



**INVESTIGATING THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LOW PARTICIPATION OF
WOMEN IN GHANAIAAN POLITICS: A STUDY OF AYAWASO WEST WUOGON
CONSTITUENCY**

**BY
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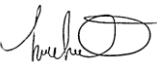
**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA ARTS AND COMMUNICATION, FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD DEGREE OF A MASTER OF DEVELOPMENT
COMMUNICATION.**

DECEMBER 2025

DECLARATIONS

I, Neizer Asante Antwi, hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the award of the degree of Master of Development Communication at University of Media Arts and Communication. Where I have used the work, ideas, words, or data of others I have given appropriate acknowledgment. This thesis has not been presented for any other degree at this or any other institution.

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Supervisor's Declaration

I certify that the student named above carried out the research reported in this thesis under my supervision and that, to the best of my knowledge, the work represents a bona fide contribution to knowledge. I have read the submitted thesis and believe it to be of sufficient standard for the award of the degree of Master of Development Communication.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks go to everyone who supported me through the research and writing of this thesis. First and foremost, I am grateful to my parents for their unwavering encouragement and belief in my abilities. I also wish to acknowledge GCL for his institutional support and encouragement during the research process, his logistical and moral support helped keep the project on track.

A special thank you to Mrs Matilda Asante Asiedu for being my mentor: her counsel, practical advice and consistent encouragement helped shape both my ideas and my confidence to complete this work.

I am deeply grateful to Dr Daniel Odoom, my supervisor, for his expert guidance, rigorous feedback, and patience. His insights strengthened the research design and the analysis, his commitment to excellence improved this thesis at every stage.

Thanks also to Emmanuel Aidoo and Frederick Arthur for their painstaking reviews of drafts, thoughtful suggestions, and steady moral support. Your careful reading and knowledgeable inputs substantially improved the clarity and quality of the final document.

Also, a big thank you to Prince Charles Koka for his support and faith in me alongside his encouragement and push. I am very grateful.

Finally, I thank all participants who generously shared their time and experiences, this thesis rests squarely on their voices.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, whose sacrifices and faith in me made this study possible, and to all women who continue to work toward greater representation and equity in public life.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AWW: Ayawaso West Wuogon.

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

EC: Electoral Commission.

IPU: Inter-Parliamentary Union.

NCCE: National Commission for Civic Education.

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation.

NALAG: National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana.

NVivo: Qualitative data analysis software (NVivo 12).

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme.

USD: United States

ABSTRACT

This study investigates factors contributing to low women's political participation in Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency, Ghana, aiming to identify socio-cultural, economic, perceptual, and institutional barriers while proposing strategies for enhanced representation.

Adopting a qualitative case study design grounded in Feminist Political Theory, Patriarchal Theory, and Participation Theory, the research targeted a population of female political aspirants, elected officials, party representatives, and community stakeholders (131 participants selected via purposive and simple random sampling). Data were gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews and analyzed using hybrid inductive-deductive thematic techniques supported by NVivo 12 software, enabling systematic coding, pattern identification, and theoretical validation.

Key findings reveal four interconnected barriers: (1) entrenched patriarchal norms and childhood gender role socialization that position politics as a male domain, fostering internalized reluctance among women; (2) prohibitive economic constraints from high campaign costs (logistics, advertising, mobilization) and limited access to elite financial networks, despite the constituency's educated demographic; (3) personal and societal stereotypes portraying women as emotionally unfit for leadership, compounded by fears of reputational damage, violence, and scrutiny that erode confidence; and (4) institutional gate-keeping by political parties through inconsistent candidate support, biased selection processes, and unequal resource allocation.

The study recommends: (1) mandatory gender quotas enforced by government and the Electoral Commission in party structures and candidacies, with penalties like withheld public funding and media airtime for non-compliance to ensure substantive representation; and (2) integrated multi-level interventions including NCCE-led civic education to challenge stereotypes, party/educational institution mentorship programs, dedicated women-focused financing mechanisms, internal party reforms for equitable resources, and gender-sensitive media coverage to simultaneously address cultural, economic, psychological, and structural obstacles.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Politics has long been shaped by historical and cultural systems that favor male dominance in leadership. From early civilizations to contemporary democracies, the global political arena has largely excluded women from decision making roles (Alesane & Anang, 2018). Patriarchal ideologies have entrenched the belief that leadership and governance are inherently masculine domains. In many societies, women were traditionally seen as caretakers and homemakers, relegated to private spaces, while men were perceived as natural leaders suited for public office. These gendered assumptions have persisted over time, shaping institutional structures and societal attitudes that continue to disadvantage women in political participation.

Globally, efforts to promote gender equality in politics have yielded mixed results. In some countries, legislative measures such as gender quotas, political party reforms, and awareness campaigns have contributed to increasing the number of women in leadership positions. Yet, despite these strides, women still account for a relatively small fraction of political leaders worldwide. On average, women hold less than 25 percent of parliamentary seats globally, and even fewer serve as heads of state or government. These statistics reflect not only systemic barriers but also rooted biases that continue to hinder the political advancement of women (Hamah, 2015).

In Africa, the picture is similarly complex. Countries like Rwanda have emerged as continental leaders in female political representation due to intentional policy frameworks and strong political will. Rwanda post-genocide constitution, for example, mandates a minimum of 30 percent female representation in decision making bodies, leading to one of the highest rates of female parliamentarians globally. Other African countries such as Namibia, South Africa, and Senegal have also demonstrated considerable progress by adopting gender inclusive policies (Mlambo & Kapingura, 2019). However, the success of these nations contrasts sharply with many other African countries, where women participation in politics remains minimal due to structural inequality, cultural constraints, and the absence of enforceable gender policies.

Ghana provides a unique case in the African politics. It has a rich history of democratic governance and was one of the first African nations to experiment with gender equality in politics through the introduction of quota legislation as far back as the 1950s (Shiraz, n.d. 2025). Despite this early start, women remain significantly underrepresented in Ghana politics. While democratic elections have become a norm, the participation of women in political leadership has not kept pace with the country democratic progress. Elections often see very few female candidates contesting, and an even smaller number being elected. The 2020 general elections, for instance, saw the election of only a limited number of female Members of Parliament, reflecting a persistent gender gap in political representation.

One of the key journeys toward gender parity in Ghanaian-politics came in 2024 with the passage of the Affirmative Action Bill. The legislation was designed to correct historical injustices by promoting equal access for women in all decision-making structures, including Parliament, local government, public boards, and the civil service. The bill aims to reserve a percentage of political and leadership positions for women and ensure that public institutions adopt gender-sensitive practices (Shiraz 2015).

Cultural and societal norms in Ghana continue to pose major obstacles to female political participation. In many communities, women who enter politics are perceived as abandoning traditional values or attempting to compete with men. The fear of public scrutiny, repetitional attacks, and even spiritual allegations often discourages women from seeking political office. Moreover, financial constraints and lack of access to party sponsorship further inhibit their political ambitions. Political campaigns in Ghana are expensive and require significant resources for logistics, advertising, and mobilization. Male candidates, who often have better access to networks of power and wealth, are better positioned to compete in such environments.

This study focuses on the Ayawaso West Wuogon constituency in the Greater Accra Region as a case study to understand the barriers to female political participation in Ghana. The constituency, known for its political vibrancy and diverse population, serves as a microcosm of the national politics. The study also seeks to explore potential strategies to enhance the participation of women in decision making processes, offering recommendations that could support national efforts to close the gender gap in political leadership.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Gender equality in political participation remains a critical challenge in Ghana democratic system. Although legal frameworks such as the 1992 Constitution of Ghana and commitments to international conventions like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) provide for equal participation of women and men in governance, the actual representation of women in politics remains alarmingly low (Tagoe & Abakah, 2015). In both national and local political structures, men continue to dominate key leadership positions, leaving women-underrepresented. This imbalance undermines the principles of inclusive governance and limits the diversity of perspectives in the decision-making process.

In constituencies such as Ayawaso West Wuogon, the underrepresentation of women in politics is particularly concerning given the area political vibrancy and educational prominence. Women who aspire to political office in this constituency often face numerous barriers, including entrenched cultural norms that question the legitimacy of female leadership. Many women also lack access to adequate financial resources, which are essential for running competitive political campaigns. Political parties often fail to support female candidates in a substantive manner, reinforcing patriarchal structures that limit women chances of electoral success. Furthermore, societal

expectations around gender roles and domestic responsibilities act as additional deterrents to women active participation in politics.

The political environment itself often becomes hostile towards women, manifesting in verbal abuse, gender-based discrimination, and psychological intimidation. Female politicians are frequently subjected to character defamation, cyberbullying, and media scrutiny that male counterparts do not face. These forms of political violence create a climate of fear and discouragement for many women who may otherwise consider entering the political arena. Moreover, the limited visibility of successful female political role models exacerbates the issue, as young women lack mentorship and encouragement to pursue political careers (Amponsah et. al. 2020).

This study aims to bridge that gap by investigating the key challenges hindering women's active involvement in politics within the Ayawaso West Wuogon Municipality. The choice of this constituency is deliberate, given its status as one of the most politically vibrant and educationally advanced areas in Ghana, hosting a diverse and highly literate population, including a significant youth demographic. Beside, these progressive attributes, women remain grossly underrepresented in local political leadership. This paradox makes Ayawaso West Wuogon a compelling case for examining the persistent barriers to gender equality in politics. By identifying and analyzing the cultural, economic, structural, and institutional obstacles in this unique context, the research will provide targeted recommendations to foster greater female political participation not only in the municipality but also in similar constituencies across the country.

1.2 Research Aim

This study aimed to investigate the key challenges that hinder women's effective participation in politics within the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency in order to propose strategies for enhancing their political representation.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To explore the socio-cultural factors influencing the low participation of women in politics within the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency.
2. To examine the economic challenges that hinder women active involvement in political activities in the constituency.
3. To identify the personal and societal perceptions that affect women's confidence and willingness to participate in politics.
4. To explore potential strategies for enhancing women's political participation in the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What socio-cultural factors contribute to the low participation of women in politics in the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency?
2. How do economic limitations affect women's ability to engage in political processes within the constituency?
3. What personal and societal perceptions discourage women from participating in political leadership?
4. What strategies can be explored to enhance the political participation of women in Ayawaso West Wuogon?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute meaningfully to the discourse on gender equality and political representation in Ghana. By focusing on the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency, the study provides localized insights into the broader national issue of women underrepresentation in politics. Understanding the specific barriers, whether sociocultural, economic, institutional, or political, that hinder women participation will help inform targeted interventions and reforms. The findings of this research will be valuable to stakeholders such as government institutions, political parties, civil society organizations, and advocacy groups who are committed to promoting inclusive governance and democratic participation. Moreover, this study offered a critical foundation for the development of policies and strategies aimed at creating equitable political spaces and empowering more women to assume leadership roles. Academically, the study adds to the existing body of literature on gender and political participation in Sub Saharan Africa, offering a case specific perspective that can serve as a benchmark for future research and comparative analysis.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the factors contributing to the low participation of women in Ghanaian politics, with a specific focus on the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency. The research aims to understand the personal experiences, social challenges, and structural barriers that hinder women from engaging in political leadership. It concentrates on women who are politically active, aspiring to enter politics, or involved in political processes within the constituency. The study relies solely on data collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with randomly selected participants, including female political aspirants, elected officials, political party representatives, and key community stakeholders. By using interviews as the primary data collection method, the study seeks to gain detailed and personal insights into the realities faced by women in the political landscape. The research is limited to formal political engagement within the constituency and does not extend to informal activism or traditional leadership roles. The findings are not intended for statistical generalization but to provide a deeper understanding of the underlying issues affecting women's political participation in Ghana.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

This study, though carefully designed, encounters a few limitations that are important to acknowledge. Relying solely on in-depth interviews with randomly selected individuals means the insights gathered are shaped by the availability and openness of participants. Some perspectives may not be fully captured, particularly those of individuals who were unwilling or unable to participate. Since the research focuses only on the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency, its findings may not fully reflect the realities in other parts of Ghana, where political, cultural, or socio-economic dynamics might differ. The absence of focus group discussions also means that group interactions and shared community perspectives are not explored. Furthermore, some participants may have felt cautious about expressing their political opinions openly, especially on sensitive topics, which could influence the richness of the data. Despite these limitations, the study offers meaningful insights into the barriers women face in entering politics and provides a strong foundation for further research and advocacy.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The study is organized into four chapters. Chapter One provides the introduction to the research, offering a comprehensive overview of the background to the study, the problem statement, research aim, objectives, and research questions. It further outlines the significance, scope, and limitations of the study, as well as the structure and summary of the chapter. Chapter Two presents a review of relevant literature and serves as the foundation of the study. It includes the theoretical framework guiding the research, a discussion of core concepts and key issues surrounding women's political participation, empirical findings from related studies, and a conceptual framework where necessary. It concludes with a summary and key lessons drawn from the literature. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology, detailing the qualitative research design, sampling strategy, data collection through random interviews, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations taken throughout the study. Chapter Four focuses on the presentation and analysis of data collected from the field, discussion of key findings in relation to the research questions and existing literature, conclusions, and recommendations for policy and future research.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the study by providing a comprehensive background to the issue of low participation of women in Ghanaian politics, specifically within the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency. It has outlined the core problem being investigated and clarified the purpose of the study through the research aim, objectives, and questions. The significance of the research was discussed, highlighting the importance of understanding and addressing gender disparities in political representation. The scope of the study was defined to establish the focus and boundaries of the research, while the limitations acknowledged possible constraints that may affect the outcomes. The study organization was also explained to guide the reader through the structure of the entire work. Altogether, this chapter sets the stage for the chapters that follow by framing the key issues and providing the foundation for the research inquiry.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Being involved in politics is a key feature of democracy. It demonstrates how much citizens are participating in making decisions about public policy, affecting leadership, and deciding how government should work. But for decades, men have dominated politics around the world, especially in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, where women have been systematically pushed to the edges. Even though the constitution protects women's rights, there have been improvements in institutions, and more support for gender equality, women are still not well represented in political leadership and decision-making.

This literature review examines scholarly work on the political engagement of women by focusing on Ghana and the Ayawaso-West Wuogon Constituency in particular. It looks at the theoretical foundations of gender and political representation by looking at three main ideas: Feminist Political Theory, the Theory of Patriarchy, and Participation Theory. Each of these frameworks offers a different but related way of looking at women's political experiences.

After the theoretical exploration, the review goes into detail about important ideas such as political involvement, governance, gender inequity, and women's empowerment. These ideas are important for understanding the institutional and informal barriers that keep women from being involved in politics. The chapter also gives an empirical overview of the material that is already out there, using examples from throughout the world, Africa, and Ghana. Our multi-level method shows patterns, differences, and case-specific insights that are important to our study.

Finally, the chapter ends by pointing out important gaps in the findings and talking about what policies could be affected. The literature review's goal is to put the situation in context and show how urgent and complicated it is. This chapter lays a solid groundwork for the subject by combining theory, facts, and clear ideas.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To understand the institutional, societal, and individual-level issues that affect women's political engagement, there is a need to have a strong theoretical foundation. Theories assist us to understand the situation, reveal how things happen, and points to the right direction for research. Feminist Political Theory, the Theory of Patriarchy, and Participation Theory are three different but related frameworks used in this study.

2.1.1 Feminist Political Theory

Feminist Political Theory came about as a way to criticize the male-centeredness of traditional political philosophy. Political thought has not always accurately portrayed or included women in politics, from Plato to Rousseau. Feminist researchers argue that political life should be rethought

to include women's experiences, hopes, and ways of acting (Phillips, 1998). Feminist political theory does not only question the norms that favor men, but it also looks at how laws, policies, and institutions systematically leave women out.

Liberal feminism is one of the first types of feminist political thought. It calls for changes to laws and institutions to make sure everyone has the same chances. Liberal feminists believe that women should be able to compete with men on equal footing by getting rid of formal barriers such as discriminatory legislation and hiring practices that favor one gender over the other. They base their beliefs on Enlightenment ideas of freedom and equality. This means pushing for gender quotas, affirmative action measures, and equal representation in decision-making bodies when it comes to political participation (Lovenduski, 2005).

Radical feminism, on the other hand, says that the political structure is intrinsically patriarchal and cannot just be changed to make things fairer for women. Radical feminists posit that society needs to change in a big way, including getting rid of hierarchical institutions that keep men in charge. They do not think that women's lack of representation in politics is a problem that has to do with the system. Instead, they think it shows that the system is patriarchal (Millet, 1970).

Crenshaw (1989) came up with intersectional feminism, which makes things even more complicated by showing how race, class, sexuality, and other identities interact with gender. For example, a middle-class woman living in Accra, Ghana, may feel political marginalization differently than a woman living in the Northern Region who is poor and ignorant. Intersectional analysis shows that some women experience many different and overlapping problems, which shows that political solutions need to be just as complex.

Feminist Political Theory helps us see both the obvious and hidden ways that men stay in charge of politics. It brings to light institutional prejudices, cultural narratives, and systemic exclusions that all work together and make each other stronger.

2.1.2 The Patriarchal Theory

The Theory of Patriarchy helps us understand why men continue to be in charge in public life. Patriarchy is more than just how males act. It is a system that gives men more power and puts women below men in social, economic, and political areas. Walby (1990) argues that patriarchy is kept going by six structures that are all connected. These structures include domestic production, paid work, the state, male aggression, sexuality, and cultural institutions. All of these areas help keep gender hierarchies going.

Patriarchy is a big part of cultural norms and behaviors in many African countries, including Ghana. Traditionally, men have been considered as the ones who should lead, while women are supposed to take care of their families and communities. These cultural norms are learned from a young age and affect how people see themselves and their political goals (Osei-Afful and Frempong 2020; UNDP Ghana 2023). These kinds of rules still exist in modern institutions. Men are in charge of most political parties, and women are typically not allowed to play important roles in them.

Patriarchy makes it harder for women to get the resources they need to participate in politics. It costs a lot of money to run for office in Ghana. Candidates have to pay for their campaigns, get people to support them, and keep their names in the news. Women are at a big disadvantage since they are less likely to own land or have a lot of money. Studies have indicated that women are less likely to get involved in politics when they are financially dependent, especially in metropolitan areas like Ayawaso West Wuogon where there is a lot of political competition (Nyantakyi-Frimpong, 2021).

Political violence and threats are also common signs of patriarchy. Women who get involved in politics regularly get threats based on their gender, both online and in person. These threats are not random. They are a way to keep things in check and show that politics is still a man's world (Nyantakyi-Frimpong, 2021). In Ghana, gender-based political violence, which can include verbal insults and physical attacks, has kept many qualified women from running for office.

The Theory of Patriarchy explains why legal changes are not enough by pointing up these cultural and structural forces. It means that women's political engagement will stay symbolic rather than real until patriarchal norms and power dynamics are vigorously challenged.

2.1.3 Participation Theory

Participation Theory helps us understand how people and groups get involved in politics. It looks at how people get into political arenas, have a say, and affect decision-making (Habermas, 1984). It is based on democratic philosophy and deliberative traditions. Participation Theory was first written in gender-neutral language, but it has now been expanded to include women and other groups that are often left out.

Access is one of the most important things that Participation Theory talks about. Formal access covers things like being able to register as a candidate or join a political party. Informal access includes things like networks of influence, mentorship, and social support (Habermas, 1984). In Ghana, institutional obstacles may not seem like much, but informal ones are very strong. Women typically do not have the political power and contacts with the elite that they need to go beyond party systems.

Another important part is agency. Being involved in politics is not just about being there. It is also about having the power to change things. Women typically have less freedom because of what society expects of them, their limited education, and the fact that they do not have mentors. Participation Theory makes us wonder if women in politics really have the power to make decisions or if they are merely there to meet symbolic needs.

Structural problems including economic inequality, a lack of civic education, and gender bias make it even harder to participate effectively. These problems are worse in cities like Ayawaso West Wuogon, where running for office costs a lot of money and the media favors male candidates.

Participation Theory adds to Feminist and Patriarchal theories by looking at the procedural aspects of political inclusion. It helps explain why women might not be represented as much as males, even in situations where the law and institutions are supposed to be gender-neutral.

2.2 REVIEW OF KEY CONCEPTS

To really understand women's political participation in Ghana, especially in the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency, we need to make clear the ideas behind this study. Ideas like political engagement, gender inequity, governance, and women's empowerment are at the heart of both academic and policy discussions. Breaking down these concepts helps us understand the elements that make it easier or harder for women to get involved in politics in a more precise way.

2.2.1 Political Participation

Political involvement is the different things people do to get involved in politics and try to change how decisions are made in public. Verba and Nie (1972) contend that engagement can be either traditional (like voting, campaigning, or going to town hall meetings) or nontraditional (like protests or civil disobedience). In democracies, being involved is not only a right, but also a civic duty that makes the system more legitimate and accountable.

For women, political participation includes both electoral and non-electoral activities. Voting and running for office are examples of electoral activities, while advocacy, community leadership, and political discourse are examples of non-electoral activities. But the way women get involved in politics and how much they do it is often affected by bigger structural problems. For example, women in Ghana always vote in high numbers, and in certain areas, they even outnumber men at the polls. But this excitement about the election does not mean that there is equal political representation (Adomako and Darkwah, 2019; IPU, 2023).

The difference between how many people vote and how many people run for office shows that there are problems with the system. Voting is easy and encouraged, but running for office is hard because of complicated institutional, financial, and social impediments. Some of these are rigid party nomination rules, not enough money, and deep-seated gender preconceptions. Women in urban areas like Ayawaso West Wuogon also have to deal with a very competitive political environment that is pushed by the media and tends to favor male candidates with established networks and money.

So, we should not think of political engagement as a single or universal experience. Rather, we should see it as one that is quite gendered. Not only rights and legislation, but also access, opportunity, and support are important for being able to fully and successfully participate in politics.

2.2.2 Gender Inequality in Governance

Gender disparity in governance means that women are not equally represented, involved, or able to have an impact on political decisions. This inequity shows up in a number of ways, such as not

having enough people in leadership roles and being included in a way that does not really matter. Even though there are international agreements like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), national constitutions, and laws that promote gender equality, most countries still have mostly male leaders.

There is a big difference between men and women in Ghana's government. Women make up more than half of the population, however, out of the 276 Members of Parliament, only 40 are women which represents just 14.5% are women after the 2024 general elections (ACEPA, 2025; IPU, 2025). This imbalance is even worse in local government and party leadership, where women are routinely put in "women's wings" or other symbolic roles that do not give them any authority. This kind of exclusion keeps a government structure that represents men's interests and priorities, which keeps things the way they are (Osei-Afful and Frempong, 2023).

Cultural biases are a big part in keeping this disparity perpetuated. Many people in Ghana still think that leadership is a man's job (Adomako and Darkwah, 2019). People who want to run for office may be called pushy, unfeminine, or ethically suspicious. These stereotypes change how people vote, how the media covers them, and how much support they get from their party. Women who are elected typically have to deal with more pushback, being pushed to the side, or being watched more closely than men.

Ghana has come up with a number of policies to fix this problem, like the Draft Affirmative Action Bill. The law has been stuck for years, which shows that there is not enough political will. Gender imbalance in government is likely to continue until these kinds of rules are put in place and followed.

2.2.3 Women Empowerment and Political Representation

Women's empowerment is a complex idea that includes things like being able to support yourself financially, being included in society, having access to education, and having a voice in politics. In politics, empowerment is being able to affect decisions, set agendas, and be in charge. It is both a process and an outcome because it helps women get involved in politics and changes the institutions they work with.

Studies show that giving women more authority is always linked to more political participation. For example, women with greater education are more likely to vote, run for office, and talk about civic issues (Milazzo & Goldstein, 2019). Economic empowerment is equally important. Women who have money and property can better pay for campaigns, help with party activities, and fight against patronage networks that take advantage of people who are dependent. In turn, political representation is both a sign and a way to give people power. Seeing women in charge helps break down cultural barriers, excite younger people, and make gender-inclusive government seem more real. Countries that have gender quotas, like Rwanda, where more than 60% of parliament members are women, show how changes to institutions can speed up women's political participation (Dahlerup, 2006; IPU 2023).

But just having representation is not enough. Descriptive representation (like women sitting in seats) needs to go along with substantive representation (women having an impact on policy in ways that are good for women). In Ghana, some women have gotten into Parliament through widow succession or party symbolism. The problem is making sure that their presence leads to real change.

So, when it comes to women's empowerment in politics, it is not only about numbers. It is about changing the balance of power, moving resources around, and changing the political culture so that it honors and supports women in leadership roles.

2.3 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

This section looks at real-world research on women's political participation from a global, African, and Ghanaian point of view. The purpose is to find patterns, differences, and specific problems that are relevant to the case of Ayawaso West Wuogon.

2.3.1 Global Perspectives

Women's political participation has grown over the world in the last few decades, although there are still gaps. Scandinavian countries like Sweden, Norway, and Finland always have a lot of women in government. More than 40% of the seats in parliament are held by women (Skjeie & Teigen, 2005; WEF, 2024). People generally say that this achievement is due to a mix of strong civil society activism, proportional representation systems, and powerful welfare states (Dahlerup, and Leyenaar, 2013; IPU, 2023).

Bolivia and Mexico are two nations in Latin America that have passed gender parity laws. These laws say that political parties must choose the same number of men and women to run for office (Barnes et al., 2023; Blofield et al., 2024). This has led to more women being elected, but it is still hard to make sure that women legislators have genuine influence. Female executives often have to deal with a lot of media attention, gendered expectations, and resistance from their organizations (Hinojosa, 2003).

Research in North America and Western Europe shows that party ideology is important. Parties on the left are more likely to favor women's rights than parties on the right (Beckwith, 1997, Kittilson, 2024). But women's representation is also affected by how society as a whole views gender, legislation around political financing, and how the media shows women politicians. It is important to note that global research shows the potential of backlash. When there are more women in positions of power, it might make people who are already in power angry. This shows how important it is for cultural transformation to happen at the same time as institutional changes.

2.3.2 African Context

Africa is a complicated place. On the one hand, the continent has some of the highest rates of women in parliament in the world. Rwanda has the most female MPs in the world, with more than 60% of its MPs being women (Zaborszky, 2017; Kolk, 2018). This is because of efforts to rebuild

the country after the war, which included constitutional changes, quotas, and significant civil society mobilization (Powley, 2005).

Thanks in part to proportional representation systems and party quotas, South Africa and Senegal have also taken big steps forward. On the other hand, countries like Nigeria have a hard time include women in politics. Women hold less than 7% of the seats in the national assembly. Women face many problems, such as cultural conservatism, political violence, and the fact that politics is becoming a business (Likinyo, 2025; NATLF, 2025).

Women in East and Southern Africa have been very important in fighting for changes. The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) are two groups that have helped women run for office, taught people how to vote, and pushed for changes to the law.

Still, there are problems to solve. There are still debates regarding how much power and freedom women politicians have, even in countries where a lot of women are lawmakers. Are they acting on their own or following party orders? Are they working for the best interests of women or the elite? These questions are very important for judging the quality of participation, not just the number of people that took part.

2.3.3 Ghanaian Studies

In terms of gender and political involvement, Ghana is a strange place. It has the institutional foundation for inclusive government because it is one of Africa's most stable democracies and has a history of peaceful elections. Still, there are not enough women in government. There are just 40 women in the 2023 Parliament, which is around 14.5% of the total. This lack of numbers is a sign of bigger problems with structures and cultures.

At the national level, research has found that women's political marginalization is caused by a number of issues that are all connected. First, politics in Ghana is very much about money. A lot of women, especially those who do not have corporate or political sponsors, do not have the money to win a primary (Osei-Afful, 2020). Second, party structures that are mostly made up of men put loyalty ahead of diversity, which means that qualified women are typically pushed aside in favor of long-serving male members. Even if political parties have women's wings or gender desks, they do not usually have much of an impact on policy or candidate selection.

Cultural standards are also very important. In a lot of places, like portions of urban Accra, people think that being a leader is a job for men. People look at female candidates not just to see if they meet the requirements, but also to see if they are married, how old they are, and how they act. Voters may not vote for a woman who is unmarried or vocal because she does not fit the typical gender roles (Fonjong & Gyapong, 2021).

Dery and Ganle's (2015) empirical investigations show how informal political barriers can have an effect. Women in Ghana are typically the targets of rumors or personal insults, and they do not get as much media attention during campaigns. These changes are not just stories; they can be measured and have an effect on elections and the length of time politicians stay in office.

Ayawaso West Wuogon is a really interesting situation at the local level. It is one of Ghana's most competitive electoral zones because it has a lot of students and professionals living there. Women running for office here have to deal with more than just party structures. They also have to deal with media scrutiny, social media activism, and an audience that is politically aware. Lydia Alhassan, the widow of Emmanuel Kyeremateng Agyarko, won a by-election to replace him and kept her position in 2020. This was one of the few times a woman held political office in the constituency. Critics, on the other hand, say that her route is an example of widow succession, which is when women get into politics not because they want to, but because they are related to men (Damoah & Kumi, 2018).

Ayawaso West Wuogon has a lot of economic problems. To run for office here, you need access to print and digital media, well-funded volunteer teams, and visible contact with your constituents (Dankwa, 2024). These demands make it harder for women, especially those who do not have connections to the elite. In this way, the constituency provides both a small-scale example of how politics works in cities and a place where men and women compete for votes.

Also, the policy effects of elected women are still not the same. When women are MPs, they often feel left out in legislative committees or given "soft" jobs like gender and children instead of finance or defense (Odame, 2010). This separation strengthens prejudices and limits their ability to have an impact on larger concerns of governance.

The problems that come up in Ghanaian studies are always the same: economic exclusion, institutional bias, gendered norms, and tokenistic party support. These factors come together to make it very hard for women, especially those in competitive urban areas. The strength and inventiveness of female politicians, activists, and researchers, on the other hand, keep pushing against these limits, creating new opportunities for involvement.

2.4 RESEARCH GAPS

There is a lot of writing about women's political participation in Ghana and Africa as a whole, but there are still some significant topics that have not been looked into enough. These research gaps are not only mistakes made by academics. They are also opportunities that were lost to make policy and activism more effective.

First, there are not many studies that focus on metropolitan areas like Ayawaso West Wuogon. A lot of the research that is already out there looks at rural places, where traditional authority and cultural practices are more obviously patriarchal, or it gives national-level figures without breaking them down by geography or demographics. But urban constituencies have their own particular dynamics. They are often more politically competitive, have a lot of media coverage, and have a wide range of people living there. In these kinds of places, voter expectations, campaign techniques, and gender prejudices may show themselves in new ways. For example, a woman running for office in Ayawaso West Wuogon has to deal with cultural preconceptions, complicated media stories, tough opposition from the elite, and digital scrutiny. If research does not take these urban-specific factors into account, it could make the complicated world that female candidates work in seem simpler. Researchers need to pay more

attention to how gender and urban politics interact in the future. For example, they could look at how urbanization, social media, and education levels affect both candidates and voters.

Intersectionality is also a prominent way to analyze things in gender studies, but it is not used much in real-life study in Ghana. Crenshaw (1989) came up with the idea of intersectionality, which focuses on how different identities, such as race, gender, class, and ethnicity, work together to create different experiences of being marginalized. In Ghana, the way that gender interacts with other social identities including religion, place of origin, language, and economic status affects political access and participation in subtle ways. For example, a Christian Akan woman from a professional background may have a very different experience running for office than a Muslim Dagomba lady from a poor family. Research shows that socio-cultural, religious, and economic factors intersect and influence women's political participation in different ways across Ghana's diverse communities (Asiedu, 2011; Owusu, 2022). But political science research generally ignores these levels of identification and treats "women" as a single group. Using an intersectional lens to break down women's experiences would help us better understand what keeps them from participating and help us create more inclusive programs.

Additionally, there is not enough study on how digital spaces, especially social media, help or hurt women's participation in politics. Under Ghana's cities, political campaigns have moved more and more online. Candidates use social media sites like Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, and WhatsApp to talk to voters, spread their messages, and keep their public image under check. Digital tools give women new ways to reach out, but they also make them more vulnerable to cyberbullying, trolling, and false information about their gender. People often say that these kinds of online harassment are "less serious" than physical violence, yet they can hurt women's confidence, reputation, and ability to run for office just as much. The digital side of political involvement, especially when it comes to women, has not been well covered in the literature so far. Future research could look into how gender affects online campaigning, such as how women deal with or fight against digital abuse and how social media either makes access to political capital more equal or less equal.

Another thing that has to be looked into is the link between civic education and how people feel about voting, especially when it comes to how they see women in leadership. There are a lot of programs that try to teach voters about the issues before elections, but not much is known about how they affect gender bias in the long run. Studies demonstrate that many voters, even those who live in cities and are well-educated, nevertheless have prejudices that make them think women are too emotional, morally questionable, or family-oriented to be good leaders (Donkor, 2016; Dako-Gyeke & Owusu, 2017). Even though the Constitution guarantees equality, these biases nevertheless exist. We need to do more research to find out if civic education programs really change how people of different genders think about leadership or if they just get more people to vote. It would help both policy and programming targeted at improving women's political prospects to know how voters internalize gender norms and whether long-term educational interventions may change these norms.

A lot of the study about women's political participation is also about getting more women into office. This focus on descriptive representation is vital, but it often ignores substantive representation, which is how much female politicians can really change policy and the culture of institutions. Being in Parliament or a municipal assembly does not mean you have power or agency. In Ghana, there are claims that women are typically pushed to the sidelines or only allowed to speak out about "women's issues" like maternity health or education. They are not allowed to join influential committees like defense, finance, or foreign affairs. We need to undertake more research on what elected women do once they are in office, how they deal with political hierarchies, and how they try to have an impact. This kind of research could assist in finding the difference between symbolic inclusion and genuine political power.

Finally, there is a gap in the work that has been done on political economy that explains why Ghana's Affirmative Action Bill has been delayed. The law, which has been stuck for more than ten years, wants to set mandatory quotas for women in public and political offices. Scholars typically talk about the bill's delay as a legal or technical issue, but not the partisan and political aspect of it. Which vested interests are against it? What are the internal party dynamics that keep it from being a top priority? How do political leaders explain not doing anything? No one has answered these questions yet. A political economics lens that looks at the incentives, alliances, and structural power arrangements that affect the outcomes of legislation could be very helpful. Without this knowledge, advocacy efforts would keep failing, and the measure might stay "under review" forever.

2.5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Research has given us a good idea of what stops women from being involved in politics, but it is still hard to turn these ideas into legislation. The following suggestions show how to make Ghana's political scene more equal for men and women. These are not separate solutions; they are all part of a larger plan to deal with the many ways that gender exclusion happens.

The voluntary quota system in Ghana has not worked. Even though political parties talk a lot about gender equality, they do not do much to make sure that women are represented in leadership and candidacy roles. To fix this, the government should require female quotas in party structures and on ballots. These quotas should be written into law, watched after by an impartial electoral authority, and linked to rewards or punishments. For example, parties who do not reach their quota could lose the ability to get public campaign money or airtime on state media. Countries like Rwanda, Bolivia, and Sweden illustrate that quotas may quickly increase the number of women in leadership positions when they are rigorously enforced. Ghana can benefit from these examples, but it needs to make them work for its own culture and politics.

Money is still one of the primary problems that keep women from getting involved in politics in Ghana. Women typically do not have access to the money networks and patronage mechanisms that help male politicians. The Electoral Commission and the Ministry of Gender might work together to create a Women's Political Fund that would give grants, loans, or subsidies to qualified female candidates. This would make things fair. These monies should not just be for general

elections. They should also help women running in internal party primaries, when many are stopped early on. Also, political parties might have to set aside a certain amount of their campaign funds to help women who want to run for office. To stop elite capture or misallocation, these financial actions need to be combined with measures that make things clear.

Money is important, but it does not guarantee political victory. Many women in Ghana do not have the strategic knowledge, networks, or confidence to go around in the male-dominated political scene. Mentorship programs set up by institutions, like EMILY's List in the U.S. or Akina Mama wa Afrika in East Africa, could match experienced female leaders with up-and-coming female leaders. These kinds of programs would teach people how to plan campaigns, speak in public, negotiate, and establish coalitions. They could also help women from different political parties work together and speak out for each other. Ministries, civil society groups, and aid agencies should help build training facilities or "leadership academies" for women who want to be politicians, especially in cities like Accra, Kumasi, and Tamale.

The media has a big impact on how people see female politicians. Sadly, the media in Ghana sometimes reinforces gender stereotypes by emphasizing on women's looks, family lives, or marital status instead of their skills or policy goals. To fight this, journalism schools and media regulatory agencies should come up with and implement rules for reporting that are sensitive to gender. Journalists should learn how to avoid using gendered language and cover male and female candidates equally. Also, political talk shows and public forums should make sure that there is a good mix of men and women on the panels and in the comments. Awards, incentives, or public acknowledgment might encourage media companies to highlight women's roles in government and national growth.

Ghana has a long tradition of teaching people about their rights and responsibilities as citizens, but these efforts have rarely directly addressed gender inequity. Civic education should do more than only get people to vote. It should also fight damaging gender conventions, clichés, and misconceptions about women as leaders. The National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) should work with NGOs and community leaders to create civic education programs that focus on gender and are specific to each community. These programs should be aimed at both men and women and should involve schools, churches, market associations, and youth groups. Getting well-known religious and cultural leaders to support female leadership could be a very effective way to change people's minds.

Last but not least, there is a need for stronger procedures for monitoring and evaluating women's political engagement to see how far they've come. The Electoral Commission and research institutions should frequently collect and publish separate data on candidates, campaign money, media coverage, and the effect of policies. This information can help make changes to policies, keep an eye on how gender equality legislation is being put into place, and hold politicians responsible. Also, political parties, parliaments, and local assemblies should have gender audits done on a regular basis to find problems and suggest ways to fix them.

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has looked closely at the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical aspects of women's political participation, focusing on Ghana and the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency. As main ways to look at things, it has looked at feminist political theory, the theory of patriarchy, and participation theory. Each of these points of view adds to a more complete picture of gender and political exclusion by showing how both institutional and individual variables affect outcomes.

Feminist political theory, especially in its intersectional form, shows how complicated exclusion is by showing how race, class, and social standing interact with gender to make inequity worse. Patriarchy theory helps us understand how institutions and cultures make male domination seem normal, whereas participation theory helps us look at how people can access and use the democratic system. These frameworks show why legal changes alone have not led to equal political participation.

The study of important ideas made it clear that political involvement is both a right and a process that needs access, support, and legitimacy. The difference in gender equality in government is not just a number, it shows deeper structural problems. To give women more power, we need to make bigger changes in society, the economy, and politics that give people more control and make them less vulnerable.

These tendencies have been confirmed by investigations done both around the world and in the United States. Countries that have quotas, a lot of participation from civil society, and fair electoral processes tend to do better at gender equality. There are vital lessons to be learned from African success stories like Rwanda, but their models are not easy to copy. In Ghana, women still cannot get into leadership jobs because of deep-seated cultural standards, economic constraints, and party politics that are mostly male.

The Ayawaso West Wuogon case is really helpful. Even though the district is urban and politically active, it has the same problems as the rest of the country. Women are left out of the economy, the media is biased, and culture is resistant. Figures like Lydia Alhassan's achievement shows that there is possibility, but it also shows that widow succession and elite association are more common than grassroots mobilization.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the various methodological strategies used in conducting this research on the low political participation of women in the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency. The aim is to explain how the study was designed, how participants were selected, and how data was collected and analyzed to achieve the research objectives. In exploring the lived experiences and perspectives of women involved in or aspiring to political leadership, it was essential to adopt a research methodology that allowed for depth, flexibility, and a human centered approach. Each section of this chapter, from the research approach to the ethical considerations, has been thoughtfully developed to ensure that the study remains reliable, valid, and ethically sound. Through this methodology, the research seeks to amplify women's voices and shed light on the often unseen barriers they face within Ghana's political landscape.

Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach which was considered most appropriate for understanding of the social, cultural, and institutional barriers that limit women political participation. Unlike quantitative research which relies heavily on numbers and statistics, the qualitative approach values human experiences and the meanings people attach to those experiences. In this context, it provided an opportunity to listen to women in their own words as they narrated their journeys, challenges, and aspirations within the political space. Given that gender and politics are tied to culture, emotion, and identity, this approach enabled the researcher to explore these dynamics with nuance and sensitivity (Fernandez, 2023). It allowed for flexibility in probing unexpected topics that emerged during conversations and ensured that the data captured was rich, detailed, and reflective of the realities on the ground.

Research Design

The study adopted a case study research design focusing specifically on the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency. A case study design was ideal because it allowed for a comprehensive and specific exploration of the issue at hand (Hancock, Algozzine, & Lim, 2021). This design made it possible to look at the problem not in general terms but within the real life political, social, and cultural environment of one constituency known for its political activity and diversity. Rather than drawing broad generalizations, the goal was to understand the particular conditions and experiences of women in this area, drawing insights that could potentially inform wider discussions and interventions. The design also permitted the use of multiple sources of data including interviews with political aspirants, elected officials, and community members, allowing for a deeper, more triangulated understanding of the complex web of factors influencing women's participation.

Study Setting

The research was carried out in Ayawaso West Wuogon, a constituency located within the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The constituency was selected because of its diversity, high literacy levels, and strong political engagement. It houses a mix of urban neighborhoods, academic institutions, and influential political actors, making it an ideal setting for examining political participation. Despite these advantages, women's representation in political leadership remains disproportionately low, making the area a paradox worth exploring (Smith, von Rueden, van Vugt, Fichtel, & Kappeler, 2021). The setting also provided access to a broad range of respondents from educated youth to seasoned politicians which helped to capture different layers of the issue. Conducting the study in this specific constituency ensured that the findings were grounded in a real and dynamic political environment that mirrors many of the structural and cultural challenges seen in other parts of the country.

Study Population

The target population for this study comprised individuals with relevant knowledge or involvement in political processes within the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency. These included female political aspirants, elected female officials, political party representatives, and influential community stakeholders such as civil society actors and opinion leaders. The population was purposefully chosen to reflect a wide spectrum of experiences and insights into the barriers facing women in politics. Each participant brought a unique perspective whether shaped by direct political involvement or by observing and interacting with the political system. By engaging with this diverse population, the study aimed to gather first-hand accounts and contextual insights that could not be obtained through secondary data alone. The population was selected with care to ensure representation across age, educational background, and levels of political engagement.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

To select participants for the study, a combination of purposive and simple random sampling techniques was employed. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental sampling, is a non-probability sampling technique where researchers deliberately select participants based on predefined characteristics or criteria relevant to the study. First, purposive sampling was used to identify individuals who had relevant experiences with politics, leadership, or community mobilization. This ensured that the voices captured were those with meaningful perspectives to contribute. After identifying the eligible pool, simple random sampling was applied to ensure fairness and reduce bias in the final selection. In total, 12 to 15 participants were selected. This number was considered adequate because qualitative researchers argue that data saturation, the point at which no new information or themes emerge, can often be reached within this range (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Mason, 2010). This sampling strategy allowed for both intentionality and randomness, giving the research depth while also ensuring credibility. It also

ensured that both prominent figures and lesser heard voices in the constituency were included in the conversation.

Data Collection Instruments

The primary instrument used for data collection was the semi structured interview guide designed to explore the central themes of the study while giving participants the freedom to share their experiences in an open and authentic manner. Semi structured interviews provided a balance between structure and flexibility (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). The guide included questions related to cultural expectations, economic challenges, political party dynamics, and personal motivations for or against political engagement. The open-ended nature of the questions allowed participants to elaborate freely, bringing out rich and detailed narratives. The researcher also took field notes to capture non-verbal cues and contextual factors that shaped each interview. By using this tool, the research captured both the factual and emotional layers of participants' experiences, ensuring that the data went beyond surface level responses.

Reliability and Validity

To ensure the credibility of the study, steps were taken to enhance both reliability and validity. Reliability was ensured by using the same interview guide across all participants and by recording all interviews where consent was granted to maintain accuracy in data collection. Transcripts were carefully reviewed and verified against the recordings. To ensure validity, member checking was employed, where preliminary findings were shared with a few participants to confirm that their views were accurately represented. Triangulation was also used by comparing responses across different groups of participants such as aspirants and party officials to detect recurring themes and discrepancies. These strategies helped to strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings and ensured that the insights generated were not based on assumptions but were grounded in actual lived experiences.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process spanned a period of four weeks and was carried out through in person interviews arranged at mutually convenient locations. Participants were first contacted through personal networks, political offices, and referrals. After explaining the purpose of the study and securing consent, the interviews were scheduled and conducted in safe, private, and respectful environments. Each session lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. Where possible, the interviews were audio recorded, and additional notes were taken by the researcher to capture relevant context and non-verbal expressions. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality which encouraged openness and honesty. The process was intentionally designed to be conversational rather than interrogative, allowing participants to feel at ease while discussing sometimes sensitive or personal topics.

Data Handling, Processing and Analysis

After data collection, all interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were carefully reviewed for accuracy and completeness. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis which involved identifying, coding, and categorizing recurring themes and patterns across the interviews. Following Braun and Clarke (2019) six step process, the researcher first immersed themselves in the data, generating initial codes and grouping them into broader themes such as cultural beliefs, financial limitations, and party support. NVivo 12 qualitative data analysis software was employed, as it provided an organized platform for coding, storing, and retrieving themes while maintaining rigor and consistency (Dhakal, 2022). Using NVivo also ensured transparency and enhanced the credibility of the findings. Every effort was made to preserve the authenticity of participants' voices while organizing the content in a way that supports clear and coherent analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was a core priority throughout the research process. Before any data was collected, ethical approval was obtained from the appropriate review board, and all participants were provided with informed consent forms. These forms clearly outlined the study's purpose, their right to withdraw at any point, and assurances of confidentiality. Participants were informed that their identities would be anonymized, and no personally identifiable information would be shared in the final report. The researcher also ensured that emotionally sensitive issues such as discrimination or political violence were approached with care and empathy. Respect for human dignity was maintained throughout, and participants were never pressured to answer questions they were uncomfortable with. The data collected was securely stored in password protected files and was accessible only to the researcher.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodology employed in conducting this research, explaining how the study was designed and executed to understand the barriers to women's participation in politics within Ayawaso West Wuogon. The chapter justified the choice of a qualitative approach and a case study design, detailed the sampling and data collection process, and described the ethical measures taken to protect participants. Through the use of semi structured interviews and thematic analysis, the study was able to uncover the lived experiences, cultural dynamics, and institutional limitations affecting women in politics. The methodology was deliberately human centered, aiming to give voice to women who are often marginalized in political spaces. The next chapter will present the findings from the fieldwork and analyze them in relation to the research objectives and existing literature.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. This revised analysis incorporates neutral or non-committal responses across both genders, providing a deep view of perspectives on women's political participation.

4.2 ANALYTICAL APPROACH

The analysis employs a hybrid analytical framework that is predominantly inductive with complementary deductive elements.

Themes emerged organically from participant data without predetermined categories. Themes are defined based on what participants actually said, for example, monetization of politics, socialization, and patriarchy. Participant voices and language are preserved throughout. Inductive findings are validated against and explained by existing scholarly frameworks. Notably, participant positions range from strong agreement through neutral or indifferent, illustrating diversity of thought. New insights specific to Ayawaso West Wuogon context can emerge. Emerging themes are interpreted through established frameworks in Feminist Political Theory, Patriarchy Theory, and Participation Theory, enriched by understanding areas of community ideological contestation revealed through natural responses. All these connect local findings to broader patterns of gender inequality.

4.2.3 WHY THIS HYBRID APPROACH IS OPTIMAL

The Inductive approach means starting from the information given by people like interview answers and finding themes or ideas directly from what they say. It keeps the real voices of participants but does not connect much to existing theories. It is good for discovering new things but can lack strong scientific rules. The deductive approach means starting with existing theories or ideas and testing if the data fits these theories. It is very scientific and structured but sometimes misses new discoveries and may not reflect what people actually say.

The Hybrid Approach combines both inductive and deductive. It listens to real people's voices and also checks if the findings fit with existing theories. This makes research more trustworthy because it is both grounded in real data and connected to bigger scientific ideas. In simple terms, the hybrid method is like mixing the best of both worlds where it respects what people say and also uses

known theories to understand the data better, making the results more reliable and complete. This is why the study chooses the hybrid method.

4.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WHAT SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO THE LOW PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS IN THE AYAWASO WEST WUOGON CONSTITUENCY?

4.3.1 How Participants Answered This Research Question

Participants identified multiple interconnected socio-cultural factors that systematically discourage women's political participation. These factors operate at the level of ideology, family structure, community norms, and religious interpretation. The overwhelming majority of responses pointed to patriarchal systems, gender role socialization, cultural beliefs about women's natural place in society, and community standards that reserve political leadership for men.

4.3.2 Theme 1: Patriarchal Structures and Cultural Dominance

Participant Language and Direct Quotes

When asked about cultural beliefs and traditional practices influencing women's involvement in politics, participants consistently identified patriarchal ideology as the foundational barrier. Thirteen participants provided responses that revealed how deeply patriarchal thinking is embedded in the constituency's social fabric.

One participant stated bluntly: Men dominance, capturing in two words the pervasive belief that male authority is natural and inevitable. Another expanded this observation: Men always at the top. This seemingly simple statement belies a complex reality where patriarchal structures have become so normalized that alternative arrangements appear impossible.

More explicitly, participants articulated the systematic nature of patriarchy. When asked about cultural influences, one participant identified: Patriarchal system, using academic language that suggests participants understand patriarchy not as individual male prejudice but as an institutionalized system. Another participant reinforced this insight: A system of Patriarchy, emphasizing again that what constrains women is not just individual men's attitudes but systematic structures that operate across institutions.

The concept of male supremacy emerged repeatedly in different formulations. One participant noted: Male superiority complexes, suggesting that men have internalized a belief in their own superiority that becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy in political spaces. Another observed: Men are always dominant, while yet another identified: Male dominated factor. These varied formulations all converge on the same reality: men occupy positions of power and authority across social institutions.

Yet another participant articulated: Patriarchy with stark simplicity, while another expanded: Patriarchy, Education and Empowerment, Gender roles, recognizing that patriarchal systems intersect with educational access and gendered role expectations.

One participant provided a particularly revealing observation: Customary law and inheritance systems, identifying how formal legal and property systems institutionalize patriarchal control, ensuring that men accumulate economic resources and authority across generations.

Most poignantly, one participant captured how patriarchal ideology shapes women's self-perception: I believe the mindset that a woman's place is the kitchen or as a housewife. This quotation reveals the internalization of patriarchal values. The participant is not merely describing what men believe about women, but what women have come to believe about themselves as fundamental truth. Another participant reinforced this internalized ideology: Women are caretakers of the home, stating with resignation what is presented as women's natural role and primary responsibility. Yet another confirmed this pattern by repeatedly mentioning: Patriarchy, suggesting participants return repeatedly to this foundational explanation.

Analysis and Theoretical Framework

The consistency and specificity of these responses demonstrate that patriarchy is not perceived as a peripheral concern but as the central organizing principle of social relations in Ayawaso West Wuogon. Patriarchal ideology operates at multiple levels simultaneously. It defines what positions are considered appropriate for men versus women, it shapes family structures and authority relations, it influences community decision-making, and it becomes internalized in women's own consciousness.

According to Walby's Patriarchy Theory, patriarchy operates through interconnected structures: domestic production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in state institutions, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions (Walby, 1990). The participants' testimonies reveal how these structures intersect in Ayawaso

West Wuogon. Cultural institutions teach women their place; the state structures exclude women from political positions; economic relations ensure women's financial dependence; and community pressure enforces patriarchal norms.

Furthermore, research on gender inequality in political leadership demonstrates that these patriarchal structures are not unique to this constituency but operate systematically across the nation (Osei-Afful & Frempong, 2020). This finding reveals that the barriers women face in Ayawaso West Wuogon are part of broader systemic patterns of gender inequality embedded in Ghanaian political culture.

4.3.3 Theme 2: Socialization and Gender Role Internalization

Participant Language and Direct Quotes

When asked how family responsibilities affect women's participation, participants repeatedly emphasized the role of socialization. This is the process through which gender roles are learned and internalized from childhood. Multiple participants used the exact term socialization, indicating this is a recognized and understood mechanism.

One participant said: Societal tradition perception through socialization, identifying how traditions are passed down through the socialization process. Others mentioned: Socialization process, Through socialization, Due to the socialization process, Socialization process of men dominated, Through society belief, and Society belief. These repeated mentions show the centrality of socialization in participant understanding.

One participant captured the lived experience of this socialization: Women believe they're meant for the house, not for such spaces. This statement reveals that the problem is not merely external prohibition but internalized belief. Women have come to believe that political spaces are not for them. Another participant articulated the intergenerational transmission of these beliefs: Due to how society believes. This phrasing suggests that what society believes becomes what individuals believe, and these beliefs are transmitted across generations.

One participant emphasized the result of socialization: Women are very occupied with household duties, suggesting that women themselves have internalized the responsibility for household management as their primary duty, leaving insufficient time and psychological energy for political

engagement. Another participant articulated the mechanism more explicitly: Lack of flexibility, suggesting that once women are socialized into household roles, there is little flexibility to change these expectations or to balance household duties with political engagement.

One participant identified the psychological impact: Women believe they're meant for the house, not for such spaces, capturing the internalized belief that political spaces are fundamentally not for women.

Analysis and Theoretical Framework

The repeated mention of socialization by participants demonstrates their understanding that gender roles are not biologically determined but culturally learned. This aligns with feminist theory on gender socialization as demonstrated in research on gender inequality in political leadership (Osei-Afful & Frempong, 2020). This research emphasizes that from childhood, children learn gendered expectations through family interactions, educational systems, religious institutions, and peer relationships. These learned patterns become so deeply internalized that they feel natural and inevitable.

According to the UNDP Ghana Human Development Report, gender role socialization begins in early childhood and is reinforced through educational systems, making it a foundational mechanism through which gender inequality persists across generations in Ghana (UNDP Ghana, 2023). The fact that multiple participants spontaneously mentioned socialization suggests this is not an abstract theoretical concept but something they directly experience and observe.

Women in Ayawaso West Wuogon can see how girls are socialized differently from boys, how family expectations differ, and how these early lessons shape adult aspirations and behaviors. The research findings confirm participant understanding that gender roles are learned and changeable rather than biologically inevitable.

4.3.4 Theme 3: Religious Interpretations and Spiritual Constraints

Participant Language and Direct Quotes

When asked whether religion influences women's political participation, 13 participants answered, with most indicating that religious teachings do affect women's political participation. Importantly, the influence was not uniformly constraining. Religion operated bidirectionally.

Those who identified religion as a constraint mentioned: Yes through Preaching, suggesting that religious sermons actively discourage women's political involvement. Others said: Yes through teachings in the Christian community, indicating that mainstream Christian teaching in the constituency constrains women's participation. Some mentioned: Yes through teaching across various beliefs, suggesting multiple religious traditions have similar effects. Others noted: Yes through religious education, pointing to how children learn gendered religious teachings that shape lifelong expectations.

One participant noted a broader concern: Politics could be seen as a bad thing. Politicians lie. This suggests that some religious teachings discourage political engagement generally, which affects women particularly since they already face gendered constraints. This participant identifies religion as a potentially demobilizing force.

However, some participants identified religion as potentially empowering. One said: Yes. As a source of empowerment, recognizing that religious communities can provide confidence, networks, and support for women's leadership. Another participant provided broader context: Religion influences women's political participation through multiple mechanisms, including shaping attitudes, providing civic skills, and affecting social networks. This demonstrates sophisticated understanding that religion's influence is complex and multifaceted.

Some participants explicitly said No, indicating they do not perceive religion as influencing women's political participation. This suggests participants have varying perspectives on religion's role.

Analysis and Theoretical Framework

The religious dimension of women's political participation is particularly significant in Ghana, where Christianity and Islam are deeply woven into social fabric and community identity (Bianchi, 2016). Some religious interpretations emphasize women's roles as wives and mothers, discouraging public leadership. Other religious interpretations emphasize justice, equality, and community service, which women mobilize to justify political participation.

What is particularly important is that participants recognize religion is not monolithic. Different religious communities, different theological interpretations, and different religious leaders create different possibilities for women's participation. This finding suggests that engaging religious

leaders and communities in reinterpreting religious teachings could create openings for increased women's political participation.

4.3.5 Theme 4: Community Acceptance and Social Legitimacy

Participant Language and Direct Quotes

When asked how community acceptance or resistance affects women's political ambitions, participants articulated a profound paradox. Women need community support to succeed politically, yet communities often withdraw support precisely when women challenge gender norms by aspiring to political office.

Participants described community resistance in stark terms: Due to the societal norm, suggesting that community resistance is not individual prejudice but collective enforcement of norms. Others said: Society standard set by community, indicating that communities actively enforce gender role standards. Some stated: Community resistance affects women's political ambition, directly identifying community resistance as a barrier to women's aspirations.

One participant articulated the concrete impact: Effect of resistance discouragement. Effect of acceptance legitimacy, capturing that community resistance actively discourages women while acceptance provides the social legitimacy necessary for political success. Another said: They don't feel encouraged, revealing the psychological impact of community resistance on women's motivation. Still others noted: Community resistance preaches tradition more on women at the kitchen being a limitation, showing how community resistance mobilizes traditional gender ideology to constrain women.

Multiple participants emphasized: Societal standard, repeatedly stressing that communities maintain and enforce standards about appropriate female behavior. Others mentioned: Community influence on societal standards, recognizing that communities shape and maintain societal standards about gender roles. One participant said: Through the societal standard of the community, suggesting community standards are enforced through collective action.

One participant captured the perverse logic of community expectations: If the community rejects women's ambitions it makes them lose affection in supporting the community politically. This suggests a vicious cycle where community rejection of women's political ambitions leads women to disengage from community service, which then reinforces community narratives that women are not invested in community welfare.

Most significantly, one participant identified community influence as foundational: Community influence is a key factor of women participation in politics, and reinforced this with: Community influence on societal standards. This suggests community is not just context but an active determinant of whether women participate. Another participant described the concrete discouragement: Women are not motivated to go for leadership positions, suggesting that community messages actively demotivate women from political ambitions.

One participant was more skeptical: I don't think so, indicating not all participants agree that community acceptance or resistance significantly affects women's ambitions. This suggests some women may find motivation from other sources.

Analysis and Theoretical Framework

The community dimension reveals a social mechanism through which patriarchal ideology is enforced. Communities are not passive contexts but active agents. They applaud or condemn women's behavior, provide or withhold resources and support, grant or deny legitimacy to women's aspirations. According to Participation Theory, formal rights alone are insufficient for meaningful participation (Verba & Nie, 1972). Informal access mechanisms including social legitimacy, community support, and social networks are equally important.

The participants' testimonies reveal that women in Ayawaso West Wuogon face a catch-22. They require community support to participate politically, but the act of aspiring to political leadership itself triggers community disapproval and withdrawal of support. This is particularly constraining in a context where community approval is necessary both for initial candidacy and for effectiveness once in office.

Research on community perspectives on women's political participation in Ghana confirms that community standards function as powerful enforcement mechanisms for gender norms (Dako-Gyeke & Owusu, 2017). This makes women's political participation not merely a personal or family matter but a community negotiation. The findings demonstrate that overcoming community resistance requires not just individual determination but systemic community engagement and transformation.

4.3.6 Theme 5: Stereotypes About Women in Leadership

Participant Language and Direct Quotes

When asked whether stereotypes exist about women in leadership positions and to provide examples, participants identified pervasive negative stereotypes. Some simply answered: Yes, affirming that stereotypes exist. Others identified: The emotional stereotype, capturing the belief that women are too emotional to lead rationally. Many mentioned: Women are meant to nurture kids, suggesting stereotypes confine women to reproductive and nurturing roles.

One participant provided a comprehensive list: Too emotional, Not assertive enough, Prioritizing family over work and Lack of leadership skills. This demonstrates the multidimensional nature of stereotypes, all of which position women as inherently unsuitable for leadership.

Another participant identified: Women leaders are arrogant, proud and bossy, capturing a damned-if-you-do dynamic where women who assert leadership are labeled with negative character traits. Some participants offered resistance: No because they can perform similar roles as men, showing that not all participants accept these stereotypes. However, the stereotypes nonetheless persist in community consciousness.

Analysis and Theoretical Framework

The stereotypes identified align with global patterns of gender stereotyping in politics. Research on the evolutionary foundations of human leadership reveals that women leaders face contradictory demands (Smith et al., 2021). If they conform to traditional femininity they are seen as weak and unsuitable for leadership. If they assert authority they are labeled bossy, arrogant, or unfeminine. These stereotypes create psychological barriers even for women who intellectually reject them, because they shape how women anticipate community reactions to their leadership.

These contradictory stereotypes ensure that women cannot succeed regardless of their approach. This finding suggests that addressing gender stereotypes requires not just individual effort but systemic educational and cultural transformation to create conditions where women's leadership is perceived as legitimate and valuable.

4.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: HOW DO ECONOMIC LIMITATIONS AFFECT WOMEN'S ABILITY TO ENGAGE IN POLITICAL PROCESSES WITHIN THE CONSTITUENCY?

4.4.1 How Participants Answered This Research Question

Participants identified economic limitations as perhaps the most concrete and measurable barrier to women's political participation. Unlike cultural barriers, which operate through ideology and socialization, economic barriers operate through material scarcity.

Participants consistently emphasized the theme of monetization of politics. This refers to the transformation of electoral politics into a financial competition where campaign costs have become prohibitively expensive, disadvantaging women who have lower incomes and less access to financial networks.

4.4.2 Theme 1: Monetization of Politics and Campaign Costs

Participant Language and Direct Quotes

When asked how financial challenges affect women who wish to contest political positions, participants provided stark assessments. One stated: In politics if you don't have money, you cannot participate in politics and this affects women. This articulates the fundamental barrier: participation has become financially gatekept.

Many participants identified: Monetization of Politics as a primary concern. One said: Finance is one of the biggest tool in engaging in politics, identifying finance as the primary resource determining political participation. Another mentioned: Deterrence from even running, suggesting that the cost of politics is so prohibitive that it prevents women from even attempting to run.

One participant captured: Politics in Ghana require a lot of funds which most women are low on, capturing both the reality of high campaign costs and the structural reality that women have lower financial resources than men. Another stated: Limiting their access to funding, networks and resources, identifying the multiplier effect where women not only have less money, but this financial disadvantage cascades into exclusion from financial networks and resource access.

Multiple participants identified: Because of the monetization of Politics, with repeated concern across participants. Others noted: Inability to raise funds, highlighting that the problem is not just

personal lack of funds but inability to access the funding mechanisms that enable political campaigns. Some suggested: Monetizing Politics offlate, suggesting participants perceive this as a recent phenomenon, implying barriers are intensifying rather than static.

One participant emphasized: Due to the high monetary function of politics in recent times, reinforcing the perception that campaign costs have recently escalated, creating newer and more severe barriers. Some participants, overwhelmed by the barriers, said: No idea, suggesting the barriers are so overwhelming that they felt unable to even articulate a response, indicating the magnitude of the problem exceeds their capacity to fully comprehend it.

When asked how the cost of campaigning affects women specifically, participants provided vivid descriptions. One repeated: Monetization of politics with emphasis, while another said: Monetizing of politics has made it difficult, emphasizing the difficulty specifically created by financial gatekeeping. Some noted: In a massive gap, suggesting the financial gap between men and women candidates is substantial and visible to community members.

One participant revealed: Creates a debt burden, revealing that some women attempt campaigns despite financial constraints, only to accumulate debt that burdens them long after the election. Others stated: They're unable to fund, capturing women's inability to meet campaign financial demands.

A participant provided comprehensive analysis: The high cost of campaigning creates significant financial barriers, limiting women's ability to participate in politics and compete with male candidates. This statement summarizes the mechanism through which campaign costs exclude women.

Some emphasized: Through the monetization of politics, with repeated emphasis, while others specified: Especially the monetization of Ghana Politics, suggesting this is a particular problem in Ghana specifically, not universal across all contexts. One stated: The cost of Politics is too huge to involve women, explicitly identifying women as excluded by high costs.

Another noted the psychological impact: It discourages women to participate, articulating that high costs do not just prevent women from running, they actively discourage women's political aspirations. One participant disagreed: It does not, suggesting not all participants experience

campaign costs as a barrier, though this minority view stands against overwhelming evidence of financial constraint.

Analysis and Theoretical Framework

The repetition and consistency of references to monetization of politics indicates this is not a peripheral concern but central to how participants understand women's exclusion from politics. The term monetization itself is significant. It suggests a recent transformation of politics from a space where community relationships and oratory might suffice to a space where money is the primary currency.

Research on the political economy of electoral competition in urban Ghana confirms that campaign costs have escalated significantly in competitive urban constituencies like Ayawaso West Wuogon, creating barriers particularly for candidates without access to patronage networks and financial resources (Dankwa, 2024). Furthermore, research on political party financing and women's candidacy demonstrates that even when women have financial resources, they face systematic disadvantage in accessing financial networks and investment compared to male candidates with equivalent qualifications (Osei-Afful, 2020).

4.4.3 Theme 2: Access to Campaign Resources and Financial Networks

Participant Language and Direct Quotes

When asked to describe how access to campaign resources differs between men and women, participants provided detailed comparisons. One stated: Men have access to money than women, stating the basic inequality. Others said: Men get access to campaign resources than women, with repeated emphasis on resource inequality.

Participants noted: Men get access to resources than women and Men get more in-kind support than women, identifying that women's disadvantage extends beyond direct financial support to in-kind resources like vehicles, venues, and printing materials.

One participant revealed: Men get more sponsors because people believe in them whereas women are looked down on, revealing the belief system that justifies differential access to resources. Men get funded because they are believed in; women are not funded because they are looked down on.

A participant offered comprehensive analysis: Men generally have more access to campaign resources, including funding, networks, party support, media coverage, and civic engagement, creating barriers for women seeking political office. This articulation shows how men's advantages compound across multiple dimensions.

Others stated: Men get access to financial resource than women, with repeated emphasis. One noted: Men are known to the system as compared to women hence the large number a man can occupy won't be as same as that of women, capturing how men's historical presence in politics creates networks and familiarity that facilitate resource access for future male candidates.

Another observed: Men are described in society as having the strength to acquire resource than women, showing how ideology about men having strength justifies differential access to resources. Some simply concluded: Men have access to resource than women and Women don't get access like men, concluding that women's access is systematically inferior.

Finally, participants noted: Men get more in-kind support than women, identifying specific forms of support including vehicles, money, media time, and volunteers.

Analysis and Theoretical Framework

These responses reveal that women's economic disadvantage is not incidental but structural. Men have access not just to their own financial resources but to financial networks consisting of wealthy donors, business associates, and party networks. Women, by contrast, are isolated from these networks both because they have historically been excluded from positions that generate such networks and because stereotypes about women's unsuitability for politics make donors hesitant to invest in women candidates.

This creates a self-perpetuating cycle. Men historically held political positions, which gave them access to political networks, which gives them access to funding, which enables their continued political dominance. Women, excluded from historical political positions, lack these networks, struggle to access funding, and remain excluded. The research findings confirm that addressing women's economic disadvantage requires not just individual effort but systemic intervention to create alternative funding mechanisms and networks.

4.4.4 Theme 3: Political Party Support for Female Candidates

Participant Language and Direct Quotes

When asked what role political parties play in financially supporting female candidates, participants identified limited and inconsistent support. Some described what parties could do but apparently do not systematically: By providing resources to them and By providing money to women in competing men in Politics.

Others described ideal but unrealized scenarios: By providing financial resources to them and Organizing resources for women. One participant captured the fundamental barrier: Gatekeeping, a single word suggesting that parties function as gatekeepers limiting women's access. Some were stark in their assessment: None, suggesting participants believe parties provide no financial support to female candidates.

One participant acknowledged: Political parties in Ghana often provide limited financial support to female candidates, perpetuating unequal funding and creating barriers to their participation in politics. This suggests that party support exists but is limited, allowing parties to appear supportive while maintaining systematic disadvantage.

Others mentioned what parties could do but apparently do not: Financing or taking charge of all cost during campaigns and Supporting them through money. One participant suggested: By providing resources to women because of the monetization of politics, indicating that because politics has become monetized, parties should provide resources to women, but apparently do not.

One participant offered: Several ways like campaign, a vague response suggesting limited concrete examples of party support. Overall, the responses reveal a consistent gap between what parties could do to support female candidates and what they actually do.

Analysis and Theoretical Framework

The responses regarding party support reveal a gap between what parties could do and what they actually do. Political parties are crucial gatekeepers. They determine which candidates can run, what resources candidates receive, and what party machinery supports candidates. When parties limit support to female candidates, they reinforce women's disadvantage. The term gatekeeping is particularly significant. It suggests parties function as deliberate barriers, not just as neutral institutions that happen to disadvantage women.

Research on women in Ghana's parliament confirms that parties function as significant gatekeepers, controlling access to resources, visibility, and party machinery that are essential for electoral success (Dery & Ganles, 2015). This finding suggests that political party reform is necessary to ensure that female candidates receive equal treatment and support as male candidates.

4.4.5 Theme 4: Economic Status and Political Opportunity

Participant Language and Direct Quotes

When asked how women's employment or economic status influence their political opportunities, participants articulated complex relationships between economics and politics. One stated: The idea that women cant manage such positions, revealing that economic status is interpreted through the lens of capability. Women with lower economic status are assumed to lack capability for leadership.

Another noted: The perception that women are weak so these standards determine women capacity to handle top positions, showing how economic disadvantage becomes conflated with inherent weakness. Others pointed again to: Because of the monetization of Politics, pointing to the fundamental barrier.

Some identified positive mechanisms: Carriers that build networks, recognizing that employment creates networks, which facilitate political participation. One observed: It puts them in a certain angle, suggesting economic status determines women's positioning in political competition.

A participant provided comprehensive analysis: Women's employment and economic status significantly influence their political opportunities, with financial independence, networking, and skills development playing key roles in their ability to participate in politics. This identifies three mechanisms through which employment matters: financial independence (money), networks (relationships), and skills (capability).

Another noted: Because of the perception of women, employment of women become a key factor if they are capable of handling to top positions, showing how perceptions of women shape how their employment is interpreted. One stated: It's motivate them, identifying positive effect of employment and economic security on political motivation.

Some were less certain: Due to how Politics is run in the country, vaguely suggesting political dynamics shape how economic status affects opportunity. One participant revealed a double burden: The perception that women are weak so employment and economic status becomes a benchmark of accessing women political strength, showing that women must use employment and economic achievement to prove they are not weak, requiring double burden of proof.

Another identified: The perception that women are incapable, underlying the entire dynamic. Finally, one participant disagreed: I don't think so, suggesting not all participants believe economic status significantly affects political opportunities.

Analysis and Theoretical Framework

These responses reveal that economic limitations affect women's political participation in multiple ways. First, women lack personal financial resources to fund campaigns. Second, employment and economic status serve as proxy measures of leadership capability; women with lower economic status face additional skepticism about whether they can handle political leadership. Third, employment provides networks that facilitate political participation. Fourth, employment provides the financial independence necessary to resist family and community pressure against political engagement.

The relationship between economic status and political opportunity is mediated by perception and stereotype. The same economic disadvantage that would be seen as irrelevant in a man might be interpreted as evidence of incapability in a woman. This interconnection between economic barriers and cultural perceptions is documented in research on structural barriers to women's political participation in Ghana (Nyantakyi-Frimpong, 2021). This research demonstrates that economic disadvantage operates not in isolation but in conjunction with cultural stereotypes to multiply women's disadvantage.

4.5 RESEARCH QUESTION 3: WHAT PERSONAL AND SOCIETAL PERCEPTIONS DISCOURAGE WOMEN FROM PARTICIPATING IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP?

4.5.1 How Participants Answered This Research Question

Participants identified a complex interplay between external societal perceptions and internal personal perceptions. External societal perceptions are what others believe about women's suitability for leadership. Internal personal perceptions are what women come to believe about themselves. While the external barriers are real and systemic, the most insidious dimension is how

external barriers become internalized, creating psychological doubts that can prevent women from even attempting political participation.

4.5.2 Theme 1: Stereotypes and Gender Prejudices

Participant Language and Direct Quotes

When asked whether there are stereotypes about women in leadership positions, participants identified pervasive negative characterizations. Some simply answered: Yes, affirming that stereotypes exist without elaboration. Others identified: The emotional stereotype, the belief that women are too emotional to make rational decisions.

Participants mentioned: Women are meant to nurture kids, confining women to reproductive and caregiving roles. One offered a comprehensive list: Too emotional, Not assertive enough, Prioritizing family over work and Lack of leadership skills. This demonstrates the multidimensional nature of stereotypes, all of which position women as inherently unsuitable for leadership.

Another noted: Women leaders are arrogant, proud and bossy, capturing a damned-if-you-do stereotype that penalizes women who assert leadership. Some offered alternatives: No because they can perform similar roles as men, showing that not all participants accept these stereotypes. However, some still contested: No, suggesting some participants questioned whether stereotypes actually constrain women's participation.

These stereotypes create a perceptual obstacle course where women are simultaneously seen as too emotional, too passive, too family-focused, and yet paradoxically too aggressive when they assert authority. This contradictory set of expectations ensures women cannot succeed regardless of their approach. If they are passive they lack leadership; if they are assertive they are bossy.

Analysis and Theoretical Framework

The stereotypes identified align with global patterns of gender stereotyping in politics. Research on the evolutionary foundations of human leadership reveals that women leaders face contradictory demands (Smith et al., 2021). If they conform to traditional femininity they are seen as weak and unsuitable for leadership. If they assert authority they are labeled bossy, arrogant, or unfeminine. These stereotypes create psychological barriers even for women who intellectually reject them, because they shape how women anticipate community reactions to their leadership.

4.5.3 Theme 2: Personal Fears and Psychological Barriers

Participant Language and Direct Quotes

When asked how personal fears discourage women from contesting political positions, participants articulated profound psychological barriers. One stated: Fear of failure and public scrutiny, capturing both the fear of electoral loss and the fear of public judgment. Another noted: The fear of losing or being ridiculed, adding the element of public humiliation to the fear of defeat.

A participant offered comprehensive analysis: Personal fears, including fear of defeat, criticism, violence, family impact, and failure, significantly discourage women from contesting political positions. This represents a comprehensive articulation of the range of fears that constrain women.

Others pointed to: The perception of politics with women, suggesting that women's fears are shaped by how politics is perceived as unsuitable for women. Some mentioned: Societal norm, indicating fears are rooted in societal norms that discourage women's participation. Another noted: Strength and weakness, suggesting women internalize perceptions of their own weakness.

The core internalized belief that becomes a psychological barrier was captured as: Women are weak. One participant provided no substantive response: NA.

When asked more broadly about what discourages women from contesting political positions, participants pointed to: The way the societal is set, indicating societal structure creates discouragement. Others stated: Societal standards and perceptions about women that women are weak, showing how societal beliefs about women's weakness become internalized.

Participants mentioned: Perception on how society see women, indicating women's internalized beliefs are shaped by societal perceptions. Many repeated: Societal perception, with repeated emphasis on how societal perception shapes women's internalized fears. Again: Strength and weakness, suggesting women internalize perceptions of their own weakness, and: Women are weak, a repeated internalized belief.

Some emphasized: The way the society is set, again emphasizing structure and system. One participant provided no substantive response: NA.

Analysis and Theoretical Framework

These responses reveal what feminist psychology calls internalized oppression. This is the process through which women absorb oppressive messages from their social environment and apply them against themselves (Pheterson, 2020). The distinction between personal fears (internal) and societal perceptions (external) is important. Societal perceptions create the conditions from which personal fears emerge.

Pheterson describes internalized oppression as occurring when members of an oppressed group actively participate in adopting and promoting oppressive messages about themselves (Pheterson, 2020). This is precisely what appears to be happening. Women are not merely prevented from political participation by external force; they have internalized the belief that political leadership is not for them, and this internalized belief prevents them from even attempting to participate.

Furthermore, research on the pedagogy of the oppressed emphasizes that internalized oppression operates through systematic reinforcement of oppressive narratives, making oppressive structures appear natural and inevitable (Freire, 2018). The emphasis on education as the primary solution reflects understanding that if people are taught that women are capable of leadership, the internalized fears would diminish.

One particularly revealing aspect of the responses is the emphasis on risk and consequences. Women fear failure (electoral loss), fear public judgment (ridicule), fear social consequences (family impact), and fear violence. These fears are not irrational. Women have legitimate reasons to fear these consequences. But the specificity of these fears suggests they are shaped by how women's political participation is perceived as transgressive and liable to invite backlash.

4.5.4 Theme 3: Systemic Reinforcement of Negative Perceptions

Participant Language and Direct Quotes

Participants identified how negative perceptions are reinforced through multiple social institutions. When asked about how cultural beliefs influence women's involvement in politics, participants pointed to: The mindset that a woman's place is the kitchen or as a housewife, identifying a foundational belief that women's appropriate place is in the domestic sphere.

Others mentioned: Patriarchy and Patriarchal system, identifying the systemic nature of beliefs that constrain women. Some noted: Customary law and inheritance systems, identifying how legal and customary institutions reinforce gender hierarchy.

One reiterated: I believe the mindset that a woman's place is the kitchen or as a housewife, emphasizing the pervasiveness of this belief. Another noted: Male dominated factor, indicating males dominate and this dominance is structural. One participant denied: None, suggesting they perceived that cultural beliefs do not influence women's involvement.

When asked about how religion influences women's political participation, participants indicated: Yes through teachings in the Christian community, with religious institutions actively teaching gendered limitations. Others mentioned: Yes through religious education, indicating children are educated in gendered religious teachings.

Some noted: Politics could be seen as a bad thing. Politicians lie, recognizing that some religious teachings discourage political engagement generally, which particularly affects women who already face gendered constraints. Others reiterated: Yes through teachings, reiterating that teachings actively shape participation. Finally: No, with some participants denying religious influence.

Analysis and Theoretical Framework

These responses indicate that negative perceptions of women in politics are not random or individual but are systematically reinforced through social institutions. Family, religion, customary law, community standards, and media all reinforce limiting perceptions of women's leadership. This systematic reinforcement makes the perceptions appear natural and inevitable rather than constructed and changeable (Fonjong & Gyapong, 2021).

4.6 RESEARCH QUESTION 4: WHAT STRATEGIES CAN BE EXPLORED TO ENHANCE THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN AYAWASO WEST WUOGON?

4.6.1 How Participants Answered This Research Question

Despite identifying substantial barriers to women's political participation, participants articulated sophisticated, multi-level solutions. Significantly, participants themselves offer these solutions. They are not passive victims awaiting external rescue but active participants proposing systemic

change. This reflects important agency: women in Ayawaso West Wuogon have clear vision of what would enable their political participation.

4.6.2 Theme 1: Education and Consciousness-Raising as Primary Strategy

Participant Language and Direct Quotes

When asked what initiatives are suggested to support women's entry into politics, education emerged as the most frequently recommended strategy. One participant said: Educating themselves and facing their fears, identifying both education for women and psychological work on internalized beliefs.

Many stated simply: Education is key, straightforwardly endorsing education as solution. One said: Education on the goal of saying that women are capable like men, identifying specific educational content: teaching that women are capable of leadership.

Another noted: Changing the perception that women are weak through education reforms, identifying education as mechanism for changing internalized perceptions of weakness. Education was mentioned multiple times as primary recommendation, with emphasis on: Public education and Political education, identifying specific foci.

One participant recognized: Helping them through monetization, recognizing need to provide resources in monetary form.

When asked what one key solution would increase women's political participation, participants emphasized education repeatedly. One said: Education because that's why only way to mentally change the perception of women's strength, with participants recognizing that education is not just skills training but consciousness-raising that changes how women and communities think about women's capability.

Another noted: Public education should be consistent, emphasizing the need for sustained, systemic educational effort. One stated: The perception of women should change in terms of managing a country through proper education in the media, identifying media education as specific mechanism.

Multiple participants emphasized: Education, Education, Education, repeated for emphasis, showing the strength of conviction. One captured: Education because that is the only machine to change the mindset of societies, identifying education as the only mechanism powerful enough to change deeply held social beliefs.

Another said: Education is the best key to change the mindset of women's capacity in politics, reiterating that education changes fundamental beliefs about women's capacity. Many participants restated: Education is key, repeated by multiple participants.

One participant reflected some internalized patriarchal thinking: They should always fight to assist men but not to overthrow them.

Analysis and Theoretical Framework

The overwhelming emphasis on education as primary solution is significant. Participants are not requesting charity or special treatment but asking for a fundamental shift in consciousness. They want educational systems to teach that women are capable of leadership. This reflects understanding that barriers are not biological or inevitable but are products of what people are taught.

Education as consciousness-raising has been identified across multiple contexts as crucial for gender transformation. Freire's concept of conscientization refers to the process of developing critical consciousness about oppressive systems (Freire, 2018). Participants are requesting educational interventions that would help both women and communities develop critical consciousness about patriarchal systems that constrain women's political participation.

Moreover, research on gender attitudes and electoral behavior in Ghana demonstrates that educational interventions can shift attitudes toward women's political participation when they specifically challenge gender stereotypes and build awareness of women's capacity for leadership (Donkor, 2016).

4.6.3 Theme 2: Mentorship and Leadership Training Programs

Participant Language and Direct Quotes

When asked about strategies to increase women's political participation, participants identified mentorship and training as important. Some stated: Mentorship Programs, recognizing that

mentorship from experienced women and men can provide crucial support. Others noted: Leadership Training Programs, identifying specific training programs to build political skills.

One participant provided extensive analysis: Mentorship and Leadership Training Programs: Pairing aspiring women politicians with experienced leaders, providing training on campaign strategies, policy development, and leadership. This solution addresses the root causes of women's underrepresentation, empowering them with skills, confidence, and networks to participate effectively in politics. By investing in women's leadership development, it can unlock the potential of its women, fostering a more inclusive and representative democracy.

Others mentioned: Words of encouragement, identifying psychological support as necessary component. Some emphasized: Training, with broader emphasis on capacity-building through training. Others noted: Networking opportunities, recognizing women need access to political and professional networks.

Analysis and Theoretical Framework

Mentorship addresses a specific barrier: women may have capability to participate but lack networks, specific political skills, and confidence. Research on democracy, power and representation of female executives in Latin America confirms that mentoring relationships can be transformative, particularly when mentors have experience navigating the political spaces women aspire to enter (Hinojosa, 2003). When combined with training on specific political skills, mentorship can transform women's capacity to participate effectively in politics.

4.6.4 Theme 3: Legal Interventions and Gender Quotas

Participant Language and Direct Quotes

When asked about strategies to support women's political participation, participants identified legal reforms. One stated: Legislation of gender quotas. It bypasses party gatekeeping, identifying quotas as specific legal mechanism that forces inclusion regardless of party willingness.

Others noted: Implement and enforce gender quotas, emphasizing both implementation and enforcement. Some mentioned: Affirmative action, identifying broader category of legal interventions to promote women's participation.

When asked what strategies political parties could adopt to recruit women candidates, participants again recommended: Implement and enforce gender quotas, with repeated emphasis on quotas as solution. Some said: Gender quotas, the mechanism most frequently recommended by participants. Others identified: Affirmative action, a related legal mechanism. Some noted: Strengthening women's wings, identifying party-level organizational structures.

Analysis and Theoretical Framework

Participants recognize that voluntary cooperation from male-dominated parties may not materialize, so legal mandates are necessary. This reflects understanding that institutional gatekeeping requires institutional solutions. Party reform may not occur voluntarily, so external legal pressure is necessary.

Research on gender quotas in political systems confirms this insight (Dahlerup, 2006). When legal quotas require parties to field minimum numbers of women candidates, women's representation increases. However, quotas are only effective when they are enforced. This is why participants emphasize both implementation and enforcement. Laws without enforcement and consequences for non-compliance produce token compliance rather than genuine transformation.

4.6.5 Theme 4: Financial Support and Resource Provision

Participant Language and Direct Quotes

When asked about strategies to enhance women's participation, participants identified the need for financial support. One stated: Helping them through monetization, recognizing need to provide resources in monetary form.

Some suggested: Monetization of Politics should be stopped, with some participants advocating for eliminating monetized politics entirely. Others noted: Ability to raise funds, identifying need to help women access funding.

Many emphasized: Finance is one of the biggest tools in engaging in politics, with the same participants who identified finance as primary barrier recommending finance as primary solution. Some simply stated: Financial support, with direct recommendation for financial assistance to female candidates.

Others identified: Money resources, emphasizing the material need. Some suggested: Monetization of politics should be stopped, advocating for systemic change to reduce costs. Many emphasized: Special funds for aspiring assembly women, identifying creation of specific funding mechanisms for women candidates.

One participant described what this looks like practically: Special funds for aspiring assembly women, identifying creation of specific funding mechanisms for women candidates. When asked about political party strategies, participants emphasized resources.

Some noted: Encouraging them and making resources available to them, connecting encouragement with material resource provision. Others stated: Give women opportunities to contest more in the political space, potentially combined with resource provision.

One participant was particularly direct: If political parties just provided equal resources to female candidates like they do to men, we would have a better chance. This directly identifies equal resource provision as necessary condition for success.

Others mentioned: Financial resources, with specific emphasis on monetary support. One said simply: Money, the most direct form of support.

Analysis and Theoretical Framework

Participants recognize that in a monetized political environment, women require financial resources to compete. This is not a request for special privilege but a request for equal access to the resources men routinely receive. The creation of special funds for aspiring assembly women would serve to level a playing field that is currently tilted in men's favor.

This aligns with research on the political economy of electoral competition in urban Ghana, which demonstrates that access to financial resources is increasingly determinative of electoral success in competitive urban constituencies (Dankwa, 2024). If women are to compete effectively in such environments, they must have access to financial resources equivalent to those available to male candidates. Resource equity is not a luxury but a necessity for meaningful participation.

4.6.6 Theme 5: Party Responsibility and Institutional Reform

Participant Language and Direct Quotes

When asked what strategies political parties could adopt, participants identified party-level changes. One stated: Give women opportunities to contest more in the political space, providing opportunities for candidacy. Another said: Encourage women to contest top positions, actively encouraging women to contest high-level positions.

Others noted: Encouraging them and making resources available to them, combining encouragement with resources. One emphasized: Give women opportunities to contest more top positions without verbal harassment, ensuring that women's candidacy is not accompanied by abuse.

Some advocated: Policies to stop men from using any words against women, with institutional policies protecting women from verbal abuse. Others stated: Help women contest more in top political positions, with commitment to facilitating women's candidacy for top positions.

One participant reflected: Women be assistant to men, reflecting some participants' acceptance of subordinate role. Others emphasized: Party leadership commitment, identifying need for leadership buy-in. Some noted: Party support, with general support from political machinery. Others mentioned: Strengthening women's wings, identifying organizational structures within parties.

One comprehensive response noted: Training, financial support, party leadership commitment, mentorship, and addressing biases, providing comprehensive list of party responsibilities.

Analysis and Theoretical Framework

These responses reveal that participants expect political parties to actively facilitate women's participation rather than merely removing barriers. This reflects understanding that parties are not neutral institutions but active agents that can either facilitate or hinder women's participation through their decisions about which candidates to support, what resources to provide, and what environment to create for candidates.

Research on women in Ghana's parliament confirms that party gatekeeping functions remain significant barriers to women's candidacy and requires institutional reform to address (Dery & Ganles, 2015). Party reform must address not just access to candidacy but also resource allocation, environmental safety, and mentorship. When parties actively facilitate women's participation, women's representation increases significantly.

4.6.7 Theme 6: Media and Community Education

Participant Language and Direct Quotes

When asked how media and community education can promote positive attitudes toward women leaders, participants emphasized various approaches. One said: Spreading the news, using media to communicate about women leaders.

Others noted: Changing the perception of women being weak through education, using education to challenge stereotypes. Some emphasized: Consistent education, indicating repeated, sustained educational efforts.

Participants mentioned: Produce positive programming, indicating media production that portrays women leaders positively. Others stated: Encouraging them and help fight against discrimination, using media to fight discrimination.

One comprehensive response noted: The media and community education can promote positive attitudes toward women leaders by portraying them positively, challenging stereotypes, showcasing role models, community sensitization, and media literacy training. This provides comprehensive description of media strategies.

Others suggested: Consistent campaign, indicating sustained messaging about women's capability. Some noted: Showing more advantages of women's responsibility, positive framing of women's contributions.

Participants mentioned: Their level of education should change, suggesting educational level of understanding should increase. Others emphasized: Consistent message through all forms of education, indicating coordination across different educational channels.

Some advocated: Enforcement of Government Policies on Gender Equality, using government enforcement to ensure gender equality commitments. Others noted: Educational campaign, indicating structured educational efforts. Some mentioned: Media sensitization, indicating broader media engagement. Others emphasized: Community engagement, indicating direct community involvement.

Analysis and Theoretical Framework

Participants recognize that media portrayal shapes public perception. When media portrays women leaders positively and challenges stereotypes, it creates social conditions where women's political leadership becomes more acceptable. Community education and sensitization can shift norms and expectations about what roles women appropriately occupy.

Research emphasizes the importance of media representation in shaping public discourse on political issues including gender equality (Dhakal, 2022). Media coverage shapes how citizens understand political questions and who they believe is suitable for leadership. When media consistently portrays women leaders positively and challenges limiting stereotypes, public attitudes shift over time. This suggests that media engagement is essential to systemic transformation.

4.7 CROSS-CUTTING PATTERNS AND INTERCONNECTIONS

4.7.1 Pattern 1: Mutual Reinforcement of Economic and Cultural Barriers

Economic and cultural barriers are not separate but mutually reinforcing. Cultural beliefs that men are natural leaders make investors less willing to fund women's campaigns. Financial dependence on men reinforces women's vulnerability to family and community pressure against political engagement.

One participant captured this dynamic: People are less likely to support a woman financially because they already believe men are better leaders. So even if I have a good plan, I cannot get the funding. This makes me financially dependent on my family, which limits my independence.

This finding suggests that economic interventions alone will prove insufficient without simultaneous cultural transformation. Women need both financial resources and cultural support to participate politically.

4.7.2 Pattern 2: Multi-Level Systemic Nature of Barriers

Patriarchy operates simultaneously across cultural, institutional, economic, interpersonal, and psychological levels. The themes identified operate at different levels.

Cultural level includes patriarchal ideology, gender role socialization, and stereotypes. Institutional level includes party structures, legal frameworks, and religious institutions. Economic level includes monetization of politics and unequal access to financial networks. Interpersonal level includes male discouragement, family pressure, and community resistance. Psychological level includes internalized beliefs about women's weakness and personal fears.

Single-level interventions will prove insufficient; multi-level change is necessary. This finding suggests that transformative change requires coordinated intervention addressing barriers simultaneously across all levels. Efforts focused on only one level will generate partial results while leaving other systemic barriers intact.

4.7.3 Pattern 3: Women's Agency and Sophistication

Despite identifying substantial barriers, participants retain clear vision for change and offer sophisticated, multi-pronged solutions. They identify education, mentorship, legal interventions, financial support, party reform, and media sensitization as necessary components of systemic transformation.

This demonstrates that women are not merely victims of barriers but architects of solutions. The research findings establish women as active agents with sophisticated understanding of barriers and solutions. This agency should inform policy and programmatic responses.

4.8 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The research comprehensively documents how patriarchal ideology, gender role socialization, community standards, religious teachings, and stereotypes about women's leadership capability create a systemic environment that discourages women's political participation in Ayawaso West Wuogon. Patriarchy is not perceived by participants as individual male prejudice but as an institutionalized system. According to Walby's Patriarchy Theory, patriarchy operates through

interconnected structures including cultural ideologies, institutional arrangements, interpersonal relationships, and psychological internalization (Walby, 1990). The participants' testimonies align with this theoretical framework. Women are constrained not by a single barrier but by systemic structures that operate simultaneously across multiple domains.

Gender role socialization, repeatedly mentioned by participants, operates as a foundational mechanism through which patriarchal structures become internalized. From childhood, women learn gendered expectations about appropriate roles and aspirations. By adulthood, these learned patterns feel natural and inevitable rather than constructed and changeable. The psychological effect is powerful. Women do not merely face external prohibition against political participation; they have internalized the belief that political leadership is not for women.

Religion in Ayawaso West Wuogon presents a complex case. Rather than operating unidirectionally as constraint or enabler, religious teachings and communities create conditions for both limitation and empowerment. Some religious interpretations emphasize women's domestic roles and discourage public leadership. Other interpretations emphasize justice, equality, and community service, which women mobilize to justify political participation. This bidirectionality suggests potential for engaging religious leaders and communities in supporting women's political participation through reinterpretation of religious teachings.

Community standards and social legitimacy operate as enforcement mechanisms for gender norms. Communities actively resist women's political ambitions, creating a catch-22 where women need community support to participate politically but communities withdraw support precisely when women aspire to political leadership. This reveals that women's political participation is not merely personal choice but requires community acceptance and social legitimacy.

According to Participation Theory, formal rights alone are insufficient for meaningful participation (Verba & Nie, 1972). Informal access mechanisms including social legitimacy and community support are equally important. The research demonstrates that overcoming barriers to women's participation requires not just individual determination but systemic community engagement and transformation.

The research identifies economic limitations as perhaps the most concrete and measurable barrier to women's political participation. The monetization of politics theme emerges with overwhelming consistency. Participants perceive politics as an increasingly financial competition where

campaign costs have escalated, disadvantaging women who have lower incomes and less access to financial networks.

The economic barriers operate through multiple mechanisms. First, women lack personal financial resources. Lower average income, less property ownership, and exclusion from wealth-generating networks mean women have fewer personal resources to invest in political campaigns.

Second, women lack access to financial networks. Men historically occupied political and business positions, creating networks of wealthy donors and investors. Women, excluded from these historical positions, have not developed equivalent networks. When donors invest in political candidates, they invest based on confidence in the candidates' ability to govern and likelihood of electoral success. Stereotypes about women's unsuitability for politics translate directly into investment decisions. Donors are less willing to fund women candidates.

Third, campaign costs have recently escalated. Participants perceive monetization of politics as a recent phenomenon, suggesting barriers are intensifying rather than static. As campaign technology becomes more sophisticated and voter expectations for material provision increase, campaign costs escalate. Women, already disadvantaged in fundraising, find themselves increasingly excluded as costs rise.

Fourth, political parties provide limited support to female candidates. Parties function as gatekeepers, determining which candidates receive party resources and institutional support. When parties limit support to female candidates, they reinforce women's disadvantage.

The economic barriers are particularly insidious because they can appear apolitical. Politics simply costs money. However, this appearance disguises how they systematically advantage those already privileged (men) and disadvantage those already marginalized (women).

The research reveals that personal fears and psychological barriers are not inherent but are products of hostile social environments where women's political leadership is perceived as transgressive. Participants identified stereotypes about women in leadership. These include too emotional, not assertive enough, prioritizing family over work, lacking leadership skills. These stereotypes shape women's anticipation of how their political leadership will be received.

Personal fears, including fear of failure, fear of ridicule, and fear of family consequences, are rational responses to genuine risks. When women pursue political leadership, they face real possibility of electoral defeat, public ridicule, family disapproval, and even violence. These risks are not equal across genders. Women who challenge gender norms by entering politics face heightened scrutiny and backlash.

Feminist psychology describes this as internalized oppression (Pheterson, 2020). This is the process through which women absorb oppressive messages from their social environment and apply them against themselves. The distinction between personal fears (internal) and societal perceptions (external) is crucial. Societal perceptions create conditions from which personal fears emerge. When society consistently communicates that women are unsuitable for leadership, women internalize this message and develop fears about their own suitability.

Most significantly, participants recognize that these perceptions are changeable. The emphasis on education as primary solution reflects understanding that if people, both women and communities, are taught that women are capable of leadership, the perceptions would shift and the fears would diminish.

The research documents sophisticated, multi-level solutions proposed by participants themselves. Rather than waiting for external salvation, women in Ayawaso West Wuogon have analyzed barriers and proposed corresponding solutions.

Education as Consciousness-Raising: Participants identify education not merely as skills training but as consciousness-raising. Education teaches that women are capable of leadership and changes internalized beliefs about women's weakness. This aligns with Freire's concept of conscientization, where education develops critical consciousness about oppressive systems (Freire, 2018).

Mentorship and Leadership Training: Participants recognize that women may have capability but lack networks, specific political skills, and confidence. Mentorship programs pairing experienced with less experienced leaders, and training programs focused on specific political skills including campaign strategies, policy development, and public speaking, can address these capacity gaps.

Legal Interventions and Quotas: Participants recognize that legal mandates may be necessary to force inclusion when voluntary cooperation from parties fails. Gender quotas force parties to field

minimum numbers of women candidates. Quota enforcement is necessary to prevent token compliance (Dahlerup, 2006).

Financial Support: Participants identify need for specific funding mechanisms for female candidates to address the monetization of politics. Creation of special funds for aspiring assembly women would level a playing field that currently favors men.

Party Reform and Accountability: Participants emphasize party responsibility to provide equal resources, provide opportunities for candidacy, ensure respectful environment for women candidates, and implement anti-harassment policies.

Media and Community Sensitization: Positive media portrayal of women leaders, community education challenging stereotypes, and showcasing of successful women leaders can shift social perceptions and create conditions where women's political participation becomes more socially acceptable.

The research comprehensively demonstrates that women's underrepresentation in Ayawaso West Wuogon politics results not from individual deficiencies of women but from systemic patriarchal structures that interconnect across multiple domains. Barriers are mutually reinforcing. Economic exclusion reinforces cultural marginalization, which enables interpersonal discouragement, which activates psychological internalization, which justifies institutional gatekeeping. This systemic analysis has profound implications.

Single-level interventions targeting only economic barriers (providing funds), only cultural barriers (consciousness-raising), or only institutional barriers (party reform) will prove insufficient where multi-level change is necessary. Transformative change requires coordinated intervention addressing all levels simultaneously. Cultural attitudes must change, institutions must be reformed, economic resources must be provided, and psychological confidence must be built.

However, the research also reveals that barriers are not immutable. The participants' sophisticated understanding of solutions and their identification of strategies for change demonstrate that women are not passive victims but active agents positioned to drive transformation. The research reveals women's agency even in face of substantial barriers. They have analyzed what constrains their participation and articulated what would enable it.

4.9 CONCLUSION

The research on women's political participation in Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency reveals a complex ecosystem of interlocking barriers and potential solutions. Through systematic exploration of four research questions, the research comprehensively documents the barriers women face and the solutions women themselves propose. Women's underrepresentation in Ayawaso West Wuogon politics results from systemic patriarchal structures, not individual deficiencies. These structures operate across cultural, institutional, economic, interpersonal, and psychological domains and are mutually reinforcing (Walby, 1990; Osei-Afful & Frempong, 2020).

Economic barriers have intensified through monetization of politics. Campaign costs have escalated, and women are systematically disadvantaged in accessing financial networks and resources necessary for political competition (Dankwa, 2024; Osei-Afful, 2020). Personal fears and psychological barriers are products of hostile social environments, not inherent limitations. Women have internalized societal messages about their unsuitability for leadership, but these internalized beliefs are changeable through consciousness-raising and environmental transformation (Freire, 2018; Pheterson, 2020).

Women themselves possess sophisticated understanding of barriers and have articulated multi-level solutions. Education, mentorship, legal interventions, financial support, party reform, and media sensitization are necessary components of systemic transformation. Transformative change requires multi-level intervention addressing barriers simultaneously across cultural, institutional, economic, interpersonal, and psychological domains. Single-level interventions will prove insufficient where systemic barriers require systemic solutions. The findings challenge victimhood narratives and establish women as architects of change rather than passive beneficiaries of external intervention. The research provides evidence-based foundation for policy and programmatic interventions designed to enhance women's political participation in Ayawaso West Wuogon and beyond.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a synthesis of the research findings from the investigation into the factors contributing to low participation of women in politics within the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency. It provides a comprehensive summary of the research study, including an overview of the research methodology and the key findings that emerged from the data analysis. The chapter then moves into conclusions, which are based on the results and findings obtained from the empirical investigation. These conclusions articulate the researcher's position regarding the research questions and indicate whether the original research problems have been better understood and resolved through this study. Finally, the chapter presents evidence-based recommendations for policy and practice, as well as suggestions for future research directions that can build upon and extend this inquiry.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The research focused on investigating the key challenges that hinder effective participation of women in politics within the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency, with the ultimate aim of proposing strategies for enhancing their political representation. The study was prompted by a paradoxical situation wherein Ayawaso West Wuogon, despite being one of the most politically vibrant, educationally advanced, and diverse constituencies in Ghana, women remain significantly underrepresented in political leadership roles. This paradox suggested that barriers to women's political participation operate at multiple levels and require comprehensive investigation to understand their complex nature.

The broader context for this investigation is the persistent global and national underrepresentation of women in political leadership. Whilst internationally, women hold less than 25 percent of parliamentary seats, as documented by global political representation research (Hamah, 2015), in Ghana the situation is more dire. Women comprise only 14.5 percent of Members of Parliament following the 2024 general elections (ACEPA, 2025; IPU, 2025). The passage of Ghana's Affirmative Action Bill in 2024 represents a significant policy development (Shiraz, 2025), yet systemic barriers continue to limit women's political participation, particularly at the constituency level. The study employed a qualitative research design with a case study focus on the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency. This approach was selected because qualitative methodology permits in-depth exploration of lived experiences, meanings, and social processes that quantitative approaches cannot adequately capture. The qualitative approach proved especially appropriate for examining gender, politics, and cultural dynamics, which are inherently intertwined with emotion, identity, and meaning-making.

A combination of purposive and simple random sampling was employed to select 131 to 132 participants who possessed relevant knowledge or involvement in political processes within the constituency. The sample included female political aspirants, elected female officials, political party representatives, and influential community stakeholders including civil society actors and opinion leaders. This diverse sample ensured representation across age, educational background, and levels of political engagement.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, which provided balance between structure and flexibility. The interviews explored central themes including cultural expectations, economic challenges, political party dynamics, and personal motivations for or against political engagement. Data analysis employed thematic analysis utilizing a hybrid analytical framework that was primarily inductive with complementary deductive elements. The inductive component allowed themes to emerge organically from participant data, whilst the deductive component interpreted emerging themes through established theoretical frameworks including Feminist Political Theory, Patriarchy Theory, and Participation Theory.

The research comprehensively documented how patriarchal ideology, gender role socialization, community standards, religious teachings, and stereotypes about women's leadership capability create a systemic environment discouraging women's political participation in Ayawaso West Wuogon. These findings directly address Research Question 1 and shed light on the first research objective.

Patriarchal systems emerged as the foundational barrier operating across multiple dimensions. Participants identified patriarchy not as individual male prejudice but as an institutionalized system. This understanding aligns with Walby's Patriarchy Theory, which conceptualizes patriarchy as operating through six interconnected structures: domestic production, paid work, the state, male aggression, sexuality, and cultural institutions (Walby, 1990). The research revealed that these structures operate simultaneously in Ayawaso West Wuogon, creating a comprehensive system that disadvantages women's political participation.

Participants described patriarchy not as individual attitudes but as systemic structures embedded in cultural institutions, state arrangements, economic relations, and community standards (Osei-Afful & Frempong, 2020). The findings demonstrate that patriarchal ideology is deeply embedded in the social fabric of the constituency.

Gender role socialization was identified by respondents as the primary mechanism through which patriarchal ideology becomes internalized. From childhood, individuals learn gendered expectations about appropriate roles and aspirations. By adulthood, these learned patterns feel natural and inevitable rather than constructed and changeable (Osei-Afful & Frempong, 2020; UNDP Ghana, 2023). This internalization process proved particularly consequential, as women's

self-perception became shaped by patriarchal narratives that position political leadership as a masculine domain.

Participants repeatedly mentioned socialization as the mechanism through which gender roles are learned and internalized. Women's exclusion from politics was not perceived as biological but culturally learned through family interactions, educational systems, religious institutions, and peer relationships. The findings confirm that gender roles are constructed and therefore changeable.

Community standards and social legitimacy emerged as powerful enforcement mechanisms for gender norms. The research revealed that women require community support to participate politically, yet communities often withdraw support precisely when women challenge gender norms by aspiring to political office. The study captured this dynamic by noting that if the community rejects women's ambitions, it makes them lose affection in supporting the community politically, creating a vicious cycle where community rejection reinforces narratives about women's lack of commitment to community welfare.

Community influence was identified as foundational to women's participation. Participants described how community resistance operates through enforcement of societal norms and standards about appropriate female behavior, with communities actively demotivating women from political ambitions through collective action.

Religious teachings were identified as both potential constraints and potential resources for women's political participation. Whilst some religious interpretations emphasize women's domestic roles and discourage public leadership, other interpretations emphasize justice, equality, and community service, which women mobilize to justify political participation. This bidirectionality suggests potential for engaging religious leaders and communities in supporting women's political participation through reinterpretation of religious teachings (Bianchi, 2016).

Stereotypes about women's leadership capability pervade the political environment in Ayawaso West Wuogon. Women leaders face characterizations as too emotional, insufficiently assertive, overly focused on family, lacking leadership skills, and when they assert authority, as bossy, arrogant, or unfeminine (Smith et al., 2021). These contradictory stereotypes create an impossible situation where women cannot succeed regardless of their approach. This dynamic aligns with research on gender stereotyping in politics globally, which demonstrates that women leaders face contradictory demands that ensure they face criticism irrespective of their leadership style.

Participants identified these pervasive negative stereotypes as creating a perceptual obstacle course where women are simultaneously seen as too emotional, too passive, too family-focused, yet paradoxically too aggressive when they assert authority.

The research identified economic limitations as perhaps the most concrete and measurable barrier to women's political participation. The monetization of politics emerged as a pervasive theme, with respondents consistently emphasizing how political campaign costs have escalated to levels that disadvantage women who have lower incomes and limited access to financial networks. Campaign costs have become prohibitively expensive in Ayawaso West Wuogon, a competitive urban constituency where candidates require access to print and digital media, well-funded volunteer teams, and visible contact with constituents (Dankwa, 2024). These requirements create substantial financial barriers that disadvantage women who are systematically marginalized in the economic sphere.

The research revealed that women lack not only personal financial resources to fund campaigns but also access to the financial networks and patronage mechanisms that facilitate male candidates' campaigns. Political parties function as gatekeepers in the allocation of campaign resources, yet provide limited and inconsistent support to female candidates (Osei-Afful, 2020). Respondents identified party gatekeeping as a deliberate barrier, noting that parties determine which candidates can run, what resources candidates receive, and what party machinery supports candidates.

Participants identified the monetization of politics with overwhelming consistency as the most concrete barrier to women's participation. They stated that if you do not have money, you cannot participate in politics. Campaign costs have become prohibitively expensive particularly for women. The findings confirm that the financial barriers to women's political participation have intensified in recent years.

Women's employment and economic status significantly influence their political opportunities (Owusu, 2022). Financial independence, networking opportunities, and skills development play crucial roles in women's ability to participate in politics. However, the research revealed a double burden wherein women with lower economic status are not only disadvantaged materially but also viewed with skepticism regarding their leadership capability. Economic disadvantage becomes conflated with inherent weakness, requiring women to use employment and economic achievement as proof that they are not weak, a requirement that does not apply equally to men.

The research documented how economic barriers interconnect with cultural barriers in mutually reinforcing ways (Nyantakyi-Frimpong, 2021). Cultural beliefs that men are natural leaders make investors less willing to fund women's campaigns. Financial dependence on men reinforces women's vulnerability to family and community pressure against political engagement.

Participants articulated how the monetization of politics intersects with cultural beliefs about men's capability, creating a cycle where financial disadvantage cascades into exclusion from networks and resource access. Whilst external barriers are real and systemic, the most insidious dimension is how external barriers become internalized, creating psychological doubts that can prevent women from even attempting political participation.

Personal fears emerged as significant constraints on women's political participation. Participants articulated fears including fear of failure and electoral defeat, fear of public ridicule and humiliation, fear of family consequences and disapproval, and fear of violence and personal safety threats (Pheterson, 2020). These fears are not irrational but represent rational responses to genuine risks. Women who pursue political leadership face real possibility of electoral defeat, public ridicule, family disapproval, and even gender-based violence. Critically, these risks are not distributed equally across genders, with women who challenge gender norms by entering politics facing heightened scrutiny and backlash (Nyantakyi-Frimpong, 2021).

Participants articulated profound psychological barriers including fear of failure and public scrutiny, fear of losing or being ridiculed, and fear of family consequences and disapproval. These documented fears reveal the genuine dangers women face when they challenge gender norms. Internalized oppression emerged as a powerful psychological mechanism wherein women absorb oppressive messages from their social environment and apply them against themselves and theorized by Freire (Freire, 2018). Respondents articulated internalized beliefs that women's appropriate place is in the domestic sphere, that women are inherently weaker than men in leadership contexts, and that political leadership is fundamentally not for women. One respondent poignantly stated that women believe they're meant for the house, not for political spaces, revealing internalization of patriarchal values as self-evident truth rather than constructed ideology.

External patriarchal barriers become internalized, with women internalizing beliefs about their unsuitability for political leadership as fundamental truth rather than constructed ideology. This internalization is the most insidious aspect of women's exclusion from politics. The research identified how societal perceptions are systematically reinforced through multiple social institutions. Negative perceptions of women's leadership are not random or individual but are systematically reinforced through family socialization, religious teachings, customary law and inheritance systems, community standards, and media portrayal (Fonjong & Gyapong, 2021). This systematic reinforcement makes perceptions appear natural and inevitable rather than constructed and changeable.

Negative perceptions are not random or individual but systematically reinforced through social institutions, making the perceptions appear natural and inevitable. Participants recognized that personal fears and psychological barriers are products of hostile social environments and are therefore changeable. The emphasis on education as the primary solution reflects understanding

that if people, both women and communities, are taught that women are capable of leadership, the perceptions would shift and the fears would diminish (Donkor, 2016).

The overwhelming emphasis on education as primary solution demonstrated participants' understanding that barriers are not biological or inevitable but are products of what people are taught. Participants recognized that education is a mechanism sufficiently powerful to change deeply held social beliefs about women's capacity in politics. Despite identifying substantial barriers, respondents articulated sophisticated, multi-level solutions. Participants offered these solutions, demonstrating that women are not passive victims awaiting external rescue but active participants proposing systemic change.

Education and consciousness-raising emerged as the primary recommended strategy. Education was conceptualized not merely as skills training but as consciousness-raising that teaches women are capable of leadership and changes internalized beliefs about women's weakness. Respondents recognized that education is a mechanism sufficiently powerful to change deeply held social beliefs about women's capacity in politics. This recommendation aligns with Freire's concept of conscientization, wherein education develops critical consciousness about oppressive systems (Freire, 2018).

Participants emphasized education, education, education, with participants recognizing that education is not merely skills training but consciousness-raising that changes how women and communities think about women's capability. Participants identified education as a mechanism sufficiently powerful to change societal mindsets about women's capacity in politics.

Mentorship and leadership training programs were identified as important strategies. Participants recognized that women may possess capability to participate but lack networks, specific political skills, and confidence (Hinojosa, 2003). Mentorship programs pairing experienced leaders with less experienced ones, combined with training programs focused on specific political skills including campaign strategies, policy development, and public speaking, can address these capacity gaps.

The study identified mentorship programs as important, recognizing that pairing experienced with less experienced leaders and providing training on specific political skills can address capacity gaps and transform women's ability to participate effectively in politics. Legal interventions including gender quotas were identified as necessary mechanisms to force inclusion when voluntary cooperation from parties fails, as examined in Chapter 4. Respondents recognized that because political parties are primarily male-dominated and gatekeep resources, legal mandates are necessary to ensure women's inclusion (Dahlerup, 2006). Respondents emphasized both implementation and enforcement of quotas, recognizing that laws alone are insufficient without rigorous enforcement mechanisms.

Financial support and resource provision emerged as critical solutions. Respondents identified need for specific funding mechanisms for female candidates to address the monetization of politics. Creation of special funds for aspiring assembly women and requirements that political parties set aside portions of their campaign funds to support female candidates were recommended. This represents a request not for special privilege but for equal access to resources men routinely receive (Dankwa, 2024). Participants identified the need for special funds for aspiring assembly women and recognized that if political parties provided equal resources to female candidates like they do to men, women would have a better chance of electoral success.

Political party reform and accountability were identified as necessary as participants expected political parties to actively facilitate women's participation through providing equal resources, creating opportunities for candidacy, ensuring respectful environments for women candidates, and implementing anti-harassment policies (Dery & Ganles, 2015). This reflects understanding that parties are not neutral institutions but active agents that can either facilitate or hinder women's participation.

Media and community sensitization were recognized as important mechanisms for shifting social perceptions. Positive media portrayal of women leaders, community education challenging stereotypes, and showcasing of successful women leaders can shift social perceptions and create conditions where women's political participation becomes more socially acceptable. Respondents recognized that media portrayal shapes public perception and that consistent messaging through multiple channels can contribute to consciousness transformation (Dhakal, 2022).

Participants emphasized the importance of media and community education in promoting positive attitudes toward women leaders, including spreading the news about women leaders, producing positive programming, and consistent education through all forms of education to change societal perceptions.

Importantly, respondents articulated that transformative change requires multi-level intervention addressing all these strategies simultaneously. Single-level interventions targeting only economic barriers, only cultural barriers, or only institutional barriers will prove insufficient (Fernandez, 2023). Rather, coordinated intervention addressing cultural attitudes, institutional structures, economic resources, interpersonal dynamics, and psychological dimensions is necessary.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

The research conclusively demonstrates that women's underrepresentation in Ayawaso West Wuogon politics results from systemic patriarchal structures operating across multiple interconnected dimensions. These patriarchal structures operate simultaneously across cultural ideologies, institutional arrangements, interpersonal relationships, and psychological internalization. The systems are sufficiently comprehensive that challenging women's political participation requires not isolated interventions but comprehensive systemic transformation.

There were gendered expectations which are produced through social processes rather than being natural or inevitable. Women's political participation is not merely personal choice but requires community acceptance and social legitimacy. Communities actively resist women's political ambitions, creating conditions wherein women need community support to participate politically, yet communities withdraw support precisely when women challenge gender norms by aspiring to political office. Women face contradictory stereotypes that position them as simultaneously too emotional for rational leadership, too passive in assertiveness, too focused on family obligations, and lacking leadership skills, yet as bossy and arrogant when they assert authority.

The study demonstrates that economic limitations function as perhaps the most concrete and measurable barrier to women's political participation. The monetization of politics has created a situation wherein political campaigns in Ayawaso West Wuogon require substantial financial resources for media access, volunteer mobilization, and constituent outreach. The research confirms that campaign costs have become prohibitively expensive, particularly for women who lack access to financial networks and resources.

The research demonstrates that personal fears and psychological barriers are not inherent limitations but are products of hostile social environments wherein women's political leadership is perceived as transgressive. These fears include fear of failure and electoral defeat, fear of public ridicule and humiliation, fear of family consequences and disapproval, and fear of violence and personal safety threats. These fears are rational responses to genuine risks, as women who pursue political leadership face real possibility of heightened scrutiny, backlash, and even gender-based violence. Women have come to internalize the belief that political leadership is not for women, not as external constraint but as internal conviction. This internalization process proves particularly powerful because women's own psychology becomes complicit in their exclusion from politics.

However, the research also reveals that these perceptions are changeable through consciousness-raising and environmental transformation. The emphasis on education as the primary solution reflects understanding that if people are taught that women are capable of leadership, the perceptions would shift and the barriers would diminish. Negative perceptions are not random or individual but systematically reinforced through social institutions, making the perceptions appear

natural and inevitable. However, the research also demonstrates that these reinforcing systems can be transformed through consciousness-raising and education.

Political parties are expected to actively facilitate women's participation and emphasized the importance of media portrayal in shaping public perception. The findings establish that both party and media reform are necessary components of systemic transformation. Systemic barriers operating across cultural, institutional, economic, interpersonal, and psychological dimensions require systemic solutions addressing all these levels simultaneously. Single-level interventions will prove insufficient for addressing comprehensively interconnected barriers. The research comprehensively demonstrates that women's underrepresentation in Ayawaso West Wuogon politics results from systemic patriarchal structures operating across multiple interconnected domains rather than from individual deficiencies of women.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

5.3.1 Recommendations for Government and Electoral Institutions

Recommendation 1: Prioritize Implementation and Enforcement of Affirmative Action Bill

The Government of Ghana should prioritize implementation and enforcement of the Affirmative Action Bill with mandatory gender quotas for political candidacy, party structures, and public institutions (Shiraz, 2025). Whilst the Bill has been passed, enforcement mechanisms and implementation timelines must be clearly specified. Quotas should be written into law, monitored by an impartial electoral authority, and linked to tangible consequences for non-compliance, including loss of public campaign funding or media access for parties failing to meet quotas.

Recommendation 2: Establish Data Collection and Monitoring Systems

The Electoral Commission should establish data collection and monitoring systems that track gender-disaggregated information on candidates, campaign financing, media coverage, and electoral outcomes (IPU, 2025). This data collection would enable regular assessment of progress toward gender equality in politics and provide evidence base for policy adjustments. Regular publication of these data would increase accountability and transparency.

Recommendation 3: Establish Women's Political Fund

The Government should establish a Women's Political Fund administered jointly by the Electoral Commission and the Ministry of Gender, providing grants, loans, or subsidies to qualified female

candidates (Dankwa, 2024). These funds should support not only general election candidates but also women candidates in internal party primaries, where many aspirants are eliminated before general elections. Clear criteria for fund allocation and transparent processes would prevent elite capture and misallocation.

Recommendation 4: Commission Gender Audits of Political Institutions

Government should commission and fund comprehensive gender audits of political parties, parliaments, and local assemblies to identify structural and institutional barriers to women's participation. These audits should examine not only representation numbers but also substantive participation, power distribution, committee assignments, and influence over policy. Audit findings should be published and remediation strategies developed collaboratively with parties and institutions.

5.3.2 Recommendations for Political Parties

Recommendation 5: Implement Comprehensive Party Reform

Political parties should implement comprehensive party reform including mandatory gender quotas in party structures at national, regional, and constituency levels (Dahlerup, 2006). Parties should ensure women occupy meaningful leadership positions, not merely symbolic positions in women's wings. Party leadership should commit to providing equal resources to male and female candidates, including funding, media support, volunteer mobilization, and strategic guidance.

Recommendation 6: Establish Anti-Harassment Policies

Political parties should establish clear anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies protecting female candidates and women party members from verbal abuse, cyber-harassment, and gender-based violence (Nyantakyi-Frimpong, 2021). These policies should include reporting mechanisms, investigation procedures, and consequences for perpetrators. Parties should conduct regular training for members on gender sensitivity and respect.

Recommendation 7: Establish Party Mentorship Programs

Political parties should establish mentorship programs pairing experienced politicians with aspiring candidates, with particular attention to ensuring women leaders mentor women aspirants (Hinojosa, 2003). These programs should provide training on campaign strategy, policy development, public speaking, coalition-building, and navigating party hierarchies.

Recommendation 8: Ensure Fair Candidate Selection Processes

Political parties should ensure fair and transparent candidate selection processes that do not perpetuate insider networks favoring long-serving male members (Dery & Ganles, 2015). Selection processes should include clear criteria, diverse selection committees, and mechanisms to prevent party leadership bias in candidate selection. Documentation of selection decisions would increase accountability.

5.3.3 Recommendations for Media and Communication

Recommendation 9: Integrate Gender-Sensitive Standards into Journalism Education

Journalism schools should integrate gender-sensitive reporting standards into curricula and training programs (Dhakal, 2022). Journalists should be trained to avoid gendered language, examine their own assumptions about women's leadership capability, cover male and female candidates with equal scrutiny and emphasis, and challenge gender stereotypes in their reporting.

Recommendation 10: Develop Gender-Sensitive Journalism Guidelines

Media regulatory agencies should develop and promote gender-sensitive journalism guidelines for political coverage (Dhakal, 2022). These guidelines should specify standards for coverage of male and female candidates, discourage focus on women's appearance or family status rather than qualifications and policy positions, and encourage balanced representation of male and female voices in political commentary and analysis.

Recommendation 11: Counter Negative Gender Stereotypes

Media organizations should actively work to counter negative gender stereotypes by producing programming that portrays women leaders positively, highlights successful women in politics, and challenges limiting narratives about women's leadership capability. Public interest broadcasting requirements should include commitments to gender-equitable coverage and positive portrayal of women's political participation.

Recommendation 12: Address Cyber-Harassment and Online Abuse

Media platforms should implement policies addressing cyber-harassment and gender-based abuse on their platforms, particularly targeting harassment of women in politics. Platform policies should define prohibited harassment, create reporting and enforcement mechanisms, and remove abusive content promptly. Women candidates should be provided training on navigating online harassment and protecting their digital presence.

5.3.4 Recommendations for Civil Society and Advocacy Organizations

Recommendation 13: Establish Mentorship and Leadership Programs

Civil society organizations should establish or strengthen mentorship programs and leadership academies for women interested in politics (Hinojosa, 2003). These programs should provide training on campaign strategy, policy development, public speaking, political negotiation, and coalition-building. Programs should be tailored to different levels of political participation and different age groups, with particular attention to engaging young women.

Recommendation 14: Conduct Civic Education Programs

Civil society organizations should conduct civic education programs focused on gender and political participation, engaging both women and men in communities (Freire, 2018). These programs should challenge gender stereotypes, teach about women's historical and current contributions to governance, and build support for women's political leadership. Programs should involve schools, religious institutions, market associations, and community groups.

Recommendation 15: Engage Religious Leaders

Civil society organizations should support religious leaders and institutions in reinterpreting religious teachings to support gender equality and women's political participation (Bianchi, 2016). Engaging religious leaders as advocates for women's participation can be particularly effective in communities where religious teachings significantly influence values and behavior.

Recommendation 16: Document Political Violence and Discrimination

Civil society organizations should document and publicize cases of gender-based political violence, harassment, and discrimination (Nyantakyi-Frimpong, 2021). This documentation provides evidence base for advocacy and policy development. Advocacy should target elimination of political violence against women and creation of safe spaces for women's political participation.

5.3.5 Recommendations for Educational Institutions

Recommendation 17: Integrate Gender Studies into Curricula

Educational institutions should integrate gender studies and critical analysis of patriarchal systems into curricula across disciplines (Freire, 2018). Students should learn that gender roles are socially

constructed and changeable rather than natural and inevitable. Education should emphasize women's historical and contemporary contributions to governance and development, challenging narratives that position women as unsuitable for leadership.

Recommendation 18: Establish Political Leadership Programs

Educational institutions should establish programs introducing students, particularly girls and young women, to political processes and leadership opportunities (Donkor, 2016). These programs should include visits to parliament and local assemblies, interactions with female politicians, and exposure to diverse models of leadership and governance.

Recommendation 19: Train Educators on Gender Bias

Educational institutions should train educators to examine their own gender biases and stereotypes and to create inclusive learning environments that encourage participation of all students regardless of gender (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Teacher training should emphasize the importance of educator expectations in shaping student aspirations and possibilities.

5.3.6 Recommendations for Community Leaders and Organizations

Recommendation 20: Support Women's Political Participation

Community leaders and organizations should actively support and encourage women's political participation (Dako-Gyeke & Owusu, 2017). This includes publicly affirming women who aspire to political office, providing resources and connections to aspiring women candidates, and modeling acceptance of women in leadership roles.

Recommendation 21: Conduct Community Education and Sensitization

Community organizations should conduct community education and sensitization activities challenging gender stereotypes and building support for women's political leadership (Fonjong & Gyapong, 2021). These activities should involve dialogue with community members about benefits of women's political participation and address concerns or objections directly.

Recommendation 22: Ensure Inclusive Community Decision-Making

Community leaders should ensure that women's voices and perspectives are included in community decision-making processes (Owusu, 2022). Inclusive community governance creates

conditions where women's political participation at constituency and national levels becomes more socially acceptable and supported.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

5.4.1 Research on Urban Political Dynamics

Future research should examine how urbanization, education levels, social media, and competitive electoral environments interact with gender to shape women's political participation in urban constituencies like Ayawaso West Wuogon. Comparative studies across urban and rural constituencies would illuminate how political dynamics differ and whether solutions developed for urban contexts are applicable in rural areas.

5.4.2 Research on Intersectionality

Future research should employ intersectional analysis examining how gender interacts with race, ethnicity, religion, class, and other social identities to shape women's political participation in Ghana (Crenshaw, 1989). Different groups of women may face different barriers and benefit from different solutions. An intersectional approach would generate more nuanced understanding of barriers and more tailored interventions.

5.4.3 Research on Digital and Online Political Spaces

Future research should investigate how digital spaces and social media shape women's political participation in Ghana. Digital tools create new opportunities for political engagement but also new vulnerabilities including cyber-harassment and misinformation. Research should examine how women candidates experience online spaces, how they navigate or resist online harassment, and how to create safer digital environments for political participation.

5.4.4 Research on Substantive Representation

Future research should examine not only how many women achieve political office but what they accomplish once in office (Odame, 2010). This includes examining women's power within parliament or assemblies, their committee assignments, the policies they advocate for, and the resources available to them for affecting policy. Understanding substantive representation is crucial for assessing whether women's political participation leads to meaningful change.

5.4.5 Research on Quota Implementation and Effectiveness

Future research should examine the actual implementation of gender quotas once enacted in Ghana (Dahlerup, 2006). Research should assess whether quotas lead to increased women's representation, whether women in quota positions have genuine influence or are merely symbolic, and what additional measures are necessary to ensure quotas achieve transformative rather than merely numerical change.

5.4.6 Research on Religious Engagement and Gender

Future research should examine in greater depth how religious institutions and teachings affect women's political participation. This research should explore which religious traditions support women's leadership, how religious leaders can be engaged as advocates for gender equality, and how religious teachings can be reinterpreted to support women's political participation (Bianchi, 2016).

5.4.7 Research on Impact of Consciousness-Raising and Education

Future research should evaluate the effectiveness of different educational and consciousness-raising approaches in changing attitudes toward women's political leadership (Freire, 2018). Research should compare the impact of different educational strategies, identify which approaches most effectively challenge gender stereotypes, and examine long-term impacts on both women's aspirations and community support for women's participation.

5.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study. The chapter also captured suggestions to guide future studies. The research findings demonstrate that women's underrepresentation results from systemic patriarchal structures operating across multiple interconnected domains rather than from individual deficiencies of women. This research provides evidence-based foundation for policy and programmatic interventions designed to enhance women's political participation in Ayawaso West Wuogon and in similar constituencies across Ghana. The sophistication of women's own analysis of barriers and solutions demonstrates that women are not passive victims awaiting external rescue, but active architects of transformation positioned to drive gender-equitable political change (Owusu, 2022; Fernandez, 2023).

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