

Research Article

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Gender: An intersectional analysis of women's involvement in politics in Local Government Administration in Northern Ghana, the prospects and the hindrances

David Suaka Yaro^{1*}, Dramani Kipo-Sunyehzi²

¹Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies C.K. Tedam University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Navrongo, Ghana, dyaro@cktutas.edu.gh

²Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, Ghana.

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*Corresponding author: dkipo-sunyehzi@ug.edu.gh

Abstract: Women in Ghana suffer many deprivations, including marginalisation, repression, powerlessness and voicelessness. The extent to which women are excluded from participating in the politics of their communities in specific regions of the North has not received sufficient academic attention. This study seeks to deal with the lacuna. The study adopted a constructivist epistemological approach, using a semi-structured interview guide to collect primary data from respondents. This was supplemented with an analysis of archival and website documents and reports of some districts in the two regions. The results revealed low levels of women's participation in local politics with no women in the thirty per cent (30%) appointment slots reserved at the district assemblies. The study also found that there is a lack of financial capacity, assertiveness, moral support and the heavy family burden of women were some problems that stood in the way of women's effective participation in politics in all areas. Other problems identified include an unfavourable political climate, a sense of inferiority of women in government and the patriarchal nature of the family system, which prevents women from assuming certain roles in the family and society. To increase women's participation in local politics, the study recommends that a quota system be introduced whereby a quota is filled by women (reserved positions). The study recommends that District Assemblies organise public sensitisation programmes to educate women about their rights and to remove some of the cultural barriers that prevent women from playing certain roles like political governance in society.

Keywords – Empowerment, Gender, Local governance, Northern Ghana, Representation, Women

1. INTRODUCTION

From human earliest stages of life to old age, a universal differentiation exists within humanity across all cultures: the division between males and females. This division often results in assigning varying responsibilities, rights, and duties, especially prominent in many societies in the Global South. These allocations, whether in daily economic endeavours, domestic spheres, or governance, historically aimed to complement each other based on societal assumptions regarding the perceived strengths of each gender derived from biological and inherent qualities, observing that these distinctions didn't inherently suggest a hierarchy, recognising the crucial reproductive role women play in lineage survival (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2010, 2021). UN Women (2021) highlighted that, as

of June 2019, only 24.3% of national parliamentarians worldwide were women, with eleven serving as Head of State and twelve as Head of Government. Also, the UN Women (2021) noted that across 103 countries and regions with available data, women's representation in elected local governing bodies varied from less than 1% to nearly equal representation at 50%, with a median representation of 26% (UN Women, 2021).

Advocates underscore the substantial impact of women's involvement in local governance. Research on panchayats (local councils) in India demonstrates a 62% increase in drinking water projects in areas led by women compared to those led by men. Similarly, in Norway, the engagement of women in municipal councils correlates with enhanced childcare coverage. Peace and wartime issues of women matter most in Europe and elsewhere (Rehn & Sirleaf, 2002; Guerrina & Wright, 2016; Asuinura & Kipo-Sunyehzi, 2024). Women play key roles in the USA in politics and all spheres of life across communities including the Black American communities (Anderson, 2021). According to Eurostat, there are nearly 9.4 million individuals in managerial roles in the European Union (EU), with men constituting 64% and women only 36%. Additionally, women represent slightly over one-quarter of board members in publicly listed EU companies (27%) and less than one-fifth of senior executives (17%) as of 2018 (Brie, 2019).

Many other African countries including Ghana have established intricate belief systems, moral standards, customs, and practices spanning various aspects of life, including many disciplines: politics, governance, economics, household management, and religion (Zimoñ, 2006; Emedo, 2024). Unfortunately, many of these traditions and belief systems exhibit discriminatory tendencies against women. Regardless of the circumstance that Ghana has a higher proportion of women than men, as indicated by the 2010 census, which documented a total population of 24,658,823 with 12,024,845 males (48.8%) and 12,633,978 females (51.2%), resulting in an overall sex ratio of 95.2 males for every 100 females (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2010). The 2021 census figures still point to more females than males in Ghana (GSS, 2021). The study of women's participation in local politics as well as in all spheres of life has become relevant worldwide in recent decades. Virtually every international organisation has developed strategies for the inclusion of women in social and economic activities. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that the issue is one of the convictions of world nations that everyone including women with the right to participate in politics including local politics or local governance of Ghana and in other countries (United Nations, 1945; Offei-Aboagye, 2000, 2004). In particular, women wishing to enter parliament had to endure hostility from some constituencies because of cultural perceptions. These perceptions include women are by-products of men, women are weaker vessels and others like women must take care of children in the home, while men do their best to support the women and children (Deku, 2005; Allah-Mensah, 2005).

According to the 2021 population and housing census by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) in the country, they (women) constitute 50.7% of the 30.8 population of Ghana (GSS, 2021). However, this does not reflect the distribution of power between men and women, which is particularly important in local politics (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). International conferences have tried to address this problem by asking countries to include gender equality in political bodies (UNDP, 2000). Ghana is one such country that is struggling to include women in politics. For example, Ghana is a party to international conventions that call for the inclusion of women in policymaking at this stage. In line with this, Ghana has many programmes aimed at encouraging women's participation in policy-making processes. Nevertheless, despite growing awareness and the fact that Ghana has made significant strides over the past five decades towards universal adult suffrage as well as a sustainable democratic dispensation, there are still barriers to women's participation and representation in local politics (Paxton, 2007; Sossou, 2011).

The question therefore arises as to why there is a low level of women's participation in politics in Ghana from 1954 to the present. This is an area of interest to researchers and possibly policymakers now and in the years to come. This study investigates the problem of low women's participation in local politics in some selected regions of Ghana. It also attempts to answer questions such as: What is the trend in women's representation in local politics in the three regions namely Northern, North East and Savannah Regions of Ghana? What elements account for the low

participation of women in local government in the regions? What factors contribute to women's involvement in local politics in these regions?

2. THEORY

Personal Empowerment Theory

The theoretical foundation of empowerment traces back to Freire (1973), who championed the liberation of oppressed groups through critical consciousness (Addo-Deku, 2012). According to Rappaport (1987), individual empowerment involves seizing control of one's life and developing a profound appreciation for one's surroundings. Empowering women to participate requires a tailored approach that acknowledges their readiness to embrace empowerment (Peterson, 2011). Pattie (2003) perceives women's empowerment as a personal, internal, and self-directed journey. Personal empowerment theory encompasses various elements including intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral aspects.

The interpersonal aspect pertains to how individuals perceive their ability to impact social and political structures within their communities (Zimmerman, 1992). In personal empowerment theory, the interactional dimension encompasses an individual's critical awareness and understanding of the socio-political landscape. This entails grasping the necessary means to achieve goals, being aware of one's environment, improving decision-making abilities, and adeptly addressing challenges within the context. Therefore, fostering awareness among women regarding their full participation is pivotal for empowerment. Hoy (2006) identified several benefits of participation, such as financial incentives, peaceful investments, power dynamics, and other intangible rewards. Consequently, women decide to engage in local governance activities based on a cost-benefit analysis (Hoy, 2006). Applying this theory in the context of this study means that women will participate more in politics only when they perceive that there are benefits in participating. This theory, however, rests the responsibility for women's participation on external factors only. The Personal Empowerment Theory was adopted to complement this gap.

3. METHODS

The study area

Northern Ghana consists of five administrative regions of Ghana namely Northern, North-East, Savannah, Upper East and Upper West regions. The study was conducted in the defunct Northern region which from 2018 comprises of Northern, North-East and Savannah Regions. Until its demarcation, the Northern Region was one of the biggest regions in Ghana in terms of landmass. In terms of religions, Islam and Christianity are the most common religions in the three regions. But there are more Muslims than Christians. English is the official language of Ghana, and it is widely used in the three regions. In terms of Ghanaian languages that are widely spoken in the three regions, Dagbani is the most widely spoken language in the Northern Region while Mampruli and Gonja are the most spoken languages in the North-East and Savannah regions respectively (GSS, 2021). The regions were formerly together and so they share boundaries but North-East and Savannah are the two extremes that also share boundaries with other regions. North-East is bordered by Upper East to the North and Burkina Faso to the East while sharing boundaries with Northern to the South. Savannah is bordered by the Bono East and Bono region to the South, Upper West to the West and shares a border with the Northern region largely to the North and the East of the Northern region towards the Kpandai District.

The three selected regions are further divided into administrative districts. The northern region has fourteen administrative districts, North-East has six while the Savanna region has seven. Each of these districts has an assembly. The District Assembly is made up of local politicians elected representatives from electoral areas (zones). Most of them are elected and a few are appointed by the government. These elected representatives are called Assemblymen or women and the non-elected are government appointees. The study used an exploratory design that is within the constructivist epistemological approach to set the direction of the study and to ensure the validity of the instruments and the reliability of the findings. The study targeted Assemblymen and Assemblywomen because

they had better information about women's participation in politics, particularly local-level politics. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to recruit the study respondents using 'mixed methods paradigms-QUAL + quan' (Kipo, 2013, p. 261). First of all the Yamane (1967) sample size formula was used to determine and arrive at a sample size of 243. After that, all the 27 districts that constituted the three regions were built into Strata (Taherdoost, 2017). A simple Random Sampling technique was then used to select nine persons from each stratum. The category of selected respondents as used in the study is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Categories of respondents of participants' perception survey

Regions	District	Male	Female	Total
Northern	Gushegu District	9	3	6
	Karaga District	9	2	7
	Kpandai District	9	1	8
	Kumbungu District	9	2	7
	Mion District	9	0	9
	Nanton	9	1	8
	Nanumba North District	9	3	6
	Nanumba South District	9	4	5
	Saboba District	9	3	6
	Sagnarigu District	9	4	5
	<u>Savelugu/Nanton Municipal</u>	9	3	6
	<u>Tamale Metropolitan</u>	9	4	5
	<u>Tatale/Sanguli District</u>	9	0	9
	<u>Tolon District</u>	9	0	9
	<u>Yendi Municipal</u>	2	0	9
	<u>Zabzugu District</u>	9	2	7
North-East				
	Bunkpurugu-Nakpanduri district	9	2	7
	Yunyoo- Nasuan District	9	1	8
	Chereponi District	9	1	8
	East Mamprusi District	9	0	9
	Mamprugu Moagduri District	9	1	8
	Sene West District	9	0	9
	West Mamprusi District	9	2	7
Yunyoo-Nansuan	9	2	7	
Savannah				
	Bole	9	3	6
	Central Conja	9	4	5
	West Gonja	9	2	7
	Sawla/Tuna/Kalba	9	3	6
	East Gonja	9	2	7
	North Gonja	9	3	6
North-East Gonja	9	1	8	

Source: Field data, 2023

In addition to this, the Expert Purposive Sampling technique was used to select 15 participants from the three regions for Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). These key informants were selected based on their participation in district assembly elections. Their experience of participation in local government added depth to the data collected around this construct. Five of this category of participants were slated for interviews while the other two were placed in two groups of five discussants each for an FGD. Of the selected informants (participants) for qualitative data, eight were Assemblywomen and the remaining seven were Assemblymen. The key informants had in-depth knowledge of the subject matter of the study and were therefore selected to offer specific information for use in the study (Susanto et al, 2024). A semi-structured interview guide was used to interview the five respondents and a forty-five-minute focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with the two groups that were constructed for FGD. The interviews and discussions focused on respondents' perception of women's participation

in local politics, obstacles, hindrances and possibilities. This enabled the searchers to capture key perspectives that had hitherto been invisible in debates about gender equality in local politics in the two regions.

While basic quantitative tools such as regression, percentages and frequencies were used to analyse the quantitative data that was gathered, qualitative data was analysed through inductive thematic analysis. The results of the interviews and FGD were transcribed and documented. The text was shared between the authors and read severally for text familiarisation and correction of errors. The authors then developed codes from the text individually and later came together to compare generated codes for relevance and reliability of results. The generated codes by both authors were nearly the same. The codes were then organised into subthemes and further organised into main themes which were built based on the research questions of the study. The results of the qualitative analysis were compared to those of the quantitative analysis for cross-validation before interpretation and discussion of the findings. The study took place within three months, from November 2023 to January 2024.

4. RESULTS

The analysis of the survey revealed varied trends in women's participation in local politics as indicated in Table 2. Participants were expected to tick either "Yes" or "No" to deny or confirm whether any of the indicators of women's participation in politics existed in their district or not.

Table 2: Survey results of women's participation in politics

Indicators	Yes	No	Mean	Variance	Standard
Contesting elections at the constituency levels	94	164	1.6400	.240	.48990
	36.1%	63.9			
Contesting elections at the zonal levels	83	178	1.6800	.227	.47610
	31.8%	68.2			
Winning elections	72	189	1.7200	.210	.45826
	27.5%	72.5%			
Availability of quotas for women at assembly	72	189	1.7200	.210	.45826
	27.5%	72.5%			
Holding party position	83	178	1.6800	.227	.47610
	31.8%	68.2%			
Participating in political rallies	83	178	1.6800	.227	.47610
	31.8%	68.2%			
Influencing major decisions within parties.	83	178	1.6800	.227	.47610

31.8%

68.2%

Source: Field Data, 2022

As indicated in Table 2, 63.9% of the total participants indicated that women do not participate in constituency-level elections. This means women hardly contest to be elected as Parliamentarians at the national level, this was in opposition to the 31.6% who said they do. 68.2% of the total respondents indicated that women do not contest zonal-level elections. This means they do not present themselves to be elected as Assembly members who represent their communities at the district level. This was also in opposition to the 31.8% who said they do. 72.5% of the participants indicated that women do not win elections even when they contest. This was in opposition to the 27.5% who said they do. Another 72.5% indicated that there were no quotas reserved for women representation in the district. Holding a position in a political party that women belong to also received low affirmations. 68.2% of the participants said women do not hold positions in their political parties. 31.8% said they do. Another 68.2% indicated that women, even if they hold positions in their political parties do not command much influence even though 31.8% of them said they do. Overall, the majority of the participants who took part in the survey indicated that women do not contest elections both at the national and zonal levels, women do not win elections, there are no quotas reserved for women, women hardly hold party positions within their political parties, and that they have little influence in their political parties. This was corroborated by the responses of the key informants during interviews and FGD. Twelve of the key informants were also of the view that women hardly contest to be elected as members of parliament for their constituency and that they also hardly contest to be elected as Assembly members. They further confirmed that there were no quotas reserved for women at the district level nor were there any at the national level. They further explained that women hardly hold party positions and exert little to no influence on the political parties to which they belong.

Respondent B12 explained as thus:

We are generally marginalised. Our people are afraid to contest elections. We lack the resources needed besides the stigma attached to women participating in politics is just unbearable. Even the few of us who are dear to the contest hardly win. We struggle to win local elections let alone Parliamentary elections..... The life of a woman in politics is just too unbearable.

Another respondent, B7 also explained:

The trend is bad, the numbers in the regions are not encouraging. Currently, the local Government Minister (Hajia Halima Mahama Nalerigu/Gambaga Constituency) is facing a lot of challenges in her constituency. Women by their nature do not want a lot of radicles, "when I won it was stolen for NDC" They were telling lies about me concerning following men. Most of the women will like to stay because of " character assassination in the region" even the chiefs are manipulated by them in their favour. When I stood a chief insulted me because am a woman. I am now down with a strange sickness and I can't trace the source of it.

Factors that Affect Women's Participation in Local Politics are based on the results of the normality test, an Ordinary Least Square regression model was adopted to test the dependability of women's participation in politics on cultural factors, economic factors, intimidation and sabotage, lack of confidence and educational levels of women. At a confidence level of 95%, the results of the regression test are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Predictors of women's participation in politics

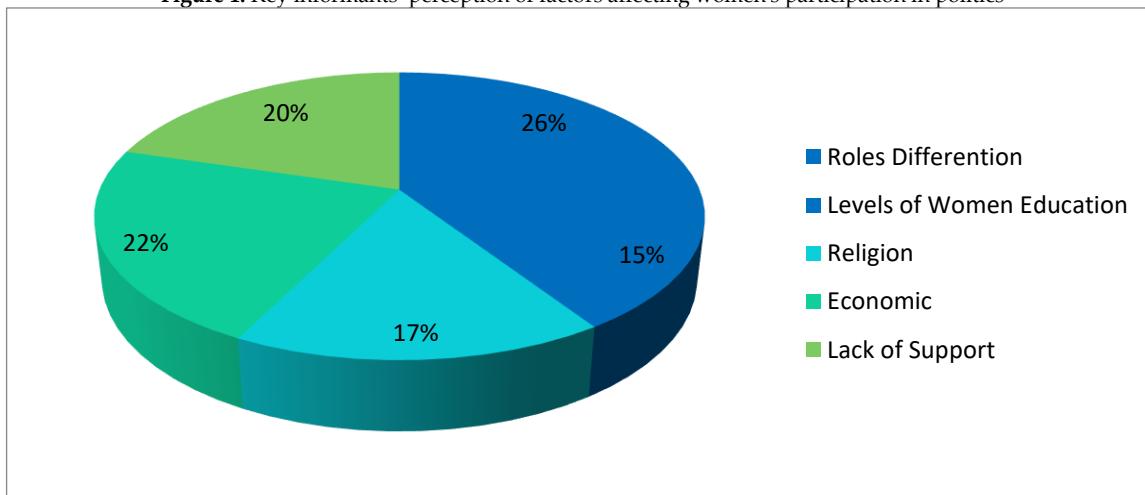
Variable	Coef.	Stand. Err	t	P>t	[95% Conf. Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Cultural Factors	8.67	0.33	0.933	0.00		
Religion	3.3	0.41	78.21	0.000	1.035	0.781
Intimidation	4.39	0.44	98.97	0.000	3.229	5.26
Poor Confidence	1.89	0.42	96.24	0.000	1.693	2.292
Levels of Education	1.16	0.2	45.5	0.000	0.981	1.547

F=0.00
R²=0.98

Source: Field Survey (2021)

From Table 4. 0 above, F=0.00 indicates the model was fit for the analysis. R² is =0.98 indicating that the factors combine to explain 98% of women's participation in politics in the defunct Northern Region. The coefficient value for cultural factors is 8.67 and it is significant at 0.00. This indicates that cultural factors predict the level of women's participation in politics and that any variation in the cultural factors of Northern Ghana will lead to a corresponding 8.7% change in the level of women's participation in politics. Religion is also shown to predict women's participation at a significant level of 0.00. So does poor confidence of women (Coe=1.89, p=0.00) and women's level of education (Coe=1.16, p=0.00). All factors are shown to have a predictive capacity over women's level of participation. This was corroborated by the responses of key informants. Factors such as role differentiation, belief systems, religion, social factors, lack of support and low levels of education came up strongly during the interviews and FGD was the main barrier to women's participation in politics. The summary of the responses of the key informant is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Key informants' perception of factors affecting women's participation in politics



Source: Field Data, 2022

26% of the key informants indicated that a culture where women are not expected to play certain roles such as leadership or management explains the low participation of women in politics. 22% of the key informants indicated that social factors such as stigmatisation, stereotyping and avoidance were some of the reasons why women's participation in politics was low. 20% mentioned a lack of support while 17% and 15% blamed the low participation of women in politics on religion and the level of women's education respectively. The results of the interviews and FGD were not different from those obtained from the qualitative analysis. The study therefore revealed that cultural

factors, religious beliefs, social factors, lack of support (intimidation), low confidence and low levels of women's education are the major factors that affect women's participation levels in politics. Respondent B9 explains it as thus: Social and cultural beliefs that women cannot be leaders in society. Men feel belittled to be led by women in society or organizations. This makes women feel ashamed and discouraged from participating in the local government's decision-making process. The majority of men in this community have the perception that it is bad for men to be led by women in society.

Another key informant B14 also explains:

Most of the women are not capable, in my case, I was only sourcing from my salary. Soliciting for finance, no one is willing to assist, including our fellow women. Men always want to have sex with you as a woman and this discourages a lot

Respondent B5 also explained

Factors boldly mentioned were the low level of education among women. About 90 per cent of women in this community do not have formal education and even those few women who attended formal school are less educational level. This makes women lack some basic skills for leadership. The outcome of this phenomenon is incompetence in certain leadership roles. It discourages young women from participating in both local and national governance.

5. DISCUSSIONS

The research revealed that women's participation in the Northern, North-East, and Savannah regions is notably limited, with few opportunities for them to be elected as parliamentarians or local council members (Assemblymen or women). Those who do stand for election often struggle to secure victory and face challenges in holding party positions, with minimal influence even when they do. These findings align with Akurugu's (2020) discovery of low female political participation in sub-Saharan Africa.

The engagement of women in Ghanaian politics since 1960 has been disheartening, marked by fluctuations in their representation. Initially, at 9.6% in 1960, it plummeted to 0.0% in 1996, rose to 10.5% in 2004, and reached 10.9% during the 2012 parliamentary elections (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development/Institute of Local Government Studies, 2013). However, at the grassroots governmental level, women's participation as elected officials has consistently remained below 10% since the advent of democracy. Their involvement in local politics significantly influences both local and national development, with scholars like Nzomo (1994) and Dosekun (2021) emphasizing its importance for social and economic progress. Despite efforts in policy formulation aimed at facilitating women's participation in community decision-making processes, the actual involvement of women in local politics remains troubling. Factors Influencing Women's Participation in Politics Numerous factors hinder women's participation in politics in Northern Ghana, as revealed by a recent study. Cultural, social, and religious influences, combined with the educational levels of women, collectively impact their engagement in politics. These factors are elaborated upon below.

Cultural Factors

The research findings indicate that cultural factors, including role differentiation, norms dictating women's behaviours, and societal values defining the ideal woman, significantly influence women's participation in politics. This aligns with Addae's (2010) observation that women's limited access to leadership positions stems from traditional beliefs attributing customary leadership roles in households and communities primarily to men. Khan and Ara (2006) also note that cultural obstacles impede women's political representation, while Addo-Deku (2012) suggests that entrenched male-dominated structures undermine gender equality, eroding women's confidence and self-esteem.

Religion

The research findings underscore religion as a significant factor influencing women's engagement in politics. This aligns with Kurfi's (2018) observations in Mali, where the Islamic faith restricted women from various social spheres,

including political involvement, fostering a dynamic where women are subordinate to men. Islam, prevalent in the studied regions, emphasizes women's obedience to their husbands and discourages female leadership in the presence of men, potentially deterring women from pursuing leadership roles (Kurfi, 2018). This religious adherence manifests in the political landscape, particularly in Northern Ghana, where only two women have been elected to parliament since independence, and female representation at the district level remains scarce. Religion plays a pivotal role in this trend by encouraging women to defer to male leadership (Schnabel, 2016). However, Sulemana and Agyapong (2019) highlight a contrasting trend in Nigeria, where Islamic women increasingly participate in politics and decision-making processes. This shift is attributed to the efforts of civil society organizations like the Federation of Muslim Women's Organizations in Nigeria (FOMWAN) and Women Awake (AA), which advocate for women's rights and engage Islamic women in discussions on political participation, challenging conventional gender norms within the society.

Educational level of women

This study found that the level of women's education affects their participation in politics. This finding is consistent with that of Kamau (2012), who in a study in Bangladesh found that the majority of the women could not read and write and so were unaware of current issues in Bangladesh. They could hardly make any meaningful contribution to raging debates on national issues. The men, their study revealed, were well educated, could speak to issues of national interest, could interact with people from outside their environment and could build stronger social networks because of their levels of formal education. This made them active and ready to participate in national and local politics. Also found that women in Northern Nigeria remained aloof in terms of politics because, unlike their colleagues in the South who are averagely well educated, they lack formal education and so could not actively participate in politics since they could hardly understand issues of national interest from the dailies or other publications. Wood (2019) reports that education is very important when it comes to politics because one will need to be abreast with the issues that affect the people of one's society and that could be gotten largely through reading and understanding publications and reports which those who are not educated might not be able to understand.

Union UN Women (2021) also reports that because of a lack of education, women find it difficult to read and understand many that could educate them and give them knowledge about local politics, this makes them impotent from partaking in both national and local politics. This finding conforms with the theory of Personal Empowerment which argues that for women to be empowered, they have to show their readiness to be empowered by acquiring personal skills, an education and a sustained drive to get involved in their personal development. While efforts are being made by various international bodies through legislation and activism to promote women's participation in politics, women have to also make efforts to develop themselves so that they can be easily pushed into mainstream politics. It is not about just participating, it is about also making some impacts. Women have to take responsibility for their personal development.

Poverty

The study found that poverty is one of the factors that affect women's participation in politics. This is consistent with the findings of those who found that financial incapacity affected women's participation in local politics in Nigeria. Participating in politics, especially in Africa comes with a lot of financial demands as people need to obtain forms at the party levels to be nominated to contest available positions. Funds are needed for campaigns, publicity and mobilisation of supporters. The North of Ghana is the poorest of all the regions. The patriarchal society of the North has made women even poorer. Women feel reluctant to use their little resources to risk contesting elections which they may hardly win. The Reason Action Theory indicates that humans will only engage in actions that have perceived benefits. When women do not see the benefits that may come from using their meagre resources to contest elections in a highly patriarchal society, they coil back and remain backstage as far as politics is concerned (Madhok, & Sumi. 2013).

Ahwoi (2010) also found that in Uganda, women are constrained from entering local politics due to the financial resources needed for campaigns. Recognising that politics is an expensive project, women coil back. To win a ballot, aspirants need to use resources to sway ballots to their side. Medoff, (1986) also stated that money, people and time are the three important resources, aspirants with the most money in an election campaign have the greatest probability of winning. He went ahead to say that women contenders, always do not raise more money compared to their male colleagues.

Lack of confidence and aspiration

The study revealed that a lack of confidence in women is one of the factors that affect their participation in politics. This is consistent with the reports of the Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Democracy in 2010 which stated that one of the reasons why women members of the black communities, minority ethnic societies and incapacitated people have lower representation in the House of Commons is that they lack confidence in themselves. They are never sure they could contest and win any elections and so stay away from participating in any politics also reports that poor participation of women in political activities could be attributed to personal qualities like insufficient self-confidence, and perceptions about parliamentary life the language used in Parliament was among other variables. Politics is an endeavour that requires a lot of confidence because one must face a crowd of people at rallies, engage in debates, talk to convince people and dare intimidators when possible. It therefore requires that people develop a certain level of confidence before they can succeed (Kamau, 2012).

Intimidation and sabotage

The study found that because of intimidation and sabotage that characterise Ghanaian politics, women are unable to take an active part in local politics in Northern Ghana. Acts of violence create an inescapable atmosphere of uncertainty, which builds fear and anxiety in women due to their vulnerability, particularly in rural Africa (Dery & Akurugu, 2021). Sometimes women are even subjected to violence by spouses for daring to participate in elections reports the case of a woman who was beaten by their spouse for picking a nomination form to contest the September 2006 elections in the then Talon-Kumbungu District in 2010 Such acts derailed the interest of women in local government politics. Further reports that the affected woman later withdrew her nomination and added that that was a disturbing scene for many women who had nursed the interest of contesting for any positions in the district. The researchers also observed that women are intimidated in many other ways such as e defacing campaign posters, putting pressure on them to step down in favour of male aspirants or threatening them with divorce. The Parliament and the District Assemblies in the last twenty years have worked in a way that confirms the views of the postcolonial counties and their institutions as male-controlled (Mukhopadhyay & Meer, 2004).

6. CONCLUSIONS

From the findings, one can conclude low involvement of women in the local politics in the various regions of Ghana, as a lot of men were noted to have occupied places left aside in the assembly for appointees which could have been used to absorb fifteen per cent (15%) of the women. Nevertheless, persistent social and traditional interpretations and delusions concerning the involvement of women in politics. These force most of them (women) to run away from politics for fear of terrorisation from their male colleagues. This condition is unfortunate and leads to the loss of the valuable impact women could give to their societies if they are cheered to enter politics and take part unreservedly.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made to enhance the number of women in politics and help them to take part effectively to bring about justifiable growth.

On the part of the weak financial capacity of most women on the political front, it is suggested that appropriate policies, including laws, should be implemented towards reducing the use of money to influence the policymaking

process of the electorates. With regard to the unflattering political climate which scares the free involvement of women, it is proposed that necessary steps should be instituted to lead to effective enactment of the rules and regulations that guide the conduct of such activities, which should be ensured at all stages of political activities so that all unjustifiable tension and transgressions arising within political activities can be reduced or eliminated.

Also, women need to be educated and encouraged to cultivate an interest in the local politics of their close societies through the local political system. Furthermore, local authorities, through the district assemblies, develop programmes that will sensitise men and women to the need to change some of the cultural practices that reinforce gender discriminatory practices and propagate discriminatory ideologies such as role differentiation, stereotyping and imbalanced family power structure. This will give women the freedom to confidently engage in activities that bring them to the fore in governance activities.

All in all, it is recommended that community members should endeavour to give women politicians the needed ethical support. This will overlay a way for interested women to be supported and elected to take their places in the local political system towards the stable development of Ghana and Africa at large.

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ORCID

David Suaka Yaro  <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8220-720>

Daniel Dramani Kipo-Sunyezi  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3697-3333>

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