

WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN SUB-NATIONAL LEVEL POLITICS IN GHANA'S FOURTH
REPUBLIC

Abstract

Debate over the factors that perpetuate male dominance in political representation all over the world continues. Several factors have been cited, including the fact that women have a weak foundation in political party leadership which forms the basis for subsequent progression in leadership. In spite of the fact that women have the capacity to compete favorably in national politics if they have a say in choosing who stands for elections at political party level, several studies tend to pay less attention on women's leadership in political parties at the subnational level. Using qualitative methods, the paper makes a contribution to women's participation in political leadership using the two dominant political parties, the National Democratic Congress and New Patriotic Party, that have alternated political power in Ghana since the return to constitutional rule in 1992. Findings showed that women's representation in political party leadership at the subnational level mirrors national trends, albeit some local particularities including unfavorable meeting time where such decisions are taken. The paper concludes with some lessons learned.

1. Introduction

The enthusiasm of Ghanaian women in party politics is not in doubt. In fact, since the return to constitutional rule in 1993, Ghanaian women have consistently sustained their enthusiasm in

their bid to contribute to the democratic processes [1,2]. Women have contested elections at both the internal party and inter-party levels, although that has not resulted in an increase in their numbers at both levels. In 2016, two women attempted the presidency for the first time, although they were disqualified by the Electoral Commission for errors in their nomination papers. These were former first lady, Nana Konadu Agyemang Rawlings, who broke away from the National Democratic Congress (hereafter, NDC) which was founded by her husband, Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, to form the National Democratic Party (NDP) and Madam Akua Donkoh who founded the Ghana Freedom Party (hereafter, GFP). At the close of filling nominations for the 2020 elections, three women successfully filed to contest the presidency; Nana Konadu Agyemang Rawlings of the NDP, Madam Akua Donkoh of the GFP and Madam Brigitte Dzogbenuku of the Progressive Peoples Party (hereafter, PPP). Additionally, the largest opposition party, the NDC, nominated a woman (former Vice-Chancellor of one of Ghana's leading public universities, the University of Cape Coast) as running mate to former president Mahama. This is by far the biggest effort at getting a woman closer to the presidency since the NDC is the only viable opposition party capable of winning elections in Ghana. It must be noted that Ghana has become a political duopoly with the NDC and NPP alternating power and commanding over 80percent of popular votes in all elections since 1992. Also, the presence of more women is, arguably, is a sign that women empowerment has been taken seriously now than before in Ghana. Such, empowerment “is important, both as a human rights objective in itself and as a means to increasing” the feminist voice at the policy level in the governance system [3, p. 53].

Notwithstanding the fact that there is hope that elected women are better positioned to deliver a more gender/feminist responsive political discourse for the female constituents [4],

efforts by feminists and other CSO interested in championing the course of women, who constitute over 52 percent of Ghana's population, to play leading roles in politics has not yielded much. For instance, in spite a marginal increase in the number of women in parliament following the 2016 elections, Ghana remains one of the "lowest ranked countries in the world in terms of women's representation in a single or lower house of parliament - with only 13.1 percent women in its parliament" [5, p. 33]. The major institution that has the capacity to increase women's participation in political leadership is political parties [6]. This they can do by electing more women at the sub-national level, which is the most important organizational unit of political parties in Ghana [7]. Political parties in Ghana, therefore, take organizational issues at that level very seriously because what pertains there is a reflection of how politics is organized at the national level [8,9]. Given this, the participation of women in national-level politics cannot be delinked from the subnational level. Elected executives at that level constitute the *selectorate* of parliamentary candidates and national party executives. According to Agomor, [10, p. 4] "Ghanaian political parties have ways influenced policies in favour of certain people like that of women and especially within the party hierarchy". The inhibiting factors to the political participation of women include, but not limited to, financial resource constraints, sociocultural factors that make many regard politics as 'men's game' and inadequate leveled playing field for both women and men [11].

The call to address the continuing pervasive marginalization of women at various stages of political leadership to give them a voice in the decision-making processes has led to the establishment of many international resolutions, treaties and conventions including the Beijing Platform for Action; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); International Convention on Economic,

Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) [12,13,14]. Apart from being a signatory to these international instruments, Ghana's Fourth Republican Constitution and Political Parties Act, Act 574 stipulate that no member of a political party should be discriminated against on grounds of ethnicity, gender, race, colour, wealth, religion, or even social status [15]. Besides, there is evidence that the Constitutions of all political parties in Ghana have ensured that their members have the same right to vote and be voted for, pay dues, and participate in decision making [12]. Notwithstanding the favorable political environment for women's participation in Ghana's body politic, the number of women in politics has rather been disappointing [11].

Although many studies on women and politics generally abound [5,16,17,18,19,11], most of these studies have focused on the national level, with less empirical basis for subnational comparison. As contribution to the literature, this paper adds to the general feminist research by exploring women's participation in subnational party politics in three of Ghana's most populous constituencies in three decisive regions. The Ashanti region represents the electoral stronghold of the New Patriotic Party, the Volta region represents the electoral stronghold of the National Democratic Congress and the Greater Accra region represents the largest swing region in Ghana. The Ledzokuku constituency represents the largest swing region- the greater Accra Region. The Kwabre East Constituency is the second-largest constituency in terms of size and population in the Ashanti Region and has since the return to constitutional rule in 1993 been the electoral stronghold of the NPP. In the 2016 elections, it was the constituency that gave the NPP its highest number of votes in both the presidential and parliamentary elections per constituency basis [20]. For the NDC, the Ketu South Constituency is the largest in terms of population and land size in the party's electoral stronghold administrative region; the Volta Region. The Ketu

South in 2016 also gave the NDC its highest number of votes on the constituency basis in both the presidential and parliamentary elections. The Ledzokuku constituency produced the highest number of votes among swing constituencies in Ghana [21]. It, therefore, stands to reason that if these major political parties are committed to increasing women's participation in politics, evidence would be seen in how women's participation is viewed in these constituencies.

This study is further motivated on the grounds that women's effective participation in these regions will eventually lead to a rise in their numbers in party leadership which can potentially lead to the domination of more women to contest parliamentary seats. This may eventually lead to an increase in the numbers of women at the national party positions and parliamentary candidates. This study, therefore fills the gap in the literature by exploring the participation of women at the subnational level in the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP).

The structure of the paper is as follows: This introductory part is followed by the legal frame within which politics is carried out in Ghana. The next section through light on the state of affairs with respect to how women have fared in politics over the years. The methodology is then discussed, followed by the findings and discussions. The paper ends with conclusions and recommendations.

2. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Ghana is a signatory to many regional, continental and international frameworks and has accordingly pledged in various forums to promote women empowerment generally and gender equality in political leadership in particular. For example, Ghana has signed and ratified the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women

in Africa. Ghana has pledged in this direction to support the advancement of women on the continent as well as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance [22]. In line with this and other conventions, Ghana has put in place some legislative reforms to guarantee the political rights of women, encourage women to participate in political leadership and generally ensured that the atmosphere is conducive for women to actively participate in political decision making [22]. Women's rights encompass the framework through which women seek to articulate their claims for recognition as human beings in all spheres of public and private life [2]. The various international treaties which Ghana is a signatory to, the many United Nations Conferences, Local and International Women advocacy networks are some of the vehicles through which women have sought to articulate these rights.

The most authoritative legal framework that guarantees the right of women in political participation and leadership decision making in Ghana is the 1992 Fourth Republic Constitution which has proven to be the longest constitution in Ghana's history. The fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms are enshrined in Chapter Five of the 1992 Constitution. Article 12(a) states that: "The fundamental human rights and freedoms enshrined in this chapter shall be respected and upheld by the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary and all other organs of government and its agencies and, where applicable to them, by all-natural and legal persons in Ghana, and shall be enforceable by the Courts as provided for in this Constitution". Article 12(2) adds that: "Every person in Ghana, whatever his race, place of origin, political opinion, color, religion, creed or gender shall be entitled to the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the individual contained in this Chapter but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and the public interest" [15]. Also, Article 35 (5d) enjoins the state to make democracy a reality by decentralizing the administrative machinery of government to the local levels (subnational) [15].

The wisdom here is to afford all possible opportunities for the people, irrespective of sex or gender, to participate in decision making at every level in national life and government [2]. It further creates an opportunity for citizens' participation in decision-making at the local governance level [15]. Accordingly, the Constitution affords all Ghanaians; men and women, the opportunity to contribute to the development of the country at the national and local levels.

Additionally, various reforms have been undertaken to specifically deal with some of the inhibiting factors that have contributed to the non-active participation of women including violence against them which scares some from coming into the public domain [22,8, 23]. For instance, Article 26(2) of the 1992 Constitution states that: all customary practices which dehumanize or are injurious to the physical and mental well-being of a person are prohibited. In response to this provision, inhumane, cruel and grossly indecent practices such as widowhood rites have been outlawed through the Parliamentary amendment of Ghana's Criminal Code. The Criminal Code (As amended) Act of 1994, make female genital mutilation a second-degree felony in which perpetrators can be sentenced to a minimum of three years' imprisonment. The provision of the Criminal Code on sexual offenses have been strengthened in terms of definition and punishment [24]. This is very relevant to deter people who accuse successful women of attaining their feat through sexual favors. Besides, a special unit has been created within the Ghana Police Service known as the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) to deal with violence against women including domestic violence.

In effect, the 1992 Constitution and the Political Parties Act of Ghana, Act 574 (2000) enjoin political parties to participate in shaping the political will of the people and disseminate information on political ideas, social and economic programs of national character [25,15]. The legal framework also gives every Ghanaian of voting age the right to join a political party and to

participate in political activity intended to influence the composition and policies at the national level [26,17]. It must be stated that the law says every Ghana without restrictions on gender, sex or any grounds. Additionally, Article 7 (1) of the NDC constitution stipulates that the party should promote participatory democracy and responsible government in Ghana and attain political power through democratic and constitutional means to create conditions conducive to ensure national development [27]. Similarly, Article 2 (1) of the constitution of the NPP stipulates that one of its objectives is to participate in shaping the political will of the people by disseminating information on political ideas, social and economic programs without discrimination [28]. In all these, there is no theoretical limitation on women in terms of the freedom to participate in political and leadership positions at all levels of national life.

3. Women's Political Participation in Ghana: The State of Affairs

Ghanaian women have played a major leadership role in politics since the pre-colonial days and were said to be particularly active during after independence. This activism led to the enactment of one of Africa's first electoral gender quotas for Parliament in 1960, though that was short lived [29]. This initial progress, notwithstanding, decades of single-party and military rule contributed to a serious setback for women's political activism that has lingered till present [12]. The involvement of indigenous women in public life suffered a setback following the introduction of western education, at the onset of British Colonialism, denied women access leading to seed of segregation in the years that followed [12,6,30]. Also, that relied upon a model of women's movement mobilization at the behest of the regime, combined with the "single-member district (SMD) electoral system and no electoral gender quota in the post-transition period, have contributed to one of the lowest representations of women in Parliament" in Ghana [29, p. 1]. According to Allah-Mensah [6], colonial rule did not prioritize female education. In

her view, this situation was, largely, aided by the prevailing patriarchal African value system as well as the customary gendered role pattern that prevailed.

This notwithstanding, Ghana has since independence in 1957 made some gains in an effort to increase the participation and representation of women in governance in response to the awareness of the fact that women are key actors in the nation's body politic. In response to the male dominance in the parliament in the post-independent era, president Dr. Kwame Nkrumah introduced the Representation of People's Amendment Bill which made it possible for women to participate in politics [31]. It is on record that in 1979, out of a 140-member parliament, only five were women [2]. The situation has since 1992 seen some improvement in women representation in Ghana although it has remained at less than 14%. This has empirically reflected in the number of women appointed to serve as ministers in the Fourth Republic.

Table 1.1. Performance of female and their male counterparts in parliamentary elections in the Fourth Republic.

Year	CONTESTANTS					ELECTED				
	Female	%	Male	%	Total	Female	%	Male	%	Total
2016	137	11	1,121	89	1258	35	12	240	88	275
2012	133	9	1,332	91	1,465	29	10	246	90	275
2008	103	10.7	856	89.3	959	20	8.7	210	91.3	230
2004	104	10.9	849	89.1	953	25	10.9	205	89.1	230
2000	102	9.3	986	90.7	1088	18	9	182	91	200
1996	59	7.6	721	92.4	780	19	9	181	91	200
1992	23	2.9	418	94.8	441	10	5	190	95	200

Source: [32,33,34].

Additionally, the processes that led to the restoration of multi-party democratic politics in 1992 saw the National Commission for Democracy tasked to spearhead the democratization process. The Commission engaged stakeholders in series of consultative processes, most of

which were informed by feminist views in relation to democratic politics including the need to promote basic human rights women and children, and political inclusion of the female gender [12, 35]. According to Allah-Mensah, the crusade for Affirmative Action in Ghana was partly based on recommendations submitted by the National Council on Women and Development (NCWD), that spelt out directive including the need “to provide a set of guidelines for systematic and sustained implementation of the various aspects of Affirmative Action towards equality of rights and opportunities for women in Ghana” [6, p. 29].

In the Fourth Republic, there has been some level of sustained women activism in party politics at all levels. This is evidenced by the increasing number of women who contest for public offices, although there is no correlation between the number of women contestants and the number of women winners. This is mainly due to the fact that the dominant parties do not sponsor more women in their electoral stronghold where victory is usually certain. It must be noted that the nature of women participation in both national and sub-national internal party organization is an indication that women are politically conscious and are committed to gender balance [6,17,30].

Such consciousness has contributed to women activism which has yielded some positive outcomes. One of the successes of The Women’s Manifesto is, perhaps, the appointment of more women into top public leadership positions such as Chief Justice, Chairperson of the Electoral Commission and Minister of Justice and Attorney General [36]. What is now needed is more women in elected political position. The political parties in Ghana have what it takes to influence their internal policies in favour of women within the parties’ rank and file. The major parties such as the NDC and NPP, rather than the fragmented smaller parties, have a better opportunity to embrace women because of their wider participation through electoral contest

[37]. Also, “the structure and internal democratic processes of the party for identifying, selecting and nominating candidates during primary elections, for party leadership and for decision-making positions, determine the extent of the gender gap and inequalities [37, p. 396].

In the view of Allah-Mensah [38] the creation of women’s wings in the various political parties does not necessarily mean the parties are gender sensitive. Although the parties have non-discriminatory policies on paper, it is still difficult for women to compete with their male counterparts. The net effect is that majority of women executives in the political parties are either within the women’s wings or at lowest rank at the national level and sub-national levels, mostly occupying subordinated non-elective positions. Positions such as secretary, treasurer and their vice are mainly the ones occupied by women [30].

It is instructive to note that some male party members offer various forms of support including financial assistance to promote women aspirants. There are also those that are antagonistic and uncompromising towards women who express interest in parliamentary seats and internal party executive positions [12].

4. METHODOLOGY

A methodology is a way of thinking about and studying social reality [39]. It is further described as a way to systematically solve a research problem scientifically [40]. This paper relied on the qualitative method to provide an understanding of women participation in party politics at the subnational level in Ghana. The reason is that the qualitative method allows for exploration, interpretation, analysis, description and interpretation of the dynamics in representation at subnational level party parties [41].

The qualitative research method is suitable for collecting data in the form of non-numerical form such as words from a small number (enough for saturation to occur) of people in order to capture their views [42, 41,43]. This method is ideal for exploring a research problem and examining the social context within which actions or behaviour occurs and its impact on a phenomenon [44]. Besides, this method allows a researcher to classify and organize data into key concepts, emerging categories and themes aimed at realizing the objectives of a study. Specifically, elite interviews with some former and current political party executives and unsuccessful candidates in the political parties' internal elections in the Ketu South, Kwabre East and Ledzokuku Constituencies were used. Also, an official of the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) who has actively been involved in various reforms within the political parties since 1992 and a onetime Head of the Department of Political Science, University of Ghana was interviewed. Additionally, Focus Group Discussions with women in the study areas as well as content analysis of published works including party constitutions/electoral rules of the NDC and NPP, especially those designed to bridge the gap between men and women, was used. These were analyzed to understand the reasons behind the low women participation in party politics at the subnational level and to determine the extent of their challenges at that level. Although the sampling reflected parity in terms of numbers between the two political parties, the focus of the discussions and interviews was on the *feminist voice* in relation to women participation in party leadership and getting the women through the focus group discussions to tell their story.

This article thus contributes to both the empirical and theoretical meanings of women participation in politics at the subnational level in Ghana. At the empirical level, the paper gives an in-depth knowledge of women's participation in Ghana's electoral system at the subnational

level and how it works practically. At the theoretical level, the paper's contribution is concerning women's role in general democratization at the subnational level and also offers adds a feminist angle to the discourse.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents an analyses and discussions of the findings of the study based on both secondary and primary data.

5.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS IN THE ASHANTI, VOLTA AND GREATER ACCRA REGIONS (1992-2016)

5.1.1 THE 1992 ELECTIONS

The First Parliament of the Fourth Republic came into force in 1993 after elections were held in 1992. In that contest, 16 women were elected in 16 constituencies out of the 200 constituencies. The Ashanti Region recorded four women victories. These were Madam Beatrice, Aboagye for the Afigya Sekyere West constituency, Madam Josephine Addai-Mensah for the Bosomtwe constituency, Madam Juliet Nti-Fordjour for the Kwabre constituency (from which Kwabre East was carved out) and Madam Mary Eugenia Ghansa for the New Edubiase constituency [35]. One female lost in the Odotobire constituency. In the Volta region, only one woman contested and was elected in the person Madam Patience Pomary for the Hohoe North constituency. The Greater Accra region saw two victorious women in that election namely Madam Victoria Adjetey for the Ga South constituency and Madam Gladys Boateng for the Tema West constituency. These were the only female candidates [35].

5.5.2 THE 1996 ELECTIONS

In 1996, the Ashanti Region recorded only two women MPs in the New Edubiase (Madam Theresa Baffoe) and Effiduase Asokore (Madam Grace Colman) constituencies while three other female candidates lost. No woman was elected in the Volta Region although two women contested the seats at Ho West and North Tongu [35,p. 146]. The Greater Accra Region recorded four women but two other females contested and lost. The winners were Madam Theresa Amaley Tagoe (Ablekuma South constituency), Madam Rebecca Akweley Adotey (Ayawaso West Wuogon constituency), Madam Margaret Clarke Kwesie (Ga South constituency) and Madam Afieye Ashong for the Kpone-Katamanso constituency [35].

5.1.3 THE 2000 ELECTIONS

In the 2000 elections, the Ashanti Region recorded two just as in the 1996 elections in the New Edubiase (Madam Theresa Baffoe) and Effiduase (Madam Grace Colman) constituencies. Five others contested and lost. In the Volta Region, only one female won in the North Dayi constituency namely Madam Akua Sena Dansua while the two others who contested lost [35, p. 165]. The Greater Accra Region recorded only two victorious women namely Madam Theresa Amaley Tagoe for the Ablekuma South constituency and Madam Afieye Ashong for the Kpone-Katamanso constituency. Three others contested but lost [45].

5.1.4 THE 2004 ELECTIONS

The number of women MPs increased in the Ashanti Region in the 2004 election to five with women winning in the Bantama, Asante Akim North, Effiduase-Asokore, Kwadaso, and Oforikrom constituencies. Five other candidates lost. Similarly, the Volta region recorded an increase with two women winning. There were Madam Juliana Azumah-Mensah (Ho East constituency) and Madam Akua Sena Dansua (North Dayi constituency) while two other women

contestants lost [35, p. 186]. Also, the Greater Accra Region recorded an increase to five female winners while three others attempted but lost in their constituencies. The winners were Madam Theresa Amaley Tagoe (Ablekuma South), Madam Frema Osei Opare (Ayawaso West Wuogon), Madam Gladys Nortey Ashley (Ledzokuku), Elizabeth Sackey (Okaikwei North) and Madam Shirley Ayorkor Botchway (Weija).

5.1.5 THE 2008 ELECTIONS

The women MPs in the Ashanti Region reduced by one in the 2008 elections with women winning in four constituencies. They were Madam Grace Addo (Amasie West), Madam Gifty Ohene-Kunadu (Asante Akim South), Madam Cecilia Abena Dapaah (Bantema) and Madam Elizabeth Agyemang for the Oforikrom constituency. Two others lost in the Ejusu Juaben and Offinso constituencies. The Volta Region retained the figure at two with Madam Akua Sena Dansua winning in North Dayi and Madam Juliana Azuma-Mensah winning the Ho East seat but one other female candidate lost in the South Tongu constituency [35, p. 207-208]. In the Greater Accra Region, four women got elected. These were: Madam Frema Osei Opare (Ayawaso West Wuogon); Madam Elizabeth Kwatsoe Sackey (Okaikoi North); Madam Irene Naa Torshie Addo (Tema West) and Madam Shirley Ayorkor Botchay (Weija).

5.1.6 THE 2012 ELECTIONS

In the 2012 elections, women won in four constituencies in the Ashanti Region and four women lost also. The winners were Madam Patricia Appiagyei (Asokwa), Madam Ama Pomaah Andoh (Juaben), Madam Grace Addo (Manso- Nkwanta) and Madam Elizabeth Agyeman (Oforikrom). In the Volta Region, the number of women shot up to four. The winners were Madam Juliana Azumah-Mensah (Agotime-Ziope), Madam Bernice AfiAdiku (Hohoe), Madam

Della Sowah (Kpando) and Madam Helen Adjoa Ntoso (Krachi West) constituencies but two women contenders in the Afadjato South and Hohoe lost [35,p .229]. In the Greater Accra Region, fourteen women contested but eight won. The winners were Madam Ursula Owusu (Ablekuma West), Madam Comfort Doyoe Cudjoe-Ghansah (Ada), Madam Shirley Ayorkor Botchew (Anyaa-Sowutuom), Madam Sarah Adjo Sarfo (Dome-Kwabenya), Madam Benita Sena Okity- Dua (Ledzokuku), Madam Elizabeth Tawia Sackey (Okaikwei North), Madam Irene Naa Torshie Addo (Tema West) and Madam Rosemond Comfort Abrah (Weija-Gbawe) [35, 45].

6.1.7 THE 2016 ELECTIONS

In the 2016 elections, six women won parliamentary seats in the Ashanti Region. These are: Ama Pomaa Boateng (Juaben); Madam Francisca Oteng Mensah (Kwabre East); Madam Joyce Adwoa Akoh Dei (Bosome Freho); Madam Mavis Nkansah Boadu (Afigya Sekyere East); Madam Patricia Appiagye (Asokwa) and Madam Ama Pomaa Boateng, for the Juaben constituency. In the Volta Region, five females won in their constituencies. These are Madam Helen Adjoa Ntoso (Krachi West), Madam Angela Oforiwa Alorwu-Tay (Afadjato South), Madam Della Sowah (Kpando), Madam Joyce Tetteh (North Dayi), Madam Bernice Adiku (Hohoe). In the Greater Accra Region, ten women won parliamentary seats in election 2016. These were Madam Tina Gifty Naa Ayeley Mensah (Weija Gwawe), Sophia Karen Ackuaku (Domeabre/Obom), Madam Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey (Anyaa Sowutuom), Madam Sarah Adwoa Sarfo (Dome Kwabenya), Nana Akua Owusu Afriyieh (Ablekuma North), Madam Ursula Owusu (Ablekuma West) and Madam Zenator Agyemang Rawlings (Klottey Korle), Madam Elizabeth Afoley Quaye (Krowor), Madam Linda Obenewaa Akweley Ocloo (Shai Osudoku) and Madam Cudjoe Comfort Doyoe [35, 45].

5.1.8 AHEAD OF THE 2020 ELECTIONS

At the close of filling of nomination for the 2020 elections, the sitting Member of Parliament for the NPP's stronghold – Kwabre East, Hon. Francisca Oteng-Gyasi had filed to seek re-election. The NDC had also filed a lady to contest the seat in 2020 in its electoral stronghold of Ketu South constituency. It is thus certain that women will occupy these two largest constituencies in terms of size and voter population in Ghana in parliament.

6. INTERNAL PARTY STRUCTURES AND LEADERSHIP SELECTION AT THE SUB-NATIONAL LEVEL

The organizational structure of the NDC and NPP exude noticeable similarities at all levels. At the subnational level, the two parties have three sub-constituency structures: Polling Stations/Branches, Electoral Area/Wards, and Constituencies. These flow from the national and regional branches [9, 23].

Table 1.2 The overall structure of the NPP and NDC from the lowest to the highest

NDC	NPP
Branch	Polling Station
Ward	Electoral Area
Constituency	Constituency
Regional	Regional
National	National

Source: Compiled by the author

From the Table, it is clear that the two parties have structures that stretch from the grassroots (lowest level) to the national level in a manner that parallels the national electoral and local government delimitation, from the lowest to the highest unit/polling station strata - constituency, district, regional and national [9]. The theoretical implication is that the structures

make it easier for the parties to identify recruitment networks of new voters, an activity that can best be done by both men and women because political parties' objective is to win elections and enhance the welfare of the people [46].

The study found that in the case of the NPP, elections at the sub-national level start from the Polling Station and end at the Constituency Executive Committee. The party also provides space for the council of elders and patrons. Technically the council of elders is supposed to provide 'wisdom' directives while the patrons are supposed to provide 'financial direction'. The NPP has five elected officers at every Polling Station. These are the: chairman, secretary, youth organizer, organizer, and women organizer. All card bearing members in good standing are eligible to elect polling station officers.

The next layer is the Electoral Area. The polling station officers elect one person who as Electoral Area Coordinator to coordinate the polling stations. Per the party constitution where an Electoral Area has more than 10 Polling Stations, two coordinators are elected.

At the Constituency Level which is the highest, the study found that all Polling Station Executives and Electoral Area Coordinators vote to elect the Constituency Executives. The NPP elects 10 people and appoints 7 others at the constituency level. Those appointed are the deputy youth organizer, deputy NASARA coordinator, deputy women's organizer, research and elections officer, communications officer and financial secretary. This brings to 17, the number of constituency executives in every constituency across the countr.

Also, there are instances where, beyond the party constitution, the subnational structure can agree on some conventions. For instance, the law says in every polling station there should be 5 executives but when a particular polling station is too large, the number can increase. For

example, in the Grace Presbyterian Polling Station in the Ledzokuku Constituency, the NPP had 15 executives because the number was large which later necessitated the creation of two additional polling stations out of it by the Electoral Commission.

If one wants to be elected at the constituency level, he/she picks a form, gets someone to propose him/her and 10 others to nominate him/her before the completed form can be submitted. The process is supervised by the regional executives. Things are however not static but keep changing in line with the exigencies of the situation. The process does not discriminate on the grounds of gender or ethnicity. What matters is that a person must be a registered party member and in good standing whose contribution to the party in terms of activism cannot be doubted.

However, the qualifications are not the same for all positions. For instance, you need to be a party member in good standing before you can be appointed as deputy youth organizer but to be appointed as the council of elder or patron, the stakes are higher. You need to be a woman to contest the slot of women organizer in both parties. If there are 210 polling stations as was the case in the Ledzokuku constituency, there would be 210 women organizers because of the position is exclusively for women. In the specific case of patrons, it is mandatory to have two women but it is not explicitly stated in the case of the council of elders. Apart from this arrangement, women are at liberty to contest any other position and are further opened to all the available appointive positions.

The NDC starts its subnational elections from the Branch (as the party calls it) where there are polling centers (which is the same as a Polling Station). The party elects 9 people who form the delegates. This means that in the Ledzokuku constituency where there are 210 polling stations, the NDC has 1,890 delegates who are all elected. The party uses this number to prepare

a delegates list or register. Now, anybody who has the interest to contest for any position at the constituency level, it is these branch executives who vote to choose them.

The NDC has three layers; Branch, Ward, and Constituency. The Ward is the second layer where one person is elected as Ward Coordinator within an Electoral Area. So if there are 16 Electoral Areas, as is the case in the Ledzokuku Constituency, there be 16 Ward Coordinators. The constitution states that Ward Coordinators should be appointed but whenever two or more candidates show interest, the party resorts to an election. It must be noted that the Ward Coordinator must be an elected official at the Branch level.

The highest is the Constituency level where there are 28 executives; 14 elected, 9 other members also elected and 5 co-opted. The 14 are the substantive ones. The NDC calls the other 8 elected people 'executive members'. They only contest as 'an executive member'. After electing constituency executives, the party appoints 5 extra members to be part of the executive body. This is done because the party believes such people have the ideas but going into an election, they were not favored and the party affords to lose them. As such the constituency executives are allowed to look within and bring these people on board. Factors considered for coopting include gender but overall, competence is the hallmark.

The election process requires that an interested party member buys a form, fills it and submits it. After that, a day is fixed for vetting. During vetting, prospective candidates are required to meet all the requirements contained in the guidelines which are usually written to guide every election. You, for instance, must be 18 years, registered voter, be of sound mind, paid your dues, has no criminal records, has no two different party membership cards and be a citizen of Ghana. These are the qualifications you must meet before you can be successful at

vetting. Even if one came from a different party, he/she must be a member in good standing for 4 years.

Qualification varies. At the constituency level, however, one must have served the party for at least 4 years. Loyalty is very critical. Although high educational qualification is welcome, it is not necessary.

It is clear that in both parties, there are no known barriers to women's participation. Both parties have reserved positions such as 'women organizers for women. They also have financial waivers (50%) for female contestants. Additionally, men are not encouraged to contest positions such as treasurer, all to boost the number of women at the sub-national level.

7. FEWER WOMEN IN PARTISAN POLITICS: THE EXPLANATION

The study found that women were underrepresented in the internal political party positions of both the NDC and NPP in the three constituencies. For instance, the NPP had 10 elected and 7 appointed constituency executives in each constituency bringing the total constituency executives of the NPP to 17. Out of the 17 executives per constituency, the NPP had only 3 women in the Kwabre East, 2 in Ketu South and 3 in Ledzokuku constituencies. On the other hand, the NDC elected 23 elected and 5 co-opted executives totaling 28 per constituency. Out of this number the study found 4 women in the Kwabre East, 5 in Ledzokuku and 8 in the Ketu South constituency (Field interview, 2019). There was however, consensus among interviewees of both parties in all the three constituencies that women do outnumber men in party rallies. The opposite was the case in party meetings. A following remark by female discussants in the Focus Group Sessions from the three constituencies are worth noting:

“We are supposed to take care of children from school and also cook for the house in the evenings. Unfortunately, party meetings are held between 4-8pm. Is that favourable for women?”

“I think it is because of the perception that women are meant for the kitchen. Women also prefer the corporate world rather than politics due to how dirty our politics has become.”

“Apathy on the part of women and intimidation by some of the men especially those who see women as threats to their positions or future ambition. I also, think that some women lack the confidence to do politics where even your language in public discourse is marked as if you were in the classroom”.

“I think generally the revolution of women leaders is now catching on in Ghana. Trust me the men have definitely had heat start. The limiting factor is that so many women have domestic and social responsibilities that naturally make them put premium on career development than politics”.

“I have been an executive at the polling station level on two occasions and it is all good. When I attempted to run for constituency secretary position in 2015, I was shocked to hear things about myself I never knew. So the problem goes beyond having the women’s wing and reducing the cost of filling of nomination papers for women. If you are unmarried, your success will be interpreted to mean exchanging sex or stuff like that”.

“We don’t contest party leadership positions because of the cost involved. Also, the time for party work sometimes doesn’t favour family women”.

“Because men are more interested in politics than women and women who do engage in politics are called all sort of names. Men are also domineering when it comes to the kind of politics that we do in Ghana”.

“Because there is too much violence in politics and women work very effectively when they are in calm situations”.

“Men started schooling before women and had already occupied all the positions. As a result of that, they have the resources as compared to women. Women on the other hand, are not able to fully participate in politics because they have to take care of their children and family”.

The responses above from the focus group discussions show that over the years, women have suffered many constraints regarding their participation in party leadership position and by extension decision-making in political life. Among these are gender discrimination, traditional prejudices, and perceptions coupled with the low levels of literacy all of which determined the extent to which women can participate in leadership the decision-making processes [17,47, 2].

The study found that the factors that militate against women participation in active party politics in the three constituencies are varied, some religious, cultural, personal and financial. Some people including women held the view that men were natural leaders who should be supported by women at home as traditions demand. A woman interviewee remarked: “I think women cannot be leading when men are there. No, even the Bible says in Church, where there are only women with a small boy, the boy should be allowed to teach the women. This means even a small boy is more important than women when it comes to leadership. This is why you don’t see more women competing with men”. Another respondent (a man remarked): “when we allow women to go to the top of leadership, it means we are saying that we are wiser than God. Is

it not written in the Bible that a woman was created to help a man? Why then should the one that God created to help be leading'?. In addition to these religious beliefs were discouraging remarks by some people who do not motivate women to want to go into politics. Both the NDC and NPP constituency chairmen in the Kwabre East and Ketu South made such remarks during an interview. An NDC activist remarked: "We cannot have equal representation between men and women. No, it is not possible. Even if we go to heaven, I don't think we will have 50/50 representation between men and women". Similarly, an NPP activist noted "In Ketu South, being an NPP member is like a taboo, not to talk of a woman leading in this party. If you are a wife and maybe you decide to be a member of the NPP, maybe that can even cause your divorce. Some men are even leaving their girlfriends and wives because of these party issues. Because of these, there is apathy in terms of women joining the party but we are now working on the women's wing so that more women can come on board. If it comes to proportional representation in terms of equality, the men are on the higher side compared to the women".

Another major problem that discourages women from participating in political leadership at the sub-national level was found to be financial constraints and the general lack of interest by most women. In the view of Ichino and Nathan [11, p. 1], the "barriers to women's political participation include economic and resource constraints that deny women the tools and opportunities for political action available to men". Tsikata [33, p. 15] for his part held the view that inadequate or lack of financial resources does not enable women to effectively compete with men and naturalize the inequalities in political representation. At the sub-national level, such views were rife. A woman remarked at Ketu South as follows: "It began long ago with more men being educated than women. This means that more men have financial capacity because they got formal sector jobs and may have saved a lot of money".

The education gap between men and women is improving positively with more women climbing the academic ladder at all levels. However, the financial disparity between men and women is such that women cannot technically compete with men for certain positions particularly because these days, money places a candidate at an advantage position even before the election day. Similar views were expressed throughout the interviews. The widely held view was that men have more financial resources than women and hence can bamboozle their way out when it comes to a contest between men and women. A lady remarked “politics *de3 s3 3y3 asikafo adwuman. Menfa makohoma nto susu anaa 3he na mmenya sika ay3 bi-* meaning politics is for the rich in society. Should I save my housekeeping money from my husband for politics or where will I get money for it?. This position also presents another angle which is that some women in the rural areas see themselves as solely dependent on men so they cannot compete with their 'paymasters' politically.

Additionally, it emerged that while some women regard politics as a dirty game due to the acrimonious nature of the male actors and the unprintable language used among the actors, some others were scared of false sexual-related accusations leveled against successful females in partisan politics. At the theoretical level, the civic voluntarism theory's assumption that people (in this context women) may be inactive because they either lack resources such as money and time, or they lack the psychological engagement (stereotypes of ideal female behavior, for instance, spending time undertaking household chores) with politics, explains the underrepresentation of women in party politics [46].

These challenges notwithstanding, the political parties have tried to enhance the visibility of women through directives from the national level, albeit little success. To address the challenges that have hindered women's activism in politics, successive governments and all the

major political parties in Ghana particularly the NDC and NPP have made conscious efforts by introducing affirmative action policies to allow women to participate in politics [48,2]. For instance, before the 2008 general elections, the NDC (which won) promised to appoint 40% of women into government and political position upon assumption of power [49]. Similarly, the NPP before the 2016 election (which it won) proposed to disallow males from contesting sitting female members of parliament in some 16 constituencies across the country. Unfortunately, both proposals were not materialized. The NDC was unable to achieve the 40% appointment and the NPP's proposal too was met with opposition by some party supporters who demonstrated at the party headquarters [2].

8. CONCLUSION

The different social, economic and reproductive roles that women and men play reflect different experiences in their access to political, social and economic services [2]. This was the case that forms the basis for the disparity between men and women in political party leadership at the subnational level.

The findings in this paper confirm the position in the dominant literature that women have been disadvantaged in political party representation and participation at the subnational level in Ghana. The paper has demonstrated that in the two largest constituencies where the NDC and NPP recorded their highest number votes in the 2016 general elections Ketu South and Kwabre East respectively, and the biggest swing constituency in terms of size and voter population (Ledzokuku), women representation in political party positions and their activism in political participation is very low. This reflects in the low numbers of women representation at the parliamentary level as well as the unimpressive numbers of women who get appointed to serve as ministers at the national level. There is, therefore, a direct link between what pertains to

the subnational level and what happens at the national level in terms of women representation in political leadership.

The study has also brought to light the reality of the effects of constraints such as financial, socio-cultural, religious and the dominant influence of the patriarchal nature of the Ghana society, on women's' quest to occupy positions in political parties. These have intrinsically demotivated women in political activism at the subnational level. Besides, though there are no inhibiting laws in the parties against women, indirect actions such as verbal abuses and the timing for party meetings usually between 4-8 pm are not conducive for most women who have other domestic responsibilities including nurturing children.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

“The obligation of anyone who thinks of himself as responsible is to examine society and try to change it and to fight it”[50, p. 8]. This author believes women are responsible and have examined and demonstrated their capacity to change the disparity between men and women in political leadership. The inhibiting factors are many and include the ‘unheard’ or ‘misunderstood’ story of women. This study sought to help add to the literature on the need for more women in political leadership and accordingly recommend the following:

The education of women in leadership roles should be strengthened at the subnational level. This should start at the basic school level onwards. The paper shares the views of Dahlerup [51] (2005) that the best way to ensure equal political representation is through education and other mediated efforts such as affirmative action. As such, the Affirmative Action Bill which was first laid in parliament over a decade ago must be passed into law as a measure to address the

history of systemic and perhaps male-induced deliberate agenda to sustain the discrimination and exclusion of women in leadership.

Beyond the resource constraints which hinder equal gender representation, the lack of acknowledgment of successful women leaders should be reversed so that the message will be sent out clearly that competence at leadership has nothing to do with sex or gender.

The National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), the Information Services Department (ISD) and the Media should collaboratively work to highlight the achievements of women in politics and further accord women the necessary platforms to articulate their views especially campaign messages during all elections at all levels.

There should be a vigorous and conscious effort at the subnational level in particular and the national level in general aimed at addressing patriarchal perpetuated religious and cultural barriers that inhibit women's participation in politics and other leadership roles. The traditional leaders should be sensitized to reform some of the beliefs that hinder the progress of women. Also, faith-based organizations and the various religious sects should reform their doctrines to reflect gender fairness in line with the admonition of the Apostle Peter in Acts 10:34 that God does not show favoritism or partiality in dealing with people. If so, why must God's children discriminate when it comes to political leadership.

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