



**THE ART OF POLITICS: ANALYSING THE FEMALE POLITICIANS' POLITICAL  
COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN THE 2024 ELECTIONS IN GHANA**

**BY**

**GIFTY HAJA SUMANI**

**(ID. NO. MAPCM24005)**

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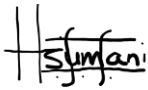
**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES**

**DECEMBER 2025**

## DECLARATIONS

### STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, **Gifty Haja Sumani**, declare that this thesis is entirely my own work. All sources from published materials have been properly cited and acknowledged. This thesis has not been submitted, in whole or in part, for the award of any other degree at any institution. I therefore accept full responsibility for any limitations or errors contained in the work.



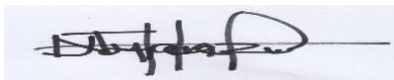
DATE: 16<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2025

GIFTY HAJA SUMANI

(Student)

### SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned supervisor, declare that I supervised the preparation and presentation of this work in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of MA thesis as laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC).



DATE: 16<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2025

DR JOYCE MANYO

(Supervisor)

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**WE DID IT!**

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the political communication strategies of female politicians in Ghana during the 2024 elections, examining their motivations, challenges, and the media framing that shaped their visibility. Using Double Bind Theory, Framing Theory, Feminist Media Theory, and Intersectionality as analytical lenses, the research employed a mixed-methods approach combining surveys of media practitioners, interviews with female politicians, and content analysis of speeches and social media posts from six months before to three months after the elections. The findings show that although media practitioners described their coverage as generally fair, significant gaps persisted in visibility, policy-focused reporting, and gender-sensitive framing. Most respondents acknowledged that political experience influenced communication choices, and over 60% of media practitioners observed that women strategically highlighted competence in response to media expectations. Nevertheless, subtle gender biases remained evident. The qualitative study showed that female politicians relied on relational rhetoric, inclusive messaging, and strong community engagement to navigate patriarchal norms and the double bind. Those in rural constituencies leaned more on grassroots outreach and traditional media such as radio, while others used social media to bypass gatekeeping and control their narratives. Content analysis showed consistent emphasis on development in areas of health, education, sanitation, and women's empowerment. The study concludes that despite persistent structural and cultural barriers, female politicians are reshaping Ghana's political communication landscape through resilience, authenticity, and adaptive strategies. The study therefore recommends that there should be improved communication skills, gender-sensitive media framing, moral and inclusive communication, capacity-building programmes by political parties and NGOs, and equitable policy support for female political aspirants and elected women leaders to enhance their visibility, credibility, and sustained participation in Ghana's democratic processes.

**Key words:** Political communication; Double Bind; Intersectionality; Media framing; Gender stereotypes; Democratic Governance; Community Engagement; Relational Rhetoric

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATIONS	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Background of the Study	1
1.1 Problem Statement	3
1.2 Research Objective	4
1.3 Research Questions	4
1.4 Significance of the Study	5
1.5 Scope of Study	5
1.6 Limitations of the Study	6
1.7 Organisation of the Study	6
CHAPTER TWO	7
LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.0 Introduction	7

2.1 Gender Dynamics in Political Communication	7
2.2 The Double Bind in Political Leadership	9
2.3 Intersectionality in Ghanaian Politics	10
2.4 Media Framing, Information Disorder, and Public Perception	11
2.5 Political Communication Channels	12
2.6 Adaptive Communication Strategies	13
2.7 Gaps in Existing Literature	13
2.8 Theoretical Framework	14
2.8.1 Double Bind Theory (Jamieson, 1995)	14
2.8.2 Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989)	14
2.8.3 Framing Theory (Goffman, 1974)	14
2.9 Conclusion	14
CHAPTER THREE	16
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	16
3.0 Introduction	16
3.1 Research Design	16
3.2 Research Approach	17
3.3 Study Area	18
3.4 Data Collection Method	19
3.5 Population and Sampling	20
3.6 Sampling Techniques	22

3.7 Data Collection and Management	23
3.8 Data Analysis	24
3.9 Ethical Considerations	26
3.10 Chapter Summary	26
CHAPTER FOUR	28
PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS	28
4.0 Introduction	28
4.1 What were the most prominent political communication strategies used by female politicians in the 2024 elections?	28
4.2 What were the Challenges Female Politicians Faced in their Political Communication in the 2024 elections?	36
4.3 How did the media (traditional and digital) frame issues about female politicians in the 2024 elections?	56
CHAPTER FIVE	61
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	60
5.0 INTRODUCTION	61
5.1 Summary of the Key Findings	61
5.2 Conclusion	63
5.3 Recommendations	64
REFERENCES	67
APPENDICES	70

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.2: Analytical steps	25
Figure 4.1: Structural bias	48

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Demographic Characteristics of respondents	21
Table 4.1: Summary of Political Communication Tactics Used by Female Politicians	36
Table 4.2: Summary of Challenges in Political Communication	49
Table 4.4: One-sample t-test results for media coverage variables.	57
Table 4.5: Summary of Media Framing Findings	59
Table 5.1: Recommendation for key stakeholders	64
Table 5.2: Suggested Pathways for Future Research	65

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Background of the Study

Globally, women's political participation has increased; however, it remains restricted by barriers rooted in gender stereotypes, media representation, and patriarchal political cultures that limit their visibility and effectiveness (Franceschet, Krook, & Tan, 2012; Kittilson, 2016). Women politicians face a double bind, where their communication strategies are scrutinised more than those of their male counterparts, forcing them to balance authority and relatability in public discourse (Jamieson, 1995).

Over the past three decades of democratic reforms in Africa, new opportunities for women to engage in political participation have emerged; however, progress has been inconsistent. Female candidates face structural constraints, including limited access to campaign financing, deeply rooted patronage systems, and gendered media reportage that impact their political communication and campaign strategies (Tripp & Kang, 2008; Bauer, 2016). Nonetheless, countries like Rwanda, South Africa, and Senegal have made progress in women's representation in parliament, demonstrating that significant change is possible when institutional reforms are backed by political will to challenge deeply rooted gender norms (Domingo et al., 2015).

Ghana is broadly considered among the most stable democracies in Africa since it has had continuous constitutional rule since the advent of the Fourth Republic in 1992. There has been a consistent peaceful shift of power between the two (2) major political parties: the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), which indicates a maturing political culture and empowering democratic institutions (Gyampo, Ofori-Mensah, and Amoako, 2022). In Ghana, the egalitarian contest in elections is usually strong due to the massive participation of

citizens in political activities. However, this process of democratic development is accompanied by issues such as ethnic polarisation, corruption, and deep-rooted patronage structures that all culminate in making elections a highly contested venture in Ghana's democratic governance.

Despite Ghana's democratic credentials, the under-representation of women in politics is one of the most urgent democratic shortcomings of Ghana. Women are still marginalised in the decisions that affect them, as well as being underrepresented in the elected and appointed offices, despite constituting more than half the population. Researchers explain that this imbalance is due to the patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes, lack of financial resources, and access to party networks (Arthur and Bawa, 2023; Osei-Afful and Osei, 2020). They argue that these obstacles limit the capacity of women, hence their under-representation in the Ghanaian political sphere.

Thus, political communication is one of the essential strategies that women with political ambition can use to navigate the political space for political positions. Political communication is defined as the application of language, symbols, and media to persuade, mobilise, and construct political identities (McNaughton and Cammaerts, 2022). In the case of female politicians, narrative control, development of a connection to the voters, and the possibility to break the stereotypes associated with gender are fundamental to their political survival. The 2024 Ghanaian elections are especially interesting when it comes to the analysis of the strategic use of communication by women politicians as a way of operating between the opportunities and limitations because they highlight how gendered expectations shape media visibility, rhetorical choices, and public legitimacy within a highly competitive and patriarchal political environment (Campus, 2013; Osei-Afful & Ayee, 2020; Waisbord & Mellado, 2014).

Globally, women in politics have higher chances of being examined in terms of their competence, credibility, and likeability (Catalano, 2021; Campus, 2013). This situation is even more

complicated in developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), where cultural sensitivities, societal norms, and existing stereotypes all converge to question the choice of a female political leader. Ghana is no exception to this development, as there is an interaction between cultural demands of femininity and political aggressiveness that greatly limits female participation in politics and political contests.

Nevertheless, literature on communication strategies that women politicians use during elections and their influence on perceptions, as well as media framing and election results, remains insufficiently studied. This paper, therefore, aims to address that gap by examining the political communication strategies of female politicians in the 2024 Ghanaian elections.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Although women's participation in politics in Ghana has seen a steady increase over the years, women's representation in politics lags in comparison to international and regional standards (IPU, 2024). Literature argues that institutional biases and inequalities of resources and gender stereotypes are some of the structural impediments to women's political participation (Adu-Agyem and Ankomah, 2019; Arthur and Bawa, 2023). Despite these strong arguments, studies have failed to explore the communication strategies female politicians use to navigate gender stereotypes and influence the perception of voters.

The 2024 elections represent a great opportunity to explore this problem. Women politicians have gained visibility and are increasingly adopting various media of communication, such as community participation and social media platforms, amongst others, to shape the opinion of the people. However, there is little empirical evidence relating to the success of such strategies, the difficulties encountered, and how the media contributes to the way such stories are framed.

This paper thus explores the political communication strategies of female contestants in the 2024 elections, especially how their political communication messages were designed, the challenges they faced in communicating with the political market, and how these challenges impacted their electoral fortunes, which ultimately impacted the number of females who won the elections in the various constituencies.

## **1.2 Research Objective**

Based on the foregoing argument about the underrepresentation of women in Ghanaian politics and the extent to which political communication can change the narrative about the competencies of women to deal with existing stereotypes, the study seeks to:

1. Explore the most prominent political communication strategies used by female politicians in the 2024 elections. That is, how their messages were designed to connect with the political market.
2. Explore the challenges female politicians faced in their political communication in the 2024 election.
3. Explore the contribution of media (traditional and digital) in framing issues about female politicians in the 2024 elections.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

Following the research objectives stated above, the following research questions were formulated for the study:

1. What were the most prominent political communication strategies used by female politicians in the 2024 elections?

2. What were the challenges female politicians faced in their political communication in the 2024 election?
3. How did the media frame issues of female politicians in the 2024 elections?

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The study makes significant contributions to knowledge on political communication. It widens knowledge on the strategic political communication strategies women use to navigate the stereotypes facing their political careers. In doing so, this study contributes to knowledge on the practice of politics in a developing democratic country like Ghana.

In relation to research, the study contributes to the emerging literature of political communication in Ghana in two aspects: one being the gendered aspect of communication strategies, and the other being a practical element on how female politicians and political parties can succeed by employing practical and effective communication strategies that can increase the chances of women winning an electoral contest.

Finally, the study's practical recommendations provide in-depth knowledge on how female politicians can leverage effective political communication strategies to enhance their political competitiveness in a male-dominated political space.

#### **1.5 Scope of Study**

The study focuses on female politicians' political communication techniques in Ghana's 2024 election. It evaluates campaign speeches, debates, interviews, advertisements, and social media communication tactics to provide an understanding of how female politicians in Ghana navigated the 2024 election. So, the study gathered and analysed data from six months before the election to

three months after the 2024 election. This offered valuable empirical data for analysis and recommendations.

### **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

Just like any research, this study has limitations. The study focuses on just political communication strategies in the 2024 election. Hence, the results cannot easily be generalised. Furthermore, the accessibility of campaign materials posed a challenge since female politicians varied in terms of visibility and resources. Thus, the study only focused on incumbents, first-timers, and a few women from rural constituencies, so this slightly influenced the balance of available data.

Lastly, Ghana's political and cultural context varies from those of other countries in Africa, although some characteristics are similar. In view of that, focusing on only Ghana's 2024 election does not easily allow for generalisation of the findings, notwithstanding that findings elsewhere might not be extremely different. Despite these limitations, the research addresses the research questions and provides in-depth insight into female political communication strategies, thus making a significant contribution to literature on political communication in Ghana.

### **1.7 Organisation of the Study**

This study is structured into five chapters. Chapter One presents the introduction to the research, whereas Chapter Two gives a review of the literature related to gender, political communication, and elections. Chapter Three outlines the methodological framework under which the research was conducted. Chapter Four analytically examines the data and presents findings. Lastly, Chapter Five concludes the study with a summary of the findings, concluding remarks, recommendations, and future research implications.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

Political communication has become a multidisciplinary subject that includes rhetoric, media studies, political science, and gender studies. Political communication does not concern the exchange of information only but also involves the symbolic construction of identities, as well as the persuasion and framing of public discourse. Political communication gains a layer of complexity in the case of female politicians since, in most cases, it is mediated by gendered expectations, cultural stereotypes, and structural inequalities.

This chapter is a review of literature about political communication and gender, with special focus on the strategies used by female politicians. It analyses the process of negotiating a socio-political and cultural space in Ghana for the 2024 elections through the specific rhetorical and communicative approaches women take. The review is structured into six parts, including gender dynamics in political communication, the double bind in leadership, intersectionality, media framing and perception, communication channels, and adaptive communication strategies. The theoretical frameworks under which the study will be conducted are also discussed in the chapter. These include the Double Bind Theory, Intersectionality, and Framing Theory.

Lastly, this chapter points out gaps in the available literature and puts the current study in place of those gaps.

#### **2.1 Gender Dynamics in Political Communication**

The field of political communication is gendered. Researchers have opined that women have distinct scarification in their quest to be represented in the political arena. Whereas men can be

rated through their competence and charisma in policy, women have to be assessed in other terms of physical attractiveness, personality, and family life (Kenny, 2013; Swers, 2002). The outcome of this asymmetry means that women politicians must pass greater credibility barriers in order to gain the trust of the people.

The empirical research indicates that women tend to use collaborative and relational rhetoric to break through obstacles (Karpowitz and Mendelberg, 2014). Relational rhetoric puts an emphasis on collaboration, sympathy, and mutual values. Although this strategy can be guided by the stereotypical views that women are supposed to be nurturers, there is also the risk that women are being subjected to the stereotype that they are not in charge. According to Everbach (2020), these rhetorical strategies might create emotional resonance with voters and, at the same time, discredit the political strength.

Female politicians in Ghana often implement rhetoric to focus on humility, social well-being, and communal interests (Adu-Agyem & Ankomah, 2019). For example, female Members of Parliament (MPs) emphasise education, health, and sanitation as their projects to demonstrate their political intentions. This is in line with cultural views of women as caregivers. According to Okon (2022), Ghanaian women politicians often shape their political identities on service and empathy and make a connection with their constituents. Nevertheless, the strategies also pose a conflict when women are required to display sternness.

Such findings are supported by comparative African research. Women in Nigeria and Kenya also focus on caring traits and grassroots affiliations during campaigns (Nzomo, 2019; Tamale, 2020). Research on female leaders in the U.S.A., Europe, and across the world indicates that the issue of doublespeak in political communication persists (Catalano, 2021). This is indicative of the fact that even though context matters, gendered expectations are a unifying factor across democracies.

## **2.2 The Double Bind in Political Leadership**

The principle of a double bind is used to explain the conflicting demands that women suffer in leadership, where they have to be likeable by being warmer and approachable and be respected by being commanding and authoritative (Jamieson, 1995). Women who seem to bear that power can be considered aggressive or even unfeminine, and the ones who focus on warmth can be viewed as weak. This contradiction makes it less credible and limits the political choice of women (Catalano, Kendall, and Nguyen, 2021).

In Ghana, culture makes the double bind worse. Women in politics are expected to be modest, humble, and motherly (Osei-Afful & Osei, 2020). When women politicians deviate from these norms, they are accused of being arrogant or disrespectful. Indicatively, studies conducted by Adu-Agyem and Ankomah (2019) indicate that Ghanaian female MPs often construct their messages using the concept of community development and family-focused policies, which is in line with cultural conceptions of femininity. This makes them relatable, but it curbs their strength- projecting capabilities in hostile political situations.

Media coverage also helps to strengthen the falsehood. The study conducted by Amoakohene (2004) revealed that the Ghanaian press often gives prominence to the way women look, their family status, and their personal life instead of their policy knowledge. Later research proves that the achievements of women are deemed less important, whereas their feminine qualities are exaggerated (Okon, 2022). Therefore, the double bind operates not only at the cultural level but is also actively reinforced through media framing in Ghana, which simultaneously constrains women's political expression by holding them to conflicting and often unattainable standards.

The issue of double bind does not occur in Ghana alone. The same paradox was present in the campaigns of Hillary Clinton in the U.S.A., since she was criticised as too cold in being assertive

and too emotional for being relatable. The same case happened with the former Liberian President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, as she encountered the same issues with the double standards between authority and demands of maternal warmth in an African context. These illustrations highlight the universality of the double bind, although its ways are different, depending on culture.

### **2.3 Intersectionality in Ghanaian Politics**

Intersectionality was first described by Crenshaw (1989), who focuses on the intersectionality of the effects of social identities, where social identities like gender, ethnicity, class, and regional origin intersect to create opportunities and experiences. Intersectionality is important to Ghanaian female politicians in interpreting their communication mechanisms.

Ghanaians base their politics mostly on ethnicity. Applicants of major ethnicities have an easier entry to political networks and resources. Osei-Afful and Osei (2020) observe that women in general, especially Akan women, tend to get party nominations more than women of minority groups. Regional forces also shape communication strategies. The Northern politicians tend to focus on resilience and communal unity, whereas Southern Ghana politicians focus on professional knowledge and growth qualifications (Arthur and Bawa, 2023).

Rhetorical strategies are also affected by the identity of the class. Tamale (2020) has noticed that elite women tend to lay stress on education, professionalism, and leadership qualifications, whereas grassroots women lay stress on resilience, humility, and local involvement. These rhetorical decisions appeal to certain constituencies. Intersectionality then provides a twist to the way women apply communication strategies in various social settings.

Regardless of its topicality, there are limited empirical studies on the intersectionality of political communication in Ghana. Most of the literature is concentrated on structural obstacles to

participation (e.g., funding, party support), and little attention is paid to the role of overlapping identities in defining rhetorical and communicative practices. This paper seeks to address that gap by examining how Ghanaian women politicians mobilised or were limited by intersectional identities in the 2024 elections.

#### **2.4 Media Framing, Information Disorder, and Public Perception**

Through media framing, people's perceptions are shaped as certain narratives are prioritised over others (Goffman, 1974). Women politicians are gendered as the media report more about their looks, marital status, and personal life than policy knowledge (Fairclough, 2003; Everbach, 2020). Amoakohene (2004) also reported in Ghana on how the media presents women in politics as exceptions and not leaders in Ghana. This trend continues today. According to Okon (2022), the media tend to portray women as outliers in politics, thus strengthening stereotypes. This kind of framing lessens the credibility of women and their presence in policy discourses.

The emergence of social media has given women more avenues to form their stories and evade the media gatekeepers. Social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, and X (Twitter) enable politicians to share personal data that focus on their accomplishments, and they also interact with voters directly (McNaughton and Cammaerts, 2022). Nevertheless, women are also vulnerable to harassment, trolling, and gendered misinformation campaigns in digital spaces. The Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID), in a report released in 2024, points out how in the Ghanaian 2024 elections women candidates were disproportionately targeted by disinformation and online abuse.

Recent research indicates the dual nature of social media. Baba et al. (2024) established that voters in Tema appreciated creative and visually attractive campaign text and that social media made

female politicians more visible. However, the use of social media itself requires constant attention and investment, which can be unfavourable to women with fewer funds to campaign in such a way. Although online platforms provide visibility and autonomy, they also create vulnerabilities, as some online users exploit these spaces to harass and intimidate female politicians.

## **2.5 Political Communication Channels**

Political effectiveness is also greatly determined by the medium of communication. Radio, television, rallies, and door-to-door campaigns are also important channels of communication in Ghana because of the high participation of the community. Nonetheless, online spaces are gaining influence on election results, especially among younger groups of people (Gyampo, Asare, and Asiedu, 2022).

In female politicians, the choice of communication channels is important. Social media gives direct contact with the voters and allows women to narrate their stories without distortion by the media. Everbach (2020) states that social media gives women the strength to showcase their accomplishments that popular media ignores. Meanwhile, grassroots campaigning is necessary in rural areas, where there is a lesser penetration of digital media.

This is supported by empirical evidence in Ghana. Baba et al. (2024) present the results showing that voters in urban areas react intensively to digital campaigns, whereas rural voters continue to value personal contacts. Consequently, women politicians strategically combine direct community engagement with some level of traditional and digital media platforms. By adopting this approach, they can broaden their reach, build trust with constituents, and ensure their messages resonate across diverse demographic and geographic contexts.

## **2.6 Adaptive Communication Strategies**

One of the major aspects of effective political communication is adaptation. Politicians tend to change their tones, topics, and performance according to the audiences (Karpowitz and Mendelberg, 2014). Ghanaian women politicians often trade off by asserting power in the legislature and kindness in the field (Adu-Agyem & Ankomah, 2019).

With this flexibility, women can find their way through the double bind by incorporating both warmth and competence. For instance, female MPs may adopt a firm tone in policy debates to signal authority, while drawing on themes of motherhood and community ties during campaign rallies to strengthen their personal connection with voters. Nonetheless, there is little empirical research to systematically monitor adaptive strategies over campaign cycles. This paper has filled that gap by concentrating on how women used different tactics in the 2024 elections.

## **2.7 Gaps in Existing Literature**

Although the research on gender and political communication continues to gain scholarly attention, much is still lacking in the literature. A large part of current literature is based on Western settings, specifically the United States and Europe, and little has been done to address Ghana and Africa (Nzomo, 2019). The Ghanaian context has seen very little done on the barriers to women's political participation, and there has been little attention given to the communication strategies used by women politicians. Analyses of political communication often remain superficial, focusing on speeches or publications without probing the rhetorical and discursive mechanisms that shape political messages. Moreover, scholars frequently overlook how female politicians actively adapt their communication to sociocultural pressures, media framing, and voter responses. There is also the lack of focus on the nature of digital communication, especially how social media, fake news,

and harassment on the Internet affect the political participation of women. It is on this basis that my research attempts to intervene, providing a discourse-level analysis of the communication tactics of female politicians in Ghana during the 2024 elections.

## **2.8 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.8.1 Double Bind Theory (Jamieson, 1995)**

This theory describes the inconsistency of expectations for women leaders: they have to be warm and competent. In the case of Ghana, it illuminates the ability to reconcile humility and authority in speeches, debates, and campaigns by female politicians.

### **2.8.2 Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989)**

Intersectionality emphasises the coinciding nature of identities, including gender, ethnicity, class, and region, and their influence over political experiences. The framework plays a critical role in studying how female politicians in Ghana construct, or are limited by, their multiple identities in developing political communication strategies.

### **2.8.3 Framing Theory (Goffman, 1974)**

Framing theory looks at the presentation of issues with the aim of influencing perception. This paper uses it to evaluate the ways female politicians are framed by the media in Ghana and the ways women employ self-framing over online platforms to change voter opinion.

## **2.9 Chapter Conclusion**

The literature read reveals that the relationships between gender, politics, and communication are highly complex. Cultural expectations and media biases subject women in politics to a double bind that constrains their communicative agency. Simultaneously, they adopt adaptive and innovative

approaches—they use intersectional identities and make use of the communication channels to overcome these difficulties.

However, the Ghanaian case is poorly researched, especially with respect to the development of women's strategies in the 2024 elections. This chapter defines the gaps in research by synthesising global and Ghanaian literature and basing the analyses on the relevant theories. The third chapter outlines the research methodology used to examine how female politicians developed and implemented political communication strategies during Ghana's 2024 elections.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter discussed the research methodology applied in the study to examine the political communication strategies of female politicians in the 2024 Ghanaian elections. It describes the research design, that is, the methodology, methods, population, and sampling techniques. It also discusses the analytical procedures, ethical issues, and limitations of the research methodology.

In all, the chapter shows the value of the chosen methodologies and their ability to help the researcher gather quality data to explore in detail the political communication strategies of women politicians in Ghana's 2024 elections.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

Research design is the overall strategy employed to integrate the different elements of research to effectively answer the research problem (Gabriel et al., 2013). It provides the structure for choosing research methods. Mann (2003) also describes research design as the process utilised in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of research data. Several different research designs exist. These include descriptive, meta-analytic, and correlational designs. The choice of design depends on the research question and variables under investigation (Punch, 2013). For this study, a descriptive research design is used. This design was chosen because it facilitates the collection of information about phenomena and describes existing variables or conditions (Marti & Fernandez, 2013). This design aligns with the research objective on analysing the communication strategies female politicians used in Ghana's 2024 elections. This design allowed the researcher to obtain in-depth information regarding the phenomena under consideration.

### **3.2 Research Approach**

The research approach involves the plan and procedures that set the steps from broad assumptions to more detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and the ensuing interpretation of the collected data (Shorten & Smith, 2017). It also refers to the overall strategy or plan that the researcher takes to carry out any research study by identifying the various processes that guide the research study (Marti & Fernandez, 2013). There are three (3) major research approaches available for the conduct of any research. These are the quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research approaches.

The quantitative research approach is a procedure that applies a natural science and, in particular, a positivist approach to social phenomena that aims to quantify data while utilising statistical analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Thus, it is a statistical process that is used to examine the relationships that exist between variables of interest. It usually employs statistical instruments in the analysis of the data collected to make inferences and is used when large amounts of data are collected for analysis (Tsang, 2014; Beyaztas & Bandyopadhyay, 2022).

The qualitative research approach, on the other hand, is usually used in social science research, whereby qualitative data is collected through focus group discussions, interviews, or reports. It gives researchers the opportunity to explore the lived experiences of respondents, thereby gaining depth of knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Denzin&Lincoln, 2018; Flick, 2014; Patton, 2015). It also allows researchers to ask follow-up questions of the interviewee, probing relevant areas and seeking clarification for better comprehension of this study (Silverman, 2020; Bryman, 2016). This approach engages research participants in dialogues and interviews where the responses are recorded and subsequently transcribed for onward

interpretation and analysis in line with the aims and objectives of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Tracy, 2020).

The mixed methods approach is a blend of both quantitative and qualitative research approaches, using both statistical data and narrative insights to gain a deeper understanding of a study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This draws on the strengths of both the quantitative and qualitative research approaches while addressing their weaknesses (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010; Bryman, 2016).

Given the value of the mixed-method approach, the current study employed a mixed-method approach to gather both quantitative and qualitative data to have a comprehensive picture of the political communication strategies of female politicians in Ghana's 2024 elections. Content analysis, structured surveys, and semi-structured interviews were used. (Gyampo, Ofori-Mensah, and Amoako, 2022; Catalano, 2021).

### **3.3 Study Area**

The research is performed in some chosen parts of Ghana, including urban and non-urban constituencies where parliamentary elections were held in 2024. Such geographical coverage guarantees the inclusion of diverse cultural, social, and political contexts and gives a comprehensive picture of the female political communication strategies (Osei-Afful and Osei, 2020). The study explores purposively selected female politicians from rural and urban areas, including first-time and incumbent Members of Parliament, to explore the most prominent political communication strategies used by female politicians in the 2024 elections, the challenges they faced, and the contribution of media (traditional and digital) in framing issues about female politicians in the 2024 elections.

### **3.4 Data Collection Method**

The research used a multidimensional data collection method to get a detailed image of the communication strategies of female politicians in the parliamentary elections of 2024. These included content analysis, semi-structured face-to-face interviews, and a survey of media practitioners.

The content analysis will examine their campaign speeches, debates, interviews, advertisements, and the social media posts created by the sampled female politicians. The approach of content analysis is popular in political communication studies since it is a systematic means of assessing messages to establish common messages, strategies, and frames (Krippendorff, 2018). It could be applied specifically in election campaign research, where communication materials are the most important medium with which candidates can engage with the electorate (McNaughton and Cammaerts, 2022). With the help of content analysis, this research could trace the way female politicians built their messages, the rhetorical strategies they resorted to, and how much these messages corresponded to or contradicted gendered political expectations.

Moreover, semi-structured interviews were conducted with female politicians to understand more about their political communication strategies, problems, and how the media influenced their campaign experiences. Semi-structured interviews are popular in qualitative studies, as they offer a middle ground between structure and flexibility to enable the researcher to ask predetermined questions and enquire about additional details (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015). This approach was selected due to its ability to help the researcher delve into the mindsets of the participants, shed light on the issues, and render the situational aspects of impact on the communication practices (Bryman, 2016). The interviews thereby provided detailed descriptions that were reflected in the content analysis results.

Lastly, the researcher conducted a survey of 11 media professionals to evaluate the contribution of the media in framing the issues of women politicians and how these affected the communication strategies of female politicians. Political science and communication research studies often involve the use of surveys to collect a set of quantifiable data regarding perceptions, attitudes, and decision-making processes (de Vaus, 2014). So, this study adopted that technique to enable the researcher to explore media attitudes towards the effectiveness of communication strategies used by women politicians in the 2024 elections. The mix of closed and open-ended questions also gave both quantifiable trends as well as room where respondents could explain their opinions (Campus, 2013). This survey highlighted the link between political communication, media interpretation, and voter perceptions.

The study had limitations, which included access to certain campaign materials, particularly internal communication documents and archived media content. There were some difficulties scheduling interviews due to the busy schedules of politicians, which at times affected the depth of responses and may have introduced response bias. Furthermore, the study was limited to the 2024 election cycle, which restricts the generalisability of the findings to other election periods and political contexts (Arthur and Bawa, 2023).

### **3.5 Population and Sampling**

Bryman (2012) describes a study's population as a model of a universe of units with shared features or characteristics from which a sample may be selected. In addition to this, Creswell (2013) states that the population of a study is the group of elements or individuals that share a single common characteristic and also have considerable information about a specific subject matter being studied, enabling them to be a suitable target for a research study. Since studying the entire population was

not feasible, the study purposively sampled female politicians who could provide relevant responses to the research questions.

This study’s target group consists of female politicians who participated in the 2024 parliamentary elections in Ghana. However, a representative sample of 10 female politicians was purposively sampled and stratified according to incumbency and first-time candidates. These representatives were selected from various constituencies across the country to give geographical balance.

In addition, 11 media professionals who cover elections, political campaigns, and report/host/produce political programmes were randomly selected to participate in surveys to gather data on the dynamics of media influence (IPU, 2024; Arthur and Bawa, 2023). Most of the respondents were well educated (holders of Master’s degrees) with over 11 years of experience, and most were working with broadcast media houses (television stations). The table below shows the demographic and professional characteristics of the surveyed media professionals.

**Table 3.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

<b>Demographic Variable</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	5	45.5
	Female	6	54.5
	Total	11	100.0
<b>Age in Years</b>	25-34 years	4	36.4
	35-44 years	4	36.4
	45-54 years	2	18.2
	55+	1	9.1
	Total	11	100.0
<b>Highest level of Education</b>	Bachelor Degree	3	27.3
	Master Degree	7	63.6
	Media College	1	9.1
	Total	11	100.0
<b>Years of Experience</b>	2-5 years	3	27.3
	6-10 years	3	27.3
	11+	5	45.5

	Total	11	100.0
<b>Type of Media</b>	Newspaper	1	9.1
	Online	1	9.1
	Radio	2	18.2
	Television	7	63.6
	Total	11	100.0

**3.6 Sampling Techniques**

In this study, purposive sampling and stratified sampling were used to sample the participants, and it was complemented with random sampling of media professionals in various media houses. The purposive sampling technique was used in the selection of female politicians since they are a subset of interest whose experiences are key to the research goals. Palinkas et al. (2015) suggest that purposive sampling suits well in qualitative research in which the participants are chosen according to their capacity to present dense and informative data. The study targets female parliamentary candidates, thereby making the data obtained to address the research questions on political communication strategies.

Additionally, the sample was further refined by using stratified purposive sampling to group female politicians into incumbents and first-time candidates. This stratification guaranteed the opportunity to explore variations in communication strategies depending on political experience and thus made the findings deeper and more valid (Patton, 2015). The 10 female politicians were chosen in various constituencies for geographical balance as well as to represent various socio-political contexts. This was decided upon using the principle of saturation, in which further participants would produce very little new information other than what has already been acquired (Guest, Bunce, and Johnson, 2006).

Eleven media practitioners who reported on elections and political campaigns were also randomly chosen to give professional insights into how the dynamics of the media affect political communication in the electoral environment in Ghana (IPU, 2024; Arthur and Bawa, 2023).

### **3.7 Data Collection and Management**

Data collection instruments refer to the materials and resources used in gathering primary data from selected respondents (Bryman, 2012). In this study, data was collected using both a semi-structured interview guide and a questionnaire.

The semi-structured interview guide provided comprehensive prompts to encourage interviewees to share their opinions on the topic, allowing them to clarify complex and ambiguous concepts in detail. The open-ended questions were beneficial, as they enabled interviewees to freely express their thoughts.

Interviews were conducted in environments perceived as safe and comfortable for participants. All sessions were primarily audio recorded with prior consent sought from all interviewees to record and transcribe data for analysis.

On the other hand, the questionnaire consisted of closed questions with multiple response options, allowing participants to select the most suitable answer. To allow participants to complete the questionnaires at their convenience and with minimal interruption, the questionnaire was adapted into an electronic format using Google Forms. This enabled the researcher to send the questionnaire electronically to participants, who could then respond, so that the researcher could get the responses in real time. This approach also reduced the workload and time required for collecting quantitative data. All the digital survey data and interview transcripts were stored in a

password-controlled computer that could only be accessed by the researcher to guarantee security and preservation of the data.

Moreover, an encrypted external drive was used as a backup drive to avoid loss of data in the event of technical breakdowns. To enhance protection, audio recordings and raw data files were marked with pseudonyms instead of the actual names of participants to ensure protection. These steps blocked unauthorised access and ensured that original data were not lost and could be verified when needed, as the best practice in social science research (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2018).

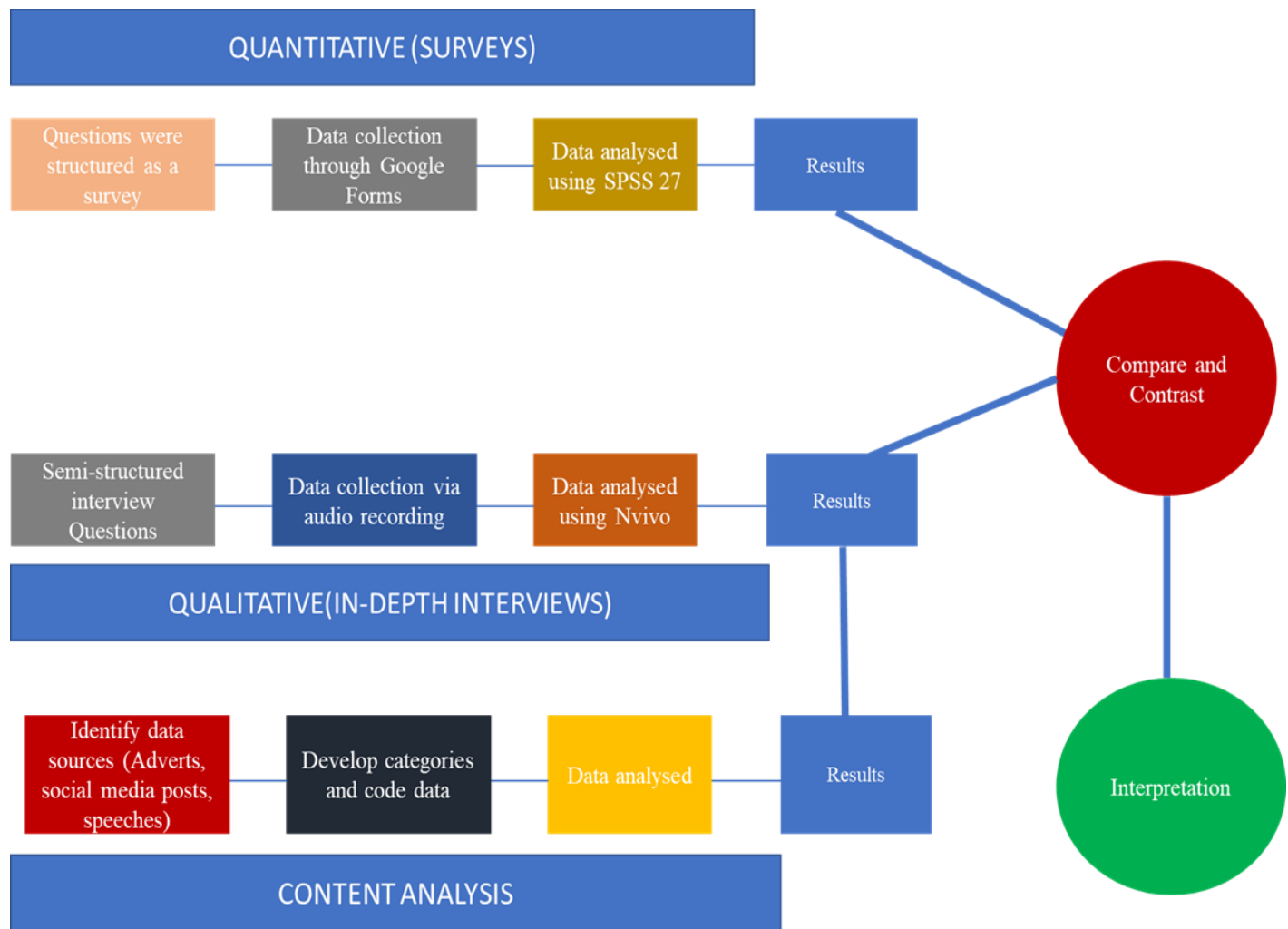
### **3.8 Data Analysis**

The qualitative data collected from in-depth interviews and the open-ended survey responses were analysed using thematic analysis. This approach involves identifying, analysing, and reporting common patterns or themes within qualitative data, allowing the researcher to interpret the findings and connect them to the study's objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was especially appropriate in this study as it was used to examine qualitative data in order to determine trends associated with challenges women politicians face in their political communication strategies, how they navigated through these challenges, and the role the media played.

Besides this, qualitative content analysis was used on the campaign materials, such as speeches, debates, advertisements, and social media posts, with the aid of software such as NVivo. In contrast to the quantitative content analysis, which focuses on frequencies and patterns of statistics, the qualitative content analysis is aimed at the interpretation of the underlying meanings, contexts, and strategies of the communication texts (Schreier, 2012). The reason this approach was selected is that the study tried to uncover how women politicians packaged themselves and addressed the

gendered expectations, as well as the way they addressed the varying groups of voters. The qualitative content analysis was possible in the study using close coding and categorisation of the collected data, which allowed the researcher to make systematic interpretations regarding the nature and role of communication strategies.

**Figure 3.2: Analytical Steps Used in the Data Analysis**



### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Ethics is needed in research involving human participation to ensure the dignity, safety, and rights of respondents are protected. The research ensured ethics throughout the process. Informed consent was sought from all participants, confidentiality was maintained, and participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could discontinue at any time in the research process without any cost or harm to them. This procedure was necessary to protect the autonomy of the participants and to enable them make an informed decision about participating (Resnik, 2018).

Data was safeguarded in line with ethical research standards, and collection commenced only after obtaining ethical clearance from the concerned institutional bodies (Gyampo et al., 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Confidentiality was observed strictly with the help of assigning pseudonyms to the participants and omitting any identifying information in the data. Data relating to sensitive information was treated carefully, and respondents were assured that data would not be published anywhere in the study with regard to their identity.

The study met these ethical standards, therefore supporting the principles of respect of persons, beneficence, and justice that are discussed in the established ethical principles of research involving human subjects (Belmont Report, 1979; Bryman, 2016) to make systematic interpretations regarding the nature and role of communication strategies.

### **3.10 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the overall research methodology that was used to explore the political communication strategies of female politicians during the 2024 elections in Ghana. It discussed that the research adopted a mixed-methods study, which combined both quantitative and

qualitative methods, as well as content analysis, hence allowing a comprehensive study of the political communication tactics of female politicians. It also discussed the data collection methods and the sampling techniques utilised in the study. All methods have shortfalls, so the chapter highlighted the limitations of the methods used and ended with ethical considerations made to ensure the credibility of the data. Overall, the chapter demonstrated that the methods used were robust and offered high-quality data for analysis.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The findings are presented according to the study objectives: identifying the political communication strategies used by female politicians, exploring the challenges that confront them, and examining how the media contributes to public perceptions of female politicians' political presence. This chapter is also discussed in line with the reviewed literature in Chapter Two.

#### **4.1 Findings with respect to RQ1: What were the most prominent political communication strategies employed by female politicians in the 2024 elections?**

Analysis of the interview data revealed five sub-themes regarding how female politicians designed and delivered their messages to connect with voters. These sub-themes are (1) Community-centred engagement communication strategies, (2) Audience segmentation and message tailoring, (3) Empathetic and relational communication style, (4) Evidence-based and solution-oriented messaging, and (5) Strategic platform prioritisation.

##### **4.1.1 Community-Centred Engagement Communication Strategies**

In response to Research Question 1 concerning communication strategies employed by female politicians, the interviews revealed a dominant theme: the prioritisation of direct, face-to-face community engagement over mass media campaigns. Female politicians emphasised direct meetings with constituents in their local environments to ensure that messages reach their target audience directly. This preference for personal, grassroots communication is exemplified in the following account from a respondent:

*“For now, what works best for me in my constituency is the interaction with the people. I have about 120 communities. So, I have 114 branches. And I know [them all] ... Because I go there myself to engage the people.” (FP1)*

Further, a respondent categorically noted that:

*“Community engagement was number one. I believe in meeting people where they are, marketplaces, churches, fishing communities, and homes.” (FP7)*

To triangulate the interview findings and enhance the robustness of this research, social media content analysis was conducted on the Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X pages of the sampled female MPs. This methodological triangulation corroborated the interview data, revealing that the social media posts of the female MPs consistently showcased engagement with various smaller community groups within their constituencies. The convergence of evidence from both interviews and social media analysis strengthens confidence in the finding that direct, grassroots community engagement constitutes a core communication strategy for female politicians in Ghana.

This finding demonstrates that female politicians strategically invested in intensive grassroots mobilisation. This approach aligns with Karpowitz and Mendelberg's (2014) findings that women politicians tend to use collaborative and relational rhetoric to overcome barriers to credibility. By physically presenting themselves in markets, churches, fishing communities, and homes, these women politicians were not merely campaigning but actively dismantling stereotypes that questioned their commitment, accessibility, and connection to ordinary citizens. This strategy reflects an adaptation to resource constraints as well as grassroots engagement. This is because, while community engagements are time-intensive, they proved to be more cost-effective than expensive media campaigns and advertisements, as one cannot easily guarantee the number of constituents they could reach.

#### 4.1.2 Audience Segmentation and Message Tailoring

The second theme emerged from the data analysis, centred on how female politicians carefully tailored their messages to different demographic groups based on their specific needs and concerns. For example, a respondent noted that:

*“For students and youth, I focused on scholarship support and business ideas. For parents, I talked about education support and improved schools. For rural farmers, it was more of a market for their stuff. For every audience, the message was different.” (FP3)*

This strategy was reiterated by another female politician who stated that:

*“For the youth, I focused on empowerment and our 24hr economy to create jobs. For women, I emphasised economic inclusion and protection of rights. Rural communities needed assurances on infrastructure, healthcare, and agriculture. I made sure no one was left out.” (FP5)*

The content review of the social media page for some respondents, for instance, showed various empowerment initiatives tailored to various groups. One respondent had a post on Facebook, where she is seen with a few women with the caption *“Empower women, empower women... providing equal access to livelihoods.”*

The data reveals that female politicians employed audience segmentation as a deliberate communication strategy, moving beyond superficial demographic categorisation to craft tailored communication messages that addressed the lived realities and specific expressed and latent needs of different voter groups. This communication differentiation strategy demonstrates that these politicians understood that a generalised message would not resonate effectively in constituencies characterised by diverse economic activities, generational priorities, and social concerns. For example, communication messages directed at market women emphasised economic empowerment and trading conditions, while messages for youth focused on employment

opportunities and skills development. By adapting their communication content, language, and delivery channels to specific audience segments, female politicians enhanced message relevance and strengthened voter connections.

This finding lends credence to Okon's (2022) observation that Ghanaian women politicians shape their identities around service and empathy by showing how they use these values to create different policy messages for different groups of constituents. The differentiated messaging strategy served multiple strategic purposes. First, it signalled that female candidates possessed profound constituency knowledge and were attentive to granular community needs.

Second, it helped them build stronger bonds with people from different demographic groups by talking about what was important to each group. Third, it countered gender stereotypes that female politicians only care about "women's issues" by demonstrating comprehensive policy competence across economic development, agriculture, infrastructure, youth employment, and other traditionally male-dominated policy domains.

The emphasis on practical, tangible benefits such as scholarships, market access, maternal health, and employment opportunities rather than abstract ideological positions reflects a pragmatic political communication approach designed to establish credibility through concrete deliverables.

This targeted communication for different segments strategy enabled female politicians to position themselves as inclusive leaders who understood the interconnectedness of community welfare, thereby building broader connections essential for electoral success in competitive multi-ethnic and multi-interest constituencies.

### 4.1.3 Empathetic and Relational Communication Style

Another prominent theme that emerged from the empirical data analysed was the adoption of an empathetic, relational communication style that contrasted with more aggressive approaches often associated with male politicians. For instance, a respondent noted that:

*“I don’t shout; I don’t insult. I believe leadership requires calmness and dignity. Some male politicians may use stronger, more aggressive language, but I prefer a motherly approach, firm but respectful. I listen a lot, and I speak with empathy.”*  
(FP7)

On the same matter, another respondent stated that:

*“When I hold the mic, I take my time... I can even hold the mic and pick somebody’s baby. I can hold the mic and go and hold an old lady and bring her, tell her, come and let’s do the communication.”* (FP1)

This finding reveals that female politicians strategically leveraged traditionally feminine communication traits, specifically empathy, active listening, storytelling, and nurturing behaviours, as political assets rather than as characteristics to be minimised. This provides nuanced validation of Adu-Agyem and Ankomah’s (2019) observations that Ghanaian female MPs emphasise humility, social well-being, and communal interests. While previous studies (Adu-Agyem & Ankomah, 2019) identified these traits among female politicians, the interview evidence in this study indicates deliberate strategic deployment, where female politicians articulated awareness of these traits to create political value and also employed the intentional use of empathetic language, storytelling narratives, and nurturing communication approaches to build voter connections. This finding adds to political communication knowledge by highlighting the agency and strategic calculation underlying what might otherwise be interpreted as natural gender expression.

#### 4.1.4 Evidence-Based and Solution-Oriented Messaging

Addressing the second dimension of Research Question 1 concerning political communication strategies, the thematic analysis revealed a consistent pattern of evidence-based messaging among female politicians. The findings demonstrate that female politicians strategically emphasised concrete track records and practical solutions in their messaging, focusing on demonstrable achievements rather than abstract promises or ideological rhetoric. This results-oriented communication strategy serves multiple strategic functions: establishing credibility through proof of competence, differentiating from political opponents who rely on unfulfilled promises, and addressing gendered scepticism about women's capacity to deliver tangible outcomes. The strategic emphasis on achievement-focused communication is articulated in the following representative account from a respondent:

*“My main goal was to make people understand that my policy was a practical and achievable development plan. I wanted to be clear, so that people can relate with it, and these are issues we face every day.” (FP2)*

Another respondent articulated the aim of her communication messages by saying that:

*“My goals were to keep messages practical and about the constituency... show results through evidence of past interventions.” (FP3)*

This finding suggests that female politicians positioned themselves as pragmatic problem-solvers and evidence-based leaders in their communication, using concrete demonstrations of past performance and specific, actionable policy proposals to build credibility and systematically counter persistent gender-based doubts about their capabilities and seriousness.

By anchoring campaigns in visible track records such as education funds, community development projects, and infrastructure improvements, and offering promises that were realistic and deliverable, these politicians pre-emptively addressed scepticism through tangible evidence that

could not be dismissed or attributed to other factors. This strategic choice directly addresses the asymmetry documented by Kenny (2013) and Swers (2002), where men are rated on competence and charisma, while women face assessments on physical attractiveness, personality, and family life, thereby requiring higher thresholds of proof.

#### **4.1.5 Strategic Platform Prioritisation**

The final theme that emerged from the analysed data relates to strategic platform selection. This is about female politicians prioritising channels that best reached their specific constituencies rather than defaulting to high-profile national media. The evidence shows that most of the female politicians were strategic about their choice of communication channels because they wanted to have maximum reach. For example, a respondent was of the view that:

*“Usually after any programme, my PA, my research assistant, they usually put it on social media... I was only dealing with Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp. And then the media in our constituency. We have a few radio stations and ten community information centres.” (FP1)*

Another respondent confirmed that her channels were deliberately selected. She noted that:

*“I prioritised community engagements, radio interviews, and some social media. Community engagements allowed direct interaction and feedback.” (FP5)*

The findings reflect resource-conscious campaign management, as these politicians recognised that while expensive national television advertising might not yield maximum returns in constituency areas with limited infrastructure, strategic integration of multiple communication channels, including social media, local radio, and face-to-face engagement, could effectively reach diverse voter segments.

This finding diverges from Baba et al.’s (2024) characterisation of digital campaign effectiveness along urban-rural lines. Whereas Baba et al. (2024) argue that voters in urban regions respond

intensively to digital campaigns while rural ones continue to value personal contacts, the current study reveals a more nuanced communication landscape. Female politicians deliberately incorporated social media into their strategic communication mix precisely because they recognised that certain voter segments, particularly youth, respond positively to digital engagement even in constituencies with mixed rural-urban characteristics. As evidenced in the interview excerpts presented earlier, politicians explicitly articulated deliberate social media deployment alongside traditional engagement methods. This finding suggests that the digital-traditional dichotomy may oversimplify contemporary political communication realities in Ghana, where integrated multi-channel strategies have become normative. The prevalence of smartphones and expanding internet access may be reshaping political communication dynamics more rapidly than earlier scholarship captured, necessitating updated frameworks that account for technological diffusion across diverse constituency types.

Second, the prioritisation of local radio and community information centres suggests an understanding of trusted information sources within constituencies. Female politicians appeared to recognise that local stations with vernacular programming may command higher credibility and local reach compared to national media for certain voter segments and issue contexts. This finding aligns with Gyampo et al.'s (2022) observations about the continued importance of traditional channels in Ghana despite growing digital influence, though the present research indicates these traditional channels function complementarily within integrated communication strategies rather than as exclusive alternatives to digital platforms.

Table 4.1 below synthesises the major communication strategies identified in response to Research Question 1, organising findings across tactics, channels, audience segmentation approaches, and strategic rationales.

**Table 4.1: Summary of Political Communication Strategies Used by Female Politicians**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Key Findings</b>	<b>Supporting Evidence</b>
Community-Centred Engagement Strategies	Female politicians prioritised direct, face-to-face interaction with constituents through small group meetings and branch-by-branch engagement to build trust and demonstrate accessibility.	“I engage my constituents in smaller groups so that the message would be well understood... I have 114 branches... I go there myself to engage the people.” (FP1)
Audience Segmentation and Message Tailoring	Politicians customised messages for different demographic groups (youth, women, farmers, elderly) based on their specific needs and priorities.	“For every audience, the message was different. What is the issue of the farmer is different from the mother or the student” (FP3)
Empathetic and Relational Communication Style	Adoption of a calm, empathetic, “motherly” communication style emphasising listening, storytelling, and emotional connection rather than aggressive rhetoric	“I prefer a motherly approach, firm but respectful. I listen a lot, and I speak with empathy.” (FP7)
Evidence-Based and Solution-Oriented Messaging	Focus on track records, practical solutions, and demonstrable achievements rather than abstract promises to establish credibility.	“People saw my track records. And now it was easy for them to buy.” (FP1)
Strategic Platform Prioritisation	Context-sensitive platform selection prioritising community meetings and local radio over national media and social media based on constituency realities	“What works best for me in my constituency is the interaction with the people... I go there myself.” (FP1)

**Source: Author (2025)**

## **4.2 Findings with respect to RQ2: What were the challenges female politicians faced in their political communication in the 2024 election?**

Analysis of the interview data revealed six major themes regarding challenges female politicians encountered in their political communication during the 2024 elections: (1) Gender stereotypes and double standards, (2) Financial and resource constraints, (3) Navigating assertiveness-modesty dilemmas, (4) Misinformation and disinformation attacks, (5) Cultural and patriarchal barriers, and (6) Unequal media scrutiny.

### **4.2.1 Gender Stereotypes and Double Standards**

In examining challenges confronting female politicians (Research Question 2), an emergent theme permeating all interview data was the persistence of gender stereotypes and double standards that constrain women's political communication. Gender stereotypes in this context refer to socially

constructed expectations that female politicians should embody traditionally feminine communication traits, such as warmth, empathy, and cooperativeness, while avoiding behaviours coded as masculine, including assertiveness, directness, and competitive rhetoric. Double standards emerge when female politicians face asymmetric evaluation: communication styles accepted or praised in male politicians trigger negative assessments when employed by women. These gendered constraints create what scholars term a “double bind” (Jamieson, 1995), wherein female politicians must navigate contradictory expectations, that is, appearing competent without seeming “unfeminine” and demonstrating warmth without appearing weak. The pervasiveness of this challenge is captured in the following representative account:

*“The men assume that politics is a reserve for men. So, we have to strive hard, especially when it comes to finances. Finance was one of the challenges that really confronts us. Finance, verbal attacks, or misunderstanding as to what to say from the men.” (FP1)*

Another respondent also stated that:

*“Sometimes, when a woman speaks strongly, people say she is disrespectful. When she speaks softly, they say she is weak. What at all are we supposed to do?” (FP7)*

The double standards around tone and demeanour created impossible communication dilemmas where no behavioural choice was safe from gendered criticism. Assertiveness would be praised as “passionate” when male politicians communicate, but on the other hand, be labelled “disrespectful” when women speak. Again, while calmness would be valorised as “composed leadership” with men, it is largely seen as “weak” in female candidates.

The empirical data also highlight how gendered attacks extended beyond policy disagreements to deeply personal realms, including marital status, sexual morality, and family tragedies. Meanwhile, their male counterparts rarely face this kind of attack. These issues make female

politicians vulnerable; hence, they need strategies to navigate intensely personal vulnerabilities in public spaces.

#### **4.2.2 Financial and Resource Constraints**

Addressing a second major challenge emerging from Research Question 2, the interview data revealed that financial limitations constitute a critical barrier affecting female politicians' ability to implement comprehensive communication strategies. Financial limitations in this context encompass insufficient campaign funds to cover essential communication expenses, including media advertising (television, radio, newspaper), production of campaign materials (posters, flyers, branded items), transportation costs for constituency visits, logistics for organising rallies and community meetings, and compensation for campaign staff and volunteers. Politics in Ghana is notably capital-intensive (CDD-Ghana, 2020; Ayee, 2017), requiring substantial financial resources for effective voter outreach across geographically dispersed constituencies. These financial barriers are particularly acute for female politicians, who typically lack access to the male-dominated traditional political financing networks comprising business associations, party power brokers, and wealthy individual patrons who provide funding for male candidates. The gendered nature of political financing means that while male politicians can mobilise campaign funds relatively easily through established networks, female politicians face systematic disadvantages in accessing comparable financial resources.

In the lead-up to the 2024 elections, female politicians interviewed emphasised the essential role of financial resources in enabling effective voter engagement. One respondent articulated the financial imperative of constituency communication:

*“Money, because even going to the people to engage with them, you need money. As a woman, you need to find ways and means to let the people listen to you and know that you are here to help.” (FP2)*

This recognition of financial necessity became particularly salient when several respondents explicitly identified resource constraints that limited their campaign activities. Another respondent directly articulated how financial and logistical limitations functioned as barriers:

*“Constraints included limited resources, transport, logistics... the number of hours, risk, bad roads.” (FP4)*

These findings indicate that financial and resource constraints represent not merely inconveniences but fundamental barriers that limit female politicians’ communication reach, frequency of constituency engagement, media access, and overall campaign competitiveness, with these constraints disproportionately affecting women due to their limited access to traditional political financing networks dominated by men. While existing literature acknowledges funding challenges in Ghanaian politics (Osei-Afful & Osei, 2020), this study reveals how financial constraints specifically limit communication effectiveness by restricting: (1) the frequency and geographic scope of direct voter engagement, (2) access to mass media platforms for message dissemination, (3) production and distribution of campaign materials, and (4) mobilisation of campaign teams for grassroots outreach. The gendered dimension of these barriers, rooted in women’s exclusion from established political financing networks, means that female politicians operate at systematic disadvantages relative to their male counterparts in executing communication strategies essential for electoral competitiveness.

### 4.2.3 Navigating Assertiveness-Modesty Dilemmas

Female politicians identified the complex negotiation between assertive political communication and deeply entrenched cultural expectations for female modesty, deference, and emotional restraint. In Ghanaian cultural contexts, women are traditionally expected to speak softly, display deference to male authority, show emotional restraint, and prioritise consensus-building over confrontational debate. These cultural prescriptions create fundamental tension in political contexts, where effective communication requires assertiveness, directness, passionate advocacy, and competitive rhetorical engagement—traits culturally coded as masculine and potentially transgressive when exhibited by women.

Female politicians must communicate assertively enough to establish credibility while avoiding the perception of violating cultural norms that trigger backlash or confirm “aggressive” stereotypes. This balancing requirement has no parallel for male politicians, whose assertive communication aligns with both masculine cultural expectations and political leadership norms. Respondents described sophisticated strategies to navigate contradictory expectations. One articulated, combining assertive content with culturally acceptable presentation:

*“I balanced firmness with warmth. I made sure that even when I spoke strongly, my message carried respect. I reminded myself that strength does not always have to be loud. I remained composed even in heated debates, letting clarity and conviction do the work.” (FP5)*

This “firmness with warmth” strategy directly addresses the cultural double bind by simultaneously projecting competence and likeability. The emphasis on remaining composed “even in heated debates” demonstrates deliberate emotional regulation to avoid “overly emotional woman” stereotypes while participating in contentious discourse.

These findings reveal that female politicians faced persistent communication dilemmas where cultural gender expectations constrained rhetorical choices, forcing sophisticated balancing

strategies that preserved assertiveness within culturally acceptable boundaries—a burden male politicians did not shoulder. This validates Jamieson’s (1995) Double Bind Theory, where women in leadership must simultaneously project warmth (likability) and competence (respect), with any imbalance triggering gendered criticism that reduces credibility.

#### **4.2.4 Misinformation and Disinformation Attacks**

Misinformation and disinformation emerged as significant obstacles undermining female politicians' campaigns. Respondents encountered false narratives through social media and traditional media, forcing them to divert communication resources toward defensive reputation management rather than proactive messaging.

One respondent detailed false social media content:

*“There’s a beautiful house in my constituency... Somebody put it on social media and said within four years, this is the house I’m able to build in the constituency. Apparently, the house is not even for a politician.” (FPI)*

Visual content was weaponised through false attribution to create corrupt impressions. Interview data suggests female politicians encountered gender-specific manifestations: accusations of corruption invoking stereotypes of material ambition; dismissal of policy initiatives as superficial charity, reinforcing caregiving stereotypes; and personal character attacks on appearance or private behaviour encountered less frequently by male politicians. This aligns with McNaughton and Cammaerts' (2022) observations about women politicians' heightened vulnerabilities to gendered misinformation campaigns.

#### 4.2.5 Cultural and Patriarchal Barriers

Analysis revealed that cultural expectations rooted in patriarchal attitudes shaped female politicians' communication effectiveness. Cultural expectations refer to socially prescribed norms about appropriate behaviour for women in traditional Ghanaian communities, particularly with traditional authority figures such as chiefs, queen mothers, and elders. Patriarchal attitudes encompass belief systems positioning men as natural authority figures, whilst positioning women in subordinate roles. These frameworks create specific communicative constraints: female politicians must demonstrate deference, speak softly, display humility, and avoid assertive communication that might be interpreted as challenging male authority or violating gender hierarchies. This creates tension because effective political leadership typically requires projecting authority and confidence, traits conflicting with cultural expectations for female deference.

Male politicians face fundamentally different dynamics: their gender aligns with patriarchal power structures, meaning their authority assertions do not violate cultural gender norms. When male politicians speak assertively to chiefs or elders, this behaviour is culturally congruent—men speaking authoritatively within established male-dominated hierarchies. Female politicians must navigate cross-cutting challenges: claiming political authority (a masculine-coded domain) whilst operating within cultural contexts expecting female subordination to male authority figures. This requires strategic communication calibration that male politicians do not encounter.

One respondent articulated the strategic balancing act between cultural deference and political assertiveness:

*“Often during community consultations or when engaging with the chiefs. Like I said, my area is patriarchal, so you don't want to do anything that will let them say you are disrespectful, but you have to be firm when need be.” (FP4)*

This captures the dual communicative imperative: avoid cultural violations inviting disrespect accusations (a gendered judgement more readily applied to women challenging male authority) whilst maintaining sufficient firmness to establish political credibility. Identifying the constituency as “patriarchal” demonstrates awareness that gender hierarchies structure communication constraints. The phrase “you don’t want to do anything that will let them say you are disrespectful” reveals heightened vulnerability to cultural sanctions, where female assertiveness in traditional contexts may risk being coded as disrespect rather than leadership.

Female politicians operated within cultural contexts where patriarchal attitudes created gender-specific communication constraints requiring strategic calibration to display cultural deference whilst asserting political authority—a fundamentally gendered challenge male politicians do not encounter. Male politicians engaging with traditional authorities operate within culturally congruent frameworks where their gender, authority claims, and cultural expectations align. This validates Osei-Afful and Osei’s (2020) observations about cultural expectations for female politicians to be modest in Ghana, contributing deeper insight into how these expectations operate as strategic communication constraints.

#### **4.2.6 Unequal Media Scrutiny**

Examining a fourth challenge emerging from the thematic analysis of interview data (Research Question 2), female politicians consistently identified appearance-focused discourse as a significant obstacle that distorted political communication and shifted focus from policy substance to physical presentation. This challenge operates on two interconnected levels. First, differential and superficial media coverage by news organisations: ‘differential coverage’ refers to quantitative and qualitative disparities whereby female politicians receive less media attention, fewer interview

opportunities, and different framing compared to male counterparts; ‘superficial coverage’ refers to media reporting that emphasises appearance, personal characteristics, and emotional presentation rather than policy positions, political experience, or governance competencies.

Second, appearance-focused public discourse on social media platforms and in community conversations, where citizens and voters disproportionately comment on female politicians’ physical appearance, clothing, body, and personal life rather than engaging with their political messages or policy proposals.

The gendered nature of this challenge lies in the systematic pattern whereby female politicians’ bodies, appearances, and personal attributes become primary subjects of evaluation, while male politicians’ physical characteristics rarely receive comparable scrutiny, allowing men’s political substance to remain the focal point of public and media attention. Female politicians interviewed articulated both dimensions of this challenge: institutional media bias and public appearance obsession, and their cumulative impact on communication effectiveness.

Regarding differential media access and emotional framing by news organisations, one respondent described how media platforms systematically prioritised male political voices whilst dismissing female politicians’ substantive communication as emotional:

*“Coverage often concentrated on different things. Men’s coverage is more; they invite them more because they get more traffic to their stations. For the women, even when they talk, they say you are being emotional.” (FP3)*

This account reveals structural media bias operating through two mechanisms: quantitative access disparity (men receive more coverage and interview invitations justified by traffic/ratings considerations) and qualitative framing disparity (female politicians’ substantive political communication is reframed through gendered emotional lenses that undermine credibility). The commercial justification that “they get more traffic” exposes how media business models

perpetuate gender inequality by prioritising male voices based on existing audience preferences shaped by historical male political dominance. The emotional framing that “they say you are being emotional” represents a gendered delegitimisation strategy whereby female politicians’ passionate advocacy, assertive positions, or strong convictions are coded as emotional instability rather than political conviction, a reframing rarely applied to male politicians expressing similar intensity.

Beyond media organisational practices, women politicians also confronted appearance-focused evaluation in public discourse that prioritised physical attributes over political substance. One respondent articulated how public attention consistently centred on her body rather than her political work, even during formal political ceremonies:

*“Female candidates, including myself, were often judged on appearance rather than substance. In my case, people frequently made comments about my body... even when I was being sworn in, people on social media only spoke about my body. Some think I’m too luxurious.” (FP6)*

This experience reveals the pervasiveness of appearance-focused evaluation, extending even to official swearing-in ceremonies, contexts where political substance and institutional role should dominate attention. That social media discourse during this formal political milestone concentrated on the politician’s body rather than her achievements, qualifications, or policy agenda demonstrates how deeply gendered appearance scrutiny is embedded in public political discourse. The “too luxurious” criticism represents a specific gendered double bind: female politicians face criticism both for insufficient attention to appearance (coded as unprofessional) and for sophisticated presentation (coded as superficiality or excessive materialism), creating no-win evaluation scenarios. Notably, male politicians’ bodies, clothing, or physical appearance rarely dominate public discourse during their swearing-in ceremonies or political activities, allowing their political credentials and policy positions to remain central.

The systematic nature of appearance-focused evaluation as a gendered pattern was further articulated by another respondent, who explicitly contrasted evaluation criteria applied to male versus female politicians:

*“The difference is clear. Men are judged on their ideas and their strength. Women are judged on their tone, their dressing, their hair, their shoes, is she married or not, or their behaviour.” (FP7)*

This direct comparison crystallises the gendered evaluation asymmetry: male politicians are assessed on substantive dimensions (ideas, strength, political and leadership qualities), while female politicians are assessed on superficial and personal dimensions (tone, appearance details, marital status, and behaviour on attributes peripheral or irrelevant to political competence). The exhaustive list—“dressing, hair, shoes”—emphasises the microscopic scrutiny applied to female presentation, where every element of appearance becomes subject to public evaluation and potential criticism. The inclusion of marital status as an evaluation criterion highlights how female politicians’ personal lives and family roles remain sites of political judgement in ways male politicians rarely experience.

To corroborate these self-reported experiences of appearance-focused public discourse, social media data from X (formerly Twitter) were analysed, examining public comments on female politicians’ posts. The analysis confirmed that appearance-focused commentary from citizens and social media users frequently dominated responses to female politicians’ substantive political content, overshadowing policy messages. For instance, under a post by one respondent announcing her donation of nine sewing machines to graduating students, which in itself is a policy-focused development initiative, a social media user’s response ignored the policy substance entirely, instead sexualising the politician:

*“Somebody too is campaigning with her ass, hmm.”*

This exemplifies how citizens' appearance-focused commentary derails substantive political communication. The politician posted about educational support and vocational training (policy substance), yet the public response sexualised her body, reducing a development initiative to crude physical objectification. Similarly, on another female politician's post discussing constituency issues, a user commented:

*"Your body bad oh fr!"*

These citizen comments, while distinct from institutional media coverage practices, demonstrate that appearance-focused discourse permeates multiple levels of political communication—not only how media organisations frame coverage but also how citizens engage with female politicians' messages on social media platforms. The cumulative effect creates an environment where female politicians struggle to maintain focus on policy substance when both media framing and public commentary consistently redirect attention to physical appearance.

The double bind created by appearance-focused discourse manifests particularly insidiously: female politicians who allocate minimal attention to physical presentation face criticism for appearing unprofessional or insufficiently polished for public office, but those who invest in sophisticated presentation are dismissed as superficial, vain, or excessively materialistic (the "too luxurious" accusation). This creates impossible strategic choices where no presentation approach escapes criticism. Male politicians, conversely, face substantially lower appearance scrutiny, allowing them to focus communication resources on message content, policy substance, and political positioning rather than managing appearance-related public discourse.

The quantitative access disparity articulated by FP3 that male politicians receive more media coverage and interview invitations because they "get more traffic" reveals structural media bias

where platforms systematically prioritise male political voices. This creates a self-reinforcing cycle:

**Figure 4.1: Structural bias**



This structural bias operates independently of female politicians' communication competence, policy substance, or message quality, representing a systematic barrier that constrains reach and visibility.

These findings align with Okon's (2022) observations that the media continues to portray women as outliers in politics rather than legitimate leaders, thereby strengthening stereotypes rather than challenging them. However, the present study extends this understanding by documenting the dual-level nature of appearance-focused challenges, both institutional media practices (differential access, emotional framing) and public discourse patterns (appearance-focused social media commentary), and revealing how these operate cumulatively to disadvantage female politicians' communication effectiveness in Ghanaian electoral contexts.

Table 4.2 below synthesises the major challenges identified in response to Research Question 2, organising findings across challenge types, specific manifestations, gendered dimensions, and communication impacts reported by respondents.

**Table 4.2: Summary of Challenges in Political Communication by Female Politicians**

Theme	Key Findings	Supporting Evidence
Gender Stereotypes and Double Standards	Female politicians faced persistent stereotypes questioning their legitimacy, competence, and morality, with different standards applied to their tone and behaviour compared to men.	“When you are calm too, they will say you are too soft.” (FP1)
Financial and Resource Constraints	Limited access to funding restricted communication reach, constituency engagement, media access, and overall campaign competitiveness	“...Money because even going to the people to engage with them, you need money... You need resources, money, transport, food, party materials.” (FP2; FP3)
Navigating Assertiveness-Modesty Dilemmas	Cultural expectations forced female politicians to constantly balance assertiveness with modesty, expending energy managing tone and demeanour.	“I balanced firmness with warmth. I made sure that even when I spoke strongly, my message carried respect.” (FP5)
Misinformation and Disinformation Attacks	Coordinated false narratives on social media and traditional networks undermined reputations and required defensive communication.	“Misinformation and disinformation... from the media, from people, ordinary people who are not in the media. And from our counterpart males.” (FP1)
Cultural and Patriarchal Barriers	Traditional gender norms and patriarchal attitudes in constituencies constrained communication strategies and required careful cultural navigation	“My area is highly patriarchal, so you can imagine... when I go to meet the chiefs and queen mothers and elderly people, I need to tone down.” (FP4; FP2)
Unequal Media Scrutiny	Media disproportionately focused on female politicians' appearance, personal lives, and tone rather than policy substance, shifting attention from competence to superficial attributes.	“Men are judged on their ideas and their strength. Women are judged on their tone, their dressing, their hair, their shoes, is she married or not.” (FP7)

**Source: Author (2025)**

### **4.3 How Did the Media (Traditional and Digital) Frame Issues of Female Politicians in the 2024 Elections?**

Transitioning from politicians’ communication strategies (Section 4.1) and challenges (Section 4.2) to Research Question 3, this section examines how media representation influenced female politicians’ political communication during the 2024 elections in Ghana. Media framing—the processes through which media platforms select, emphasise, and interpret information—significantly shapes public perception and electoral outcomes. Understanding media framing patterns illuminates structural factors beyond female politicians’ control that affect their communication effectiveness.

Thematic analysis of interview data revealed four major media framing patterns: (1) Superficial and appearance-focused framing, which is prioritising physical appearance over policy substance; (2) Gendered interpretations of communication style, which means reframing female assertiveness as “emotional” while coding male assertiveness as “strong”; (3) Disproportionate moral scrutiny and personal life focus, which aligns with investigating female politicians’ private lives at levels rarely applied to men; and (4) Minimisation of policy substance and achievements, that is, trivialising substantive work or framing development initiatives as “charity”.

These interconnected patterns cumulatively disadvantaged female politicians during the 2024 electoral cycle. The following subsections present detailed empirical evidence for each theme, drawing on respondents’ firsthand accounts of media interactions and observed coverage patterns. This analytical structure enables systematic examination of how media framing operated across multiple dimensions to shape, and often distort public understanding of women politicians’ qualifications and political value.

#### **4.3.1 Superficial and Appearance-Focused Framing**

Interview analysis revealed a persistent media focus on female politicians’ physical appearance, clothing, and bodies rather than political messages and competencies. Superficial framing refers to media practices prioritising dimensions irrelevant to political performance—physical attractiveness, fashion choices, and body shape, but minimises substantive political content, including policy expertise, legislative achievements, or governance vision. This operates through multiple mechanisms: disproportionate appearance coverage, headlines emphasising physical attributes, and visual framing focusing on appearance details rather than professional contexts.

Male politicians, by contrast, rarely experience comparable appearance scrutiny, with coverage typically opening with political credentials rather than physical descriptions.

Female politicians identified this framing as undermining communication effectiveness. One respondent described how appearance-focused public discourse dominated even during formal political ceremonies:

*“Female candidates, including myself, were often judged on appearance rather than substance. In my case, people frequently made comments about my body... even when I was being sworn in, people on social media only spoke about my body. Some think I’m too luxurious, as though femininity or success was incompatible with political leadership.” (FP6)*

This demonstrates appearance-focused framing permeating contexts where substance should dominate. That swearing-in ceremonies generated discourse centred on bodies rather than qualifications, revealing deeply entrenched patterns.

To triangulate self-reported experiences, social media data from X were analysed. Appearance-focused commentary frequently dominated responses to substantive political content. Under one respondent's post announcing constituency development initiatives (vocational training equipment donation), a user responded, *“Somebody too is campaigning with her ass hmm”*—completely ignoring policy substance to sexualise the politician’s body.

This finding demonstrates that media and public discourse employed superficial framing, reducing female politicians to aesthetic objects rather than political subjects with substantive agendas. This systematically privileged appearance-based narratives over competence-based coverage, reflecting and reinforcing gender stereotypes about women’s primary value residing in physical attractiveness rather than leadership capabilities.

This validates Amoakohene’s (2004) findings two decades earlier about Ghanaian media emphasising women’s looks over policy knowledge. The persistence across twenty years suggests

deeply institutionalised media practices resistant to change, aligning with Okon's (2022) observation that women's achievements are barely highlighted whilst feminine qualities are exaggerated and hyped.

#### **4.3.2 Gendered Interpretations of Communication**

Interview data revealed that the media consistently interpreted female politicians' communication through gendered lenses, applying different standards to men exhibiting similar behaviours. One respondent described how her assertive communication triggered gendered criticism:

*“Sometimes people judge my tone, even when I am just being firm. If a man spoke the same way, no one would complain.” (FP7)*

This double standard emerged regardless of whether female politicians adopted assertive or calm communication approaches. Another respondent articulated how even composed delivery faced misinterpretation:

*“Many voters appreciated my calmness and saw it as maturity. However, some critics misinterpreted it as weakness. The media often highlighted my composure positively, but at times they glossed over the firmness of my message simply because I delivered it calmly.” (FP6)*

These accounts reveal the double standards of the media: female politicians' communication was misinterpreted regardless of approach, while male politicians' equivalent behaviours were normalised or celebrated. This created impossible rhetorical environments where women could not win, irrespective of their communication choices.

This validates Jamieson's (1995) Double Bind Theory, where women face contradictory demands that undermine credibility and limit political choices; a pattern confirmed by Catalano, Kendall, and Nguyen (2021).

### 4.3.3 Disproportionate Moral Scrutiny and Personal Life Focus

The media applied heightened scrutiny to female politicians' personal lives and moral conduct while largely ignoring or normalising equivalent issues for male politicians. In Ghana, it appears that the personal life stories of male politicians are mostly ignored during campaigns, but those of women are highlighted, and this impacts women's desire to contest political positions. For instance, a respondent noted that:

*“When it comes to moral life of a female politician, the media is quick to pick it. But when it comes to the moral life of a male politician, it's normal. They look at it as normal. It's the order of the day.” (FP1)*

Most of the respondents believed that morality has nothing to do with their capabilities as female politicians. However, the media keeps scrutinising their moral and personal life and ignores their capabilities. This is affirmed by a respondent:

*“That's my challenge with the media... They should always dig down. Even if you dig down, that's the person's personal life. The person's morality has nothing to do with the person's capabilities.” (FP1)*

This finding establishes that the media systematically applied disproportionate scrutiny to female politicians' personal lives, romantic relationships, and moral conduct. These dimensions were predominantly regarded as inconsequential for male politicians, thereby establishing supplementary accountability criteria for women. This not only diverts attention from substantive political assessment but also perpetuates gendered perceptions that women's private morality held greater political relevance than that of men.

This finding validates and extends Amoakohene's (2004) earlier findings about Ghanaian media. In his view, the Ghanaian media focuses on the personal attributes of women instead of their leadership capabilities. This is probably the reason Okon (2022) argues that media reportage continues to strengthen stereotypes as they keep pitching women in politics as outliers in politics.

#### 4.3.4 Minimisation of Policy Substance and Achievements

In exploring the contribution of the media in framing issues related to female politicians, one emerging theme is the issue of the minimisation of policy substance and achievements. The findings indicate that media coverage frequently minimised or reframed female politicians' substantive policy work and development achievements, reducing serious governance initiatives to superficial characterisations. This is supported by a participant as

*“When my education fund supported a lot of students, some media framed it as charity work instead of serious development planning.” (FP2)*

The minimisation of policy substance and the achievement of female politicians has led many of the respondents to adopt a more proactive approach to showing or proving that they are equally capable of making significant achievements. The respondents indicated their approach in communicating their achievements, as the media has failed in communicating that in their reportage.

*“That is why, for me, I often begin my speeches by emphasising my record, experiences. People just assume that, oh, she is a woman and not capable. Unless you prove it.” (FP7)*

This finding demonstrates that the media minimised female politicians' substantive policy achievements and governance competencies through several mechanisms. First, media outlets reframed serious development initiatives as mere charity or social work. Second, they allocated less coverage time and prominence to women's policy proposals compared to their male counterparts. Third, they allowed appearance and lifestyle narratives to overshadow substantive political content. These practices created a challenging media environment, so female politicians struggled to build credible policy profiles, regardless of how well they did in real life.

This supports Okon's (2022) claims that the media downplays women's accomplishments while exaggerating their feminine traits. It also builds on Amoakohene's (2004) findings by showing that

women not only get less policy coverage, but that the coverage they do get actively undermines their substantive work instead of fairly representing it.

The reframing of structured education funding, presumably involving needs assessment, application processes, accountability mechanisms, and sustainability planning, as simple “charity work” exemplifies how media employed trivialising frames that stripped female politicians’ initiatives of their strategic, policy-oriented dimensions. This reframing implicitly suggested that women engaged in emotional, ad hoc assistance rather than systematic governance interventions. This way of reporting and media coverage have significant political consequences. Charity work connotes temporary, feel-good interventions rather than sustainable development planning, potentially undermining female politicians’ credibility as serious policymakers capable of ensuring growth and development. This aligns with broader patterns recorded by scholars where the media selects and frames issues, they consider worthy to discuss over other important issues thereby influencing perceptions negatively in some instances (Everbach, 2020; Fairclough, 2003; Goffman, 1974)

#### **4.3.5 One-Sample t-Test Results for Media Coverage Variables**

A one-sample t-test was conducted to determine if media practitioners’ perceptions of media coverage of female politicians differed significantly from a neutral test value. The test examined 36 variables across six thematic categories: frequency and focus of coverage, engagement and challenges, communication and framing, cultural and societal influences, media framing and portrayal, and media’s role and influence. Table 2 below presents the complete statistical results.

**Table 4.3: One-Sample T-Test Results for Media Coverage Variables.**

Variables	<i>t</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Interval	Confidence
				Lower	Upper
<b>Frequency &amp; Focus of Coverage</b>					
Coverage frequency of female politicians	8.343	0.000	2.09	1.53	2.65
Visibility compared to male politicians	14.907	0.000	1.82	1.55	2.09
Dominant focus of coverage	5.622	0.000	2.82	1.70	3.94
<b>Engagement &amp; Challenges</b>					
Active engagement for publicity	12.264	0.000	1.73	1.41	2.04
Challenges in gaining media attention	7.946	0.000	3.18	2.29	4.07
Specific challenges limiting coverage	9.834	0.000	3.27	2.53	4.01
<b>Communication &amp; Framing</b>					
Tailored communication strategies	7.455	0.000	1.55	1.08	2.01
Tone of media coverage	8.032	0.000	1.82	1.31	2.32
<b>Cultural &amp; Societal Influences</b>					
Influence of cultural attitudes on reporting	10.750	0.000	3.18	2.52	3.84
Expectation of humility over assertiveness	10.423	0.000	3.55	2.79	4.30
Focus on community roles over policy	10.757	0.000	3.27	2.59	3.95
Media framing reflecting cultural bias	8.409	0.000	3.00	2.21	3.79
Emphasis on personal life over policy	10.864	0.000	3.36	2.67	4.05
<i>Emphasis on educational background</i>	8.439	0.000	3.18	2.34	4.02
<i>Emphasis on family life</i>	8.192	0.000	3.36	2.45	4.28
<i>Emphasis on personal behaviour</i>	6.708	0.000	3.00	2.00	4.00
Influence of public perceptions/norms	8.533	0.000	3.27	2.42	4.13
Influence of specific cultural issues	12.450	0.000	2.82	2.31	3.32
<i>Balancing political/family life</i>	9.441	0.000	3.45	2.64	4.27
<i>Cultural preference for male decision-makers</i>	9.083	0.000	3.00	2.26	3.74
<i>Norms emphasising humility/submissiveness</i>	9.960	0.000	3.36	2.61	4.12

Variables	<i>t</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Interval	Confidence
<i>Beliefs reinforcing male dominance</i>	9.815	0.000	3.09	2.39	3.79
<b>Media Framing &amp; Portrayal</b>					
Media bias from societal perceptions	10.757	0.000	3.27	2.59	3.95
Framing on education vs. policy	9.815	0.000	3.09	2.39	3.79
Framing on competence/incompetence	8.439	0.000	3.18	2.34	4.02
Framing on family status over agenda	12.587	0.000	3.55	2.92	4.17
Framing on appearance/dressing style	8.195	0.000	2.73	1.99	3.47
Comparison to male leadership styles	11.124	0.000	3.00	2.40	3.60
Portrayal through traditional gender roles	11.744	0.000	3.64	2.95	4.33
Framing as suited for community vs. national issues	12.845	0.000	3.00	2.48	3.52
Treatment as emotional vs. rational	7.596	0.000	2.73	1.93	3.53
<b>Media's Role &amp; Influence</b>					
Influence on public perceptions	16.166	0.000	2.55	2.19	2.90
Responsibility for fair representation	9.587	0.000	2.27	1.74	2.80
Role in representing female politicians	11.092	0.000	4.18	3.34	5.02
<b>Politicians' Response</b>					
Coverage aspects influencing strategies	9.960	0.000	3.36	2.61	4.12
Communication strategies adopted	6.829	0.000	2.27	1.53	3.01
Readiness to provide practical solutions	7.111	0.000	2.73	1.87	3.58

**Note.** All t-tests are significant at  $p < .001$ . Indented items represent subcategories of the main variable.

The quantitative analysis provides robust statistical validation for the qualitative themes documented in female politicians lived experiences. The strongest convergence appears in cultural and societal influences, where variables examining expectations of humility over assertiveness (M

= 3.55), portrayal through traditional gender roles (M = 3.64), and emphasis on family status over political agenda (M = 3.55) achieved the highest mean differences. This mean difference means that respondents perceived these cultural and societal factors as exerting a significantly stronger and more consistent influence on female politicians' experiences than other measured variables, indicating that gendered expectations and stereotypes remain deeply embedded in political evaluation. Hence, these findings directly corroborate female politicians' accounts of being subjected to gendered double standards, particularly FP7's observation that male assertiveness is celebrated as passion while similar behaviour by women is condemned and seen as rudeness.

The quantitative data on media framing patterns statistically substantiate the qualitative evidence of appearance-focused coverage (M = 2.73) and treatment as emotional versus rational (M = 2.73). While these variables showed lower mean differences compared to cultural influence measures, their statistical significance ( $p < .001$ ) validates FP6's experience of her swearing-in coverage focusing exclusively on her body rather than political competence. The finding that the media's influence on public perceptions achieved the highest t-value ( $t = 16.166$ ) underscores the powerful role media plays in perpetuating these biased narratives, echoing female politicians' documented struggles with having policy substance overshadowed by superficial coverage.

The alignment between the media's acknowledged biases and female politicians' documented experiences provides compelling evidence that gender-biased coverage operates as a systematic pattern rather than isolated incidents. The findings revealed that individual awareness proves to be insufficient, and without structural reforms in newsroom practices and editorial policies, these issues will persist. This converging of stakeholder perspectives strengthens the study's validity and contribution to knowledge.

**Table 4.4: Summary of Media Framing Findings**

Theme	Key Findings	Supporting Evidence
Superficial and Appearance-Focused Framing	The media persistently focus on female politicians' physical appearance, clothing, and bodies rather than on their political competence and policy substance	"Even when I was being sworn in, as you know, people on social media only spoke about my body." (FP6)
Gendered Interpretations of Communication Style	The media applied double standards, characterising female assertiveness as rudeness or emotionality while celebrating similar male behaviour as passion or strength	"When a man raises his voice, they say he is passionate, when I do the same, they will say I'm angry or being disrespectful." (FP4)
Disproportionate Moral Scrutiny and Personal Life Focus	The media subjected female politicians to intense scrutiny of their personal lives, relationships, and moral conduct while normalising equivalent issues for male politicians	"When it comes to moral life of a female politician, the media is quick to pick it. But when it comes to the moral life of a male politician, it's normal." (FP1)
Minimisation of Policy Substance and Achievements	The media minimised or trivialised female politicians' policy work, reframing development initiatives as charity and allocating less coverage to women's substantive contributions.	"When my education fund supported a lot of students, some media framed it as charity work instead of serious development planning." (FP2)

**Source: Field Data (2025)**

## Chapter Summary and Conclusion

This chapter presented findings on female politicians' communication strategies and challenges during the 2024 Ghanaian elections.

First, the findings show that female politicians were deliberate about their communication strategies. Most of their approaches revolved around relational engagement, competence framing, and strategic use of digital media. They positioned themselves as accessible, community-centred

leaders while simultaneously foregrounding their qualifications to counter heightened competence scrutiny. Digital platforms served as vital spaces for narrative control, enabling women to project policy-driven identities that traditional media often overlooked.

Second, women navigated interlocking structural, cultural and institutional challenges. Despite regular media coverage, they remained less visible than men, a pattern consistent with symbolic annihilation. Low public interest in women's political activities, limited resources, weak party support and culturally imposed double binds forced women to practise extensive emotional self-regulation and work harder to attain legitimacy. Lastly, the media played a decisive but uneven role in shaping women's political presence.

Overall, the findings show that female politicians offered strategic and sophisticated political communication in the 2024 election in Ghana. However, this happened within a system that continually narrows its communicative space. In all, female politicians' efforts do not reflect only leadership practice but an ongoing battle against gendered norms, media biases, and structural inequalities.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter concludes the study. It presents major findings of the study, recommendations, suggestions for future research, and limitations of the study.

#### **5.1 Summary of the Key Findings**

The research examined the political communication strategies of women politicians in the 2024 elections, the challenges they faced in their campaign and political journey, and the role of the media (traditional and digital) in framing issues about female politicians in the 2024 Ghanaian elections. On the matter of the political communication strategies used, the findings showed that women politicians focused on relational rhetoric and the use of social media to convey their political message to the target audience. Empirical data analysis revealed that most of the communication was grounded in values of relational rhetoric, and it was communicated on digital media. It was also tailored and empathic in nature. Tactically, the political communication of female politicians was community-focused, with the intention of engaging effectively to counter the double bind of being expected to be both assertive and authoritative to be seen as competent, while simultaneously being required to remain warm, approachable, and non-aggressive to avoid negative gendered judgements.

To gain attention, it was observed that some female politicians paid attention to their communication on social media, and many others focused on community outreach to extensively convey their plans and overcome cultural obstacles such as patriarchal norms and financial restrictions.

On the one hand, findings on the contribution of the media (traditional and digital) in framing issues about female politicians revealed that the media gave fair coverage. However, they largely focused on social issues (27%), gender and family issues (27%), and personality and character (9%). This shows that the media reportage and coverage predominantly (63%) focused on issues beyond policy positions and the competence of female political candidates. So, while the media highlighted the campaign promises and policy issues of female politicians, much attention was paid to trivial issues and, to an extent, overlooked the substance of their promises and views on policy issues that could make female politicians more competitive.

This way of media reportage and coverage is problematic because, in essence, the media highlighted more of the personal issues of the female position as opposed to the views that demonstrate competencies in terms of what they are willing and can do (promises) and their views on policies that are impactful to showcase their in-depth knowledge on matters affecting their constituents. Essentially, the media was gender-biased in their coverage and reportage; hence, they did not create deep interest in the political behaviour of female politicians. It is thus not surprising that some media practitioners noted that there is low interest in female participation in politics.

Finally, on the challenges female politicians face in their political communication, the evidence shows that they navigate a complex landscape marked by structural, cultural, and institutional barriers. These include limited access to traditional media platforms, online harassment, and financial constraints. Cultural expectations and patriarchal norms imposed additional pressures, forcing women to carefully manage their tone, appearance, and public conduct to avoid negative gendered judgements. They also faced some misinformation, which added an emotional and psychological burden. Collectively, these challenges constrained their visibility, required constant

strategic vigilance, and demanded that female politicians work harder than their male counterparts to assert competence, maintain credibility, and communicate effectively with the public.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

Using the 2024 election as a case study, the study concludes that female politicians are confronted with serious changes that impact their political journey and their communication techniques. Notwithstanding the numerous challenges, women politicians continuously strive to succeed. As highlighted in the previous chapter, challenges such as media bias and projecting social issues as opposed to views on policy position are real, yet few women have pushed against the odds and conveyed political communication that demonstrated that they are capable and have the qualities to execute the roles and responsibilities of political office.

To conclude, while studies have looked at different aspects of women in politics, this study fills the gap in research on the intersection of gender, media, and political communication in the Ghanaian electoral context. It was observed that female politicians employ strategic communication tactics, including relational rhetoric, competence framing, digital, and face-to-face engagement, to navigate structural barriers, cultural expectations, and media biases to assert political legitimacy.

Certainly, from an academic perspective, this research provides deep knowledge in providing a succinct but logical understanding of the political communication strategies that female politicians use to deal with the double bind of being in politics. In terms of practical application, this study provides feasible recommendations to guide female politicians and media organisations on how to offer gender sensitive reportage. This is particularly important because we are in an era where gender equity and women's representation are critical for democracy. In all, this study is timely

and valuable as it provides incremental knowledge on female politicians’ political communication strategies. In doing so, this research makes a significant contribution to knowledge in the field of political communication.

### 5.3 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, feasible recommendations are provided to guide female politicians, media practitioners, political parties, and policymakers in creating a more supportive and equitable environment for women’s political participation and communication. See Table 3 below.

**Table 5.1: Recommendation for key stakeholders**

Activity	Detail
Provide Improved Communication Skills	Extensive training on political communication must be provided to female politicians. Improved communication skills will enhance women politicians’ ability to create legitimate, ethically sound, and audience-specific messages.
Offer Gender-Sensitive Media Framing	Media organisations should adopt gender-fair reporting that highlights women politicians’ competencies and policy positions rather than personal or gender-based trivialities. Centring coverage on what women leaders do rather than who they are will foster greater public interest in women’s political participation and ensure they receive equitable visibility.
Support Moral and Inclusive Political Communication	Political communication should be moral, respectful, and inclusive. Politicians and media practitioners should not only support but also engage in non-partisan and fair discourse that will develop political trust with the public and democratic participation.
Engage in Capacity-building Programmes by Political Parties and NGOs	Political parties and/or NGOs should continuously support female candidates in training and retraining in various competencies, not only in media but also in funded resources that support campaign planning.
Policy Support for Gender Equity	Policymakers should have gender equity in agenda-setting priorities and policies that are specifically intended to increase women’s participatory opportunities and their influence in politics. Institutional pathways that seek to reduce structural barriers to effective political engagement will support women’s ability to compete effectively with their male counterparts.

## 5.4 Future Research

Building on the scope of this research and the areas explored, there are several meaningful directions future researchers can take to deepen our understanding of gender and political communication. Table 4 below highlights some practical next steps and why they matter.

**Table 5.2: Suggested Pathways for Future Research**

Action	Details
Expand Sample Size and Diversity	Future studies should include a larger and more diverse group of female politicians across regions, political parties, and positions to strengthen generalisability and capture varied political communication experiences.
Examine Comparative Cross-Country Dynamics	Researchers should compare Ghana with other African democracies to analyse similarities and differences in gendered political communication and media framing. This will provide broader continental insights.
Investigate Media Influence Using Content Analytics	Studies should apply advanced media analytics to objectively measure gender bias and framing patterns in both traditional and digital media.
Explore Audience Perception of Female Politicians	Future research should assess how voters interpret and respond to female politicians' messages, particularly how relational rhetoric and competence framing shape voter attitudes and support.
Study the Impact of Digital Misinformation on Women Candidates	Researchers should examine how online misinformation specifically targets female politicians, how it spreads, and what strategies can effectively counter its emotional and political impact.
Assess the Role of Political Parties in Shaping Women's Communication Capacity	Further studies should evaluate how internal party structures, training programmes, and resource allocation influence women candidates' ability to communicate effectively.

## 5.5 Limitations of the Study

Despite a rigorous methodological approach and critical analysis of the data, this thesis comes with some shortfalls, just as all other dissertations do. First, although the findings of this research are empirically valid, they emanate from a study of a few women politicians. This limits the study,

and hence, the findings cannot automatically be generalised, although it should stimulate further research on female political communication across other countries. Further, even though the research purposefully selected and interviewed experienced female politicians, as with all interviews, their opinions provided one view that might not be a true account of reality, though necessary measures such as analysing social media posts to corroborate findings were put in place to curb one-sided views. Despite these limitations, the study is valuable because it provides in-depth responses to the research questions.

### **Concluding remarks**

Advancing women's political communication extends beyond individual strategy or personal resilience; it is a core democratic necessity. Communication systems that marginalise women through gendered framing and biased practices undermine the quality of representation, constrain policy deliberation, and weaken democratic accountability. By centring the lived experiences, strategic choices, and structural challenges of female politicians, this study underscores the need to recalibrate political communication norms in Ghana. Such a shift demands recognising women as legitimate, competent, and indispensable, not as actors within the political sphere, whose voices are central to inclusive and effective democratic governance.

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## APPENDICES

### INTERVIEW GUIDE



#### **Introduction**

Thank you for participating in this study. My name is Gifty Haja Sumani, and I am a Master of Arts student in Political Communication Management at the University of Media, Arts, and Communication. This questionnaire is part of my dissertation on the topic: The Art of Politics: Analysing the Female Politicians Political Communication Strategies in the 2024 Elections in Ghana. The aim is to understand the strategies used, the challenges they faced and how they navigated those challenges. Your responses are important and will be anonymous and confidential. This will also be used for academic purposes only.

#### **Interview Guide for Female Politicians**

##### **Section A: Background Information**

1. Can you briefly tell me about your political journey and role in the 2024 elections?

2. What motivated you to run for office in this election?

3. How would you describe the political environment for women in Ghana today?

### **Section B: Communication Strategy**

4. What were your main goals in your communication strategy during the 2024 elections?

5. Which platforms (e.g., rallies, traditional media, social media) did you prioritise, and why?

6. How did you tailor your messages to different audiences (youth, women, rural communities, party loyalists, etc.)?

7. How did you adapt your communication style during the 2024 elections compared to your male counterparts? Please describe specific strategies or approaches you used that differed from those of male politicians.

### **Section C: Gender and Double Bind Challenges**

8. In your experience, how did issues of gender shape public expectations of how you should speak or present yourself?

9. Many female politicians experience pressure to balance being assertive with being perceived as likable, a challenge less commonly faced by their male counterparts. Could you describe how you managed this balance in your communication style during the 2024 elections?

9(a) Please share any specific strategies or approaches you used to navigate expectations around assertiveness and likability.

9(b) Were there moments when you felt pressure to soften your message to be seen as likeable? How did you handle that?

9(c) Looking back, how do you think this balance affected how the media or voters perceived you?

10. There have been instances where the media or political opponents framed female politicians' communication differently because of their gender. Can you share your experience with this? Kindly give examples of ways where your political communication or public image framed, twisted, or portrayed differently because you are a woman?

#### **Section D: Media Relations and Public Perception**

11. How did you engage with journalists and news outlets during the campaign?

12. What differences did you notice in the way the media covered male and female candidates' political communication and campaigns during the 2024 elections? Please explain specific ways the coverage differed and how it affected you or others.

13. How did public feedback (online comments, community responses, etc.) shape your communication strategy?

#### **Section E: Support Systems and Constraints**

14. In what ways did your party provide specific training or support for communication strategies?

15. What were the biggest constraints or challenges you faced in communicating your political message? (Probe for cultural, financial, and institutional if not mentioned)

16. To what extent did you collaborate with civil society groups, women's organisations, or influencers to amplify your voice?

#### **Section F: Reflections and Lessons**

17. Looking back, which communication strategies worked best for you? Why do you say so?

18. What challenges would you advise future female politicians to prepare for in terms of political communication?

19. How do you see the future of female political communication in Ghana?

20. Is there anything else you would like to add about your communication journey during the 2024 elections?

## QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MEDIA PRACTITIONERS



### Introduction

Thank you for participating in this study. My name is Gifty Haja Sumani, and I am a Master of Arts student in Political Communication Management at the University of Media, Arts, and Communication. This questionnaire is part of my dissertation on the topic: **The Art of Politics: Analysing the Female Politicians Political Communication Strategies in the 2024 Elections in Ghana.** The aim is to explore the contribution of media (traditional and digital) in framing issues about female politicians in the 2024 elections, the most prominent political communication tactics used by female politicians in the 2024 elections, how their messages were designed to connect with the political market, explore the challenges female politicians faced in their political communication in the 2024 election. Your responses will be anonymous and confidential and will be used only for academic purposes.

**Section A: Demographics**

1. Sex:  Male  Female

2. Age:  18–24  25–34  35–44  45–54  55+

3. Educational Level:  Diploma  Bachelors Degree  Masters Degree  Other

**Specify.....**

4. Years of experience in journalism/ media:  Less than 2years  2–5 years  6–10 years

**11+ years**

5. Type of media organisation:  Newspaper  Radio  Television  Online/Digital  Other.

**Specify.....**

6. Name of Media House-----

**Section B: Media Coverage of Female Politicians**

7. How often did your media house cover female politicians during the 2024 elections?

Very frequently  Frequently  Occasionally  Rarely  Never

8. Compared to male politicians, how would you rate the visibility of female politicians in your coverage in the 2024 elections?

Much higher  Higher  About the same  Lower  Much lower

9. What was the dominant focus of coverage of female politicians?

Policy issues  Campaign promises  Personality/Character  Social issues

**Gender/family roles**

10. Did female politicians actively engage your media house for publicity?

Yes, very actively  Yes, somewhat actively  No

**Section C: Challenges and Perceptions**

11. In your view, do female politicians face more challenges in gaining media attention compared to their male counterparts?

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

12. What challenges limit coverage of female politicians? (Check all that apply).

Limited campaign resources  Lack of access to media networks  Lower public interest

Gender stereotypes  Editorial bias  Other. Specify .....

13. Do you think female politicians tailor their communication different for media platforms than male politicians?

Yes  No  Not sure

14. How will you describe the tone of media coverage of female politicians?

Very positive  Positive  Neutral  Negative  Very negative

**Section D: Cultural and Social Influences on Coverage**

15. To what extent do you agree that the following cultural attitudes in Ghana influenced media reporting of female politicians during the 2024 elections?"

**Response****scale:**

1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

<b>Cultural Attitude</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Emphasis on women fulfilling traditional gender roles					
Expectation that female politicians should appear humble and approachable rather than assertive					
Focus on women’s community and relational roles instead of their policy positions					
Greater acceptance and preference for male leadership styles in politics					
Media framing that reflects cultural bias against women in positions of power					

16. During the 2024 elections, the media emphasised the following aspects of female politicians’ personal lives and appearance more than their policies.

**For each item, please indicate your level of agreement:**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
Marital status					
Educational background					
Family life					
Personal behaviour					

17. Public perceptions rooted in cultural norms influenced how journalists framed female politicians.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

18. To what extent do you agree that the following cultural issues influenced how journalists framed female politicians in the 2024 Ghana elections?

**Response** **scale:**

1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

Cultural Issue	1	2	3	4	5
Gender stereotypes that portrayed women as less capable leaders					
Expectations for women to balance political life with family responsibilities					
Cultural preference for men in decision-making and leadership roles					
Social norms emphasising women’s humility and submissiveness					
Religious or traditional beliefs reinforcing male political dominance					
Media bias shaped by societal perceptions of women in authority					

**Section E: Media’s Role in Shaping Perceptions**

19. How did the media frame issues relating to female politicians during the 2024 Ghana elections?

For each of the following, indicate your level of agreement that the media emphasised this frame in covering female politicians:

**Response**

**scale:**

1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

<b>Media Framing Factor</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Focused on women politicians' educational background rather than their policies					
Questioned their competence or incompetence to hold leadership positions					
Highlighted their family life and marital status over political agenda					
Emphasised their personal appearance and dressing style					
Compared their leadership style to male politicians					
Portrayed them through the lens of traditional gender roles					
Framed them as more suited for community and social issues than national policy debates					
Treated their communication as emotional rather than rational or policy-driven					

20. To what extent do you think media coverage influences public perceptions of female politicians in the 2024 elections.

Very great extent  Great extent  Moderate  Low  No extent

21. Do you think the media has the responsibility to promote fair representation of female politicians?

**Strongly Disagree**  **Disagree**  **Neutral**  **Agree**  **Strongly Agree**

22. What role should the media play in representing female politicians? (Select all that apply)

Promote fair and accurate representation of female politicians

Highlight the achievements and competence of female politicians

Avoid emphasising personal or family life over professional qualifications

Challenge stereotypes and biases about women in politics

Provide equal coverage compared to male politicians

Stay neutral without focusing on gender issues

23. Do you think media coverage affected the communication strategies female politicians adopted during the 2024 elections.

**Strongly Disagree**  **Disagree**  **Neutral**  **Agree**  **Strongly Agree**

24. Which aspects of media coverage most influenced the communication strategies adopted by female politicians during the 2024 elections? (Select all that apply)

Media focus on educational qualifications

Media portrayal of competence or incompetence

Emphasis on family life and responsibilities

- Attention to physical appearance
- Coverage of personal behaviour or morality
- Reporting on political experience and track records
- Gender-based stereotyping or biased framing

**Section E: Political Communication Strategies**

25. Which of the following communication strategies did female politicians adopt in response to media coverage during the 2024 elections? (**Select all that apply**)

- Emphasised educational qualifications and certificates
- Highlighted past professional or political experience
- Promoted personal values and integrity (honesty, service)
- Stressed competence and leadership ability
- Framed family roles positively
- Framed themselves as community-oriented leaders
- Adjusted speech style/tone (more assertive or conciliatory)
- Used social media actively to bypass traditional media
- Avoided personal topics and focused only on policy
- Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

26. How clearly did female politicians explain their policy initiatives and issue positions to demonstrate their understanding of citizens' needs?

**Not at all clear**  **Slightly clear**  **Moderately clear**  **Clear**  **Very clear**

27. To what extent did female politicians' communication messages show that they were ready to provide practical solutions to the problems facing their people?

**Not at all**  **To a small extent**  **To a moderate extent**  **To a large extent**  **To a very large extent**

28. What recommendations will you make to improve the visibility and fairness of female politicians in the media?