim women who had enough influence to send out positive images of Muslim women.

Also, Rabinovich (2013) conducted a discourse analysis of a television programme hosted by Syrian based female Islamic televangelist Rufayda al-Habash. The objective of her study was to examine how female Muslim preachers use media to extend their religious authority and to discuss issues concerning Muslim women. Rabinovich (2013) found that in the discourses of Rufayda al-Habash, there was usually the attempt made by Rufayda to provide empowering discourse on the Muslim women that sometimes challenge conservative positions held by some of the traditional male clerics.

Schulz (2012) also examined the role of mass-media in the emergence of female Muslim preachers in Mali. Her focus was on how female Muslim preachers in San and Bamako used radio to extend their religious messages. Schulz conducted participant observations and more than seventy semi-structured interviews with Muslim women who were active in Muslim women

groups and at the same time, appeared on radio to preach. One of Schulz's key findings was that the preaching of the female leaders on radio was met with resentment from Muslim male scholars as they felt the women did not have the religious authority and competence to engage in that activity.

Similarly, Gomez -Perez (2016) studied women's Islamic activism in Burkina Faso with the key objective of investigating how female preachers in Ouagadougou used radio to claim a new identity for women within Islam. She conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with female preachers, some of whom hosted programmes on Islamic radio stations as well as those who preached at women gatherings. Gomez-Perez found that though female preachers reinforced normative religious discourses, they would call on Muslim women to become conscious of their rights.

With regards to online media, Nielson (2016) in examining the authority of female preachers in Islamist *Salafi* movement analysed 21,000 texts by 172 men and 43 women on a *Salafi*-oriented website called 'Saaid.net'. He found that the female preachers apart from discussing women issues were also engaged in discussing issues of worship and jurisprudence which are usually perceived to be discussions reserved for male scholars. Nielson also observed that the female preachers reached more audiences than the male scholars.

Similarly, Piela (2013) conducted a discourse analysis to analyse texts from discourses written and published by Muslim women on women-only online discussion groups. The aim of the study was to examine Muslim women's activity online and how they use it to engage in the Islamic religious discourse on their role and rights as Muslim women. Piela (2013) focused on the texts of one Muslim woman on an online Muslim women's group. The analysis of the selected texts by the researcher revealed a resistance to discourses by patriarchal religio-political agents and

Western neo-orientalists. The analysis also revealed that the women resorted to reading and interpreting Islamic sources for themselves rather than referring to the interpretations of Islamic text by males.

2.2.2 Muslim Women and Agency

Wangila (2012) conducted a survey and in-depth interviews with 30 Muslim women from Kenya with the aim of finding out the challenges Muslim women face in their attempt to claim their human rights. One of Wangila's (2012) findings was that the opinions of some Muslim scholars in Kenya on the incompatibility of human rights with Islam served as a major challenge for Muslim women's attempt to exercise their agency. She also realised that many of the Muslim women were unable to clearly differentiate practices that were legitimately prescribed by the *Qur'an* from harmful cultural practices.

Ammah (2015) did a narrative analysis of the activities of two Ghanaian Muslim women's organisations engaged in *dawah*: the Islamic Charity Centre for Women's Orientation in Accra and the Mariam Alhassan Alolo Institute/Vocational Centre located in Tamale. The aim of her study was to find the motivation of Ghanaian Muslim women who decided to move into the field of *dawah* that is male dominated. Ammah (2015) found that it was the desire to change the negative perception of the Muslim woman that pushed them to form Muslim women groups and *dawah* programmes targeted at transforming the Muslim woman into an ideal Muslim woman. An additional finding of her work was that Ghanaian Muslim women took advantage of the media to empower Muslim women with secular and religious knowledge.

Shaikh (2013) investigated the activities of a Pakistani-based Muslim women's organisation called *Al- Huda* International, a group made up of elite Pakistani women. Her aim was to find

out how the organisation had fast expanded its membership and why many Muslim women were drawn to the organisation. She conducted in-depth interviews with students and teachers at Al-Huda between 2005 and 2007. One of Shaikh's (2013) major findings was that the organisation engaged in interpreting religious teachings in ways that was different and more empowering for Muslim women than was done by the male scholars because they believed as Muslim women they also had the right to contribute to Islamic discourse.

Kalmbach (2008) also conducted a case study of a female religious preacher in Syria Huda al Habash. The aim of her study was to examine how changes in Islamic authority have created a space for women participation in the mediation of Islamic teachings. Kalmbach (2008) found that women like Huda al – Habash acknowledge that they have the right to share their knowledge as Muslim women. Kalmbach (2008) observed that though female preachers engaged in subtly re-interpreting some teachings by male scholars on their roles as Muslim women in the society, the female preachers would still adopt some of the conservative teachings of the male scholars due to their inability to fully change the already existing views on the role of the Muslim woman.

Declich (2013) conducted in-depth interviews with women scholars in Northern Mozambique, specifically in Pemba, Metuge, Quissanga and Ibo Island to find out the relevant role Muslim women play in Muslim practices of worship and to understand how Muslim women engaged agency. She conducted the interviews between August 2007 and August 2010. Declich's (2013) findings revealed that in Ibo and Pemba, Muslim women would meet as groups to conscientise themselves on their role as Muslim women by drawing inspiration from the lives of the wives of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH). The Muslim women who led such groups described themselves as being chosen by God to do such work and therefore saw it as their path to gaining their salvation.

Amir-Moazami and Jouili (2006) conducted interviews with young Muslim women belonging to *Sunni* Muslim organisations in France and Germany between 2003 and 2005. The purpose of the study was to find out how the Muslim women view themselves in terms of their ability to acquire and disseminate Islamic knowledge and how they situate their discourse within the religious circles they are belong to. The findings from the research revealed that the Muslim women saw themselves as responsible for acquiring and teaching Islamic knowledge to their communities. The findings also showed that the Muslim women contributed to the religious discourse by challenging prohibitions such as the secluding of women from society and restricting their ability to seek knowledge.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology that guided the study. It begins with a description of the methodology used for the study, the data collection method, the population of the study, the sampling method, the data collection procedure, the research instrument used and ends with a brief description of how the data was analysed.

3.1 Methodological Approach

The qualitative approach was used for this study as the study sought to explore the experiences and views of Muslim women who are actively engaged in Islamic television programmes in Ghana. “Actively engaged” in the context of this study refers to “participating as a studio guest, show host or a producer.” To be able to get a rich narrative and to understand subjective or personal experiences of their research participants, the in-depth interview method was employed. It is the most appropriate for a study of this nature as shown below.

In-depth Interviews

Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander (1990) have defined in-depth interviews as “repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed towards understanding informants’ perspectives in their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words”. It involves asking questions to systematically record and document the responses to probe for further deeper meaning and understanding (Guion, Diehl and McDonald, 2011).

In-depth interview was the method chosen for the study as it helped the researcher get rich information on the phenomenon under observation. Its ability to capture verbal and non-verbal actions adds up to making the narration richer (Guion, Diehl and McDonald, 2011).

The study used the seven stages of conducting in-depth interviews according to Kvale (1996), which includes thematising the questions that will be required to answer the research questions, designing an interview guide, interviewing the respondent with the help of the interview guide, transcribing the interview, analysing the interview to make it meaningful, verifying and reporting.

3.2 Population

The population of the research was Muslim women who have either served as studio guests, show hosts or producers of Islamic television programmes. The Muslim women have appeared on one or more of the following Islamic programmes; ‘Islam and Life’ (GTV), ‘*Al-Ma’raa*’ (Faith TV), a gendered segment under Islamic Belt called ‘The Muslim Woman’ (Metro TV) and the Morning Show of Guidance TV.

3.3 Sampling

The researcher purposively sampled 12 Muslim women from Islamic television programmes that have been airing for the first six months of 2017. According to Tongco (2007), purposive sampling is a type of non probability sampling that is most effective when one needs to study a certain cultural domain with knowledgeable experts within. As this study focused on studying Muslim women who appear on Islamic television programmes, the researcher found purposive sampling to be the most appropriate sampling method. The researcher's decision to purposively sample 12 Muslim women was based on the position expressed by Guest et al. (2006), who propose that saturation occurs around 12 participants in a homogenous group. Though Crouch and McKenzie (2006) also maintain that for sampling in qualitative interviews, the best sample size for participants who belong to a homogenous group is between 15 and 20, the researcher chose to sample 12 Muslim women primarily because saturation was reached. The producers of the selected programmes provided the researcher with the list of Muslim women who appeared on their programmes between January 1, 2017 to June 30, 2017. From the list, the researcher selected the respondents based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. Female Muslim producers or talk show hosts of the Islamic programmes were also selected.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The study period was the first six months of 2017, which spanned from January 1, 2017 to June 30, 2017. This period was selected in order to provide a more recent picture of issues surrounding Muslim women participation in Islamic television programmes in Ghana.

The respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study, after which a consent form was issued to the respondents to seek permission from them to be engaged in an in-depth interview. The researcher met the respondents at places that were at their convenience and conducted the

interviews with them. Each interview lasted between 45 to 75 minutes and was recorded in audio format, after which the interview was transcribed. The researcher took notes of the respondent's non-verbal reactions that were observed during the interview.

3.5 Research Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was designed to guide the in-depth interview which was conducted with the respondents. The interview guide contained 18 open ended questions for Muslim women who have appeared as guests on Islamic television programmes and 28 open ended questions for Muslim women who were either talk show hosts or producers of Islamic programmes. The questions were framed in line with the purpose of the study.

3.6 Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed in order to help with the analysing of the data. Identification of the themes was guided by Ryan and Bernard (2003). To identify themes in a textual data containing rich narratives, Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggest looking out for the repetition of words, transitions, and similarities and differences that occur within the data. The study applied the suggestion by Ryan and Bernard (2003) to the transcribed texts. The themes obtained served as the information used to answer the questions the study sought to find. To protect the identity of the respondents, the respondents were numbered.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the participation of Muslim women in Islamic Television programmes in Ghana. This chapter presents the findings that emerged from the study. The findings are presented beginning with the respondents' engagement in Islamic television programmes, a profiling of the respondents and then proceeds to presenting the themes that emerged from the study. The presentation of the themes have been organised in line with the objectives of the study.

4.1 Findings

Respondents' Engagement with Islamic Television Programmes

The study conducted in-depth interviews with 12 Muslim women drawn from the Islamic programmes 'Islam and Life' (GTV), 'Al-Ma'raa' (Faith TV), 'Islamic Belt' (Metro TV) and the Morning Show of Guidance TV. Table 2 presents a profile of the respondents (next page).

Table 2. Profile of Respondents

Respondent No.	Age Range	Highest level of Education reached	Years of Experience in Islamic Television Programmes	Marital Status	Occupation
Respondent 1	25-34	Bachelor's Degree	2	Divorced	Entrepreneur
Respondent 2	35-44	Postgraduate Degree (MA)	5	Married	Public Servant/Entrepreneur
Respondent 3	25-34	Bachelor's Degree	2	Single	Islamic talk Show Host/Islamic School Teacher
Respondent 4	25-34	Bachelor's Degree	1	Married	Public Servant/Islamic talk show Host/Entrepreneur
Respondent 5	35-44	PhD Candidate	9	Married	Lecturer/Professional Counseling Psychologist
Respondent 6	25-34	MPhil Candidate	4	Married	Nurse
Respondent 7	25-34	Bachelor's Degree	2	Married	Entrepreneur/Housewife
Respondent 8	25-34	Postgraduate Degree (Mphil)	1	Married	Social Worker/Professional Counseling Psychologist
Respondent 9	25-34	Bachelor's Degree	1	Married	News Broadcaster/Islamic talk show producer
Respondent 10	35-34	PhD Candidate	1	Married	Islamic School Teacher
Respondent 11	35-44	Bachelor's	1	Married	Entrepreneur

		Degree			
Respondent 12	35-44	Bachelor's Degree	8	Divorced	Social Worker/Public Servant

(Source: Researcher's Findings)

Apart from appearing on Islamic television programmes, the respondents also appear on Islamic radio programmes, as well as non Islamic radio and television programmes. They usually appear in their capacity either as experts providing an Islamic perspective on an issue related to their profession or as Muslim women simply presenting the experiences of Ghanaian Muslim women. Most of the respondents have appeared on more than one Islamic television programme. They also appear to be influential in their Muslim communities and have networks with Islamic talk show hosts and producers. They indicated belonging to Muslim women's groups which they referred to as spaces where they gain empowering knowledge on their roles as contemporary Muslim women. They are technology savvy and use social media apps, particularly Whatsapp and Facebook to share their opinions on issues and connect with other Muslim women to share ideas.

4.2 Motivation for Muslim women participation in Islamic Television programmes.

The first major objective of this study was to find out what motivates Muslim women to participate in Islamic television programmes. The findings from the interviews revealed three principles that motivate Muslim women to participate in Islamic television programmes. These are a sense of religious obligation, realisation that Muslim women's voices are missing in public discourse and individual agency.

4.2.1 A Sense of Religious Obligation

From the interviews conducted with the respondents, six of the respondents clearly attributed their appearance on Islamic television programmes primarily to their belief that they have the responsibility as adherents of their faith to contribute to knowledge dissemination concerning their religion. The women explained that per Islam, they are mandated to be actively engaged in *dawah* (propagation of Islamic knowledge) and they would make reference to Islamic sources such as the *Qur'an* to support their point. An interesting finding noticed in relation to the theme was that the women believed that propagating Islam is not reserved only for the male Islamic scholars, but rather a duty incumbent on every Muslim regardless of their gender. Thus for the women, appearing on Islamic television programmes was a way of fulfilling their religious obligation as believing Muslims. For example, one of the Muslim women who appeared as a guest on Metro TV's 'Islamic Belt' explained:

I think as a Muslim, my purpose of existence has a lot to do with propagation of Islam. Basically, what empowers me to do *Dawah* and appear on Islamic programmes is the fact that I am responsible. I am a vicegerent of Islam as a woman and I have my role to play and that is very important because according to the *Qur'an*, Allah says that He will ask you what you did with your time, what you did with your money, what you did with your health, and all of those so it is obligatory on me. It is not only a responsibility for those who have status, say the Imams, the teachers and all that. No matter who you are, you have to do your own part to help publicise Islam. (Interview: Respondent 7)

This notion of religious obligation being a driving force is re-echoed by other respondents who say they view their participation as a form of *Jihad*. This shows that most Muslim women who appear on Islamic television programmes see such platforms as an opportunity to prove their loyalty to their faith. This explains why one of the Muslim women who appeared as a guest on GTV's 'Islam and Life' as well as Metro TV's 'Islamic Belt' expressed a sign of anger when

explaining how she found the perception held by people about the motivation for Muslim women participation in Islamic television programmes:

If I wanted the popularity of it, I wouldn't leave my house when I was with my parents at Frafraha on the Dodowa road (stretches her right arm and snaps her fingers to signal how far the town mentioned is). And even the Choice FM programme, it was in the evening at 7pm or so, and with my own vehicle and after that, I don't take anything, my sister. The farthest I have gone is they giving me water (raises an empty Voltic bottle lying on the table to explain her point). I don't take anything. I'm doing my own aspect of my *Jihad* [striving in the cause of Allah]. It is the same with the Islamic television programmes. (Interview: Respondent 6)

4.2.2. Realisation that Muslim Women's voices are missing in public discourse

Another reason why Muslim women appeared on Islamic television programmes was because they noticed the voices of Muslim women were missing in the Islamic public discourse. Five of the respondents clearly mentioned realising that Muslim women's voices are not being represented enough as being their motivation for appearing on Islamic television programmes. The respondents were conscious of the domination of Islamic discourse by Muslim men, which they indicated indirectly deprived the society of the Muslim woman's experiences and challenges. The respondents therefore saw themselves as individuals who are to provide the narratives of Muslim women. This reveals that Muslim women are being more active than passive in their response to the male domination of Islamic discourse. Appearing on Islamic television programmes for such women is a way to react to the male domination of Islamic discourse and to provide the perspectives of Muslim women that appear to be missing. One of such Muslim women who has developed her own Islamic television programme targeting Muslim women explained:

I came up with my programme because each time I tune into a TV discussion, it's skewed. I feel the voices of Muslim women are not there (frowns her face). We've

left the discussions; we've left the debates and all this research and everything to men. And one thing, giving account is based on what the person is feeling and what the person. So so long as that women thing is not there, there is something lacking. (Interview: Respondent 4)

For some of the respondents, closely tied to them realising Muslim women's voices were missing from Islamic discourse was their personal experiences. They indicated that there was a point in their lives when an encounter gave them an awakening on their public role as Muslim women. One of the respondents for instance explained how she reacted when she was invited to join a Muslim organisation in which she was to be the only female:

In fact, nobody could tell me they did not want me as part of the organisation (raises her voice to emphasise her point). There was nothing like that. But I realised that if I keep quiet and stay aloof, the organisation will continue to stay male-dominated and you will not be recognised. Sometimes erh, you force yourself and be part of something because if you don't do it, there will be nooooo recognition for your gender (waves the tip of her finger as she ends her point). This is one idea that drives most of my activities oooo. (Interview: Respondent 2)

In the case of Respondent 2, the invitation to join a Muslim organisation actually made her realise the importance of taking advantage of avenues to represent women. The impact of such personal experiences on a Muslim woman's participation in Islamic television programmes is equally seen in the response of another respondent who referred to her dreams as being what made her realise she had a responsibility to help other Muslim women;

This is what I have been doing. You know, I forgot to tell you when I was in Legon, anytime I slept I dreamt in which I was being told 'You have a lot, hundreds and more Muslim women who are facing the same challenges like you. What can you do to help? You have been very lucky, you have been successful. So what will you do for other Muslim women out there?' Hajia (places palm on the interviewer's

shoulder), these words when I remember them, push me to continue reaching out to Muslim women on any platform I can. (Interview: Respondent 12)

The responses indicate the respondents believe strongly that they bear the responsibility to empower and represent the voices of Muslim women. This reveals that Muslim women who appear on Islamic television programmes have a strong attachment to the programmes because they realise the power of such avenues in fulfilling their personal responsibility towards Muslim women in the society.

4.2.3 Individual Agency

Findings from the interviews showed that five of the respondents mentioned the right to speak on their issues as Muslim women as being the motivation for their appearance on Islamic television programmes. The respondents found it problematic that Muslim men speak on certain issues regarding women. The women argued that women, for certain issues, women are more likely to interpret the experiences of women much better than men. The respondents during the interview would refer to historical evidence in Islam that showed that Muslim women were allowed to speak on issues to justify their appearance on Islamic television programmes. This finding in itself reveals that Muslim women realise that their experiences are not fully dealt with by the interpretation of Muslim males who appear on Islamic television programmes. The women thus see Islamic television programmes as avenues where they can fully exert their agency by providing alternative interpretations of Islamic sources in a way that captures their experiences as Muslim women. One of the Muslim women who appears on Islamic television programmes in her capacity as a Psychologist explained:

“Until our men, or the men begin to appreciate that they can’t handle very issue; they cannot speak on every issue; they cannot be speaking on behalf of women (says

expressing a firm tone)...you know, when I look at the TV and see a panel of men discussing family, I say where is the woman representative there (firm and bold tone)? It doesn't make sense to me because you certainly can't be speaking for women. You're not the Prophet. You cannot be speaking on our behalf. No! Even there were points where the Prophet taught his women and they spoke and the women consulted them because there is a natural tendency that a woman understands her fellow woman better (says firmly). And for me, it's the main reason why I just can't stop appearing on Islamic programmes no matter how hard I want to. (Interview: Respondent 8)

Another respondent emphasised on the importance of Muslim women taking advantage of Islamic television programmes because it is their responsibility as Muslims to contribute to the propagation of Islam and the empowerment of women. She explained:

Now, society is changing and we do not have people publicly condemning the appearance of Muslim women on TV. And that is why I am saying now is the time (taps her finger continuously on the table). Now is the time we must take advantage of nobody openly saying 'A or B, don't sit on TV!' So if you get the opportunity to appear on a programme, do it. It's your responsibility as a Muslim. Don't complain by saying you can't do it. It doesn't kill you. I'm still sitting here after appearing on those programmes (spreads her arms apart and laughs lightly). (Interview: Respondent 2)

In the response of Respondent 2, there is a call on Muslim women to take up the challenge of making their voices heard. It appears that Muslim women who participate in Islamic television programmes are conscious of the politics of representation and the importance of being seen. This reveals that Muslim women who appear on Islamic television programmes use such avenues to drive the agenda of increasing the visibility of Muslim women in the media by encouraging their fellow Muslim women to also appear on such programmes when they are invited.

4.3 Issues Muslim women discuss on Islamic television programmes

Another key objective of this study was to find out the issues Muslim women discuss when they appear on Islamic television programmes. Findings from the study revealed Muslim women

discuss a variety of issues when they appear on Islamic television programmes, key of which are politics and leadership, education and women empowerment, health and religious issues.

4.3.1. Politics and Leadership

From the findings, six out of the 12 respondents mentioned having been invited to deliver on issues concerning Muslim women in politics and leadership. They indicated that on such platforms, they would make reference to Muslim women in Islamic history who held positions of influence and were able to lead their community despite their being women. Making reference to influential women in Islamic history appeared to be a common strategy used by the respondents to justify why Muslim women should be engaged in politics and leadership. The respondents also mentioned that due to the cultural understanding of the role of the woman in general, they have to deal with clarifying stereotypical views of Muslim women. One of the respondents who is the President of a Muslim women's group for career Muslim women made a comment that embodies this observation:

The host was telling me that he has seen a couple of women in other committees like two mosques, in the whole of Accra which doesn't sound well to me because it is not something that has been predefined by our religion that Muslim women should not be on such committees. Shafawu Bin Abdullahi was actually collecting tolls at the time of Umar. She was the woman who actually got angry when they said they should decrease dowry in Madina. So why won't women be put on the committee if women were put in influential places? (Interview: Respondent 11)

An interesting finding was that Muslim women who worked as producers or talk show hosts of Islamic television programmes would choose topics that aim at changing the traditional view on the role of the Muslim women in society. They mentioned that they chose to put out topics that

appear controversial in the Islamic public discourse. This particular finding shows that topics selected for discussion for Muslim women were not chosen in a vacuum, but with the purpose of providing alternative discussions concerning their roles as Muslim women in the society. Also, the findings revealed that the presence of Muslim women in influential positions in Islamic programming has a positive effect on the type of discussions that are held regarding the Muslim woman and increases the chances of Muslim women appearing as guests on such programmes. One of the Muslim women who works as a producer of an Islamic television programme threw more light on the reason behind the framing of topics such as Muslim women and politics:

We've realised that most of our Muslim women hardly partake in politics. Some women are not allowed to partake in certain activities. So we sit down and we come out with such programmes whereby we have effective Muslim women in the community. We bring them on board to discuss about women so as to communicate with the young Muslim woman out there who is also looking up to someone, you know. (Interview: Respondent 9)

Other respondents equally expressed strong views on the acceptability of Muslim women to participate and become leaders in Islam. One of such respondents explained that

Our people still have not accepted the fact that women can go into politics. They think it is *haram* (not permissible). Nooooo matter how many verses you quote to hammer your point (raises her voice). And you know, generally because of people mixing the religion with culture, sometimes if you are not discerning enough it is difficult to draw the line. But no. It is not wrong. It is not wrong at all (waves her palms and shakes her head as she makes her point). Both my mum and dad are very responsible and respected Islamic scholars and I come from a strong Islamic scholarly background, so I do a lot of investigation before I speak. It is not against Islam. (Interview: Respondent 5)

The responses reveal that Muslim women who appear on Islamic television programmes make conscious effort to read and understand their role as Muslim women for themselves and from

that, they derive personal motivation and evidences which they use to challenge audiences who have reservations on their appearance.

4.3.2. Women's Empowerment and Education

From the findings, five out of the 12 respondents indicated being invited to speak on issues of women's empowerment and education. Some of the topics the respondents mentioned appearing to discuss were 'The Role of Women on Nation Building; Marking the International Women's Day', 'The importance of Girl Child Education', 'Importance of Education before, during and after marriage' among others. The respondents said when they appeared on Islamic television programmes, they would make reference to certain practices such as parents not taking their girl children to school in the Ghanaian Muslim community. They believed it was Islamically unacceptable. It then shows that the Muslim women are conscious of the negative practices affecting Muslim women in the Muslim community. They therefore use Islamic television programmes to rectify and present solutions to such problems from an Islamic and empowering perspective. To increase the acceptance of their message by their audience, some of the respondents made reference to the benefit of education in their personal lives. One of the respondents who is the Executive Director of a Non-governmental organisation that targets the empowerment of Muslim women and children is an example of such women:

So I'm saying all this so that we understand how important women education is how relevant women education is to Islam. I went there to work as an NIA official, not as a Muslim women organiser, but in a way, I helped that community re-build their mosque. Look at me! (points to herself). Am I not promoting Islam (raises her voice)? Am I not helping Muslim communities? So where lies the, you know, that when a

woman goes to school it will not help her to practice her Islam (raises her voice)? It will rather promote her, develop her, make her focus what she is doing so that she can help more. (Interview: Respondent 12)

4.3.3. Health

With regards to health, the findings revealed that four of the twelve respondents indicated they were invited to discuss topics such as “Marital distress”, “Improving the Mental state of the Ghanaian Muslim Youth”, “The incidence of Youth Suicide in Ghana” and “Sex in Islam”. In their discussions, they would explain the issues from an Islamic perspective to enhance the reception of the message by their audience.

4.3.4. Religious Issues

From the findings, four out of the 12 respondents mentioned being invited to talk about purely religious issues. Some of the topics mentioned by some of the respondents were “The importance of *Lailatul Qadr*”, “The role of the mother during *Ramadan*”, “The *Hijab*” and “The role of the *Zakat* fund in developing the Muslim *Ummah*”. No respondent made mention of discussing issues such as Islamic jurisprudence and religious worship, which are usually discussions held by Muslim male scholars. This finding in itself reveals that Muslim women are being limited to discussions related to women and social issues rather than issues of Islamic jurisprudence and religious worship on Islamic television programmes.

4.4. Advantages Muslim women gain by participating in Islamic television programmes.

Another key objective the study sought to achieve was to determine the advantages that Muslim women gain as a result of their participation in Islamic television programmes. The findings revealed that when Muslim women appear on Islamic television programmes, it provides them with three key advantages, which are the opportunity to challenge stereotypical views about Muslim women, to promote their personal agendas and to serve as role models for young Muslim females.

4.4.1. Challenging stereotypical views about Muslim women.

The findings revealed that all the respondents indicated their appearance on Islamic television programmes gave them the opportunity to challenge the stereotypical views that Muslims and non-Muslims hold about Muslim women. Interestingly, 11 out of the 12 respondents mentioned that most Muslim men tend to have chauvinist views regarding Muslim women. In light of this they indicated that their appearance on Islamic television programmes gives them the opportunity to challenge such chauvinist views. From the interviews, there was an indication that most of respondents were fully aware of the stereotypical perceptions surrounding them as Muslim women. During the interviews, the responses from the respondents showed that they were passionate about the stereotypical views they challenged. One of the respondents who was a onetime parliamentary candidate in her constituency explained how she had to challenge the view of a colleague Muslim male panelist on the stance of Islam on women's participation in Politics:

The person was arguing to the point that as a woman it's not encouraged for a woman to be outspoken (rolls her eyes). Because of the challenges of politics he thinks it's a no go area for a woman. It has some elements of leadership and to him, the realm of leadership doesn't fit the personality of a Muslim woman, because a woman cannot lead prayers. And I said "Well, you are entitled to your opinion but so far as I am concerned, the investigations I have done, the research and then what I have inquired,

what I know is that as long as it will not affect the practice of your religion you can aspire to the highest, not just the first or second lady (says smiling). You can aspire to even be the president if you want to". (Interview: Respondent 5)

Similarly, some stereotypical perceptions are held by non-Muslims, which the respondents mentioned they were able to clarify due to their appearances on Islamic television programmes.

One of the respondents who works as a Nurse recollected a comment she received from a Non-Muslim when she appeared on Islamic television programmes to talk about HIV/AIDS in the Zongo community:

One person said "Are you really a Muslim?" That was one comment someone sent. "How come I'm well informed?" The person wasn't a Muslim. And I told him that he should go back there and check his statistics well. During those days that we were not having enough Muslim women out there to speak, he should compare the statistics now. This is a growing population. Even our folks some of who have not been to school before now understand the essence of education, so we are there. (Interview: Respondent 6)

One of the respondents recounted how her hosting an Islamic programme changed a viewer's outlook on the status of Muslim women. She explained:

It was my first live programme and it wasn't easy, you know (laughs lightly). The whole thing is that it is hard for you to see a woman hosting an Islamic programme. That whole thought was weighing on me ooo (laughs). But I remember that day I got so many comments. On my Facebook page, when I posted the picture of the show, one person commented by saying he was so proud of me because he had always heard people say Islam does not allow women to work in the media. He said I had changed the way he viewed Muslim women (looks to the floor and smiles lightly). That really meant a lot to me, you know. (Interview: Respondent 9)

The findings show that the mere appearance of the Muslim women on Islamic television programmes have a positive impact on the way Muslim women are viewed in society.

4.4.2. Platform to promote their personal agendas

Four of the 12 respondents mentioned appearing on Islamic television programmes gave them the opportunity to promote their agenda. The respondents during the interviews expressed concerns about social problems they observed in the Muslim community and admitted using such platforms for advocacy. They mentioned having personal agendas such as women empowerment, girl child education and Muslim women in politics which they made sure they spoke about anytime they appeared on Islamic television programmes. What this reveals is that Muslim women who appear on Islamic television programmes were conscious of the power of the media in framing discourse. They therefore did not remain silent on their concerns, but rather advocated the strong agendas they have. For example, a divorcee who was one of the respondents mentioned observing the unfair treatment being meted out towards other divorced women in her community as what motivated her to establish an NGO which deals with the empowerment of women, youth and children. She indicated using such platforms to advocate her course:

If we don't start advocating this, who will do it for us? I am from the Zongo Community and if we keep quiet over it who will talk about it for us? Who will fight for us? So we have to do something and me, I talk about these things when I appear on the Islamic programmes. (Interview: Respondent 12)

4.4.3 Role modelling

Four respondents mentioned their appearance on Islamic television programmes had given them the opportunity to serve as role models to young Muslim girls and become people who are looked up to in the community, especially in terms of educational and career choices. The respondents made reference to comments from people on how their appearance on Islamic television programmes was a source of motivation to young Muslim girls who watched those

programmes. Because of this experience, the respondents saw the need for more Muslim women to be invited on Islamic television programmes. One of respondents who works as a producer of an Islamic programme indicated that the fact that people would look up to her made her happy:

Being part of the programme, people will see you and they look up to you. Recently a friend called me and told me his sister is coming here to do her National service and he has a colleague in School, she's here and you know, the lady saw me and she was like "Oh! I'm looking up to you. I see you on TV, you know, and I'm so happy". Sometimes you go out and people are like "Oh, I want my daughter to also go to this school so what do I do? What school should she attend?" So you can see that, at least with my little effort people are looking up to me and I'm so happy. (Interview: Respondent 9)

The findings also revealed that Muslim women who appear on Islamic television programmes serve as role models in their communities. Some of the respondents mentioned having access to influential leaders in their community because they were seen as women worthy of emulation. This reveals that Muslim women who appeared on Islamic television programmes increased their social status, which made them more welcoming to influential male leaders in the community, as was explained by one of the respondents:

Right now, as I am speaking, you know we have this *Tijjaniya* and *Ahl us Sunna* sects. I can go to any of them (says laughing). They are more or less like my brothers and fathers. I can walk to any of them and ask them anything I want, provided it will be beneficial to me and the rest of the Muslim *Ummah*. They see me to be "wow, this girl she's bringing a lot of understanding." So you see how impactful the appearance on TV and all that is? (places finger beneath her right eye) They themselves have come to realise that when you give a Muslim woman that opportunity, she will excel of course. (Interview: Respondent 12)

4.5. Challenges Muslim Women face by participating in Islamic television programmes

The findings revealed that Muslim women face a number of challenges when they appear on Islamic television programmes. However, the challenges most mentioned by the respondents was the poor sponsorship of Islamic television programmes, criticism of appearance, having an unsupportive husband, limited spaces for participation and inadequate time.

4.5.1. Poor sponsorship of Islamic television programmes

The findings revealed that all the 12 respondents identified the poor sponsorship of Islamic television programmes as a major challenge to their ability to participate in Islamic television programmes. Many of the respondents for example were aware that Islamic television programmes in Ghana were few in number and were not aired regularly primarily because the Muslim community was less enthusiastic about sponsoring Islamic television programmes. This view came especially from the respondents who were either talk show hosts or producers, as was explained by a producer of an Islamic programme:

When it comes to Islamic content, getting the content for the particular channel is a problem. And even if you have a programme you want to do, nobody is willing to sponsor. For instance in the month of *Ramadhaan*, we have so many opportunities but our people will never do it (sighs). They wouldn't sponsor. Instead they will focus on ermnnn (pauses) breaking the fast. Imagine the kind of money that goes into it! (Interview: Respondent 9)

For respondents who appeared on Islamic television programmes as guests, they saw the challenge of sponsorship from a personal angle. One of the respondents explained:

You know, some programmes come with allowance (pauses) maybe fuel allowance. But most of the Islamic programmes because of poor sponsorship, it doesn't come on so you have to drive from your house to a programme and having a 4x4 wheel drive

(points to her car and laughs lightly) you will have to spend an average of 100.00 Ghana cedis over fuel. So if you are attending three programmes in a week and an average of 12 programmes a month, you can imagine. It is difficult. (Interview: Respondent 5)

Another respondent who shared a similar opinion also stated:

I realize when you go to these stations, and do your talk. Yes, we know we are doing it for the sake of Allah. But at least, something for transport (spreads out right palm as she ends her points). They won't give. Maybe you haven't even taken breakfast before coming. But that is not to say we won't come but at least a little funding for transport is okay. (Interview: Respondent 11)

The responses from the respondents show that the poor sponsorship of Islamic television programmes affects not just the availability of Islamic programmes, but also the willingness of guests to appear on such programmes. The respondents indicated they would have wished to sponsor Islamic television programmes if they had the means to. According to them, sponsoring Islamic programmes would grant them blessing from *Allah* and also grant them the chance to influence the production of such programmes. The extent to which the respondents were concerned about the poor sponsoring of Islamic television programmes is an indication that the Muslim women are conscious of the fact that losing Islamic television programmes due to poor sponsoring of Islamic television programmes can deprive them of the avenues they can use to exert their agency. In addition, the fact that the respondents would attend the programmes though they would not be compensated gives an indication of how passionate they are on using such avenues to empower and educate women.

4.5.2. Criticism of appearance

The findings also revealed that seven of the respondents mentioned being criticised based on their appearance as one of the challenges they faced when they appeared on Islamic television

programmes. The respondents found the focus on their appearance rather than their content unfair, since when it came to their male counterparts, the focus was more on their content than their appearance. Though the respondents acknowledged experiencing being criticised for not covering their hair with a veil (popularly known as *mayafi*), three out of the seven respondents mentioned being criticised for having their nails designed with *lele* (henna) during a live broadcast of an Islamic television programme they appeared on. The respondents interpreted such treatment as a way of discouraging the Muslim woman from appearing on Islamic television programmes. None of the seven respondents mentioned that they had stopped appearing on Islamic television programmes because of such experiences. The respondents indicated that they kept appearing on the programmes despite such experiences. This revealed that Muslim women understood that the treatment of criticism is to discourage them from appearing on such programmes and thus did not stop appearing on such programmes because they saw the space as an influential avenue to exert their agency. One of the respondents who was a victim of criticism of appearance recounted her experience on the live television programme:

The person just called, a male of course (emphasising her point amidst laughing). “What does Islam say about women publicly adorning their beauty, including painting their nails?” The host tried to let him know it was ‘*lele*’ (henna design), but he still insisted “Yes, yes, the person is coming on air, and everybody is watching her. She should have removed it.” (pauses and waves her hands in the air) I mean, all the interesting discussions, the person didn’t see it and couldn’t make contributions on it. The person was only interested in nails, and meanwhile it was *lele* (Interview: Respondent 5)

Another interesting finding was another form of ‘silent criticism’ that a respondent narrated a colleague of hers had experienced from un-Islamic television programmes. In this case, Muslim women were not allowed to appear on some un-Islamic programmes because of the veil as the

sponsors of such programmes do not want to have the veil associated with their programme. This finding showed that Muslim women experienced a ‘double discrimination’ from both Islamic and un-Islamic television programmes. Moreover, it indicated the importance of allowing Muslim women space on Islamic television programmes. Due to the treatment from some un-Islamic programmes, Islamic television programmes appear to be the platform which Muslim women look to share their experiences. Thus continual criticism of appearance of the Muslim women may affect their willingness to appear on Islamic television programmes, which totally erases them from contributing to the public discourse. One of the respondents explained this challenge:

A colleague was telling me she had quite a challenge. Because the programme wasn't a Muslim programme and the sponsors were non- Muslims, they told her to remove her veil and she had to boycott the programme. The men don't actually host the women on our Islamic programmes. So over here too we've been cut off again. So it starts from our own people. They are not giving us the chance. They even start intimidating us. How come others wouldn't follow suit? (Interview: Respondent 6)

On the concerns raised by respondents on criticism of appearance being a challenge, there were some respondents who expressed different opinions. One of such opinions is seen in the response of one of the respondents:

Now with the trouser thing, what is a male's nakedness? Where according to the *Qur'an* is the male's nakedness? It's from the navel to the knee... But for the woman you have to be covered all the way down. Now with the beard and then the trouser to the ankle length, it is a strong *sun'nah* but if you do not do it, you are not punishable. ... But for the woman the prescription is there (claps her hands). They said expose only your face. (Interview: Respondent 7)

Another opinion was seen in the response of a respondent as she recounted her appearance on an Islamic programme:

The very recent programme I appeared on, nothing happened (shrugs her shoulders and shakes her head). Nobody said ‘Why are you not veiled?’ I was with Hajia (making reference to another Muslim woman). Infact, I have the video clip at home. We spoke (pauses briefly) nobody called me to say ‘Why are you not in veil?’ I was in a headgear and in that, I believe I am equally covered. (Interview: Respondent 2)

This shows that some Muslim women do not conform to societal expectations of how they should look but appear based on how they personally understand the concept of dress and modesty in Islam. This in itself reveals that Muslim women are not a monolithic group and differ in the way they interprate and practice Islamic teachings.

4.5.3. Having an Unsupportive Husband

Although eight of the respondents affirmed that their husbands were supportive, they acknowledged that having an unsupportive husband can pose a great challenge for Muslim women who participate in Islamic television programmes. For example, one of the respondents indicated that she was able to participate in Islamic television programmes because her husband had given her permission to. This according to about to four of the respondents is a requirement in Islam. What this revealed was that Muslim women with husbands who deny them permission to appear on Islamic television programmes were more likely to have problems participating in Islamic television programmes. Some of the respondents who found such restrictions by their husbands frustrating and tried to rebel ended up paying for it. One of the respondents who is a divorcee explained how she had to walk out of her marriage due to such restrictions being imposed on her by her then husband;

When I first got married, I told my husband that I really want to be a Muslim woman advocate. He worked with a particular TV station. I actually thought he would help me get an avenue on the station to empower our Muslim women (says clasping her

fingers with a raised tone). So I told him that is what I want to do and he said no (frowns her face). He had the platform to help but he did not. He said “no, you won’t do it.” So it was actually when I divorced [him] that was when I became free to do what I am doing now. (Interview: Respondent 1)

Interestingly, one respondent who mentioned her husband was not residing in Ghana indicated that she intentionally took into consideration the geographical location of the man she chose to marry because she foresaw that it she would not get opportunity to be doing the work she was currently engaged in. She explained:

My husband is not here. I just calculated that because I noticed if I should marry someone who stays in Ghana here, you know, I wouldn’t have got the opportunity to still be doing my work. (Interview: Respondent 9)

Other respondents indicated their husbands were supportive of their appearance on Islamic television programmes, as well as any other activity that was making them relevant to society.

One of the respondents explained:

My husband is the peaceful, loving and caring type (smiles broadly). Oh, you know, my husband is very sweet (looks up to the ceiling amidst smiling). I remember the last time he watched me on TV, he listened to what I said and said it was good. For him, he would encourage you. My husband is actually not the type who would want to condemn a woman to the house. (Interview: Respondent 2)

Another respondent equally shared the extent to which her husband gave her the space to engage in her media activities:

For me, my media work and appearances on those programmes became much more easier when I got married. My husband has been very supportive of my activities. The first episode I shot for my programme was at home. In fact, the whole day he didn’t even stay there. He left the whole house for me to shoot my programme. (Interview: Respondent 4)

The different reactions expressed by the husbands of the respondents on their appearance on Islamic television programmes reveals the difference of opinion that exists between Muslims regarding the extent to which Muslim women can appear in the public space. It also reveals that Muslim women usually make certain compromises that will enable them participate effectively in Islamic television programmes.

4.5.4. Limited spaces for participation

The findings revealed that five of the respondents identified limited spaces for participation as one of the challenges facing Muslim women who participate in Islamic television programmes. The respondents used the phrase 'limited spaces' to refer to either the roles they played when it comes to Islamic television programmes, the topics discussed in relation to women issues and availability of Islamic programmes for them to participate in. One of the respondents indicated how she constantly rebelled against her programmes Manager's decision to maintain her as a guest and producer rather than a talk show host of an Islamic television programme. Even though she admitted appearing as a guest on an Islamic television programme, she saw herself being able to not just be a guest on the show, but also a host of the Islamic programme. Her reaction to her manager's decision revealed that there exists some dissatisfaction among Muslim women about their being limited to being guests of Islamic programmes:

He just wants me to continue appearing as a guest, you know, and I also don't want to accept it because the moment I start, then it means I will have to continue being a regular guest on the show. And there is no way he will allow me to host it. (raises her voice). But I had to boycott and tell him 'No! I also want to host it.' Hardly for you to see a Muslim woman being the host of a programme and the first time I did it, it was overwhelming. (Interview: Respondent 9)

Some of the respondents also pointed out the seeming preference of Muslim male guests over Muslim female guests as an action that limits the ability of women to participate in Islamic television programme. When commenting on this issue, they mentioned it was easier for them to be invited on Islamic television programmes that were being handled by female show hosts more than programmes that were handled by male show hosts. This reveals that the presence of Muslim women who play major roles in the production of Islamic television programmes increases the chances of Muslim women being able to participate in Islamic television programmes. Another respondent linked the preference of male guests to the dominance of male show hosts:

When you look at TV stations and the people working there, most I'd say are men. That is even the first challenge (sighs). Most of them are men so it is very difficult for women to penetrate there. And even at the various Islamic TV programmes that are run, you can see that most of the hosts are even men. (Interview: Respondent 12)

However, other respondents believed there was more to male preference on Islamic television programmes as guests and hosts. One of the respondents who hosts an Islamic programme explained why on one occasion she had to choose a male guest over a female guest for her programme:

Eid ul Adha was when I went for a male guest. I couldn't get a woman at the time. He was there for me. I didn't get a female because the males are more into the research of Islam than the females. That is really what caused me to go and get a male instead of a female. Though my programme is for women, I wouldn't just get a female when I know she would not be able to tackle the topic well. If it is the man who can handle the topic well, I bring him on board. (Interview: Respondent 3)

Another respondent explained that the character of some Muslim woman can be the reason for the challenge:

Sometimes, it's just timidity. Naturally, some of the women are timid. She just can't face crowd. So if you ask such a person to come and sit in front of a TV, it will be difficult, you understand. (Interview: Respondent 2)

Still on the difference of opinion, another respondent mentioned that in Islam, it is more preferable for men rather than women to appear in the public space, which includes television programmes. She explained:

Islam sees a woman as a very precious jewel that doesn't have to be exposing herself or coming out and be mingling with men and stuff. There are some kind of restrictions. In a country where you do not have resource persons to handle women issues, it becomes necessary for a Muslim women who is in *dawah* to come out, unless the men are doing everything to their satisfaction and the problems of the women are being catered for 100% by the men. From my point of view, if the appearance of Muslim women on TV could be limited it would be okay, as there are male scholars who handle it very well. The women do have their *madrasas* (Islamic schools) for the adults, the youth and children where they can teach (Interview: Respondent 10)

Drawing from the response of Respondent 10, it is clear that Muslim women with a similar opinion are less likely to avail themselves for an Islamic television programme even if the space is available. The diversity in the responses reveals an interesting finding. Contrary to the view that Muslim men compared to women are given more chances to appear on Islamic television programmes, the case of Muslim women not availing themselves for Islamic television programmes, as well as their limited Islamic knowledge on the issue to be discussed accounts for the preference of male guests to female guests. It also reveals that the appearance of Muslim women in the media space is not just met with apprehension from Muslim males, but Muslim women as well.

4.4.5. Inadequate Time

Four of the respondents identified inadequate time as a challenge for Muslim women who appear on Islamic television programmes. The word “time” occurred multiple times when the respondents were referring to either the timing of the Islamic programme itself, being invited on short notice, or the length of the programme being too short. One of the respondents during the interview complained about the short length of such programmes:

Time is a major problem for us because you've prepared your outline pertaining to the time you know you are going to be given. The host is there and you as the professional you are also there. You may come out of the thirty with twenty, if not fifteen to eighteen minutes to voice out [your education] (pauses) definitely, the host will chip in. But you go there and then you are left with 20 minutes. What are you going to give out? When you rush through too how would understanding take place? And our target audience how are they going to understand what you are doing? Time is a major factor for us here (pauses) major one. (Interview: Respondent 6)

Other respondents indicated that sometimes they are given very short notice of the programme. They mentioned this posed a serious challenge to them because they may be having other obligations they would have to fulfill. One of such respondents explained:

My challenge is sometimes you are called upon at a dire minute, a time that probably you are very busy. For instance this last one, that was the day we were going to organise one national event. I was very busy in this office, walking around and I just got the call like less than an hour to appear there. (Interview: Respondent 2)

There were two differing views from married respondents on the time of the programme itself being a challenge. For some of the respondents, the time of the programme conflicting with their family obligations was enough reason to serve as a challenge. One of the respondents explained:

If you are invited for a morning programme and you are supposed to be there at 6am (pauses) and you have a baby or you have an uncompromising husband who wouldn't understand or give you the permission to go (pauses) or even if he will give you the permission, the responsibilities at home affect how much time you have to do other things. (Interview: Respondent 5)

However, one of the respondents who is equally married indicated time did not pose a challenge for her. She explained her passion was enough to make her find time to appear on Islamic television programmes:

I have a busy schedule, but because of my passion for women, I find time. I work for myself so I can squeeze time and go for the programme, no matter what time it is. (Interview: Respondent 11)

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion of the findings, the conclusions and recommendations that resulted from the study. To understand the participation of Muslim women in Islamic television programmes, the study carried out in-depth interviews with Muslim women who appear on Islamic television programmes in Ghana. The research questions for the study dwelt on finding out what motivates Muslim women to participate in Islamic television programmes, the issues they discuss and opportunities and challenges they encounter when they appear on such programmes. This chapter begins with a discussion of the findings, the conclusion of the study, the limitations and ends with recommendations based on the findings from the study.

5.1 Discussion of Findings

This study set out to examine the participation of Muslim women in Islamic television programmes in Ghana. The study posed four research questions, specifically what motivates

Muslim women to participate in Islamic television programmes, the issues they discuss on those platforms, the advantages and challenges they encounter when they appear on such programmes. In this section, discussions will be on the findings. This section discusses the implications of the findings against the questions posed and what the literature says. The discussion of the findings have been organised according to the objectives that were set for the study.

5.1.1 Research Question 1: What motivates Muslim women to participate in Islamic Television programmes?

The findings of this study revealed that the one of the major motivations for Muslim women who participated in Islamic television programmes was that they saw such programmes as avenues that could be used to fulfill their religious obligation of spreading the message of Islam. Their belief that the propagation of Islam is not reserved only for the male Islamic scholars, served as a justification for them to participate in Islamic television programmes. This shows that Ghanaian Muslim women are taking the responsibility to disseminate their knowledge with the society. This is line with Amir-Moazami and Joulli's (2006) findings that Muslim women see themselves as responsible for acquiring and teaching Islamic knowledge to their communities. It is also line with Declich's (2013) findings that Muslim women see engaging in spreading Islamic knowledge as a way to gaining salvation.

The study found that Muslim women participate in Islamic television programmes because they noticed their voices were not being represented in the Islamic public discourse. The Muslim women were conscious of the domination of Islamic discourse by Muslim men and the importance of the politics of representation. Thus Muslim women use such avenues to encourage

their fellow Muslim women to partake in public Islamic discourse. Appearing on Islamic television programmes for these women is then seen as a way to react to the male dominance of Islamic discourse and to provide the perspectives of Muslim women that appear to be missing. This finding ties in with another reason that was found, which was that Muslim women believed in their right to speak for themselves and interpret their own experiences. Muslim women have realised their experiences are missing and being misrepresented, though some Muslim women believe that the issue of Male domination does not necessarily have a negative impact on the way Muslim women's experiences are interpreted. This resonates with the argument Kramarae (2005) makes for the muted group theory, which is that when dominant groups control language, the experiences of subordinate groups tend to be excluded. The actions of the Muslim women are then seen as a reaction to the exclusion of their experiences. In addition, that not all Muslim women believe their experiences are being excluded because the Islamic public discourse is male dominated is a confirmation of the argument Tannen (1990) makes for the Genderlect theory, which is that the fact that language is man-made does not mean all men use language to try to control and marginalize the experiences of women. Nonetheless, Muslim women still see Islamic television programmes as spaces which they can use to exert their agency and provide alternative interpretations of Islamic sources in a way that captures their experiences as Muslim women. This finding is also in line with studies such as Shaikh (2013) and Kalmbach (2008) who also found that Muslim women believe they have the right to speak for themselves and interpret Islamic sources from their perspective. What this indicates is that there is a rising level of consciousness in Ghanaian Muslim women on the right to speak for themselves and not be spoken for.

5.1.2 Research Question 2: What main issues do Muslim women discuss when appearing on Islamic Television programmes?

The findings from the study reveal that Muslim women discuss a number of issues which include Politics and Leadership, Education and Women Empowerment, Health and Religious issues. One of the major issues found was that Muslim women discuss issues of Muslim women in leadership and in politics, which is a highly contested matter in Islam (Ammah, 2013; Sulemana, 2015). It appears that Muslim women use such programmes to introduce discussions that they see as problems that affect the Muslim woman. What this reveals is that topics selected for discussion for Muslim women are not chosen in a vacuum, but with the purpose of providing alternative discussions concerning their roles as Muslim women in the society. Another issue that Muslim women discuss according to the findings of the study are issues of education and women empowerment. A common thread that was seen in the narrative of the respondents was their passion about empowering the Muslim woman to be able to represent herself in society. Considering the educational level of the respondents, it was not surprising their passion. Shaikh (2013) equally observed a positive relationship between the educational level of Muslim women and their woman consciousness level. A key finding that was made in relation to this was the reference made by some of the respondents to Islamic teachings and historical documentations of influential Muslim women in Islam. This was a similar observation captured by Ammah (2015) on how female preachers appeal to their audiences. This shows that Muslim women use Islamic communication to enhance the acceptability of their message, especially because their appearance in itself is received with mixed reactions from the Muslim community. The Muslim women empower themselves with religious knowledge which they use to derive alternative explanations that challenge dominant views on the status of the Muslim woman. That Muslim

women strive to discuss issues from their perspective and not from the perspective of the male scholars who dominate religious discourse confirms the argument made by Harding (1993) on the importance of inquiry beginning from the perspective of the subordinate group. It was realised that Muslim women are more likely to be invited to talk on women and social issues rather than issues of Islamic jurisprudence and religious worship. However, there was also the indication that the Muslim women are limited to such issues because they seem to lack deep knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence.

5.1.3 Research Question 3: What advantages do Muslim women gain when they participate in Islamic television programmes?

The findings from the study revealed that Muslim women who participate in Islamic television programmes are also able to challenge the stereotypical perceptions that surround them as Muslim women. Their appearance on Islamic television programmes gives them the chance to explain and clarify the perceptions of both Muslims and non-Muslims on their role in the society. This finding is also in line with findings of Carlands (2012) on the fact that Muslim women appear on Islamic media programmes to challenge the stereotypes and dominant views that do not reflect the true status of Muslim women. Muslim women who appear on Islamic television programmes also get the opportunity to promote their personal agendas which are as a result of certain concerns they are passionate about. Muslim women who appear on Islamic television programmes seem to be conscious of the power of the media in framing discourse. They therefore do not remain silent on their concerns but use them as platforms to speak out against the problems they see affecting Muslim women. Their appearance also grants the opportunity to serve as role models to young Muslim women.

5.1.4 Research Question 4: What challenges do Muslim women encounter when they participate in Islamic television programmes?

This study revealed five challenges Muslim women encounter when participating in Islamic television programmes. One of the major challenges revealed was the poor sponsorship of Islamic television programmes. This finding was not captured in the literature reviewed for the study. It appeared the problem of sponsorship was seen from two perspectives. Apart from poor sponsoring of Islamic programmes indirectly limiting the number of Islamic television programmes available for Muslim women to participate in, the fact that there is no compensation for Muslim women who appear on such programmes can discourage them from appearing on such programmes. Findings from the study also showed that male domination of Islamic television programmes has more to do with the response of Muslim women when they are invited to appear on such programmes and their Islamic knowledge base on the issues to be discussed. Responses from the Muslim women that having Muslim women in positions such as talk show hosts increased their chance of being invited as a guest on Islamic television programmes. This finding re-affirms the findings made by Bostan (2011) on how the presence of Muslim women in influential media positions increases the chance of Muslim women being portrayed in the media. Another major challenge the Muslim women encounter is the criticism of their appearance rather than their content. Muslim women who appear on Islamic television programmes are more likely than their male counterparts to face criticism based on their outlook. This particular finding was also observed in a study by Carlands (2012). However, the difference in opinion expressed by the Muslim women regarding being criticised based on appearance reveals that Muslim women are not homogenous in the way they interpret the teachings of Islam. Factors such as their personal experiences, their level of educational and religious

knowledge influence the way they think and how they practice Islam. It is because of findings like this that Abu-Lughod (2002) and Mohanty (1984) have problems with the West homogenizing the experiences of Muslim women. This finding also affirms arguments made by Gill (1998) and Heckman (1997) that women cannot be treated as a homogenous group because experiences differ even within women groups that share a certain status in common. Having an unsupportive husband also serves as a challenge for Muslim women who participate in Islamic television programmes. This is because when their husbands do not grant them permission to appear on such programmes, they will not be able to appear. The study found that whereas some Muslim husbands encourage their wives to participate in Islamic television programmes on an Islamic basis, other Muslim husbands do not encourage their wives to appear on Islamic television programmes, equally on an Islamic basis. The use of Islamic evidences by Muslim husbands to either allow or discourage their wives from participating in Islamic television programmes affirms Orakzai's (2014) observation on the controversial nature of the discourse regarding the participation of Muslim women in the public and private sphere. The challenge of having an unsupportive husband was not captured by the literature reviewed for the study. The timing of some of the Islamic television programmes was also identified as a challenge especially for some married Muslim women to appear since they had other home obligations to attend to.

5.2 Conclusion

This study examined the participation of Muslim women in Islamic television programmes in Ghana. The study sought to find out why Muslim women participate in Islamic television programmes, the issues they discuss and the opportunities and challenges they encounter. The findings show that Ghanaian Muslim women are not a homogenous group. Though they share a

common faith, they have different personal experiences and differ in the way they think and respond to Islamic teachings. Ghanaian Muslim women still share a common struggle with Muslim women in other parts of the world in overcoming patriarchy, capitalism and extremist religious views. The findings also show that it is a difficult task to disengage Islamic teachings from patriarchy, culture and traditional gender roles. Despite the challenges identified, the findings reveal that Ghanaian Muslim women take advantage of the media to project their views in Islamic discourse, thereby making themselves more visible in the public space.

5.3 Limitations

The study was successful in determining the key objectives set for the study. It however faced some limitations. One of the limitations was getting access to records of Muslim women who had been invited on Islamic television programmes from the producers of the programmes. This slowed down the data collection process. Also, due to financial constraints, the study focused on Islamic television stations that air Islamic television programmes in Accra, which may not have captured other satellite television stations that may also be airing Islamic television programmes in other parts of Ghana. This means the study sampled only Muslim women who appear on Islamic television programmes that air in Accra. Also, considering the plethora of media in Ghana, the study focused on only Islamic television programmes and not Islamic radio programmes, which is more common.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on findings from the study, the researcher recommends that Islamic television programme producers put more effort into seeking sponsorship for Islamic television programmes so as to encourage Muslim women to participate in Islamic television programmes. The researcher

strongly recommends that Islamic television programme producers come up with more topics that aim at educating viewers on the importance of Muslim women participating in the public space. The researcher also recommends that religious departments of television stations work to ensure that Muslim women are represented and given influential roles to play on production teams of Islamic television programmes so as to enhance the appearance of Muslim women on such platforms. Future studies can consider comparing frames in Islamic programming discourse between men and women by interviewing male and female guests and producers.

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APPENDIX 1

RESPONDENT CONSENT FORM.

IN DEPTH INTERVIEW ON PARTICIPATION OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN ISLAMIC

TELEVISION PROGRAMMES IN GHANA

Dear Respondent,

My name is Khadijah Abdul Samed, a student pursuing an MA in Communication Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon. I am undertaking a research study on the **Participation of Muslim Women in Islamic Television programmes in Ghana**. I kindly seek to have an interview with you in relation to my study. This is primarily due to your experience in the field of my study. The interview will last for 90 minutes and will focus on how Muslim women engage in Islamic television programming in Ghana and how effective such programmes have been in that regard. The interview will be recorded (audio) to ensure that all discussions are accurately captured. This exercise is for the sole purpose of research and I wish to assure you that your views will be treated with utmost confidentiality and for the intended purpose only. The time and place of the interview will be at your discretion.

Your participation is voluntary and you are free at anytime to withdraw from the interview should you deem it necessary.

If you are okay with the details given and would like to help, kindly fill in the details below:

I,have

voluntarily agreed to avail myself to participate in this research.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Thank You.

APPENDIX 2

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What is your understanding of the concept of Islamic television programming?
2. When did you begin to appear on Islamic television programmes?
3. For how many months/years have you been participating in Islamic television programme discussions?
4. How easy was it for you to appear on those programmes?
5. Which specific Islamic television programmes in Ghana have you appeared on?
6. How frequently are you invited to appear on Islamic television programmes?
7. In what capacity are you usually invited?
8. What influences your decision to appear on any Islamic television programme?
9. Can you recollect an instance when you were asked to appear on an Islamic programme and you declined the invitation?
10. If yes, what was the reason?
11. What subjects are you usually invited to discuss?

12. Do you have special areas of concern (Muslim women empowerment/marriage/domestic violence/education of Muslim women) you advocate for when you appear on these programmes?
13. Do you think the subjects you are invited to discuss on those programmes influence the way Muslim women are viewed?
14. What have been your most memorable experiences in your appearance on Islamic television programmes?
15. Based on your experiences, do you think Islamic television programmes create enough space for Muslim women to participate?
16. Based on your experiences, is it easy for women to appear in Islamic television programmes?
17. How beneficial has appearing on Islamic television programmes been to you?
18. What challenge(s) do you encounter due to your appearances on Islamic television /programmes?

(Extra questions for Muslim Women who host Islamic programmes/involved in Islamic television programmes production)

19. What is the name of the programme you handle?
20. What responsibilities do you have being the host/producer of the programme?
21. Who is the target audience of your programme?
22. How much control do you have in the selection of the topic for discussion on your show?
23. What influences the choice of the topic(s) for discussion on your programme?
24. What subjects do you usually discuss?
25. Are there instance when you have males as guests?
26. What subjects do the male guests discuss when they appear?
27. Have you been a panelist on any Islamic programme(s)?
28. Which ones?

