

# Womens participation in local government elections nadowli ghana politics essay



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Decentralization in the world today is regarded as one of the most acceptable forms of governance which promotes greater participation of the citizenry especially the vulnerable (women and the minority) in political decision-making in the society. Decentralization has assumed this dimension of late due to the emphasis on good governance, participatory democracy and gender equity in the world over (Allah-Menash, as cited in Amponsah N et, al, 2003). The wind of democracy which started blowing across the African continent in the late 1980s saw decentralization as a wheel for accelerating, deepening and consolidating democracy in the continent.

As a result of the above impetus, decentralization is currently being implemented in different forms by the various governments in Africa supported by international development agencies, national governments, non-governmental and grassroots organizations. For instance, Ghana started her current decentralization programme in 1988 after the promulgation of the PNDC Law 207 with the aim of promoting political participation and consolidation of democracy (Amponsah N et, al , 2003).

“ It is important to note that the modern system of local government has its basis in the colonial era. During the colonial era, the system of indirect rule, which was based on the traditional system of the local people, did not give recognition to women as the traditional system was a male dominated institution. Chiefs were therefore, the core of the local government system to the detriment of women” (Amponsah N et, al , 2003 : 139).

Thus, from the very beginning, local government was considered a stronghold of male political power and control (Local Government

Information Digest, 1997). The situation continued and even got well-established when local government in the form of indirect rule became a requirement rather than an option (Busia, 1951). In addition, the kind of education given to the locals was very much segregated and gendered. At independence very few and countable women had had education which could put them on the same pedestal to compete favourably with their male counterparts

It is interesting to note that from the very onset of politics in Ghana, the political platform has been gendered in favour of men to the detriment of women's participation. The inadequacy of women's involvement in local politics was undoubtedly noted by the Minister for Women's and Children's Affairs (Mrs. Gladys Asmah) during an encounter with the media, when she observed that " women who were given significant roles to play in local administration during the pre-colonial times have been neglected in modern times". But more significantly, she notes that " debates on transitions to democracy and good governance have not paid any attention to the role of women" ( Amponsah N et al , 2003 : 140).

In the context of Ghana, the drive and take-off period for participation by a significant number of the public went through a gradual process and for women a more gradual approach. However, it is expected that with the wind of democratization blowing across the country, the chances of women making inroads into the male dominated profession would show positive signals. The 2000 and 2004 general elections were not too good examples for gender equity in politics though more women exhibited keen interest in contesting for elective positions. Thus, in 2000, out of 200 members of <https://assignbuster.com/womens-participation-in-local-government-elections-nadowli-ghana-politics-essay/>

Ghana's legislature, 18 (9%) were women. However, in 2004, the number of elected women to the legislature increased to 25 (10.9%) out of 230 membership. It is worthy to note that the number of female who contested for elections increased from a total of 95 (8.8%) in 2000 elections to 104 (10.9%) in the 2004 elections (Electoral Commission's elections report, 2004: 53).

Again, the number of women contestants in District Assembly elections right from 1994 to 2006 has witnessed an increase. However the number of female who won elections is still low as compared with their male counterparts (Electoral Commission Election Reports: 1998, 2002, 2006). Ayee (2000: 34) states that "the dominance of men in the work of the DAs is overwhelming"

Nevertheless, the successful democratic elections couple with the smooth changed of governments in Ghana is a signal that democracy is maturing hence an opportunity for women to continue with the struggle for political representation. It is an undeniable fact that popular participation in decision-making is "an imperative tenet for democratic local government" (Ayee, 2000: 2).

Local level elections are therefore, considered as providing space and opportunities for women who aspire for political representation and decision-making in the society. This study therefore, is geared towards finding the possible factors for the low participation of women in local government elections in the Nadowli District and suggests pragmatic solutions to improve women participation in subsequent local government elections.

## 1. 2 Problem Statement

Since the introduction of the current decentralization system in Ghana, numerous efforts have been made by successive governments and development partners alike to increase participation of women in local level elections. Despite these efforts, many more eligible women have not participated in District level elections over the past years.

According to Offei-Aboagye, (2000), “ women in 1994 made up of only 3 percent of elected members, a figure that increased to 5 percent in 1998. In 2002, the 368 elected female candidates still constituted only 7 percent as compared with 93 percent men elected. However, it is quite clear that in terms of performance significant gains have been made though expectations have not been greatly met” (as cited in Amponasah etal, 2003: 149). In Nadowli for instance, the first ever female presiding member who was elected in 2006 though performed well could not get the nod for the second term in 2009 (Electoral Commission Nadowli, 2009).

Narrowing the trend to the Nadowli District, the level of representation by women is not different. In 1998, the number of elected women to the District Assembly was two (2) out of the total membership of thirty-six (36), representing 5. 55%. However, in 2002, the number of elected women to the Assembly increased to six (6), representing 16. 66%. In 2006, the number of elected women to the Assembly rose to 8, i. e. 22. 22% (Electoral Commission District Assembly Election Reports: 1998, 2002, 2006).

Even though, the trend indicates that the numbers are increasing, the gap between the female and their male counterparts in the Assembly is still very

wide despite the fact that women constitute more than 50% of the total registered voter population in the district (Electoral Commission, 2006).

Though, nationally, researchers such as Offei Aboagye and others have conducted research into the issue of low representation of women in both national and local body politics in Ghana, much has not been done in this part of the country especially the Nadowli District. As result of the above picture, the problem this study is motivated to investigate is the issue of low participation of women in local government elections in the Nadowli District.

Low participation of women in this study refers to the inadequacy of eligible women in presenting themselves for elective positions in both national and local level elections in Ghana.

## **1. 3 Research Questions**

### **1. 3. 1 Main Research Question**

What factors are responsible for the low participation of women in local government elections in the Nadowli District?

### **1. 3. 2 Sub-research questions**

What economic factors account for the low participation of women in local government elections in the Nadowli District?

What socio-cultural factors are responsible for the low participation of women in local government elections in the Nadowli District?

What religious factors perpetuate low participation of women in local government elections in the Nadowli District?

What educational factors promote low participation of women in local government elections in the Nadowli District?

## **1. 4 Research Objectives**

### **1. 4. 1 Main Research Objective**

To investigate the factors responsible for the low participation of women in local government elections in the Nadowli District.

### **1. 4. 2 Sub-research objectives**

To find out the economic factors that account for the low participation of women in local government elections in the Nadowli District.

To determine the socio-cultural factors that are responsible for the low participation of women in local government elections in the Nadowli District.

To establish the religious factors that perpetuates the low participation of women in local government elections in the Nadowli District.

To find out the educational factors that promotes low participation of women in government elections in the Nadowli District.

## **1. 5 Significance of the study**

The importance of women's participation in politics the world over and local government elections in particular cannot be over-emphasized. Women in Ghana have been inadequately represented as candidates in both national and local government elections over the past (Mark T and David H, 1997). Despite the fact that conscious efforts have been made by successive governments and development partners to inspire and increase women's

participation in national and local government elections, they generally have not made the desired impact since the inception of the current local government system in Ghana.

Although available statistics indicate that the number of women in local government has increased over the years, the situation is still below expectation. (Electoral Commission District Assembly Election Reports: 1998; 2002; 2006). This study will, therefore, serve as a contribution to new knowledge by unearthing those obstacles that inhibit women's participation in local government elections in Ghana as a whole and the Nadowli District in particular. The study will also highlight the ways in which pragmatic solutions can be sought to improve women's participation in future local government elections in Ghana.

Furthermore, the study will reveal some of the best approaches that have been adopted in order to make local government more responsive to women and gender issues and to help enhance women's participation in local governance. Again, findings at the end of the study may not be a panacea for low female participation in local government elections in the Nadowli District but a guide for further research by other researchers towards finding lasting solutions to low participation of women in local level elections.

## **1. 6 Study Area**

The study area for this research is the Nadowli District in the Upper West Region. The choice of the district is by no means arbitrary in that the district is not an exception to the low participation of women in local government elections in Ghana. The researcher could have, therefore, chosen any other



district in the country for his research since the issue is not peculiar to only one particular district. However, the Nadowli District is being selected for this research because the researcher is currently a worker in the district and will find it more convenient carrying out the research in the district.

The Nadowli district is located in the middle of the Upper West Region of Ghana. The District has 158 communities covering a land area of 2, 742. 50sq/km. The estimated population size of the district is about 82, 716 ( Ghana Statistical Service, 2000 ). The district has an estimated growth rate of about 3% per annum and density of 31 persons per sq, km of which about 53% are female, 47% male and 57% are under 21 years(Electoral Commission, Nadowli , 2005).

The people of the district are predominantly Dagaaba who form about 96% of the population and speak Dagaare, the commonly spoken language in the area. The north-eastern part of the district is occupied by the Sissala who form about 3% of the population and speak Sissali. Other minority tribes who form about 1% can also be found in the district. About 90% of the economically active population is peasant farmers (Electoral Commission, Nadowli, 2005).

## **1. 7 Limitations**

This study is limited in terms of coverage. Geographically the study covers only the Nadowli district, for that matter, the conclusions drawn may not apply to the other districts in the country and, therefore, it is difficult to generalize the findings.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2. 0 Introduction**

This segment of the work will examine existing literature on decentralization, participation of women, and local government election. In order to review existing literature on the above research problem very smoothly and easily, literature review will take the form of theoretical and conceptual frameworks. At this point, some theories and concepts on the work will be identified, possible amendments done and acknowledgements made.

#### **2. 1 Theoretical Framework**

A theory is considered as an explanation that links several concepts. It is also considered as a way of explaining the social world around us. In this case theories explaining decentralization, women's participation and local government elections by linking different factors that are thought to cause or perpetuate low participation of women in local government elections will be examined.

#### **2. 2 Conceptual Framework**

Under this framework, literature will also be reviewed on all the concepts embedded in the study. This is organized as follows; participation of women, local government election and decentralization

##### **2. 2. 1 Women**

The concept of woman (plural women), is usually used to show biological sex differences. Women constitute more than 50% of the total population of the Republic of Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 2000). Besides household <https://assignbuster.com/womens-participation-in-local-government-elections-nadowli-ghana-politics-essay/>

activities, women also contribute appreciably to the national economy.

Ghana established a Ministry for Women and Children Affairs in 2001 to champion the cause of women and children six years after the World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. Ghana has also made giant strides by appointing the first ever female Speaker of the legislature, first female Chief Justice, and first female Minister for Justice and Attorney General (Researcher personal experience).

Notwithstanding these efforts, a greater number of women in Ghana are not well equipped to participate adequately in the socio-cultural, economic and political activities in the country. The National Council on Women and Development (NCWD) in a survey carried out in 1998 observed that in Ghana women were marginalized and remained the minority in politics. Gender discrimination is very common in all aspects of the society and at all levels although the Constitution of Ghana [Article 17(1) and (2)] guarantees equal rights to all citizens in the country (1992 republican constitution of Ghana)

Women in this study, therefore, refer to all female adult Ghanaians who are 18 years and above, qualified and are capable of holding public office.

## **2. 2. 2 Participation**

The concept of participation has been defined and used widely in different perspectives especially within the development discourse. The definitions in relation to the concept have generated controversies which continue to dominate the debate about its meaning. With regards to political participation in particular, Verba and Nie (1972: 2) define it as “ those legal activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at

influencing the selection of governmental personnel and or the actions they take". Parry et al (1992, as cited in Amponsah et al, 2003: 140-141), in broader terms defined it as " taking part in the process of formulation, passage and implementation of policies".

Participation according to Lisk (1995: 15-28) is the " involvement of the populace in the choice, execution and evaluation of programmes and projects meant to bring about significant improvement in the lives of the people. Participation should also be seen as an increase in the power of the poor and disadvantaged, especially women, whose active involvement provides a voice for the ordinary citizens". According to Gaventa and Valderrama(1999, as cited in Amponsah et al, 2003 : 141) the concept of participation, however defined, " expresses itself collectively or individually through voting, campaigning and contests and group action, geared towards influencing the representatives in government".

Participation in the context of this study implies the active and unrelenting involvement of the electorate especially women in elective positions at both national and local level elections in Ghana as a whole and in the Nadowli District in particular.

### **2. 2. 3 Local Government**

Local government is basically an organized social entity with a sense of belonging. By definition, local government means " an intra-sovereign governmental unit within the sovereign state dealing mainly with local affairs, administered by local authorities and subordinate to the state government" (Jahan, 1997: 92). Local government sometimes denotes an

administrative authority over a local area. Local government operates only within powers ceded to it by legislation or directive of the central government.

In this study, local government refers to the jurisdiction over the administration of a local area defined by a geographical boundary.

## **2. 2. 4 Decentralization**

Decentralization as a concept gained prominence in the 1980s and 1990s in the developing world basically to promote political participation and give people more influence in decision-making at the grassroots level. It is regarded as a strategy that will bring development closer and faster to the door-steps of the people at the rural areas than the central government (African Institute for Community-Drive Development (n d). Decentralization is defined as “ any act in which a central government formally cedes powers to actors and institutions at lower levels in a political-administrative and territorial hierarchy” ( Mawhood 1983 as cited in Ribot, 2001: 5).

Decentralization may also be defined as “ the transfer of responsibility (authority) and resources (human and financial) and accountability from central government to local self governing entity”. This involves a long process of political, fiscal and administrative decentralization. When only responsibility or authority is transferred but not resources – there is deconcentration. When responsibility and resources are transferred there is delegation. When there is the transfer of responsibility, resources and accountability (partially or completely), there is devolution or democratic

decentralization (Rondinelli, etal, 1989, as cited by Amponsah etal , 2003: 20).

The promulgation of PNDC Law 207 of 1988 gave birth to Ghana's present system of decentralization. However, chapter 20 of the 1992 Constitution replaced the PNDC Law 207 after coming into force. This was also subsequently replaced by the Local Government Act 462 of 1993. These legal provisions made it possible for the establishment of MMDAs as the apex of political authority at the local government level (Amponsah N et, al , 2003).

In this study, decentralization refers to the transfer or delegation of power, resources and decision-making from the central government to the local level or the grassroots level in order to promote rapid development and political participation towards deepening and consolidating democracy in the society

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3. 0 Introduction**

This aspect of the study will look at the study design that will be employed. It further indicates the data collection and sampling methods. Also to be discussed include the sample units and size.

#### **3. 1 The study design**

A research design is a plan explaining in detail how the researcher intends to conduct a research work right from the research topic through the

methodology, sampling and sampling procedure, data collection, data analysis and interpretation to reporting. The plan is the complete scheme or program of the research (Sarantakos, 2005)

This study involves the perceptions and opinions of people and has a lot of ethical implications hence a qualitative research approach is adopted. The study involves all registered voters in the Nadowli district. The sample units include registered women groups from the 10 Area councils in the district, opinion leaders, and candidates of previous local government elections (elected and losers). The sample size will be 4 women groups randomly selected from the ten area councils, 10 opinion leaders and 25 candidates of previous local government elections.

The research design will include semi-structured interview and focus group discussion. Semi-structured questions will be designed and personally administered by the research team including the researcher and 2 trained research assistants. The focus group discussions will be regulated to avoid digression and excesses during interviews.

### **3. 2 Sampling Technique:**

Sampling technique is essential in any social research. The issues involved are: " how wide coverage is acceptable? What types of respondents will be able to give answers to the research questions? Will the selected group of respondents be adequately representative of the community? What typical groups of respondents are available? Can we select a typical village or a community? All these are relevant questions which come to mind when an investigator begins to select a sampling design" (Twumasi, 2001: 19).

“ In considering a sampling design, the research scientist first of all determines his population universe. He must be able to outline the parameters of the population he wants to study”. Kish (1967) mentions that “ the first step in the selection of a sample is to consider a sampling design. It denotes all the stages and the processes involved in reaching the respondents” (as cited in Twumasi, 2001: 19).

Two main sampling techniques will be employed by the researcher to gather data. These include purposive and simple random sampling techniques.

### **3. 2. 1 Purposive Sampling**

Maxwell (1997: 87) defines purposive sampling as one in which “ particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices.” The sample units in this case include: candidates of previous local government elections (both elected and losers) and opinion leaders. The sample size will be 25 candidates (elected and losers) of the previous local government elections and 10 opinion leaders. The investigator has the firm conviction that these particular target groups in the district are better positioned to provide vital information relating to the study in question which cannot be gotten from other choices.

### **3. 2, 2 Simple Random Sampling Technique**

Also simple random sampling technique will be employed to choose women groups in the district as respondents to questions for data from the field. Thus, out of the 10 area councils in the districts, 4 women groups would be selected through the simple random sampling procedure. Names of all



registered women groups will be thoroughly mixed in a box and a research assistant will be made to pick 4 at random. Researcher will draw meaningful conclusions at the end of the study base on the outcome of their responses.

### **3. 3 Data collection methods and tools**

“ Many methods are used in social research to collect data. It is however important to note that the selection of a particular method to collect data must be decided upon in the light of the research problem. In making this decision, the researcher must keep in mind the type of people he is dealing with, the nature of the social situation, the mood of the social environment and the psychology of the people. It is also necessary to use more than one method to collect data. Using various suitable methods to collect data will help the researcher to evaluate his data source and detect inconsistent answers” (Twumasi, 2001: 29). As a result of this assertion, the data collection methods that would be employed to gather information for further analysis include; primary and secondary sources.

The primary data collection method will employ the use of: focus group discussion and semi-structured interview with key participants using semi-structured questions based on the research questions which permit respondents the freedom to give answers by freely expressing themselves (Karma, 1999 as cited in Twumasi, 2001).

In addition to this, secondary sources in the form of documents, reports, books, journals and the internet will be consulted for additional information. These methods, however, would be used concurrently in order to complement the shortfalls each method may pose. Data collected from these

sources will be mainly qualitative, however, there will be some quantitative measurements involving population numbers and socio-demographic characteristics of respondents.

All data collected will be first and foremost coded accordingly into various themes such as economic factors, socio-cultural, religious and educational among others. Under the various thematic headings, the researcher will engage in discussions, interpretation of data, make inferences and draw conclusions. Excel will be used to analyze all quantitative data.

### **3. 3. 1 Focus Group Discussion.**

This is a special type of interview in which a small group discusses a subject spontaneously. This kind of interview is normally carried out to get a group's perspective on a subject under study. " The researcher may use a focus group that has knowledge about the research topic to discuss or seek further information on various aspects of the topic" (Twumasi, 2001: 64). In focus group discussion, it is recommended that members of the group should be knowledgeable in the topic to be discussed, have a good facilitator, good group dynamics (group interaction), good questions and a good sample size. The study will use a women group size of about 6-10. The discussion will be guided by the use of semi-structured questions. Also four focus groups will be employed since one group may not be typical to give the researcher a reliable insight which can be generalized as the views of the entire study area.

### **3. 3. 2 Semi-Structured Interview**

Semi-Structured Interview as the name implies, lies somewhere between structured and unstructured interviews. It contains elements of both structured and unstructured interviews. The “ degree to which interviews are structured depends on the research topic and purpose, resources, methodological standards and preferences and type of information sought, which of course is determined by the research objective” (Sarantakos S, 2005 : 269). This method will be used to collect data from candidates of all previous local government elections (elected and losers) and the opinion leaders.

### **3. 3. 3 Semi-Structured Questions**

Semi-structured questions are research questions which though are written down but permit respondents the freedom to give answers by freely expressing themselves as open-ended questions do. (Twumasi, 2001). “ The investigator writes down the questions and expects his respondents to give their own answers. They give flexibility in answering questions. Respondents can express themselves as fully as they wish” (Twumasi, 2001: 55-56). These questions will be administered to all target respondents.

## **CHAPTER FUOR**

### **Data Presentation and Analysis, Interpretation And Policy Direction**

#### **4. 0 Introduction**

This section of the study will deal with the presentation and analysis of data

## **4. 1 Data Presentation**

Data collected will be presented in the form of frequency tables, percentages, graphs and charts.

## **4. 2 Data Analysis**

Descriptive tools and techniques will be employed to analyze qualitative data. However, quantitative data will be analyzed using statistical tools and techniques available on excel to generate computer based outputs from which inferences can be made.

## **Organization of the Work**

The full report on this research will be organized in five (5) chapters as follows:

Chapter one will be an introduction to the study which shall consist of a contextual background to the study, the problem statement, research questions and objectives, significance of the study, the study area, limitations of the study and organization of the report.

Chapter two shall cover the theoretical perspectives. It will examine some theories relevant to the study as well as review appropriate concepts embedded in the study.

Chapter three will deal with the research methodology. These will take form of research design, the sampling procedures and methods of data collection.

Chapter four will deal with presentation and analysis of data.

Chapter five will consist of discussion on data presented and analyzed, findings, conclusion and recommendations.

## **Time Plan**

The time plan below shows the expected duration of the research study.

Activities

Duration

Responsibility

Field preparation

1 month

Lead researcher

Data collection

2 months

Lead researcher & 2 research assistants

Data analysis

2 month

Lead researcher

Write-up

1 month

Lead researcher