



GENDER, POLITICAL CULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY IN NORTHERN GHANA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THREE CAPITALS

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Abstract

Globally, nationally and locally, the issue of men and women's equal participation in politics and decision-making has now been well recognized. Thus, academics, researchers, philosophers, gender activists, women's groups, international conventions and declarations as well as regional and national bodies have been depositing their respective opinions as to how gender parity can be achieved in national and local level decision-making structures. However, it is justifiably clear that despite all these efforts, gender parity in national legislatures, District/Municipal/Metropolitan Assemblies (DMMA) and public life remains a thorny issue especially in Ghana even though Ghana is the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence. Evidentially, Ghana is also among the first countries in Africa to recognize and acknowledge the contributions of women in politics and decision-making toward national development. In 1960, for instance, Ghana instituted the People's Representation Bill which enabled ten women to gain seats in parliament. This study thus examines the question of gender, politics and decision-making in Ghana's democratic dispensation. The main objective of the study is to understand how political culture facilitates the inclusion of men and women for sustainable democracy in Ghana. A cross-sectional design also termed as quasi-experimentation or quasi control design was applied in the study in the three capital cities of Northern Ghana. Questionnaire, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were the main tools used to collect empirical data. Data analysis was qualitative and quantitative. Results of the study indicated that in the three northern regional capitals, women have a low representation in politics and decision making due to a number of factors: socio-cultural, illiteracy, finance and religious. This did not however apply to men. The conclusion is that women are prepared to have their voices heard in the decision-making processes of the three regional capitals in DMMA and other structures that provide the opportunity. Recommendations made were with regards to promoting the education of women, adoption of strategic frameworks and strengthening the capacities and confidence levels of women.

Keywords: Gender, Political culture, Sustainable democracy, Men's political participation, Women's political participation

Introduction

Chen and Rulaska (2005) in their *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* argued that the concept *political culture* was popularized by Almond and Verba in their five nation comparative study of 1963 titled: *The Civic Culture*; in which they purported that the development of a sustainable and workable democratic government system depends on the orientations people have on the political process (Teorell, 2002).

Similarly, Yoon (2010) traces the concept of political culture to Almond and Verba's (1963) work. Like

Yoon (2010), scholars such as Easton (1975), Inglehart (1990 and 1997), Putnam (1993 and 2000), Inglehart and Welzel (2005) and Welzel (2013) are unanimous that the concept of political culture emerged from Almond and Verba's (1963) *the Civic Culture*, followed by Pye and Verba's (1965) work *Political Culture and Political Development* which sought to provide an analytical tool kit for the examination of the civiness question empirically.

More specifically, Dalton and Shin (2011), Chen and Rulaska (2005) and Teorell (2002) have argued that the

citizens of firm democracies, such as those of Great Britain and that of the United States of America had formidable ‘civic culture’, with citizens that are more competent and had a higher level of citizen participation at the local level politically than people in areas with young and fragile democratic systems such as those of Germany, Mexico and Italy.

Almond and Verba’s (1963) *Civic Culture*, in the view of Chen and Rulska, (2005) was the first breakthrough at understanding the correlation between citizen orientations and democracy. Tessler and Gao (2009) opinionated that it was the first effort to not only logically but systematically collate and codify variables that present an opportunity to measure how citizens participated in five different states. The variables they identified were from cross-sectional surveys, which provided an opportunity to measure the qualities used for assessing the level of political participation of the people of the United States, Mexico, Great Britain, Germany and Italy.

However, as Dalton and Welzel (2013) noted, Almond and Verba’s (1963) *Civic Culture* failed to table systematic cross-national data to support their conclusions because such a research was not feasible. They noted that the *Civic Culture* study and much of the early public opinion research typically focused on established Western democracies such as those of USA and Great Britain, which were advanced democracies. Practically, the reason was that representative mass surveys could not be conducted in areas such as the communist world and large parts of the developing world which were not yet experiencing democracy. They stated however, that the situation changed dramatically when consecutive waves of democratization opened the former communist bloc and large parts of the developing world to survey research.

Based on a survey finding, Inglehart and Welzel (2005) formulated the “human development” approach to political culture studies where they attempted to demonstrate that socio-economic development, emancipative cultural change and democratization constitute a coherent syndrome of social progress. This cultural pattern or “human development syndrome” has been universal in its presence across nations and cultural zones and as a whole contributed to broadening human choice and freedom (Pavone, 2014).

In his *Freedom Rising*, Welzel (2013) expanded the “human development” approach to describe the growth of emancipative values among contemporary publics. He equates development with the empowerment of people to exert their freedoms. He describes liberal democracy as the “legal component” of empowerment. Its significance from an empowerment perspective is that it grants people the rights that enable them to practice freedoms (both personal and at the political level) (Pavone, 2014).

Welzel (2013) identified a set of orientations that are emancipative in their impetus because they merge libertarian and egalitarian orientations. The prevalence of these emancipative values in a society is more closely linked with levels of democracy than any other citizen belief. The most important component of emancipative values in this respect has been found to be liberty aspirations – quite in line with the emphasis that liberal democracy places on freedom (Welzel, 2007). In short, the human development model by Inglehart and Welzel (2005) and Welzel’s (2013) emancipatory proposition argue for recognition of an assertive model of democratic citizenship.

Equally, Tessler and Gao (2009), recognised that the Arab Human Development Report of 2006, published by the United Nations Development Programme elucidates the essence of gender equality and women’s empowerment as the new wave of sustainable democracy and how that serves as a means for a sound political culture.

In Ghana, research into political behaviour (Political Culture and Political Socializations), while crucial for political development, is inchoate, to say the least. Yet, the application of the Gender-Analytic Approach (GA) to social phenomena is still conspicuously absent in most literature including the literature on democratization in Ghana. Moreover, research on northern Ghana, particularly in the area of politics and political culture, is still woefully inadequate even though that area constitutes an important constituency for the development of sustainable democracy. This study thus, addresses the policy-oriented question of the nexus between gender, political culture and the development of sustainable democracy in Ghana.

Research Problem

Although Ghana is seen today by many observers as a relatively stable country in the West African sub-region and continues to receive massive foreign aid and investment from developed (industrialized) countries and the International Financial Institutions, the search for a sustainable democracy still continues especially as the peasantry and women are yet to be sufficiently empowered to participate effectively in the process. Ghana endeavours to forge a viable blueprint for its democratic body politic in its social milieu because of a multiplicity of complex but interrelated factors among which are the need for a sustainable economic environment as a sine qua non for democracy, the absence of a sound political culture and the low levels of the cognitive (knowledge and beliefs), affective (feeling towards), and evaluative (judgments about) orientations towards politics among many, especially excluded groups such as women.

Primarily, the democratic project in post-colonial Ghana had apparently been misconstrued as a state-building yet a male-centric project; the development of massive and complex political structures/institutions and the failure to account for women's political orientations; their knowledge, beliefs and judgments about politics. The political elite who were largely men had emphasized more on building formal institutions including legislation, bureaucracies, mass media and political parties at the expense of the nation-building project of forging a sound political culture that reflects the political orientations of men and women supportive of a sustainable democratic political system. However, these orientations must not simply add but fundamentally include those of women.

After sixty years of independence, as a matter of easily observable fact, Ghanaian women still lag behind their men counterparts in politics and decision-making structures, especially in parliament, the national machinery for decision-making. At present, out of the 275 parliamentary seats in the Ghanaian legislature, only 37 members are women making only a paltry of 13.5% of the house. This comes in the wake of constitutional reforms and other international and regional efforts that target the equal participation of men and women in politics and decision-making. Ghana's 1992 Republican Constitution forbids

discrimination of any form in terms of gender and sex. Ghana has also ratified and endorsed several international conventions and declarations including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, the African Charter, the Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals, among others. In 2001, Ghana established the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MOGCSP) to champion the affairs of women and children in the country. Despite all these efforts, it is evidential that Ghanaian women do not have a complete representation in parliament and other local level decision making structures like their men counterparts given the fact that women constitute 52% of the country's population. In the light of the above, the study examines the following research questions: How does political culture facilitate the inclusion of men and women for sustainable democracy in Ghana? What are the difference(s) between women's and men's participation in political activity and decision making in the three regional capitals?

The analyses presented below focus on a literature review on political culture, democracy, the democratization process in Africa and Ghana, gender and political participation, gender and political culture and gender and sustainable democracy in Africa and Ghana followed by a conclusion.

Conceptual and Contextual Analysis

Political Culture

According to Chilton (1988), "Political culture" is a likely powerful and unifying concept in the political science arena. He stated that when it was first proposed by Almond (1956) and later on employed in *The Civic Culture* (Almond and Verba, 1963; cited in Chilton, 1988), the term sought to solve in a scientific, cross-culturally valid way the micro-macro problem: examining the problem of determining how people affect their political system and vice versa.

Chilton (2005) stated that broadly, the criteria for conceptualizations of political culture emerged from three main issues: a) that political culture offer distinctively new forms of analysis, particularly those appropriate to the micro-macro problem; b) that the

concept should not be limited to specific cultures or predicated upon a priori empirical assumptions; c) and that it should have a scientific value. Chilton (2005) employed these criteria to assess four conceptualizations of political culture: Almond and Verba's (1963) classic Civic Culture Approach, Elazar's (1966) analysis of US subcultures, Jowitt (1974) and Archie Brown's analyses of Marxist-Leninist political culture and Dittmer's (1977) "symbol system" approach. Chilton (2005) argued that all these did not meet the three criteria.

A new conceptualization of political culture is one given by Chilton (1988; 2005:427). He sees the concept as all "publicly common ways of relating within the collectivity". This conceptualization according to him satisfies all the three criteria stated above. Montana (2013) agrees with Chilton's (1988, 2005) collective agency conceptualization of political culture. Montana's (2013) study defines political culture using a collective agency perspective, conceptualizing the patterns as frameworks for action. McGrane and Berdahl's (2013) study titled '*Small Worlds' No More: Reconsidering Provincial Political Cultures in Canada* however, defined political culture as the basic sentiments of the citizenry within a polity concerning politics and its relationship to the functioning of society. As such, McGrane and Berdahl's (2013) definition embodies both a 'civic' and a 'values' element. The civic element relates to the subjective orientation of citizens to their political system while the 'values' element examines the underlying beliefs of the citizenry about fundamental political questions, such as the role of the state in the free market, the status of minorities, etc (McGrane and Berdahl, 2013).

There seems to be a problem in the conceptualization of Political Culture. Tumbas (2008) in her review of Mishler and Detlef's (2003) study, goes to the extent of asserting that there is the temptation to simply leave the concept and the baggage it carries and to start looking for other concepts that might be less value-laden and emotionally charged.

The difficulty in giving a clear conceptualization to Political Culture by scholars and academics in the field has extended in disabling the concept from giving the equality levels at which men and women can participate in even Chilton's (2005) "public

commonness." Thus, there is the need for a proper conceptualization of political culture first and second, such a conceptualization should be seriously engendered to give the parameters within which men and women in a given culture can be part of Chilton's (2005) "public commonness". However, for the purpose of this study, the definition of political culture is seen in line with McGrane and Berdahl's (2013) definition.

Democracy

Oquaye (2004:58), in his book *Politics in Ghana (1982-1992): Rawlings, Revolution and Populist Democracy*, opines that the term 'democracy' has become a prescriptive phenomenon. It stretches from the boundaries of a goal, a reality to an illusion. Its illusory perspective though intangible has often been invoked as direct government of the masses in whatever form it is viewed. He further argues that the term democracy has not been insulated from the conceptual problems surrounding the expression. In contemporary Ghana therefore, one can speak of "grassroots democracy," "participatory democracy," "people's democracy," "the national democratic revolution" and "economic democracy." Starr (1992) and Marshall (1997) have argued in line with Oquaye (2004) that the concept democracy has changed over time and that there are significant differences in the aspects of democracy stressed by different authors. Similarly, Galligan and Clavero (2008: 5) also argued that "democracy is a concept that is highly contested, and therefore, a concept that is not easy to define." They explain that although there have been endless disputes over its meaning, democracy assessments tend to define the concept in procedural terms i.e., as a political system characterized by the presence of a set of rules and institutional arrangements for arriving at collective decisions. They add that procedural definitions of democracy can be traced back to the influence of Schumpeter's seminal work, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, in which democracy has been defined as "an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by men as of a competitive struggle for the people's vote." Expanding on that definition, Rakner, Menocal and Fritz (2007) present Dahl's (1971) seven key criteria that are essential for democracy: control over

governmental decisions about policy constitutionally vested in elected officials; relatively frequent, fair and free elections; universal adult suffrage; the right to run for public office; freedom of expression; access to alternative sources of information that are not monopolised by either the government or any other single group; and freedom of association (i.e. the right to form and join autonomous associations such as political parties and interest groups). Kabagambe (2006) has, however, stated that the number of variables put forward by Dahl (1971) is eight (8) although he failed to enumerate and elucidate on them. Dahl's (1971) definition of formal democracy includes the basic civil liberties that should, in principle, guarantee that the democratic process is inclusive, free of repression and enables citizens to participate in an informed and autonomous manner. Mazrui (2002) has stated that the most fundamental of the goals of democracy are probably four. Firstly, to make rulers accountable and answerable for their actions and policies; secondly, to make citizens effective participants in choosing rulers and in regulating their actions; thirdly, to make society as open and the economy as transparent as possible; and fourthly, to make the social order fundamentally just and equitable to the greatest number possible. For others like Walby (2008) and Onuoha (n.d), democracy, which is predicated on the principle of majority rule, offers a window of opportunity for marginalized groups to participate in shaping policies and decisions that affect their lives. Onuoha (n.d) states that embedded in this understanding is the belief that democratic governance should aim at providing equal opportunities and improving the socio-economic conditions of the people irrespective of ethnicity, religion, age, sex or gender. From the above analysis, scholars, authors, or even politicians remain in a conceptual quicksand about exactly what the word democracy denotes. Some go as far as possible to argue that democracy is merely accepting democratic norms, while others are of the opinion that having electoral freedom is democracy. Dahl (1971) even argues that democracy has not yet been reached by any society, and that the closest we can see at present is a *polyarchy*, a system that exhibits many of the features of democracy, but has not quite reached full democratization. The definition

of democracy in this study falls within Rakner, Menocal and Fritz's (2007) definition.

According to Huntington (1991) cited in Alvandi and Hakala (2007), the Third Wave of Democratization reached the African shores in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Bratton and de Walle (1994), cited in Rakner and associates (2007), stated that between 1989 and 1994, as a consequence of external and internal demand for democratic openings, 41 out of 47 countries in sub-Saharan Africa underwent significant political reform, including, in many cases, the first competitive elections in a generation

Crawford (2004) further states that in the case of Ghana, the wave of democracy that swept through sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1990s brought irresistible pressure on the then quasi-military government of Fl. Lt. Jerry Rawlings and his ruling Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) to draft a multi-party Constitution for the Fourth Republic. The Constitution was then approved by a large majority (92 per cent) in the national referendum of April 1992, instituting a hybrid model of a US-style executive presidency alongside a unicameral parliament of 200 members, also able to serve as government ministers, elected on a first-past-the-post single member constituency basis. AfriMap (2007) argue in similar lines that the PNDC came under enormous pressure from the late 1980s to return Ghana to a democratically elected government with civic groups mounting persistent demands for a return to constitutional rule and dialogue on the transition process.

Crawford (2004) says that although Rawlings and his party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), retained power in the 1992 and 1996 elections, a key criterion of democratic consolidation was met in the December 2000 and 2008 elections and in the current (2016) Presidential and Parliamentary election when a peaceful transfer of power between political parties occurred for the first, second and third time in Ghanaian history, with the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP), led by John Agyekum Kufuor, winning the presidency and exactly half of the 200 parliamentary seats in 2000 and with the coming to power of Prof. John E. A. Mills and NDC after the 2008 elections. In the 2016 election, Nana Akufo-Addo of the NPP took over power from John Dramani Mahama of the NDC. Gyimah-Boadi (2007) stated

emphatically that the peaceful handover of power from Rawlings to Kufour on January 7, 2001 and Akufo-Addo from Mahama in January, 2017 serves as a landmark event in Ghana’s search for democratic development.

Mukandala (2001: 1) states that perhaps the plethora of literature on the field endeavour to tell of ‘two tales of democracy’ in Africa: an account of liberal democracy and explication of the genuine struggles of people for real liberation and popular sovereignty as opposed to flag independence and a people’s state. All the existing narratives, whether received or home-grown, reflect either of these two tales or a medley of them. Unfortunately, however, as Mukandala (2001) rightly argues, the stories on Africa have in the last analyses not conveyed the true meaning of democracy no matter what parameters are used to measure successful democratic transitions and consolidations.

In the case of Ghana, although it appears to be progressively thriving on the democratization drive, Crawford (2004) notes in line with Almond and Verba (1963:32 cited in Crawford, 2004) that on the micro-political level, Ghana only appears to have a relatively thriving civil society, especially in terms of associational life at the local level. Oquaye (20004) laments on Ghana’s democratization drive which serves to buttress the above assertion. On the Ghanaian parliamentary representation, he observes that the issue of representation in Ghana’s Parliament concerns the gender balance, only few women are MPs. He finds this to be highly unacceptable. In relation to gender, Rai (1996) cited in Crawford (2004), notes that democratization should provide an exciting potential for the lives of women. Whether this potential is realized or not should however depend on whether and how issues arising from women’s experiences in both the public and private spheres are addressed.

Table 1: Number of Ministers in the 6th and 7th Parliaments of the Fourth Republic in Ghana

Election Year	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
2016	89 (80.1)	21 (19.9)	110 (100)
2012*	50 (72.5)	19 (27.5)	69 (100)
2008	48	14	62

Gender and Political Participation

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the term gender denotes: the qualities associated with men and women that are socially and culturally constructed rather than being biologically determined. Gender includes the way in which society differentiates appropriate behaviour and access to power for women and men. Although the details vary from society to society and change over time, gender relations tend to include a strong element of inequality between women and men and are strongly influenced by ideology (UNDP, 1986) cited in Onuoha, (n.d).

According to ABANTU for Development (2004), traditional prejudices, beliefs and perceptions, gender discrimination and low levels of literacy have contributed to the low level of women’s participation in the policy-making process in Ghana. There is also evidence of the lack of political will and commitment by political parties and the executive arm of various governments to facilitate women’s effective participation in politics and decision-making. In his examination of the Ghanaian political spectrum, especially the dynamics of political representation and participation, Akita (2010) argues in line with ABANTU for Development (2004) that women’s representation and participation seemed to be skewed towards one particular gender - the male. Ghana operates a Parliamentary democracy which calls for fair and equal representation.

The above continues to reflect on the low numbers of women in decision making even when the opportunity presents itself for the nomination or appointment of women in public office. The table below shows the number of Ministers in the 6th and 7th Parliaments of the Fourth Republic in Ghana.

	(77.4)	(22.6)	(100)
2004			
2000**	69 (86.25)	11 (13.75)	80 (100)
1996			
1992	81 (90)	9 (10)	90 (100)

Source: Myjonline.com (2016)

*The figures presented above come from the June, 2016 updated list following a ministerial reshuffle.

** List of Ministers as of 27th March, 2003

The table shows that in terms of men and women as ministers in the 6th and 7th Parliaments of the Fourth Republic, more men than women are holding ministerial positions. In all the Parliaments, the percentage of women is less than 30 as being advocated by the UN Declaration and the Planet 50:50 agenda.

Similarly, at the DMMAs, there continues to be a wide disparity in the participation of men and women in Ghana. Table 2 presents the situation at the local level which gives a clear picture of the low numbers of female representation in local governance (Assemblies) in Ghana (1994-2015).

Table 2: Female Representation in District Assemblies in Ghana (1994-2015)

Year	CONTESTED			ELECTED		
	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)
2015	1182 (6.2)	17756 (93.8)	18938 (100)			
2010	1376 (7.9)	15939 (9.2)	17315 (100)	412 (7.95)	5681 (92.05)	6093 (100)
2006	1772 (11.9)	13084 (88.1)	14856 (100)	478 (10.1)	4254 (89.9)	4732 (100)
2002	965 (7.1)	12625 (92.9)	13590 (100)	341 (7.4)	4241 (92.6)	4582 (100)
1998	547 (3.6)	14696 (96.4)	15243 (100)	196 (4.1)	4624 (95.9)	4820 (100)
1994	N/A	N/A	N/A	122 (2.9)	4082 (97.1)	4204 (100)

Source: Adopted from (Tsikata, 2009; Yobo, 2012 b, Boateng and Kosi, 2015).

The table shows that although the percentage of women who contested elections in 2006 was 11.9%, this figure could not be sustained as the number kept decreasing from 7.9% in the 2010 election to only 6.2% in the 2015 election. This shows a certain deficit in the participation of women in DMMAs in Ghana.

Gender and Political Culture

Kandawasvika-Nhundu (2009) asserts that local traditional/cultural beliefs and values form one of the most important impediments to the participation of women in most facets of public life. African traditions

seemed to have defined and ascribed separate roles to males and females. It is evident that while the male roles are empowering, the female roles are disempowering. These gender roles and societal expectations turn to hinder the participation of women in politics in Ghana.

Similarly, a final Report on *Ghana Democracy and Governance Assessment*, USAID/Ghana (2011) argues that the major setback to gender equity in Ghana is the existence of traditional authorities. Chieftaincy is overwhelmingly a male-dominated

institution. This is particularly problematic in the north of Ghana and in rural areas, where structures for the state are weakest, the strength of traditional authorities and male dominance promotes gender discrimination.

Gender and Sustainable Democracy in Africa and Ghana

The important role of women's participation in national and local governance according to Helgesen (2011) has well been established at the highest level of international policy on human rights, equality and equity (CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals, the African Charter Protocol on Women's Rights in 2003 and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in the same year). In most African democracies, efforts for women's participation has gained further momentum, as women's participation in politics and governance has been recognized as an indicator of sustainable democratic governance. Available evidence from countries in Africa such as Rwanda, Mozambique, Swaziland and South Africa have one third of their parliamentarians being women (Hamah, 2015). It is also evidential that more women were elected to Parliament in the aftermath of the first post-conflict national elections held in Sierra Leone in 2002. The reason attributed to this was because Sierra Leone had employed the proportional representation contrary to the traditional majority system of elections (Hamah, 2015).

However, as Hamah (2015) observes, most African countries still lag behind in terms of women's participation in politics and decision making at the national and local level governance. Women are below the "critical mass" threshold of 30% proposed by the Beijing Platform for Action and the European Women's 50:50 Campaign.

Helgesen (2011) argues that no discussion is more important for gender equality than that of democracy and gender because it is about power and influence over the very political processes that in turn determine development, peace and security, and human rights. For her, democracy and gender equality are two of the most universally accepted notions in today's world. Helgesen (2011) therefore, argues that democracy cannot be fully realized unless there is equality

between citizens, and that includes equality between women and men. Democracy will also not be realized if there is numerical equality but not popular control over public decision-making. Kandawasvika-Nhundu (2009) captures succinctly that the present ideal for democracy and for that matter sustainable democracy is that it should be inclusive, participatory, representative, accountable and transparent.

Ghana has over the years recognized the important contribution of women to national development and has made some considerable efforts to have gender parity in parliament and other decision making structures in the country. For instance, soon after independence, Kwame Nkrumah promulgated the People's Representation (Women Members) Bill which afforded women to compete in a democratic election across the 10 Regions of the country where 10 women were elected to be part of the National Legislative Assembly. Ghana has also ratified and endorsed series of commitments towards women's rights under the UN such as CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as the Millennium Development and current Sustainable Development Goals. At the continental level Ghana has adopted both the African Charter Protocol on Women's Rights in 2003 and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in the same year. Article 17 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana prohibits gender discrimination. Furthermore, Ghana's commitments to bridge the asymmetrical gap between men and women in politics and the decision-making process informed the 1998 Affirmative Action Policy which indicates a 40% quota of women in all public political platforms (Shiraz, 2015 and Hamah, 2015).

Regrettably in Ghana today, males more than females, dominate in all the political structures that provide the chance for decision making from national to local levels. Effective political participation at the national and local levels can only produce meaningful results if both sexes are equally represented and their needs and aspirations are taken into consideration in decision-making as well as equal contribution to the development debate sustainably.

Methods

The analysis is based on a cross-sectional survey conducted in the three capital cities in Northern Ghana: Tamale, Bolgatanga and Wa in 2015. The

three study sites were selected because of the fact that the study is technical in nature, which requires a certain level of awareness of formal political orientations and organization for the questionnaire administration. Hence, the three capitals of the north, where formal politics tended to be concentrated were purposely selected. Statistics show that the three northern regions have low levels of literacy, especially among women and in the rural areas (see FAO, 2012). Hence, if the study is situated outside the main capitals of the regions, it might be difficult to get the right people with the right knowledge to answer the questions. Simply put, the data gathered might not reflect the demands of the questions posed. Furthermore, given the vast nature of the three regions, it was just impossible to cover the entire area given the limited resources of the researcher. In essence therefore, the Northern Region was represented by the Tamale Metropolis, the Upper East by the Bolgatanga Municipality and the Upper West by the Wa Municipality.

A combination of probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used in this study. In the use of probability sampling, the simple random sampling technique was used to recruit 25 men and 25 women of voting age in each regional capital who

were in local government decision-making structures, politicians, gender activists, students, market women and members of decentralised departments. The respondents were selected randomly from a 2012 projected population of 222, 0095 males and 221979 females in the Tamale Metropolis, 67,054 males and 68,604 females in the Bolgatanga Municipality while in the Wa Municipality there were 57,985 males and 61,402 females. Any person who was 18 years and at had Secondary Education within the three capitals which the researcher met was automatically selected till the total target was reached for the administration of the questionnaire. Also, men and women knowledgeable who worked in district assemblies, politicians, gender desk offices, academia, market women and men and NGOs in the study area were selected randomly that is any of the categories the researcher met were recruited for the key informant interviews (one participant at a time) and focus group discussions (eight participants for each FGD). The simple random sampling technique was adopted to give each person in the regional capitals who were 18 years and above who met the requirement for the study an equal chance of being selected for the study. Table 3 captures the research tools and respondents covered in the sample.

Table 3: Research tools and respondents covered in the sample

Region	Study location	Questionnaire		Focus Groups		Key Informant Interviews		Total
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Northern	Tamale Metropolitan	25	25	3	3	3	3	62
Upper East	Bolgatanga Municipal	25	25	3	3	3	3	62
Upper West	Wa Municipal	25	25	3	3	3	3	62
Total		75	75	9	9	9	9	186

Source: Researcher's Construct, Field Data (2015).

The data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The qualitative analysis took the form of descriptive narratives involving discussions on the data gathered from the three capitals of northern Ghana. This entailed the coding of the data and drawing out themes according to the research questions. The Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) software was used to facilitate the

generation of tables and figures. The software generated the tables and figures while descriptive explanations were made by the author. The tables were then modified to fit the page margins to avoid difficulties in saving and opening the work.

Findings and Discussions

This section presents the findings and discussions of the study. Each sex (male and female) in the three capitals was given equal representation. The level of education of the respondents varied among the capitals with Tamale having the highest number of respondents with tertiary education of 37 (24.7%) followed by Wa 36 (24%) and then Bolgatanga 34 (22.7%).

Occupationally, in terms of trading in the three northern capitals, among the male respondents, Bolgatanga had the highest of 8 (32%), followed by Wa 4 (16%) and Tamale with only 2 (8%) respondents. It is the same for the female respondents. Bolgatanga had the highest number of female respondents of 6 (24%) followed by Wa 2 (8%) and Tamale 1 (4%). Salaried workers constituted the majority of the respondents with Tamale having the highest number of salaried workers in the study. Tamale had 22 (88%) male salaried workers and 14 (56%) female salaried workers. Bolgatanga had 15 (60%) male and 19 (76%) female salaried workers while Wa had 6 (24%) male and 11 (44%) female salary workers. The number of respondents in Tamale who were students was 11 (44%). Of this figure, 1 (4%) of them was male while 10 (40%) were female. In Bolgatanga, the respondents who were students were 2 (8%) and these were only male indicating that there were no female students involved in answering the questionnaire. Wa had the highest number of students. The male respondents were 15 (60%) while the female were 12 (48%).

It was realized that the respondents who were single and married for the three capitals were higher than the categories of divorced, widowed and separated. Also, the number of respondents who were single was higher than all the categories. Wa had the highest number of respondents for both male and female of 33 (66%) who were single than Tamale and Bolgatanga which had 20 (40%) of the respondents each. The information gathered during the FGDs indicated that in Wa, there is an educational revolution where every young person seems to like to obtain the highest level of education possible.

Political culture and the inclusion of men and women in politics and decision making

In the three capitals, views of respondents were sought on their knowledge of any political system practiced in Ghana such as DMMA, parliament and political parties. This was first, to set the basis for which the respondents were aware of any system of administration in Ghana and second, which system allows provides opportunity for their participation in the political process. From the questionnaire survey, 91% (137 out of the total of 150) of the respondents of all three capitals knew of the political systems practiced in Ghana. In the Tamale Metropolis, the male respondents who knew of the political systems were 23 (92%) while the female were 21(84%). In Bolgatanga, the male respondents were 23 (92%) while the female respondents were 22 (88%). Wa had 25 (100%) males and 23 (92%) female respondents who knew of the political system.

Comparing the knowledge of the respondents on the political system practiced in Ghana, it was realized that Wa had the highest number of 48 (96%), followed by Bolgatanga which had 45 (90%) respondents and Tamale 44 (88%). In terms of the male respondents, Wa had the highest number (25) who knew any political system practiced in Ghana followed by Tamale and Bolgatanga of 23 each. Wa again, had the highest of 23 (46%) of the female respondents who knew any political system practiced in the country, followed by Bolgatanga 22 (44%) and Tamale being the lowest with 21 (42%) of the respondents. Regionally by sex, there were more males 71 (47%) than females 66 (44%) who had knowledge of the political system practiced in Ghana.

In terms of the male and female respondents, it is clear that the male respondents dominated the female in terms of their knowledge of any political system practiced in Ghana in all the three capitals. The male respondents were 72 (48%) out of 150 (100%) while the female respondents were 66 (44%) out of the total number for the capitals.

Galloy (1999) exploring the electoral process and women contestants in Congo attributed the above situation to illiteracy and political “blindness” on the part of women. Tsikata (2009) noted that within the national political processes and the arena of politics and decision making, Ghana is one area where gender disparities are most visible, persistent and have

proved hard to tackle. Thus, women's poor showing in political and public life are at once a reflection of the pervasiveness of gender inequalities and a barrier to tackling this problem. She noted that "the problems of the political system" and the culture of power disadvantages women. The longstanding disadvantages and discriminatory practices, Tsikata (2009) observed often make women to lack experience and practice in public life and have skill deficits in formal education, public speaking and the craft of politics (Tsikata, 2009).

Political systems and equal participation of men and women

In terms of their equal participation in politics and decision making, both male and female respondents from the three capitals acknowledge that it is the modern democratic system of governance that allows for their equal participation. Twenty eight percent (42) out of 100% (150) of the respondents in Tamale stated that it is the modern democratic system of governance that allows for the equal participation of men and women in politics. The male respondents were 19 (12.7%) while the female respondents were 23 (15.3%). In Bolgatanga, 42 (28%) of the respondents agreed that it is the modern democratic system of governance that allows for the equal participation of both men and women. The male were 17 (11.3%) while 25 (16.7%) of the female in the region agreed that it is the modern democratic system. Wa had the highest percentage of respondents, 45 (30%) who agreed that it is the modern democratic system that allows for equal participation of men and women in politics, 20 (13.3%) for male and 25 (16.7%) for female.

Tamale had the highest number of male respondents, 23 (15.3%) who agreed that the modern democratic system allows for the equal participation of both men and women. This could be attributed to the more cosmopolitan nature of that capital, followed by Wa of 20 (13.3%) of the respondents and Bolgatanga, 17 (11.3%). In terms of the female respondents, Bolgatanga and Wa had the highest number of respondents of 20 (13.3%) each in support of the modern democratic system of governance as one which allows for the equal participation of men and women. This could be as a result of the long years of the vulnerability of women in those regions (see

Apusigah's 2004 arguments on the Upper East Region).

The total number of female respondents in the three capitals outnumbered that of the male respondents. The female respondents in the three capitals who agreed that the modern democratic system of governance allows for equal participation of both men and women were 73 (48.7%) while the total number for the male was 56 (37.3%). The responses indicated that women have in recent times identified that the traditional political system has been a bane to their inclusion in politics and public life and are clamoring for the modern democratic system of governance.

Amoako (2011) and Hegelson (2011) argued that participation of women and men in political life is one of the foundations of democracy. The process of democratization across West Africa suggests increased participation of the citizenry in decision making, which presupposes greater representation of women in governance. The male respondents did not equal the women on the subject matter because as Apusigah (2004) has noted in the Upper East Region of Ghana, patriarchal societies have a tendency to increase the vulnerability of women. Tsikata (2009) sets the records straight when she asserts that both men and women are active in community affairs. However, their involvement is gendered, with men dominating community governance institutions such as chieftaincy and the unit committees of the District Assemblies and women participating more in community level activities related to the reproduction of their households (Tsikata, 2009). Similarly, Akita (2010) notes that political representation and participation is often skewed towards one gender; men. Yet, Ghana operates a Parliamentary democracy which calls for fair and equal representation. Women should therefore, not be seen as passive receivers of the benefits of democracy rather, they should be active participants.

Political Culture of Men and Women and Sustainable Democracy

Political culture is necessarily correlated with the development of sustainable/viable democracy in a country. Some empirical studies have established this nexus. The proponents of political culture: Almond and Verda (1963) and Pye and Verda (1965) have shown that sustainable democratic political systems

are founded on sound political culture- “civic political culture” and that the stability of developed democracies such as those of America and Britain are due to the civic or participant political cultures they have forged in their societies. This is a fundamental prerequisite for political development.

For this purpose, Walby (2008) has stated that it is widely believed that democracy, which is predicated on the principle of majority rule, offers a window of opportunity for marginalized groups to participate in shaping policies and decisions that affect their lives. Embedded in this understanding is the conviction that democratic governance should aim at providing equal opportunities and improving the socio-economic conditions of the people irrespective of ethnicity, religion, age or gender (Walby, 2008).

The respondents indicated their orientation to participation in politics and decision making in the three capital cities. All the respondents, 150 (75 males and 75 females) indicated that through the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as Gender Desk Offices in the Assemblies, they have received some orientations on the current democratic system of governance in Ghana. Rai (1996: 242) has noted that democratization provides “an exciting potential for the lives of women” and thus men. The position of the men and women’s respondents of the three capitals corroborates Rai’s (1996) assertion.

The Political aspirations of men and women

Tsika (2009) argues that the strong socialization of men and women to see men as natural leaders and women as followers, as well as the low gender consciousness of the electorate disadvantage women candidates who run for political office. The failure of women candidates to win elections then discourages other women from vying for political office, thereby creating a cycle of disadvantage (Tsikata, 2009). This is a true reflection of the situation for women in the three northern capitals. Eight (8) percent (12) of the male respondents aspired for political positions in Bolgatanga, while 3 (2%) of the female aspired. Wa

had 10 (6.7%) of the male respondents while 3 (2%) of the females aspired for political positions in that capital. It is only Tamale which had an equal number of male and female respondents, 8 (5.3%) who aspired for a political position in that capital. Tamale had the highest number of female and male respondents, 16 (10.7%) who aspired for political positions, followed by Bolgatanga of 15 (10%) and the lowest is Wa of 13 (8.7%).

Comparatively, more men compared to women aspired for political positions in the northern capitals. Twenty percent (30) of the men compared to 16 (10.7%) women aspired for political positions in the three capitals.

The political aspirations varied between literate and illiterate men and women. In a Key Informant Interview with a woman in the Wa Municipality, she was quick to respond to the question on whether she as illiterate an woman aspired for political positions in the capital as follows:

How can I aspire for a political position when I am not educated? It is only the educated ones that can vie for political positions in this region. If I do, no one would listen to me.

However, men were better-off, because the few wealthy ones illiterate men could vie for political positions within the party hierarchy. In a Key Informant Interview with a man in Tamale, a regional party executive member spoke to me that:

My modus operandi in the political arena in this area is to marshal all the young people around the area and have considerable influence over them. In that way, your party would recognize your credibility and vote for you to occupy a party hierarchy position. Otherwise, you are relegated to the background because you are an illiterate.

Assessing the 2010 District level elections in the three northern regions, Amoako (2011) asserted that 63.6% of the electorates would vote for a candidate because he or she is literate/ knowledgeable. This goes to prove the point that although women have been subjugated by society for a long time in their political

efforts, their plight has further been worsened by their low levels of education (Apusigah, 2004).

FAO (2012) assessed that the overall literacy rate for women is 46 percent, compared to 67% for men. The northern regions show the most accentuated gender differences in adult literacy. This therefore, has given men a fair advantage over women in political activities in the regions.

Women's aspirations for political leadership in Northern Ghana

Views of the respondents were sought on the aspirations of women for political leadership in the three northern capitals. In Tamale, only 3 (2%) of the male respondents out of the total of 150 (100%) in the three capitals stated that women aspired for political leadership in the capital, while 8 (5.3%) of the female respondents agreed that women aspired for political leadership. Bolgatanga had only 2 (1.3%) out of 150 (100%) of the male respondents who mentioned that women aspired for political leadership in the capital. Six percent (9) of the female respondents agreed that they aspired for political leadership in the capital. Wa had 7 (4.7%) of the male and 2 (1.3%) of the female respondents who agreed that women aspired for political leadership in that capital.

All the three regional capital areas had low numbers of women aspiring for political leadership. Out of total i.e. 150 (100%) respondents for the three capitals, only 33 (22%) of them were of the view that women aspired for political leadership. This is confirmed by Amoako (2011) on her study titled: *The performances of women candidates in the 2010 district level elections in Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions of Ghana*. She noted that in the three northern regions, women were poorly represented at lower levels of government due to negative stereotyping and perception about women. It is worth noting that local representation provides a pool of women available to serve at the national level. In the Tamale Metropolis, during the 2010 Local government elections, out of 191 candidates from 64 electoral areas, the male candidates were 174 while only 17 were female, representing only 8.9% of the total candidates (NORSAAC, 2011).

In a Focus Group Discussion with female candidates who lost the elections in the Tamale Metropolis in the 2010 local government election, they were quick to assert that:

There were several intimidations from the men folk and lack of support from the community because the perception is that a woman must be subjected to a man no matter how influential she can be. Women must always come after men and not the other way round. That is the reality we have to contend with here.

Anarwat and Longi have argued that the stiff challenge women face in politics in Ghana is not new. It has historical antecedents. For instance, although in 1960 the Women Members Act was introduced to address the gender imbalance in the Ghanaian Parliament, the Act did not go without any opposition. One of the male members wanted no 'Pancake' ladies and 'Lip stick' women in their august Assembly (Anarwat and Longi, 2007; 139) although the pancake-women demonstrated to their dismay their worth by their immeasurable captivating and inspiring contributions to policy formulation that has helped to change public life in Ghana.

The reality is that women have the desire and preparedness to challenge the status quo. In Amoako's (2011) study of the three northern regions, she found that in recent time, women readily come out to contest district level election which previously was not the scenario sometime ago.

A Gender Desk Officer in Bolgatanga in a Key Informant Interview stated that:

Women are now willing to compete with their men counterparts for political positions especially at the district level in this capital. I think the issue is for them to learn the antics involved in political campaigns and lobbying for political positions

This assertion was confirmed by both men and women in a Focus Group Discussion in Bolgatanga.

The past Deputy Regional Minister was a woman. There are others that are also occupying positions at the Municipal Assembly and others are also nurturing interest to vie for political office leadership in the region and beyond.

Difference(s) in Women's and Men's Participation in Political Activity and Decision Making

The respondents, male and female, indicated their participation in various political activities in the three northern capitals. These activities were: voting in local and national level elections and contesting for positions in the Town/Area Council/Unit Committee/District Assemblies, Parliament, and Political Party hierarchy as well as any other political position. Bolgatanga had the highest number of respondents who voted during local and national level elections. It had 48 (32%) of the total of 150 (100%) of the respondents who voted during such elections. Wa came second with 47 (31.3%) while Tamale had the lowest with 46 (30.7%) of the total respondents.

Bolgatanga had the highest number of men who voted during local and national elections. Sixteen percent (24) of the respondents voted during elections. Tamale came second with 23 (15.3%) of the respondents while Bolgatanga had the lowest of 22 (14.7%) of the total number of respondents. Wa however, had the highest number of women who voted during local and national elections of 25 (16.7%) of the total respondents, followed by Wa 24 (16%) and the lowest from Tamale 23 (15.3%).

In terms of the voting pattern between men and women in the three capitals, women voted often during local and national level elections than men. The women respondents constituted 73 (48%) of those who voted during elections whilst the men constituted 64 (42.7%) of the total respondents. This confirms Amoako's (2011) study of the three northern regions on the performance of women during the 2010 District level elections that women readily come out to vote during District level elections which was not the scenario sometime ago. Her study revealed that a high percentage of 89.7% as opposed to 10.3% of women voted in the 2010 District level elections as they have been doing previously in northern Ghana (Amoako's, 2011). All the respondents (100%) indicated that they voted willingly without any coercion or influence.

The participation levels of both the male and female respondents when it comes to contesting for Town/Area Council/Unit

Committee/District/Municipal/Metropolitan level elections remains low. Only 1 (0.7%) of both the male and female respondents in Tamale contested elections at the district level, 2 (1.3%) for Bolgatanga and 1 (0.7%) for Wa. The issue is even worst on the issue of contesting for the position of Member of Parliament. Tamale and Wa had 1 (0.7%) respondent each while Bolgatanga had none.

Respondents contesting for Political Party hierarchy positions in Tamale were 4 (2.7%) of the total respondents for male and female, Bolgatanga 2 (1.3%) and Wa 1 (0.7%). Bolgatanga had the highest number of respondents who contested for any political position of 3 (2%) while Tamale recorded 1 (0.7%), Wa had none.

Comparing the participation levels of men and women in the three northern capitals on the political activities analyzed above, it was realized that more men voted and or contested more in those political activities than women. The male respondents constituted 12 (8%) of those who contested for Town/Area Council/Unit Committee/District/Municipal/Metropolitan level position, contested as a Member of Parliament, contested for a Political Party hierarchy position or any other political position while the female constituted only 5 (3.3%). In the light of the above, Odame (2010) and Amoako (2011) have argued that Ghana is no exception of the low representation of women in both local and national levels. After more than two decades of the fourth republic, the representation of women in district and national levels is still as low as 7% and 18% respectively.

Abdulai (2009) has argued that the Local Government System of 1998 especially, has not provided conducive environment for women to participate in decision making. According to him, closely related to the limited participation of civil society is the marginalization of women in local level power structures. This marginalization is to be seen in voting, contesting and appointment to decision making positions by their men counterparts who wield authority in the political realm.

The assertion above is in line with lamentations made by Hassan (1992) about the situation of women in Nigeria. Hassan (1992) stated that the woman has

been socialized and/or oriented to only be seen and not heard. The woman is an object subordinated to men. The woman exists to satisfy the interests of men. The woman's place has always been the kitchen as an administrator in that arena.

Factors/Challenges Men and Women Face Regarding Political Participation

In her foreword to the book *Women in Politics and Public Life in Ghana*, Allah-Mensah (2005:1) asserted that:

The conclusions of this publication point to the fact that, women in this area are grossly under represented even if compared to the number of qualified women in the population. Furthermore, a significant number of those who are employed in the civil and public service occupy 'low grade level' positions only.

Allah-Mensah shows clearly that in spite of the important roles Ghanaian women play within the family, community and society, they do not occupy key decision-making positions in any of the sectors of economic, political and social life. They are relegated to the background as far as public decision-making is concerned.

ABANTU for Development posits to the effect that traditional prejudices, beliefs and perceptions, gender discrimination and low levels of literacy have contributed to the low level of women's participation in the policy-making process. There is also evidence of the lack of political will and commitment by political parties and the executive arm of various governments to facilitate women's effective participation in politics and decision-making (ABANTU for Development, 2004).

The above assertions by ABANTU for Development and Allah-Mensah (2005) were confirmed as the challenges/factors that women faced in the three northern capitals. The women mentioned socio-cultural factors 120 (80%), illiteracy 113 (75%), political deceit/lies 128 (85%) as well as financial constraints 102 (68%) and the last, religious factors

60 (40%) as the challenges they faced in participating in political activities and in decision-making.

In a key informant interview with a gender activist in Bolgatanga on my perception that she would be able to turn issues round as a result of her in-depth knowledge on political and gender issues, she retorted:

I do not want to be called a liar. Politics in this region is about lies. You only see politicians during electioneering periods and afterwards they are gone after deceiving the people to vote for them to continue to be in power.

Dolphyne and Ofei-Aboagye (2001) mentioned that political violence, intimidation, corruption, embezzlement and the lack of accountability as factors which have resulted in most women shying away from politics, while they should instead be involved to turn the tables round. Dolphyne and Ofei-Aboagye (2001) put it in line with Galloy (1999) that intimidation, physical violence and the threat of it, make women shy from politics. They continued that politics in Ghana is notoriously aggressive. The media are highly sensationalist and politicians attack each other with impunity. Many perceive this belligerent behaviour to be primarily in the male domain (Dolphyne and Ofei-Aboagye, 2001).

Women also face financial constraints in participating in politics. In her study of the performances of women in the 2010 District level elections in northern Ghana, Amoako (2011) stated in her findings that a significant percentage of 53.8% of the female respondents faced financial constraints in contesting the District level elections. This is supported by Dolphyne and Ofei-Aboagye (2001). According to them, the most frequently mentioned problem facing women in politics is the lack of resources to finance their political careers.

As USAID/Ghana asserted, campaigns in Ghana are expensive and candidates rely on personal financial networks for campaign funds. Since men tend to dominate these networks, women find it far more difficult than men to raise the funds they need to finance a campaign (USAID/Ghana, 2011).

Religion affects the participation of women in politics in the three northern capitals. It is particularly acute in Tamale than in the other two regions. The respondents mentioned Islamic religion as a factor. Even in times of prayer, women have to stay behind the men. In a Focus Group Discussion with women in the Tamale Metropolis, the women blurted out that:

Our religion bars us from positions of leadership. A woman has to be subjective to the man. Can't you see the way we even pray in the mosque? Have you seen any woman in the front? No. Women stay behind for the men to lead. How can we then say we want to be their leaders in the white man's environment? That is the domain of our husbands.

The study of Dolphyne and Ofei-Aboagye (2001) confirms the above statement. They identified Christian fundamentalism to be preventing women from active participation in politics in southern Ghana, while in the northern part, it was Muslim fundamentalism (Dolphyne and Ofei-Aboagye, 2001).

The men in the three capitals unanimously agreed that the factor that hindered their participation in politics was illiteracy. This particularly came from majority of the illiterates captured under the Focus Group Discussions. FAO (2012) captures that the rate of literacy in Northern Ghana among men is 67%. It therefore, implies 33% are not literate. This can significantly affect the overall participation of men in politics in the three capitals.

However, while the lack of education/literacy hampered women's political careers, the same did not apply to men. There were quite a number of regional party chairmen with little or no education (Dolphyne and Ofei-Aboagye, 2001). This corroborates the statement from the Focus Group Discussion with men in Tamale, where a regional party executive member spoke to me exclusively after the discussion:

Our modus operandi in the political arena in this area is to have more backing from the young people around the area and have considerable influence over them. In that way, your party gurus can recognise your ability to lead others and so you can win votes to occupy a party hierarchy position.

Mitigating Change

Women need to rally behind each other for their increased participation in local and national level governance. More education and training should be given to the girl child so as to have literate women contesting elections in the future. Traditional and cultural barriers that face women should also be reformed through constitutional legislation and education.

All the women indicated that one way to increase their participation in local and national level governance is to support each other in terms of resources, campaigns and votes during local and national elections. All the women indicated again that they would promote girl child education so as to provide a pool of educated women to contest in local level elections to represent women's interest in those structures. Seventy of the women, that is 46.7% mentioned that women in the local and national level government structures will educate all women in district, municipal and metropolitan areas on the procedures and importance of vying for positions at the local and national governance levels.

All the respondents (150) indicated that to increase the participation of women in decision making at the local level requires male support. Women require the support of their husbands, fathers and brothers. They expect the men to make conscious and deliberate efforts to support them in their daily chores to reduce their burdens and help with their campaigns during elections.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The analysis confirms the literature above that women have been disadvantaged in their political participation. The study indicated that in the three northern regional capitals, women have low participation in politics and decision making due to: socio-cultural, illiteracy, finance and religious factors. Women are prepared to have their voices heard in the decision making processes of the three regional capitals in District/Municipal/Metropolitan Assemblies and other structures that provide the opportunity. Recommendations are: promoting the education of women, strengthening the capacities and

confidence levels of women and the adoption of strategized frameworks for equal participation of men and women in politics and decision-making and addressing the socio-cultural and religious limitations in the three capital cities of northern Ghana and beyond. The Adatuu's Model known as African Democratic System of Governance Framework (ADSGF) is recommended below:

This is a framework developed by the researcher as a special contribution to address the problem of women's low participation in politics and decision making in the three capital towns of the north, Ghana and beyond. The *ADSG* framework is premised on the argument that in patriarchal societies where there is male dominance in leadership and decision-making,

while females are stereotyped as wives, mothers, housekeepers and cooks, inclusion of women in politics and decision making would only be realistic with the interplay of several actors for change to happen, especially in the three northern capitals of Ghana. The process includes government directly and through its decentralized departments: Area/Town Council/Unit Committee, District, Municipal and Metropolitan Assemblies and Gender Desk Offices, Traditional authorities: Chiefs, Tindanas, Soothsayers and Rainmakers, Civil Society Organizations: NGOs, CBOs and FBOs and Religious Authorities: Christianity and Islam networking to have more women participating in decision making and occupying leadership positions. This is illustrated in Fig. 1.

Figure 1: African Democratic System of Governance (ADSG) Framework (The Adatuu Model).



Source: Author's own construct, 2016.

The ADSG framework proposes that Government should repeal Article 276 1 & 2 of the 1992 Constitution which states that:

a chief shall not take part in active party politics, and any chief wishing to do so and seeking election to parliament shall abdicate his stool or skin.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that chiefs are good politicians, especially in northern Ghana during the period of colonial rule. Chiefs played an active role in the governance process. Traditional authority proved so useful in colonial policy of indirect rule that where colonial authorities found no chiefs as in acephalous societies, they created them. Chiefs became the main agents of indirect rule in the Gold Coast and the Native courts were to be the extension of this administration. Also, in 1883, the Gold Coast Native Jurisdiction Ordinance recognised local chiefs and their courts and thereby further incorporated chiefs into the British colonial administration. Native authorities became organs of local government to which Native Courts were attached. They employed their own police force and even operated local jails. The native courts were run in accordance with what was understood to be customary law and were presided over by chiefs and their councillors (see Awedoba, 2006).

My argument has further been justified by others (Allah-Mensah, 2005) that in the light of the comparative failure of the African state to bring about democracy and development because the state has been undermined by greedy and violent political elites within and without Africa, chieftaincy has re-emerged as an important vehicle for more or less authentic indigenous political expression. And to a large extent in my view, a better institution for democratic governance through its active involvement in politics, especially in Ghana and the rest of Africa.

There are already visible cases of chiefs involving themselves in serious political issues in northern Ghana (classical examples of these situations are beyond the scope of this study). By allowing chiefs to be involved in active politics, their families, especially wives and children will participate actively in support of their fathers. In this way, within the core

of the traditional authority, women have the opportunity to express their political desires so freely without any hindrance from their husbands. The wives of the chiefs who will support either their husbands or his political party will marshal other women to support their interest once they are closely associated with the royal. In so doing more women will be involved and exposed to political issues such as the modern democratic system of governance.

At the decentralized departments of government: Area/Town Council/Unit Committee, District, Municipal and Metropolitan Assemblies, especially at the District, Municipal and Metropolitan Assemblies, chiefs are already represented there. The *Adatuu Model* proposes that at least one wife of the chiefs should also be given representation at those levels. If that is done, the chiefs will recognise the worth of their wives in contributing effectively to national government and would involve them in decision-making at their royal courts. As Anarwat and Longi (2007) noted, the pancake and lipstick women in parliament demonstrated to the dismay of the men in parliament their worth by their immeasurable, captivating and inspiring contributions to policy formulation that changed public life in Ghana in the 1960s.

Aside that, the wives of the chiefs will relay what they learnt during the District, Municipal and Metropolitan Assembly meetings to their colleague wives and women in the community, educating them about the processes of decision making at those levels and soliciting their views for the next meetings. The *Adatuu Model* also argues that the District, Municipal and Metropolitan Assemblies should give a representation each to the tindanas, soothsayers and rainmakers. If this is done, they will be exposed to modern ways of taking decisions and not relying so much on superstitions as the case is presently. They will also relay their experiences to their wives about meetings they have attended, indirectly educating their wives on public decision-making. In sum, the vertical relationship on the model allows for a networking of the modern and traditional political systems.

The government also needs to give a representation to two members of the major religious bodies in northern Ghana: mainly the Christian and Islamic religions, one male and one female in the decentralized structures: Area/Town Council/Unit Committee, District, Municipal and Metropolitan Assemblies. When this is done, the representatives will have the opportunity to report to the leadership and congregations of their religions what transpired in their meetings. In northern Ghana, women patronize religious activities more than men and so more women will be enlightened on the decentralized concept and its procedures. Through the rapport between the District, Municipal and Metropolitan Assemblies and the religious bodies, the Gender Desk Office staff of the Assemblies can have education/sensitization programmes with the women folk of the religious bodies. This will help in educating/sensitizing/orientating the women on political systems and the need for them to be more visible in politics and in the decision-making processes of their communities.

In sum, the horizontal relationship on the *Model* creates an enabling environment between government and religious authorities. Gender related Civil Society Organisations such as NGOs, CBOs and FBOs have already been making efforts to get as many women as possible to participate in political activities and in decision-making in the three northern regions. For instance, in Bolgatanga we have the Centre for Sustainable Development Initiative (CENSUDI) and Youth Link Ghana (YLG) working in this direction. The District, Municipal and Metropolitan Assemblies need to collaborate with them to intensify their activities and to reach out to as many women as possible by supporting them with logistics. The NGOs are already well known for their advocacy skills and so would be able to work in collaboration with government, traditional and religious bodies to achieve the desired results.

If the above proposition of the *Adatuu Model* is followed, the result will be a change from low participation of women in political activities and decision making to an increased participation of women in politics and decision making in the three

capitals of the north, Ghana and other regions of the world.

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