



**GENDERED VOICES IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN GHANA:
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF FEMALE POLITICAL COMMUNICATORS ON FACEBOOK
AND X**

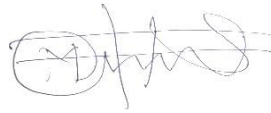
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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION**

DECEMBER 2025

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been submitted for the award of any other degree in this university or any other institution of higher learning. I further affirm that all sources used or quoted have been duly acknowledged through complete references.



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CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

This project work has been compiled and submitted under my supervision in line with the supervision and formatting guidelines established by the university of media, arts and communication (UniMAC-IJ)



Dr. Daniel Odoom
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Signature

29/11/2025
Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God Almighty for His guidance, strength, knowledge, and wisdom throughout this research journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to offer my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Daniel Odoom, whose steadfast mentorship has been both a pillar and a driving force behind the success of this project. I also want to show my sincere appreciation to all the lecturers at UniMAC-IJ for their invaluable guidance, support, and the knowledge they imparted during my time at the university. I further extend my deepest thanks to my mother and siblings who have been behind me since at the very beginning and for their unwavering support. I also thank my friends and colleagues for their encouragement throughout our journey at UniMAC-IJ; your guidance, inspiration, and support have been truly invaluable, and we are genuinely thankful to you all.

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ABSTRACT

The study explored the ways in which female political party communicators in Ghana utilize Facebook and X to influence political dialogue and gender representation from January 1, 2020, and October 31, 2025. The study concentrated on six notable communicators from the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), utilizing qualitative content analysis of publicly available posts and related audience engagements. Using framing theory, gender representation theory, and symbolic annihilation as a basis, the analysis categorizes themes, linguistic styles, and visual tactics, traces interaction patterns, contrasts platform impacts and party variations. The research highlights a gap in Ghanaian and African academia that has predominantly focused on elected officials or activists, by emphasizing party communicators who craft and share narratives daily. Methodological rigor is maintained by utilizing a systematic codebook, manifest/latent coding, an audit trail, and reliability cross-checks. Public figures are recognized due to the public and strategic nature of their statements, whereas regular users in comment sections remain anonymous to reduce potential harm. The study finds Ghanaian female party communicators post strategically: Facebook for explanatory community-building, X for rapid rebuttals. Issue-led, professional framing outperforms personality; gendered attacks sometimes force defensive pivots. Audiences diverge by showing support on Facebook but antagonistic on X, with visibility boosted by media/elite retweets. The results provided platform-specific recommendations and SOPs for women's digital participation in Ghana's changing public space.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

Worldwide, women continue to be underrepresented in political leadership and communication positions, despite a gradual increase in their involvement over time. By early 2024, women occupied merely 26.9% of parliamentary positions globally, indicating a continued gender disparity in political choices (IPU, 2024). Societal expectations and stereotypes regarding the 'ideal' roles of women play a part in this lack of representation (Krook, 2017). Conventional news outlets frequently reinforce these biases by emphasizing female politicians' looks, personal lives, or feelings instead of their qualifications or policy stances (Merrefield, 2024). Research on Western media reporting indicates that women candidates get comparatively less coverage focused on issues and are assessed through a gendered perspective that highlights their appearance or emotional expression (Merrefield, 2024). These biased representations form a 'distorted reflection' of female leaders and strengthen beliefs that leadership belongs to men. Concurrently, the growth of the internet and social media has created new channels for political communication that may disrupt these gendered media trends.

Politicians globally now utilize platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (X) to engage directly with voters, avoiding conventional media gatekeepers (Jungherr, 2016). Social media can enable female candidates to challenge stereotypes and portray themselves as both champions for women's issues and formidable leaders, addressing the double standards they frequently encounter (Krook, 2009). Studies on the 2018 U.S. elections indicate that women candidates who interacted with voters on social media occasionally enhanced their electoral prospects by being perceived as both capable and approachable (Krook, 2009). Nonetheless, the digital public sphere isn't entirely an equal space; it can also replicate or even intensify misogyny and

harassment. A 2016 worldwide survey conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union revealed that 41.8% of female legislators experienced highly degrading or sexualized images of themselves online, reflecting a wider trend of digital harassment targeting women in politics (IDS, 2024). This gendered digital misinformation, ranging from derogatory remarks to misleading rumors about personal matters, is being utilized to suppress women's voices in civic discussions throughout various African nations (IDS, 2024). This concerning trend indicates that although social media provides fresh avenues for women's political expression, it simultaneously introduces new difficulties that may hinder female involvement and contributions to public discourse.

In Africa, the interactions of gender and political communication reveal comparable conflicts between advancement and persistent disparities. The representation of women in African politics has seen a gradual enhancement, with women currently constituting approximately 26% of parliamentary members in Africa, reflecting a modest increase in recent years (Africa Barometer, 2024). Several African nations have achieved significant progress via affirmative action and advocacy, but deeply rooted patriarchal norms still restrict women's political power. Research throughout Africa consistently points out obstacles like gender biases, societal norms, and party "boys' club" affiliations that impede women's complete involvement in politics (Africa Barometer, 2024; UNDP, 2024). These obstacles are clearly evident in media portrayals. An examination of news media in Nigeria revealed that female politicians received minimal visibility and were frequently marginalized in political news, reinforcing the belief that 'only men engage in politics' (Asare & Agomor, 2023). Ghanaian academics note that women in African politics are often depicted through limited perspectives that emphasize their household roles or personal qualities instead of their skills (Asare & Agomor, 2023). These media biases lead to the symbolic erasure of women; a situation where women's viewpoints are diminished or wiped out in public discussions. Certainly, women have been 'symbolically

erased' in numerous African media settings as a result of gender biases and male supremacy (Mohammed, 2022; Osei-Appiah, 2019). In light of these shortcomings of traditional media, social media has become a crucial space for political discourse in Africa. The growth of internet access and mobile phone usage has significantly increased, leading to lively online political communities (Nyabola, 2018). In nations such as Kenya, social media platforms have become essential for political campaigning and involvement. For women functioning in patriarchal and occasionally undemocratic environments, these platforms provide a means to bypass institutional and structural obstacles. A study on Kenyan women in politics indicated that social media allowed them to build their public persona and engage with voters independently of conventional gatekeepers (Evans & Clarke, 2016). Evans and Clarke (2016) also observe that in patriarchal settings, digital platforms enable women to circumvent traditional male-dominated networks in media and showcase themselves according to their own preferences. Therefore, the digital public sphere in Africa offers opportunities for elevating women's voices, allowing female politicians and activists to connect directly with audiences and possibly confront existing gender norms. Simultaneously, women in African politics encounter online abuse and false information that mirror offline patriarchal perspectives. Recent studies caution about 'gendered disinformation' efforts throughout Africa intended to undermine vocal women and discourage others from engaging in politics (IDS, 2024). Prominent instances, like the sexist assaults on a female Kenyan presidential candidate's marriage status, demonstrate how social media can serve to weaken women's credibility through misogynistic stories (IDS, 2024). In spite of these obstacles, African women leaders and activists persist in using digital platforms to communicate their messages, create solidarity, and advocate for increased gender equality within the political arena.

In this wider global and African framework, Ghana serves as an intriguing example for exploring gendered political communication in the digital era. Ghana is frequently celebrated

for its stable democracy; however, the representation and voice of women in politics are still significantly restricted. Women make up more than half of Ghana's population, yet their representation in formal politics is significantly limited. In 2020, merely 14.5% of positions in Ghana's Parliament were occupied by women, highlighting a persistent gender disparity in leadership (Akanyako & Akapule, 2025; UN Women, 2020). This number falls short of the regional average in Africa and highlights the systemic obstacles confronting Ghanaian women in achieving political progress. Cultural norms and political frameworks have historically supported male leadership, and these prejudices extend into media representations of women in politics. A recent study in Ghana by Asare and Agomor (2023) showed that local news outlets often focus on the looks, marital and family backgrounds, or 'feminine' qualities of female politicians rather than their skills or political accomplishments. This type of coverage not only reduces women's perceived legitimacy but also can deter women from seeking political positions by reinforcing the belief that their concerns won't be taken seriously (Asare & Agomor, 2023). Connected studies indicate that traditional portrayals and media narratives dominated by men have resulted in a symbolic exclusion of women from Ghana's public sphere (Mohammed, 2022; Osei-Appiah, 2019). In other terms, the voices and contributions of women are frequently overlooked or deemed less significant in mainstream political discussions. This media landscape presents a major challenge for Ghanaian women seeking positions in politics or public communication, as they face assessment based on criteria that undermine their leadership abilities.

Simultaneously, the communication environment in Ghana is quickly changing due to the rise of social media. In the last ten years, political parties in Ghana have progressively integrated social media as an essential element of their campaign and outreach methods (Tawiah, 2025; Yussif et al., 2024). Platforms such as Facebook and X (Twitter) have developed into significant venues for political discourse in the nation. By 2024, estimates indicated that around

71.9% of social media users in Ghana were utilizing Facebook, while 36.8% were on Twitter (X), establishing these platforms as the top two social networking sites among Ghanaians (Tawiah, 2025). The extensive user community of Facebook especially, which encompasses a wide portion of the public, along with the real-time news focus of X, creates social media as a vital arena for political discourse. These platforms facilitate immediate, direct interaction with citizens, permitting political communicators to share information without the influence of conventional media editors (Yussif et al., 2024). Researchers have observed that social media might provide communicators enhanced control over their narratives, aiding them in agenda-setting and personalizing messages (Tawiah, 2025; Yussif et al., 2024). For women in Ghanaian politics, traditionally sidelined by mainstream media, social media offers a chance to enhance their visibility and engage with constituents independently. Previous studies indicate that, despite patriarchal settings, online platforms allow women the opportunity to bypass traditional gatekeepers and create their own public identities (Evans & Clarke, 2016). In Ghana, women in politics and party spokespersons could leverage social media to showcase their policy initiatives, share their opinions, and connect with supporters, thus challenging the limited narratives they encounter elsewhere. Nevertheless, it remains uncertain how far this positive situation is being achieved in reality for female communicators in Ghana. The digital public sphere may reflect social biases, raising the question of whether Ghanaian female political communicators can genuinely confront gender stereotypes online or if they unintentionally perpetuate them. Furthermore, the public's response to women's political expression on social media remains uncertain: do Ghanaian online audiences support and uplift women's voices, or do they subject female communicators to the same gender-related criticism and animosity seen in other contexts? These uncertainties emphasize the necessity for meticulous, context-driven studies on the role of gender in Ghana's political discourse on social media.

1.1 Problem Statement

Even with the surge of digital media in recent years, significant differences remain in how men and women's voices are seen and understood in political communication. This is particularly apparent in Ghana, where women constitute a minority in politics and encounter considerable difficulties in their representation and involvement. When women in Ghana reach political positions or serve as representatives for political groups, they are often portrayed in clichéd manners in both conventional and digital media. For example, content analyses reveal that the portrayal of women in Ghanaian politics frequently emphasizes their appearance, personal relationships, or marital situation rather than their policy proposals and leadership skills. Asare and Agomor (2023) discovered that these narrow and appearance-focused representations generate a distorted public perception of female politicians, which may discourage other women from seeking political roles by suggesting that women's input will be appreciated only for their external characteristics. In a comparable manner, studies by Mohammed (2022) and Osei-Appiah (2019) reveal that Ghanaian women face a type of 'symbolic erasure' in mainstream media, where they are consistently underrepresented or sidelined because of enduring stereotypes and male dominance in media narratives. These deep-rooted patterns of representation can quietly weaken women's authority and impact as political communicators, by depicting them as anomalies or outsiders within a male-oriented political story.

The rise of social media in Ghana has elevated expectations of altering this story. Indeed, prominent political parties like the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) have enthusiastically incorporated Facebook and X into their communication plans, particularly during electoral campaigns. These platforms facilitate immediate, direct communication with voters, theoretically permitting political figures to convey their messages without the midway influence of conventional media (Tawiah, 2025; Yussif et al., 2024). In this context, women in political communication might have more

power to shape their public images and priorities. Previous research in different contexts indicates that social media can assist women in politics in circumventing traditional gatekeeping and patriarchal limitations, enabling them to shape their own identity and stories (Evans & Clarke, 2016). The issue, however, is whether this commitment is being realized for female party communicators in Ghana. It is unclear how Ghana's female political communicators are using Facebook and X: are they leveraging these platforms to confront gender stereotypes and expand the discussion, or are they limited to specific topics and presentation styles? Moreover, there is limited understanding of how audiences interact with and react to the social media content shared by these women. Do online audiences in Ghana react differently to political messages based on the gender of the communicator? For instance, do posts from female communicators gain support and amplification, or are they faced with biased responses and reduced engagement because of underlying sexism? These inquiries are vital, as the relationship between the communicator and the audience ultimately dictates the impact of any message in the digital public sphere.

Recent research shows a significant deficiency in our comprehension of these matters. A substantial amount of research has focused on gender bias in media reporting about female politicians (Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008) and the engagement of prominent female leaders or activists with social media (Mohammed, 2022). Nonetheless, a significant portion of this research has centered on either elected women in roles like Members of Parliament, ministers, or presidential candidates, or on grassroots women's organizations. There is significantly less data on women working as communicators for political parties, a powerful but overlooked group. These communicators are essential in influencing party narratives and public views on political matters, effectively serving as the link between political institutions and the populace. In contrast to elected officials who might possess personal mandates, party communicators function strategically, sharing the party's message and addressing public issues on behalf of

their organizations. Grasping their communication methods, particularly in emerging media environments, is crucial since they can subtly shape public perception and the framing of political discussions. However, their experiences and tactics continue to be insufficiently explored in the scholarly work on political communication and gender. This study seeks to address that gap by thoroughly analyzing the material that female party communicators in Ghana disseminate on social media and how the public engages with that material. In doing this, the research addresses multiple interconnected issues: the continuous underrepresentation and distortion of women in political dialogue, the ambiguous influence of social media on amplifying or diminishing women's political voices, and the insufficient academic focus on an important group of female political figures in Ghana.

1.2 Research Aim

This study seeks to examine how female political party communicators in Ghana, used Facebook and X to shape political discourse and gender representation in Ghana within the period of 2020 to early 2025.

1.3 Research Objectives

The following are the specific objectives of this research:

1. To examine the level of involvement of women in political communication on Facebook and X in Ghana.
2. To identify the prominent themes, language, and visual strategies utilized by female political communicators on Facebook and X.

3. To assess the extent of gendered biases in the themes, language, and visuals employed by these female communicators.
4. To analyze the nature of user interaction patterns with posts from female political communicators.
5. To explore strategies to enhance the participation and effectiveness of Ghanaian women in political communication on Facebook and X.

1.4 Research Questions

Aligned with the objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the level of involvement of females in political communication on Facebook and X in Ghana?
2. What themes, language styles, and visual elements do female political communicators in Ghana use on Facebook and X?
3. To what extent do gendered biases manifest in the themes, language, and visuals utilized by female political communicators on these platforms?
4. What is the nature of user interaction with posts from female political communicators on Facebook and X?
5. What strategies can be adopted to enhance the participation of Ghanaian women in political communication on Facebook and X?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Initially, the research highlights gender representation in the digital public domain. The digital public sphere has evolved into a significant platform for the formation of public opinion and political discourse in Ghana. If, as earlier studies indicate, conventional media in Ghana have frequently portrayed women in politics in a constrained and clichéd way (Asare & Agomor, 2023), it is crucial to determine if social media is changing this situation. This study aims to establish whether online political dialogues simply mirror traditional gender biases or if female communicators are effectively redefining themselves and the topics they address in a more empowering manner.

Secondly, the research addresses a void in scholarly literature regarding political communication and gender, specifically within the African context. Although there is a growing amount of research worldwide concerning social media in elections and political campaigns, a significant portion of that scholarship has concentrated on Western contexts or prominent officeholders. In Ghana and comparable settings, studies have frequently investigated how politicians use social media during elections or how activists engage in online mobilization (Yussif et al., 2024; Mohammed, 2022). This study provides a distinct viewpoint that is frequently neglected in conventional political communication research by concentrating on party communicators, the women who develop and share political messages behind the scenes.

Thirdly, the research holds practical importance for initiatives aimed at advancing gender equality and inclusive governance in Ghana. By revealing the dominant themes and framing methods employed by female political communicators, along with the nature of public reactions to them, the study can guide the strategies of different stakeholders: political parties, civil society groups, media professionals, and the communicators themselves. Furthermore, the

study addresses the fifth aim of investigating methods to improve women's involvement in political communication. In this context, its importance rests in offering recommendations grounded in evidence. It might provide valuable guidance for NGOs and global partners dedicated to women's political empowerment, indicating where to direct initiatives related to skill development or establishing networks for female communicators.

Ultimately, the importance of this study reaches the theoretical realm by exploring the idea of the digital public sphere through a gender perspective. Traditional theories of the public sphere (Habermas, 1989) have faced criticism for overlooking marginalized voices, while feminist theorists have consistently advocated for acknowledging 'counter publics' in which women and other groups express their interests (Fraser, 1990). In the era of social media, the public arena is reshaped digitally, provoking inquiries regarding participation and fairness in these emerging platforms. Through the analysis of Ghanaian women's voices in the digital public sphere, this study provides empirical foundation for these theoretical conversations. It aids in determining if social media in an emerging democracy acts as a platform for women's empowerment or merely a new stage for existing power disparities.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The extent of this study establishes the limits for the research, specifying what is part of it and what is not. The research focuses on Ghanaian political parties, particularly the NDC and NPP, in terms of geography and institutions. These gatherings emphasize women who hold official communication positions. This encompasses roles like communications directors for parties, spokespeople, deputy communication officers, and managers of social media. The reason for focusing on these individuals is that they serve a crucial function in political communication, functioning as message curators and intermediaries between the party leaders and the public.

Due to their positions, their activity on social media is probably both intentional and impactful. Concentrating on women in these positions enables the research to explore how gender dynamics function, not among high-ranking elected officials, but at the essential tier of party communication where political stories are created and shared.

The study examines content shared and interactions taking place from January 1, 2020 and October 31, 2025. This period is intentionally selected to align with the peak of Ghana's 2024 general election season and its subsequent effects. October 2024 is expected to signify the active campaign phase preceding the December 2024 elections, with the following months extending into early 2025 covering the elections and the ensuing period of political transition or conflict. This time frame is important as election cycles usually heighten political communication efforts.

Regarding platforms, the research is limited to Facebook and X. These were chosen because they are, as of the mid-2020s, some of the most popular social networking services in Ghana for political news and conversations. Concentrating on these platforms guarantees that the research includes both a broad outreach channel (Facebook) and a rapid information platform (X), encompassing various communication styles. The content analyzed will consist of publicly accessible posts from the chosen female communicators on their official or personal Facebook pages and X accounts, along with the interactions linked to those posts.

1.7 Organisation of Study

The research is structured into five chapters. Chapter One includes an overview and context of the research, an articulation of the issue, research goals and inquiries, research rationale, and the extent and constraints of the study. Chapter Two examines pertinent literature regarding research topics and also assesses the study's key concepts. In Chapter Three, the research

design, sampling technique, sample size, data gathering instrument, data and resources, data interpretation and analysis, and ethical considerations associated with the study are presented. Chapter Four addresses data analysis and presentation, while Chapter Five examines the study findings and offers conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a thematic empirical and theoretical analysis of the concepts and theories used in the research. It achieves this by initially clarifying and critically evaluating theories, followed by interacting with the literature that shapes the study's key terms and goals. Subsequently, a synthesis of the topics addressed within the theoretical framework and the empirical analyses.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Three theories highlight the significance of this research. These include Entman's (1993) framing theory, the gender representation theory with contributions from Butler (1990) and Hall (1997), and the symbolic annihilation theory presented by Gerbner (1972) and Tuchman (1978).

Framing theory suggests that media, along with political communicators, choose certain elements of a perceived reality to emphasize, thereby promoting a specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral assessment, and/or recommended treatment (Entman, 1993). In reality, Ghana's women politicians and activists present matters like providing free sanitary pads for girls in junior and senior high schools or advocating for women's rights in ways that connect with the audience. Gender-specific framing, or gender conflict framing, investigates how these messages emphasize or minimize gender as an element. Gender representation theory, or feminist media theory, analyzes the depiction of women in comparison to men. It warns us about the ongoing stereotypes and the conflicting pressures women encounter. Recent

studies on young women in New Zealand's parliament indicated that their social media posts focused on being likable and relatable, though this created a tension between likability and competence (Fountaine, 2017). In Ghana, comparable dynamics might emerge as women leaders seek to be seen as friendly but also commanding. The theory of symbolic annihilation (Tuchman, 1978) is highly pertinent as it contends that media frequently dismiss or trivialize women by either neglecting them or depicting them solely in conventional roles, thus symbolically erasing women's presence in the public sphere. In Ghanaian politics, this may result in female candidates or women-centered issues getting minimal attention or being overshadowed by gender-biased narratives (Diabah & Agyepong, 2022; Osei-Appiah, 2019). Framing, representation, and symbolic annihilation offer perspectives to analyze how Ghana's digital environments either support or contest gendered trends concerning female political communicators and their activities online.

2.1.1 Framing Theory

Framing theory examines how media influence views by emphasizing specific elements of a topic while minimizing others. Its origins are in sociology and cognitive psychology. Significantly, Erving Goffman's influential idea of frame analysis (1974) characterized cultural frames as collective understandings of reality that assist individuals in making sense of events (Shaw, 2007). Shaw (2007) states that Goffman considered frames as either fundamental structures, which are deeply ingrained cultural norms, or constructs created by communicators, emphasizing that deliberate framing can alter perceptions of reality. Kusmanoff (2018) asserts that within media studies, Entman (1993) emerged as a key scholar, characterizing framing as the process of emphasizing certain elements of perceived reality within a communication, thereby fostering a specific problem definition, causal analysis, moral judgment, and/or

suggested solution. Entman's definition highlights that frames direct audiences to understand issues in particular manners. Gamson and Modigliani (1987) advanced this approach by demonstrating how media narratives shape public discourse on social matters, serving effectively as frameworks that organize meaning (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

Framing theory has developed into a dynamic area with persistent discussions over time. Researchers have observed that framing research started as a fragmented paradigm without a coherent method (Kusmanoff, 2018), yet significant advancements have occurred. Researchers like Scheufele and Tewksbury (2004) discuss the distinctions between frames and agenda-setting or priming, the extent of agency held by media creators, and the influence of cognitive biases on the reception of frames. Some critics claimed that earlier framing studies overlooked power dynamics (Carragee & Roefs, 2004), but newer research has incorporated perspectives on political or corporate effects on frame development.

In the digital age, the theory has evolved to incorporate new media types. For instance, researchers note that social media and visual elements necessitate expanding framing ideas to encompass video frames, infographics, and hashtags as framing tools, with algorithms contributing to this process. Fountaine (2017) observes that during the social media era, framing continues to be crucial as it serves to examine issues such as digital activism, hybrid media frameworks, and personal communication on platforms. Specifically, the identical conceptual model can be utilized for hashtags on Twitter or Facebook campaign messages, which enhance specific interpretations of issues over alternatives. Researchers now refer to algorithmic symbolic annihilation to explain how platform algorithms promote certain narratives while silencing others, an idea that extends framing into the realm of algorithmic gatekeeping (Fountaine, 2017).

Framing theory has distinct uses in digital political discourse. Politicians and their backers on Facebook and Twitter can shape discussions by selecting words, visuals, and tags that emphasize specific themes. For instance, research on Ghana's 2024 election indicated that prominent candidates utilized social media features like hashtags, videos, and Instagram stories as organized framing instruments. Mahama's campaign employed hashtags such as *#ResettingGhana* and *#Mahama4Change2024* to create a story of economic transformation and revitalization (Amankwah & Mbatha, 2019). The authors noted that candidates utilize digital capabilities beyond basic messaging tools into organized framing methods and purposefully build narratives on platforms such as X and Facebook (Amankwah & Mbatha, 2019). In practice, framing could involve a woman politician highlighting topics such as education or health on social media, areas typically associated with femininity, while male politicians concentrate on security or the economy, thus influencing public discussion through varied perspectives.

In the contexts of Africa and Ghana, various studies demonstrate dynamics of framing. A comprehensive review of Ghanaian media indicated that studies on framing have largely concentrated on politics and elections (Fountain, 2017). For example, analysts of social media have utilized framing theory in the context of Ghana's political landscape. An analysis of Ghanaian presidential campaigns utilized framing to investigate how Mahama's and Bawumia's Facebook and X posts depicted matters related to the economy and education (Amankwah & Mbatha, 2019). The analysis highlighted that Ghanaian framing studies additionally explore how online news and print media portray topics such as health, development, or gender (Fountain, 2017). Additionally, certain researchers warn that African media frequently endure negative external framing (Baah-Acheamfour & Lamptey-George, 2024), highlighting a connected concern where frames can bolster stereotypes. These results

indicate that framing theory is employed to analyze Ghana's digital political landscape, where researchers investigate how platform-specific features influence message framing.

2.1.2 Gender Representation Theory

Gender representation theory, based in feminist media studies, analyzes the representation of men and women in media and how such representations uphold social norms. It relies on wider scholarship concerning media representation (Stuart Hall, 1997) and particularly on feminist criticisms of media culture. Foundational contributions encompass Mulvey's (1975) theory of the male gaze, which contended that mainstream cinema and media frequently portray women through a heterosexual male lens, portraying them as passive objects of visual enjoyment. Though Mulvey concentrated on film, later academics utilized comparable concepts in news and entertainment. They noted that media often depict women in clichéd roles like caregivers, victims, or sexual objects, whereas men are presented as proactive figures. For instance, a literature review conducted by GMMP (2021) discovers that although certain media representations have diversified in recent years, women are still underrepresented, with their presence sometimes falling below 24% of featured individuals, frequently portrayed in line with conventional gender stereotypes. In political news reporting, feminist communication researchers such as Tuchman (1978) and Ross (2008) observed that women are frequently marginalized, with articles emphasizing female politicians' looks, family life, or emotional characteristics instead of their policy knowledge.

Key discussions in gender representation theory focus on whether media reinforce or contest gender norms, and how social movements such as *#HijabIsAnIdentity* or heightened women's activism are portrayed in representation. Certain academics contend that emerging digital

media provide opportunities for counter-stereotypes, whereas others caution that social media frequently magnifies entrenched biases via viral memes or influencer trends.

Utilizing gender representation theory in digital political communication involves analyzing the portrayal of female leaders across social media and online media platforms. Social media allows women politicians to communicate directly, yet it also subjects them to widespread gender expectations. An examination of Ghanaian newspapers through representation theory revealed that the media's portrayal of women in politics often emphasizes their looks and personal lives over their leadership abilities (Asare & Agomor, 2023). Asare & Agomor (2023) found that Ghanaian media frequently portray women in politics with a 'limited representation,' focusing on appearance or marital status and neglecting their qualifications. This corresponds with broader research indicating that female politicians on Facebook or Twitter frequently encounter double standards, being evaluated based on their attire or familial responsibilities, unlike their male counterparts in various situations. Digital campaigns may unintentionally strengthen these depictions if advocates and reporters discuss women's images or voices using gendered language (Asare & Agomor, 2023).

Within the African context, certain research emphasizes the influence of cultural norms on representation. For instance, studies on East African media indicate that while women leverage social media to promote causes, the coverage frequently reflects conventional gender roles. A study concentrating on gender representation in the media in Ghana highlights that, although women have larger population figures, they continue to be underrepresented in media coverage as politicians (Asare & Agomor, 2023). Ghanaian media frequently portray women leaders in domestic or supportive roles instead of highlighting them as influential decision-makers (Asare & Agomor, 2023). Simultaneously, social media initiatives in Africa are starting to confront stereotypes. Hashtags such as #HeForShe or #WomenCan have highlighted women's leadership. Still, established depictions endure, and studies indicate that even in online

environments, algorithms and viewer tastes might enhance material that aligns with gender norms.

2.1.3 Symbolic Annihilation Theory

Symbolic annihilation theory focuses on how media successfully eliminate marginalized groups by way of absence or trivialization. Originally introduced by Gerbner (1976) and expanded upon by Tuchman (1978), the term refers to how media neglect or adverse stereotyping constitutes a type of symbolic violence. Gerbner described it as the lack or insufficient representation of a group in media, perpetuating social inequality (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Tuchman notably contended that when women are represented in media, they frequently occupy subordinate positions or serve purely decorative functions, thereby symbolically erasing their existence as significant participants (Tuchman, 2000). As Gerbner & Gross (1976) state, representation within the fictional realm indicates social existence, while lack of representation signifies symbolic annihilation. Tuchman (2000) categorized this into three types: omission (excluding women), trivialization (featuring women solely in minor roles), and condemnation (representing women unfavorably). These concepts emerged from the examination of television and print media but have now been widely utilized.

Academics discuss the degree to which media has advanced over time. Some observe slight improvements: women are now more prominent in news and entertainment compared to the 1970s, yet they frequently remain subjected to stereotypes. Some emphasize novel types of destruction. In today's digital era, for instance, scholars discuss algorithmic symbolic annihilation, wherein social media algorithms often favor content that aligns with prevailing norms, thereby muffling alternative identities (Fountain, 2017). This expands the theory

regarding how technology can make specific voices seem 'invisible' despite their online presence.

Symbolic annihilation holds particular significance for female political communicators as it reflects how media marginalization can inhibit women's involvement in politics. This theory is applied to examine issues such as the underreporting of women's political successes or the concentration of media criticism on female leaders. For instance, the Media Foundation for West Africa (2025) states that online news related to female politicians in Ghana frequently leads to harassment. MacLellan (2017) emphasized this by stating that online news media typically frame coverage of female politicians in a way that encourages criticism. This observation demonstrates symbolic annihilation through criticism, where female leaders are attacked and diminished, hindering their visibility and influence. In the same way, if the achievements of women's policies are excluded from media stories (omission) or depicted solely through family angles or scandals, this mirrors the limited representation trends mentioned earlier (Asare & Agomor, 2023).

In digital political communication, symbolic annihilation can appear both as a lack and as a form of harassment. Although social media formally democratizes visibility, it also creates new spaces for trivializing through neglect, as few women's stories gain traction, and for condemnation through harsh criticisms. For instance, Ghanaian women candidates on Twitter may become popular when controversies arise, but infrequently for significant accomplishments. Examples of gender-based cyber-violence demonstrate the theory in practice. MacLellan (2017) observes that discussion threads concerning Ghana's female politicians serve as a primary source of online gender-based violence, with media representation contributing to this issue.

In Africa, uses of symbolic annihilation theory involve investigating how the media minimizes or misrepresents women's involvement in politics. In numerous African newsrooms, women's political concerns might get little attention or be depicted as unusual. Research on Kenyan and Nigerian media shows that mainstream channels frequently overlook female candidates or mention them only in relation to male leaders. In contrast, women's advocates have utilized hashtags and digital campaigns to combat destruction. However, the enduring existence of negative stereotypes illustrates that the battle remains ongoing (MFWA, 2025). The theory of symbolic annihilation serves as an important perspective, prompting us to scrutinize not just the amount of media focus on women, but also the nature of that focus.

In summary, framing, gender representation, and symbolic annihilation provide complementary approaches to examine female political communication. Framing theory explores the portrayal of issues concerning women in politics; gender representation theory analyzes the images and roles of women that are depicted; and symbolic annihilation investigates what is absent or devalued. They collectively aid in clarifying the media environment encountered by Ghana's female politicians on Facebook and Twitter. These frameworks, backed by recent studies from Ghana and Africa (Amankwah & Mbatha, 2019; Asare & Agomor, 2023; MacLellan, 2017), enable researchers to evaluate and confront the media factors influencing women's political empowerment in the digital era.

2.2 Review of Concepts

The key terms and phrases for this study are gendered voices, digital public sphere, female political communicators, and gender/female representation. In order not to create confusion regarding their general meanings, due to different scholarly philosophies and areas, the following definitions have been assigned to them to avoid ambiguity.

2.2.1 Gendered Voices

In this research, gendered voices denote how communication by female political figures is influenced by gender norms, stereotypes, and societal expectations in terms of both expression and reception. It illustrates how women's communication, visibility, power, and credibility are shaped or limited on digital platforms because of their gender. These voices might indicate empowerment, self-expression, defiance, or conversely, be sidelined through symbolic invisibility or gendered responses in user engagements.

2.2.2 Digital Public Sphere

In this context, the digital public sphere pertains to the environment established by Facebook and X where political dialogue, engagement, and discussions occur instantaneously. It serves as the platform where Ghanaian political communicators reach audiences, influence narratives, and challenge interpretations, beyond the conventional control of mainstream media.

2.2.3 Female Political Communicators

Female political communicators are women with official communication positions in political parties, tasked with crafting, sharing, and overseeing party messages, particularly through social media channels. This category consists of communication officers, spokespersons, and/or digital strategists.

2.2.4 Gender/Female Representation

In this study, gender representation pertains to the visual and rhetorical depiction of women, especially female political communicators, online as capable professionals, maternal figures, or through simplistic stereotypes that emphasize their looks or relationship status. It investigates if social media provides chances for self-created, empowering portrayals or if it continues to reinforce conventional types of symbolic erasure.

2.3 Empirical Review

Ghana is recognized as a stable democracy in Africa, yet women are still underrepresented in politics. By the year 2020, women occupied merely around 14% of parliamentary positions. It was not until 2016 that the nation had its first female presidential candidate from the National Democratic Party (NDP) and a woman selected as a major party's vice-presidential candidate in 2020 by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) (Højlund, Aning & Adu, 2020). Simultaneously, the use of the internet and social media has increased swiftly in Ghana. By the start of 2023, just 19.5% of Ghanaians, or 6.6 million individuals, were active on social media (Højlund, Aning & Adu, 2020). Nonetheless, there has been a sharp rise in the number of users lately. By mid-2025, social media users in Ghana have reached 22.9%, which amounts to 7.95 million people in the population. Facebook comprises approximately 50.4% of Ghana's social media traffic, while Twitter (X) represents around 12.5% (Statcounter, 2025).

Social media have transformed political campaigning in Ghana. Research indicates that by the mid-2010s, political parties and candidates in Ghana quickly embraced platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. For instance, in the 2016 elections, candidates in Ghana extensively used Facebook to rally voters, promote interaction, and coordinate teams (Amankwah & Mbatha, 2019). This affordable, straightforward communication enables

politicians to evade traditional media gatekeepers (Amankwah & Mbatha, 2019). However, Ghana's online user base remains restricted, and digital gaps continue to exist between urban and rural regions. In Ghana's political landscape, female figures encompass notable leaders like former First Lady Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings, Vice-President Samira Bawumia, women presidential aspirants such as Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang, and grassroots women's groups like the 31st December Women's Movement, along with feminist NGOs (Odoi & Baidoo, 2024). Different groups utilize social media in distinct ways: elite women frequently share political messages and develop personal brands, whereas grassroots individuals employ platforms for advocacy, mobilization, and collective protest, exemplified by the *#PepperDemMinistries* and *#HijabIsAnIdentity* feminist campaigns (Odoi & Baidoo, 2024)

2.3.1 Digital Engagement and Communication Strategies

As noted by Amankwah and Mbatha (2019), political communicators in Ghana, including women, are becoming more engaged on Facebook and X. Although many studies concentrate on political parties or notable politicians broadly, certain observations relate specifically to women. Tawiah (2025) examined Ghana's 2024 presidential campaign and discovered that Facebook served as the primary platform. Candidates employed a combination of posts, videos, and live stories to present economic and education topics to voters. While Tawiah did not emphasize gender, the research shows that women in roles such as running mates, first ladies, or female candidates can apply these identical strategies. Additional research centered on Ghana, like that of Odoi and Baidoo (2024), indicates that Ghanaian feminist organizations utilize Facebook and Twitter to initiate campaigns for women's rights overlooked by established movements. This type of digital feminism employs hashtags and easily shareable content to engage younger audiences. Research conducted beyond Ghana indicates that women

utilize social media to establish direct connections. For example, Fountaine's (2017) research in New Zealand discovered that young female MPs utilized a likability approach on Twitter by highlighting everyday activities and community happenings to enhance relatability. This suggests that women politicians in Ghana might likewise emphasize personal narratives, constituency matters, or family visuals in their posts to increase their attractiveness. In conclusion, the research shows that women communicators utilize digital platforms for advocacy and campaigning, frequently mixing policy messages with personal stories and taking advantage of Facebook's extensive reach.

2.3.2 Representation Patterns and Framing of Women's Roles

Studies consistently indicate that media and political dialogue in Ghana often portray women in conventional or supportive positions. An analysis of Samira Bawumia, the Second Lady of Ghana, revealed that media coverage predominantly employed a spousal frame, emphasizing her role as the vice president's wife, along with other non-political frames such as social initiatives, ceremonial responsibilities, and fashion (Sikanku & Donkor, 2024). The writers observe that the political frameworks were considerably less robust than the prevailing spousal and social service frameworks (Sikanku & Donkor, 2024). This implies bias in framing based on gender. Regardless of her political prominence, Samira was frequently depicted in connection to her husband or as a philanthropic figure, rather than as an autonomous policymaker. Likewise, Diabah and Agyepong (2022) discovered that Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang, Ghana's 2020 female vice-presidential candidate, was occasionally portrayed in ways that contest conventional gender stereotypes, but mostly depicted in stereotypical manners. These clichéd representations highlight her roles within the family or her emotional behaviors. This framing exemplifies a traditional form of gendered representation, where

women's political legitimacy is expressed in personal terms. In contrast, Sarfo-Kantankah et al. (2024) demonstrate that Ghanaian female MPs frequently seek to redefine these roles. Through parliamentary dialogue, female MPs framed themselves as the unified voice of Ghanaian women, employing inclusive terms like 'we' and 'our' to address women's concerns and advocate for empowerment. This discovery indicates that Ghanaian women leaders on social media might also portray themselves as advocates for women, employing first-person plural to foster unity. Worldwide, this perspective corresponds with the idea that women in politics will prioritize community values and compassionate representation. These patterns theoretically demonstrate the application of framing theory, as female politicians adopt or are assigned specific frames such as 'mother' and 'champion of women', highlighting gender as an important issue. They also illustrate how deeply rooted biases in gender representation continue to exist on digital platforms. If women on Facebook/Twitter keep emphasizing social or supportive roles, it could indicate their tactical decisions and societal norms

2.3.3 Audience Engagement and Interaction

Few studies in Ghana have concentrated specifically on audience interactions with female politicians on social media. Nevertheless, broad analyses of Ghanaian Twitter indicate dynamic public engagement regarding political matters that female leaders can utilize. Aker et al. (2024) examine Ghanaian Twitter discussions (*#FixTheCountry* protests) and discovered engaged youth involvement. While this study is centered on specific issues, it suggests that posts from female politicians may generate comparable engagement when they tackle relevant subjects. There is a lack of empirical data on engagement metrics concerning female political communicators in Ghana within the literature. Notably, influential women typically attract considerable attention. Tawiah (2025) observes that in 2024, Mahama and Bawumia boasted

millions of followers, as both candidates' Facebook pages received more interaction compared to Twitter or Instagram. The key point for women communicators is that Facebook continues to be the best platform for cultivating a wide audience in Ghana, whereas X generally draws more specialized or upper-class conversations. Research indicates that audiences tend to react favorably to genuine, personal interaction. Fountaine (2017) discovered in New Zealand that tweets reflecting warmth or friendliness received high levels of engagement. If this becomes a trend, Ghanaian women could enhance interaction by sharing behind-the-scenes material or replying directly to their followers. Conversely, any gender-specific framing might restrict interaction with parts of the electorate that could hold biases towards those messages. In general, although explicit data from Ghana is insufficient, existing literature indicates that the social media influence of female politicians depends on the choice of platform (Facebook larger than X) and on sharing content that appeals to their audience

2.3.4 Gendered Challenges: Harassment and Symbolic Annihilation

A significant focus in the latest literature is the array of challenges that female political communicators encounter online. Ghana is not immune to worldwide trends: women in politics frequently face harassment, intimidation, and disparaging remarks on social media. The Media Foundation for West Africa (2025) reports that female politicians in Ghana face online gender-based violence, encompassing insults and threats related to their gender. The report indicates that this type of harassment significantly hinders women's complete involvement, leading some to self-censor or retreat from online engagements (MacLellan, 2017). This corresponds with international research indicating that almost 50% of female lawmakers globally have encountered sexist harassment on social media (Patterson, 2016). In Ghana, social media networks led by men have been unwelcoming; the announcement of Jane Opoku-Agyemang

as the NDC vice-presidential candidate ignited anti-feminist and misogynistic remarks online (Højlund, Aning & Adu, 2020). These events demonstrate symbolic annihilation at work. Rather than engaging in substantial policy debates, women face mockery or intimidation, which diminishes their political expression. Symbolic annihilation theory (Tuchman, 2000) highlights that media frequently downplay women or render them unseen. Osei-Appiah's (2019) comparison of Ghana and Nigeria highlights the almost total lack of media coverage for Ghana's female presidential candidate (Jane, 2020), labeling it a 'symbolic annihilation'. On social media, although anyone can share posts, algorithmic biases and trolling may still overshadow women's content. The literature indicates that Ghana's women in politics need to manage this online hostility. They frequently implement safety strategies and depend on legal actions. For example, a number of women MPs mentioned receiving training from NGOs to deal with online harassment (MacLellan, 2017). In conclusion, online violence based on gender and lack of visibility continues to be significant obstacles. Theoretical frameworks highlight that these issues are not individual shortcomings but systemic biases, with social media having the potential to enhance either the representation or destruction of women based on the context.

2.4 Synthesis of Theoretical and Empirical Review

In general, the literature presents a multifaceted view. Ghanaian women in politics are becoming more engaged on Facebook and Twitter, utilizing these platforms to connect directly with their voters and supporters. Digital platforms offer fresh avenues for feminist activists to effectively rally around previously overlooked topics like reproductive rights through digital campaigns (Odoi & Baidoo, 2024). Women legislators can utilize inclusive "we" language to highlight unity and empowerment (Sarfo-Kantanka, Ngula & Nartey, 2023). Conversely, established media standards and societal prejudices influence these online engagements. Posts

by women might still be perceived as 'domestic' or 'apolitical' by viewers or the women themselves (Sikanku & Donkor, 2024; Diabah & Agyepong, 2022). Theoretically, framing on social media takes place in content selection, regarding which stories women opt to share, and in feedback, concerning how others react. Ghanaian women communicators seek to portray themselves as advocates for women's issues, yet they face audience perceptions that might simplify them into stereotypes. The theory of gender representation is evident in the ongoing prevalence of conventional portrayals of women. Symbolic annihilation is apparent in the stark underrepresentation and sidelining of women's political dialogue, even with the accessibility of social media. In comparison to other settings, Ghana exhibits numerous similarities with other democracies where social media is democratizing due to its accessibility, yet it simultaneously subjects women to novel types of harassment (Patterson, 2016; MacLellan, 2017). Cross-national research, like Osei-Appiah's (2019) analysis in Nigeria, shows that in numerous African democracies, women's electoral engagement and visibility are still minimal, highlighting that Ghana is included in a wider trend of gender disparities. Research indicates a necessity for capacity-building via media literacy and legal assistance for female digital communicators in Ghana, along with gender-sensitive evaluations of social media content.

2.5 Chapter Summary

From 2019 to 2025, female political figures in Ghana have progressively utilized Facebook and X for campaigning and advocacy purposes. This analysis reveals that women, whether at elite or grassroots levels, utilize these platforms to create political messages, commonly positioning themselves as champions for women and their communities. Nonetheless, their online tactics and responses are profoundly influenced by gender. Media framing often highlights conventional roles that reflect enduring gender prejudices. Symbolic annihilation

continues when women are either underrepresented or targeted on social media. Ghanaian scholarships from 2019 onwards showcase these dynamics through case studies of particular individuals and feminist movements. Insights from New Zealand and Nigeria highlight that the struggles between likability and competence, along with the threat of online harassment, are universally experienced. The literature highlights both the potential and challenges of social media for women in politics in Ghana; it serves as a space for visibility and participation, but it also mirrors existing offline gender power dynamics unless actively confronted.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research paradigm and philosophy that guides the aim and processes of the research. It establishes the methodology and the various components of the data gathering, condensing and analysing.

3.1 Research Approach

This research employs a qualitative content analysis method grounded in an interpretive framework. Content analysis was initially created as a research instrument to explore the characteristics of communication. It is “crucially significant for theory and research in political communication” (Benoit, 2013, p. 129). Content analysis is especially effective for investigating discourse on social media because it allows for a systematic and detailed exploration of contextual textual and visual messages (Benoit, 2023). Researchers view content analysis as a versatile approach for examining text data, spanning from interpretive evaluations to structured textual coding (Benoit, 2023). This adaptability makes it perfect for investigating how and why inquiries regarding communication material on platforms such as Facebook and X.

Being a qualitative study, the focus is on grasping context and significance instead of on numerical generalization. Qualitative content analysis enables the researcher to analyze social media messages in a subjective yet systematic way. It is described as a research technique for the subjective analysis of text data content through the organized classification process of coding and recognizing themes or patterns (Delve, 2025). This study indicates that the

subjective experiences and perceptions about women political communicators on social media are more effectively examined through interpretive analysis instead of solely relying on quantitative methods. Previous research indicates that qualitative methods using deliberately chosen small samples can reveal underlying meanings in communicators' perspectives, messages and how the audience interpret and perceive them. Consequently, a qualitative content analysis was selected to investigate the subtle communication tactics and audience reactions in this situation. This method allows for an interpretative, thorough evaluation of women's representation in online political discussions and audience perceptions consistent with the aims of the research.

3.2 Research Design

The research design relates to the approach, plan, and framework for carrying out a research project (Robinson, 2024). It is crucial to highlight that choosing a research design significantly relies on the characteristics of the research issue, the researcher's individual experiences, and the intended audience for the study.

The research approach utilizes a qualitative content analysis design that centers on publicly accessible social media posts. In contrast to a case study that focuses on specific bounded cases and frequently utilizes various data sources such as interviews or observations, content analysis in this context emphasizes textual and visual data sourced from social media posts and comments. The goal is to methodically examine this material for repeating themes, patterns, and structures of significance and public interpretation and perception. Content analysis is among the most used techniques for examining discourse, such as political discourse, because of its foundations in communication studies and its relevance to textual and media communications (Benoit, 2023). Utilizing content analysis, the research can directly explore

how female political communicators share messages and interact with the public on social media. This approach enables the creation of replicable and legitimate inferences from texts, or other significant materials, to the contexts in which they are utilized, essential for comprehending the online portrayal of the communicators (Benoit, 2023).

In this design, all data comprise naturally occurring communications, such as social media posts and replies, instead of researcher-elicited data. There are no interviews or interventions involved; rather, the approach focuses on observing and analyzing current content. This method is suitable since the research inquiries focus on how these communicators portray themselves and engage online and the response from the audience which can be understood by analyzing the material generated by them and their audiences. According to Benoit (2023), content analysis offers a structured approach to examine political communication messages thoroughly. It allows for both manifest content analysis and latent content analysis, providing a thorough perspective on communicative behavior (Benoit, 2023). In general, the qualitative content analysis approach enables the researcher to identify patterns and decipher meaning in social media discussions, which corresponds with an exploratory and descriptive goal to comprehend representation on these platforms.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

Garcia (2020) points out that it is not always practical to include all individuals impacted in analyzing a phenomenon. In this instance, the investigator will concentrate on a specific group termed a sample from the population that has particular traits. The sample, according to Lee (1993), consists of individuals selected from a large population. According to Brown (2021), this reduced group should represent a portion of the population that the researcher intends to study to obtain information, draw conclusions, and create generalisations. According to Taylor

(2023), sampling includes the intentional, referenced, random, or chance selection of participants.

In qualitative content analysis, sampling entails deliberately choosing data sources that are the most pertinent to the research queries (Benoit, 2023). Instead of random sampling, this research employed purposive sampling to select a specific range of social media content for examination. The researcher specifically focused on a group of individuals and their online interactions that could offer valuable insights into women's political representation. The focus of the study was on female political communicators within Ghana's two leading parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), who are actively engaged on social media. A select group of key communicators was deliberately chosen from this population according to established criteria. This method corresponds with relevance sampling, meaning it involves choosing textual units that directly help in addressing the research questions (Benoit, 2023). Focusing on information-dense cases enhances the study's analytical rigor and depth, as purposive sampling guarantees the sample aligns closely with the research aims (Campbell et al., 2020).

3.3.1 Sample Selection and Size

Six (6) female political communicators were chosen for the content analysis. This consisted of three women from the NPP and three from the NDC, showcasing an equal representation of both major political parties. The intentional selection of six individuals aligns with qualitative research standards that prioritize depth over breadth – as highlighted by Adams (2020), enlarging sample size in qualitative studies doesn't inherently improve the research and may weaken the richness of findings. Lim (2025) also notes that qualitative research usually

depends on small samples to facilitate an in-depth examination of phenomena. The criteria for including these communicators were as follows:

- **Gender and Role:** The person is a woman and acts as an acknowledged representative or mouthpiece for her political party.
- **Experience:** She possesses significant experience (approximately ten years or more) in representing or actively participating in party communications, guaranteeing her a prominent voice in political discussions.
- **Social Media Presence:** She operates official public social media accounts (Facebook and X/Twitter) that boast a substantial following (over 10,000 followers). A large number of followers signifies a wide reach and impact, rendering her online content relevant to the examination of public political communication.
- **Engagement Level:** The communicator engages actively with her audience on these platforms by frequently posting and replying to comments. Individuals who interact with users, responding to comments, offer a more comprehensive context for examining two-way communication and dialogue.
- **Connection to Research Subject:** Due to their responsibilities and engagement, the chosen communicators are expected to produce content that mirrors their portrayal as women in politics and to draw public discourse regarding this portrayal. This relevance sampling guarantees that the gathered data will shed light on the research questions (Benoit, 2023).

These criteria produced a specific sample anticipated to offer valuable insights. A sample size of six was considered adequate due to the qualitative aspect of the study; it strikes a balance between practicality and profundity, preventing an excessively large sample that might “overlook the depth and richness a smaller sample can offer.” Every chosen individual acts as a source of various data points, which together create the collection for analysis. It is important

to recognize that in content analysis, it is often possible to examine all pertinent data from the selected sources if achievable (Benoit, 2023). In this research, the social media output created by these six communicators during the designated timeframe makes up the dataset, essentially serving as a comprehensive collection of their posts within that period. Analyzing the entire collection of their communications instead of a random selection enhances the phenomenon's coverage and reduces sampling gaps (Benoit, 2023).

3.4 Data Collection Method and Process

The gathering of data centered on collecting publicly accessible material from the chosen communicators' social media profiles. Due to the online format of the research, no in-person fieldwork or interviews took place. The researcher instead methodically gathered digital material from the Facebook and X accounts of the six communicators. The data consisted of two primary categories: the posts made by the communicators and the comments from users that reacted to those posts. The gathering process was thoughtfully designed to guarantee thoroughness and pertinence, all while being discreet and ethically sound

- **Social Media Posts:** All publicly made posts by each identified communicator throughout the specified study period were gathered. This encompassed text revisions, photos, videos (or captions for videos), and all other media content posted on their official Facebook pages and X accounts that are directly associated with their political position. The collection took place over a set duration, such as a few months during a political campaign or major events, to obtain a detailed overview of their online communication in context. Every post was recorded with its date, platform, and content information. All discernible post components including captions, hashtags, and any

linked media were recorded for analysis in their original format, maintaining context. This method crucially collects spontaneous communications found in the public domain, showcasing genuine messaging strategies employed by the communicators in real time.

- **User Comments:** To assess audience engagement and conversation, comment sections linked to the collected posts were also compiled. Instead of collecting all comments, which may be impractical for extremely popular posts, a targeted approach was employed to obtain a practical yet informative selection of comments. For every communicator, the researcher distinguished various kinds of posts for comment analysis, such as those with substantial engagement, thus, the ones that garnered many comments, reactions, or shares, and several posts with average engagement. By examining both highly engaged posts and more ordinary ones, the analysis encompasses a spectrum of audience reactions from strong public responses to more standard discussions. The emphasis was not on measuring the comments but on analyzing the quality and characteristics of the discussion in a qualitative way. Comments were gathered by scrolling through the threads manually and either copying them or taking full screenshots. For every chosen post, a collection of leading comments and responses, comprising both encouraging and critical feedback, were recorded. This produced a body of user-created texts that engage with the communicators' content, revealing how the audience views and reacts to the women's messages.

All gathered information was arranged and classified methodically. Social media posts were arranged in chronological order for each communicator and tagged with the communicator's code and a post ID or date. Posts with images were stored and assigned descriptive filenames. In the same way, comments were stored along with their original post and marked with essential metadata. This meticulous documentation guaranteed that throughout the analysis, every piece

of content could be linked back to its context. By organizing the information in this systematic manner, the researcher created a dataset suitable for coding and thematic analysis.

During the data gathering, the researcher stayed unobtrusive: solely publicly accessible information was utilized, with no interaction with the communicators or commenters taking place. This technique corresponds with a non-participant observation method in online research, considering accessible social media content as archival information. This method generally does not necessitate informed consent, provided that privacy expectations remain intact, which is a crucial ethical aspect addressed later in this chapter (Panel on Research Ethics, 2023).

3.5 Data Analysis

The gathered social media content underwent analysis via qualitative content analysis methods, mainly through thematic coding and interpretive discourse analysis. The objective of data analysis was to recognize recurring themes, frames, and patterns in the self-presentation of female political communicators and audience responses, thus addressing the research inquiries related to representation and engagement. The examination occurred through a repetitive, multi-phase method that integrated aspects of thematic analysis and content analysis best practices:

- **Acquaintance:** The researcher initially engaged deeply with the data by reading and re-reading all gathered posts and comments. This initial phase provided a contextual insight into each communicator's approach and the overall mood of audience engagement. Observations about first impressions, remarkable statements, or significant interactions noted in the data were recorded.
- **Development of Coding Scheme:** An initial coding framework was created based on the research questions and the preliminary analysis of the material. In qualitative

content analysis, coding categories may be generated inductively from the data and/or influenced by theoretical frameworks (Benoit, 2023). In this instance, a blend of the two was utilized. Certain codes were inductive, arising from shared themes in the posts, like repeated topics or rhetorical techniques employed by the communicators, whereas others were deductive, based on established theories regarding gender and political communication. For example, previous research on women's representation indicated searching for frames like empowerment or family-centric stories; these offered initial categories for coding. The coding framework was recorded in a codebook, where each code was distinctly defined and accompanied by noted examples, adhering to the guideline that categories must be mutually exclusive and comprehensive to ensure that every pertinent content unit can be coded clearly (Benoit, 2023). The initial coding categories comprised: Policy Matters, Personal Stories, Gender Focus, among others for the posts; and for comments, categories such as Supportive Attitude, Critical Attitude, Gendered Remarks, and Harassment.

- **Unit of Analysis and Coding:** The unit of analysis depended on the level of inquiry. For examining the communicators' messages, each social media post, including its textual caption and any attached media content, was treated as a unit to be coded for themes and frames. Within posts, meaningful segments, such as sentences or phrases, were highlighted and assigned codes from the codebook. For the audience perspective, each comment or in some cases, a thread of a comment and its direct replies, served as the unit of analysis, coded for tone, content, and presence of stereotypes or recurring arguments. Coding was conducted manually, using qualitative data analysis software to tag segments of text with the appropriate codes. During coding, the researcher remained attentive to both manifest content and latent content. For example, manifest coding noted if a post was about economic policy or education (topic), whereas latent coding

assessed the presence of, say, an implicit appeal to female solidarity or a subtle defensive tone in response to criticism. In the audience comments, a manifest code might record that a comment discusses the communicator's policy stance, while a latent code might interpret the comment's sentiment as sarcastic or supportive beyond its literal words. By capturing both levels, the analysis acknowledges that "latent content can differ from the manifest content of the words used" (Benoit, 2023), thereby providing a richer interpretation.

- **Progressive Enhancement:** The programming procedure was repetitive. With the coding of additional data, the researcher improved the code definitions and may have introduced new codes to align more closely with the data. This method aligns with the constant comparative technique in qualitative research, where the coding framework develops to effectively classify all pertinent information (Benoit, 2023).

- **Thematic Analysis and Synthesis:** After coding was finished, the researcher examined the codes to uncover major themes and trends. Thematic analysis served as the method to categorize codes into overarching themes that address the research questions. The analysis revealed important themes in the self-representation of the communicators' posts. For instance, notable themes included "Policy Emphasis vs. Personal Narrative" (whether they prioritized policy topics or personal experiences in their content), "Gender Emphasis or Lack Thereof" (did they explicitly reference their identity as women, or present themselves in neutral gender terms), and "Engagement Tactics" (like employing emotional appeals, narrative techniques, or action-oriented prompts in their communication). Every theme was exemplified with coded instances from the posts. The thematic analysis of the comments revealed patterns in public reactions: for example, "Support and Solidarity" (comments lauding the communicator or expressing agreement), "Criticism and Resistance" (comments disputing or targeting the

communicator's perspectives or credibility), and "Gendered Feedback" (comments that address the communicator's gender, positively or negatively). These themes were analyzed further to determine how they appeared differently on the two platforms (Facebook vs. X) and within the two political parties. The analysis highlighted any differences – for instance, it was found that Facebook comments were generally lengthier and occasionally contained personal comments or mentions of family, whereas X replies were briefer and frequently more direct, concentrating on political topics.

- **Frameworks and Analytical Lens:** In interpreting the data, existing theoretical frameworks were applied where relevant. One guiding framework was framing analysis from political communication theory. Drawing on Entman's (1993) conceptualization of framing, the researcher coded for framing elements in the communicators' posts, such as problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and remedy recommendation. For example, a post discussing an economic issue might be framed as a "problem" of inequality with a suggested "remedy" in the form of a policy proposal; these aspects were noted. This helped in understanding how the women frame political issues in their communication. Additionally, given the focus on gender, the analysis paid special attention to any content reflecting gender representation categories. On the audience side, a form of discourse analysis was employed to assess the nature of interactions in the comments. For instance, the analysis examined if commenters frequently brought up the communicator's gender and how these discourses contribute to or undermine the communicator's representation. By qualitatively depicting these audience views and stereotypes, the study gleaned insights into how female political figures are received online.

- **Comparative Evaluation:** Ultimately, the research included a comparative aspect. Through several cases (the six communicators), the analysis examined themes among individuals as well as between groups. The NDC communicators were evaluated against those from the NPP to identify any political differences in their online presence or the nature of the responses they garnered. The variations between the platforms (Facebook and X) were analyzed, as noted, to understand how the medium could affect the communication style or audience interaction. This comparative perspective provided depth, aiding in the identification of distinctive patterns. All these analyses were consolidated to create a unified account of findings, which is detailed in the following chapter.

Throughout the data analysis process, measures were taken to ensure trustworthiness of the qualitative findings. The coding and theme development were systematically documented, providing an audit trail of how raw data translated into conclusions. Where possible, the researcher discussed coding decisions with a peer or supervisor to enhance reliability (though a single-coder approach was used, an external check on a subset of data helped validate the consistency of coding). The difference between manifest and latent content was acknowledged to balance objectivity and interpretation – manifest content coding enhances reliability since it deals with the explicit surface of text, whereas latent content coding, though more interpretive, yields deeper insights (Benoit, 2023). By combining both, the study ensured a comprehensive analysis. Overall, the qualitative content analysis of the social media data enabled the research to derive nuanced themes and answer the research questions about how female political communicators represent themselves and engage with the public in the digital sphere.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical factors were crucial in this research, particularly since it entails human-related data in a digital setting. Ethics in qualitative research demand careful attention from the initial planning phases through data gathering, analysis, and the dissemination of results. Utilizing publicly accessible social media content as data raises particular ethical issues related to privacy, consent, and confidentiality. The investigator followed several procedures to guarantee the research was carried out with honesty and consideration for everyone involved.

Consent and Privacy: As the data comprises publicly available posts and comments, obtaining formal informed consent from the content creators was not necessary according to standard research ethics guidelines. Institutional ethics guidelines suggest that research based solely on publicly available information, where individuals lack a reasonable expectation of privacy, might not need consent or review by ethics boards (Panel on Research Ethics, 2023). All the social media content utilized was accessible to any internet user (e.g., posts on public profiles, comments on public pages), indicating that the communicators and commenters have voluntarily opted to share this information publicly. The research advanced carefully to honor the rights and feelings of the content creators.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: The female political communicators are treated as public figures, and their identities are not anonymised. The content analysed consists of material they deliberately published on official social-media pages that are openly accessible to anyone. In line with contemporary internet-research ethics, public communications by officeholders and candidates do not carry a reasonable expectation of privacy, and accurate attribution can be ethically justified on grounds of transparency, public interest, and scholarly verifiability (Association of Internet Researchers [AoIR], 2019; British Psychological Society [BPS], 2021; Townsend & Wallace, 2016). Naming these communicators also preserves the contextual

integrity of political speech. Thus, statements intended for a broad public and for reputational effects in the political arena should be studied within that public context (Nissenbaum, 2010; Zimmer & Proferes, 2014).

This approach follows widely cited guidance that distinguishes between (a) public actors communicating in public fora and (b) private individuals, for whom the risks of harm and expectations of privacy differ (AoIR, 2019; BPS, 2021). For public actors, especially those using verified or official pages, attribution supports accountability and reproducibility in political-communication research; obscuring their identities can misrepresent the communicative ecology and hinder replication or legal scrutiny of claims (Townsend & Wallace, 2016). At the same time, the study remains attentive to proportionality and potential harms, only content germane to the research questions is reproduced, and quotations are accurate, contextualised, and limited to what is necessary for analysis (Markham & Buchanan, 2012).

By contrast, ordinary users who appear in comment threads or as interaction partners are not public figures. Consistent with best practice, their direct identifiers such as usernames, profile names, and handles are withheld; when needed for evidential clarity, they are referenced generically like ‘Facebook user A’ or paraphrased to avoid traceability (BPS, 2021; AoIR, 2019). This differential anonymity preserves the public nature of politicians’ speech while minimising risks to non-elite participants (Eysenbach & Till, 2001; Markham & Buchanan, 2012).

Respect and Non-maleficence: The investigator followed the ethical requirement of treating participants with respect, dignity, and care during the entire study. In practice, this involved thoughtfully reflecting on how results are communicated to avoid misrepresenting or unfairly condemning anyone. Sensitive management was applied to critical discourse, including sexist

remarks aimed at a communicator. The examination concentrated on trends and thematic consequences instead of pointing out or embarrassing any individual user. The aim is academic understanding, not public visibility of people. The thesis highlights overall patterns like the prevalence of a theme in comments and representative examples while not associating them with specific individuals, thus safeguarding those individuals' privacy rights despite their comments being in a public space.

Data Management and Protection: All gathered information was kept safely on a device secured with a password. Even though the content is accessible to the public, the assembled dataset (particularly with any contextual annotations) was regarded as confidential research information. Access to the complete dataset was limited to the researcher and, when required, their academic supervisors. Upon finishing the analysis, the data will either be kept or discarded in accordance with university data management regulations. This guarantees that there will be no accidental sharing or improper use of the data outside the boundaries of this study.

Reflexivity and the Researcher's Position: The researcher stayed mindful of her own presence and biases throughout the process. Given that qualitative content analysis requires interpretation, it was vital to recognize any biases related to gender and politics that might influence the analysis. Frequent discussions with advisors and analyzing raw data aided in preserving an unbiased perspective. There was no engagement with the content creators (communicators or commenters), preventing any impact on their actions or creating any expectations from the researcher.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

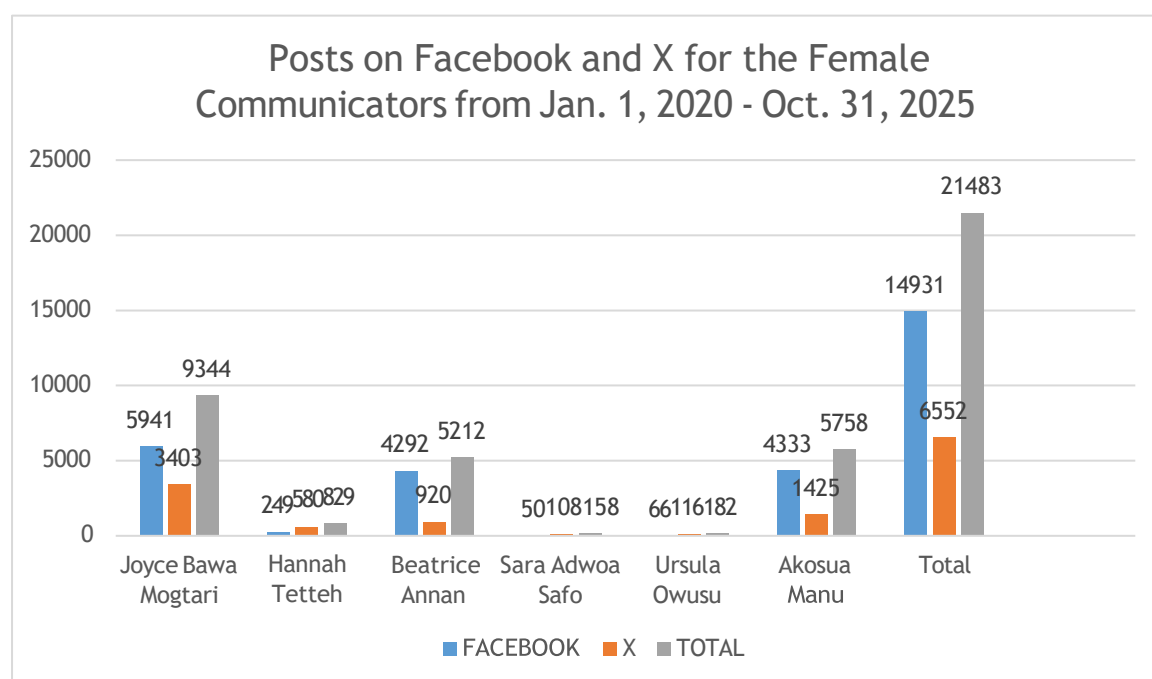
This chapter presents a detailed content analysis of Facebook and X posts by six female political communicators in Ghana between January 1, 2020 and October 31, 2025. The analysis is organized around the four research objectives in chapter one. The analysis begins by quantifying and describing the level of involvement of these women on the two platforms. Next, the study identifies the thematic patterns, language styles, and visual elements in their posts. This takes the analysis to assess gendered dimensions within their content and finally, an examination of audience interaction patterns is assessed. The women are Joyce Bawah Mogtari, Hanna Tetteh and Beatrice Annan, all affiliated with the NDC, and Sarah Adwoa Safo, Ursula Owusu, and Akosua Manu from the NPP.

By focusing on party communicators rather than front-line elected officials, this analysis sheds light on an often-overlooked group that curates political messaging behind the scenes. The findings show how these women balance party narratives and personal voices online, and how their use of social media reinforces or challenges traditional gendered expectations.

4.2. RQ1: What is the level of involvement of females in political communication on Facebook and X in Ghana?

All six women maintained active social media profiles during the period studied, with posting intensity increasing around major events such as campaigns, elections and trending news developments. Most posted original content at least several times a month, often more frequently in 2024-2025. For example, Joyce Bawah Mogtari regularly tweeted updates about

NDC campaign events, averaging 34 posts per week in the 2024 campaign season. Akosua Manu similarly used X to celebrate party milestones and comment on national issues, with some days yielding 4 posts. Akosua Manu and Ursula Owusu-Ekuful maintained busy schedules, sharing press conference clips and policy announcements frequently, especially during the 2024 election cycle. In all, the following data indicates the number of posts on Facebook and X for each of the women during the period.



During the period, Joyce Bawa Mogtari posted 5,941 on Facebook and 3,403 on X; Hannah Tetteh posted 249 on Facebook and 580 on X and Beatrice Annan posted 4,292 on Facebook and 920 on X. also, Sara Adwoa Safo posted 50 on Facebook and 108 on X; Ursula Owusu posted 66 on Facebook and 116 on X and Akosua Manu posted 4,333 on Facebook and 1,425 on X. The total posts of 14,931 on Facebook shows the communicators often use Facebook to connect more to their followers than X, which had 6,552 total posts. With a combined total of 21,483 posts on Facebook and X, the female political communicators post 12.3 items daily – approximately 2 posts per person per day.

The engagement metrics measured for the six female political communicators using their Facebook and X official accounts and the findings are as follows:

4.2.1 Akosua Manu

Akosua Manu is member of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and a former Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the National Youth Authority. She is a visible figure in youth mobilization for the NPP, often active on social media defending government policies and promoting the party's agenda. Her X handle is [@KozieOzie](#) and that of her Facebook is <https://www.facebook.com/akosua.ofori/>.

Akosua Manu has been an active poster on social media platforms. In the past six months she has made dozens of tweets and retweets, often highlighting government projects and political events. Her X account has about 30,000 followers. Over this period, she posted 172 original tweets and shared 23 posts. Her tweets typically garner significant engagement, often hundreds of likes and many posts reach thousands of views on the platform.

She maintains a popular Facebook page under her name. The page has around 85,000 pages with over 4,000 users 'talking about this'. In the last six months she has been very active, posting frequent updates about youth programs and her political campaign. She made numerous posts. Her follower count is roughly 85,000-page likes, and these followers show strong engagement. Each post sees substantial interaction, often receiving hundreds of reactions and many comments from supporters. Akosua posted 523 times on Facebook within the six-month period, averaging 3 posts daily. She has a higher presence on Facebook than on X in terms of frequency of posts.

4.2.2 Sarah Adwoa Safo

Sarah Adwoa Safo is the former Member of Parliament for Dome-Kwabanya Constituency. She has served as Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection under the Akufo-Addo government. Though she faced controversies over absenteeism in Parliament, she remains a key NPP figure. Her X handle is [@SarahAdwoaSafo](#) and that of her Facebook is <https://www.facebook.com/sarah.adwoasafo.18>.

Sarah's X presence has been minimal in recent times. Her account has about 8,000 followers but she has posted very little. In fact, she has made only 13 new tweets or retweets in the last six months. Consequently, there were no recent retweets, likes, or views to report for this period with the account being essentially dormant in 2025.

On Facebook, Sarah Adwoa Safo primarily uses a personal profile rather than a public page. She does not have a large public Facebook page following like some others. Her profile shows intermittent activity – for example, occasional posts about personal or political updates. In the last six months she posted very sparingly on Facebook, 6 posts in all. She has 81,000 followers on her personal profile. Engagement on her Facebook posts is relatively low; when she does post, they receive only limited comments and reactions. Overall, her Facebook presence showed low activity and modest engagement in the past half-year.

4.2.3 Joyce Bawah Mogtari

Joyce is a member of the National Democratic Congress (NDC). She is the Special Aide and spokesperson to President John Dramani Mahama. She is a lawyer and former Deputy Minister of Transport. Mogtari is one of the most prominent female voices in the NDC, handling communication and strategy for Mahama's campaigns. Her X handle is [@joyce_bawah](#) and that of her Facebook is <https://www.facebook.com/JoyceMogtari/>.

Joyce Bawah Mogtari has been highly active on Twitter, especially as a spokesperson for John Mahama's campaign. In the last six months she has tweeted almost daily, including original posts and frequent retweets of news and campaign content. Her Twitter account has 186,800 followers and over 9,000 total tweets to date. During the period, she posted 717 items on Facebook and 352 on X. This averaged 30 post per week for Facebook and 14 posts per week for X. Many of her posts are shares of speeches or interviews; she retweeted dozens of items from allies and media. Joyce's tweets get strong engagement with each tweet typically receiving dozens of retweets and replies, and a few hundred likes. For example, a recent policy update tweet received 467 likes and was viewed about 12,000 times, and some posts, especially those featuring John Mahama's activities, have garnered 500+ likes and tens of thousands of views.



Joyce Bawah Mogtari has a widely followed Facebook page. As of October 2025, her page has over 150,000 likes and about 157,000 followers, reflecting her prominence. In the past six months she has been extremely active on Facebook, often posting daily updates including post-campaign messages, videos, and commentary on national issues. She made approximately 180–

200 posts within the period. The engagement level on her Facebook posts is high. Each update commonly attracts hundreds of reactions, dozens of comments, and frequent shares. For instance, her video posts often get thousands of views within days and text/photo posts spark active discussions in the comments. Overall, Joyce's Facebook page shows robust follower interaction, reflecting a strong social media presence over the last six months.

4.2.4 Beatrice Annan

Is a member of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) communication team. She frequently appears on TV and radio as a party communicator, articulating NDC positions and critiquing government policy. She is considered part of the younger, emerging NDC voices in political communication. Her X account is [@BeatriceAnnan1](#) and her Facebook page is <https://www.facebook.com/beatrice.annan.108>.

She has maintained an active Twitter profile in the last half-year. With 33,800 followers, she tweeted regularly about political commentary and media appearances. Her account shows roughly 920 total tweets from 2020-2025, and in the last six months she posted 111 times. This included her own tweets as well as retweets of notable figures. She actively reshared party news and colleagues' posts, contributing a few dozen retweets over six months. Despite a smaller follower count than others, Beatrice's tweets often see solid engagement. Typical posts receive on the order of 50+ retweets and a few hundred likes. Notably, one of her tweets praising John Mahama ('... he is a blessing to Ghana...') in the period gained over 2,000 likes and about 83,000 views, indicating the capacity for viral reach. In general, her tweets in the last six months regularly got hundreds of likes and tens of thousands of impressions, reflecting a very engaged audience relative to her follower base.



Beatrice Annan does not appear to have a public official Facebook fan page with its own follower count. Instead, she uses her personal Facebook profile to engage with the public. As a result, exact follower statistics are not publicly available and personal profiles show friends/followers only to logged-in users. Over the last six months, Beatrice has been active on Facebook by sharing posts about her media appearances on Good Morning Ghana TV discussions and political commentary. She made a total posts of 518 in the last six months, often sharing videos or links from news outlets. She has 66,000 followers. Her Facebook posts see moderate engagement, often attracting a number of reactions and some comments, especially from fellow party supporters.

4.2.5 Ursula Owusu-Ekuful

Ursula Owusu-Ekuful is a member of the New Patriotic Party (NPP). She is also the former Member of Parliament for Ablekuma West Constituency. She served as Minister for

Communications and Digitalisation under President Akufo-Addo. Ursula is a senior figure in the NPP, known for her strong defense of government policy and her leadership on digital governance. Her X handle is [@UrsulaOw](#) and her Facebook account is <https://www.facebook.com/p/Ursula-Owusu-100044294476326/>.

Ursula Owusu-Ekuful's X activity has slowed in 2025, as she transitioned out of her ministerial role after January. She has about 47,000 followers on X. Her account has around 158 tweets total between 2020 and 2025. One notable tweet she made about 5 months ago was a tribute to a newly appointed Justice, which got 792 likes, 151 replies, and was viewed 96,000 times, showing that when she does tweet, it reaches a wide audience. She did not actively retweet others in the six month period. In summary, Ursula's Twitter had minimal new content in the last half-year, with 14 posts, though her earlier posts continue to garner likes and her follower count remains sizeable.

She maintains a public Facebook page as a politician, which remains quite popular. The page has roughly 147,000 followers. Over the past six months her Facebook posting has been occasional; she posted a few key updates or announcements, such as reflections on leaving office or supporting party events. With the number of followers, her posts typically receive hundreds of reactions and numerous comments, albeit less engagement than during her time in office. While she's posted less frequently since mid-2025, 8 posts in all, whenever she does, supporters actively engage, indicating continued interest. Overall, Ursula's Facebook in the last six months shows a high follower count but low posting frequency, with her followers still responding appreciatively to the limited content shared.

4.2.6 Hanna Tetteh

Hannah Tetteh is associated to the National Democratic Congress (NDC). She is the former Member of Parliament for Awutu Senya West and former Minister for Trade and Industry, as well as Minister for Foreign Affairs under President John Mahama. Currently, she serves in international diplomacy as a UN Special Representative. Her X handle is [@HannaTetteh](#) and her Facebook account is https://www.facebook.com/p/Hon-Hannah-Tetteh-100076251578004/?_rdr.

Hanna Tetteh's X account has a large follower base of 112,400 followers, but she has been largely inactive on the platform. In the past six months (April–Oct 2025), she posted 70 tweets, of which majority were retweets. Given her role as a United Nations Special Representative, she may have refrained from frequent personal tweeting.

Hanna Tetteh has not actively maintained a high-profile Facebook page in recent years. There is a small public page titled 'Hon. Hannah Tetteh' with about 5,600 likes, but this was likely created during her political tenure and is not frequently updated. Over the last six months, she has made no significant Facebook posts addressing the public. Most updates about her work come through official UN channels rather than personal social media. Her public page has 5,800 followers, which is comparatively low. In terms of engagement, her posts get minimal engagement with only a handful of comments and likes. In summary, Hanna Tetteh's Facebook presence in the past six months has been minimal to nonexistent, with only 30 posts, reflecting that she has stepped back from domestic social media engagement while focusing on her international diplomatic role. Any references to her on Facebook during this time were typically news pages or third-party posts, rather than her own postings.

The two posts below are representative of this high involvement of the communicators:

On January 24, 2025, Joyce Bawah Mogtari posted a campaign poster for a “Thank You Tour” in the Volta Region (frame 1), reflecting active engagement in party campaigning. This level of original content was typical of her regular postings. Her post garnered 141 retweets, 932 likes and 17 thousand views.

On September 25, 2025, Akosua Manu posted an image of Hon. Kojo Oppong Nkrumah asserting the fact that President John Mahama said COVID affected Ghana’s economy. Her post also garnered 120 retweets, 723 likes and 55 thousand views (frame 2).



These accounts frequently alternate between original statements and retweeting party accounts or media outlets. Their content appeared regularly rather than sporadically. During the 2024 campaign months, the findings observed some days with two or three posts. By contrast, in quieter months posts were less frequent but still weekly on average. The communicators also

used both Facebook and X, though their styles differed by platform. In general, the frequent posting signifies a significant degree of engagement and implies that these women act as dynamic intermediaries between their parties and the public, aligning with Aker et al.'s (2024) claim that posts from female politicians can elicit similar engagement when addressing pertinent topics.

Content among the six accounts is not distributed randomly; it reflects party location and institutional function. Women communicators associated with the NDC utilize a more issue-critical approach on X, where the platform's features support quick commentary. They emphasize large-scale economic issues (inflation, taxation, joblessness), governance challenges (safety of media, credibility of elections), and pan-African obligations, placing Ghana's difficulties within wider discussions of development and democracy. This opposing position is not merely ideological; it is also algorithmic — critical and relevant posts spread more rapidly on X than standard governmental updates, granting opposition figures greater visibility. Their tone is typically positive, didactic, and confidence-building, inviting supporters to 'vote wisely' and celebrating national symbols. NPP-affiliated female communicators communicate more pragmatically and reactively, often tied to intra-party dynamics or immediate governance issues like telecommunication costs, corruption and constitutional debates. When under personal or electoral pressure, messaging skews toward defensive or grievance-tinged narratives. This was to be expected because they were in power and needed to defend government policies and fight misinformation.

On gender cues, both camps deploy femininity strategically. NDC figures more often use sisterhood/motherhood imagery and inclusive appeals associated with global leadership roles whilst NPP figures reference female identity to humanize or defend positions while pairing it with technocratic competence. Engagement styles are conversational across the board but intensity varies with cycle and circumstance: NDC women in opposition sustain campaign-

oriented outreach; NPP women facing internal turbulence may temporarily de-escalate visibility. Overall, differences reflect issue selection and emotional register, aspirational/educative on the NDC side versus pragmatic/managerial and at times defensive on the NPP side, while sharing a common avoidance of overt gender attacks.

4.3. RQ2: What themes, language styles, and visual elements do female political communicators in Ghana use on Facebook and X?

The coding revealed several prominent themes in the posts. These include governance and policy, empowerment and gender-related issues, campaign mobilization, economic development, social welfare, international affairs, and technological innovation. Language styles ranged from formal policy language to informal or local expressions, while visuals included photographs, infographics, and video snippets. Below are the main thematic clusters, with sample posts (text and images) illustrating each.

4.3.1 Campaign Mobilization and Party Events

A strong theme was direct campaigning and party events. The tweet by Joyce Bawah Mogtari above is an example of promotional posters and rally snapshots, often in English mixed with some local phrases and upbeat tone. The image exemplifies how party communicators use social media to mobilize regional supporters. The text frames the event as a “beautiful family reunion,” invoking community and cultural solidarity. The language is positive and inclusive, aimed at rallying the base. Visual elements include a large photo of President Mahama, framed by NDC colors, speaking alongside the schedule. The overall tone is celebratory and motivational, characteristic of election campaigning. As seen here, theme codes for such posts

include campaign events and party promotion. The language is formal yet warm, and the post features original imagery (photo and text) to grab attention.

4.3.2 Empowerment and Gender

A repost by Beatrice Annan on December 4, 2024 highlights a promotional tweet from John Dramani Mahama (frame 1), foregrounding women's empowerment as a key electoral promise. This functions as part of direct campaigning and online mobilization, where party communicators use visually striking posters and short, persuasive text to reach both core supporters and undecided voters. She uses a formal yet warm text, promising policies that uplift women while inviting participation in a broader national project: *'Vote John Mahama and the NDC. We have the policies to promote women's empowerment.'* The hashtags #LetsBuildGhanaTogether and #Mahama4Change2024 reinforce unity, progress, and change, appealing to both national pride and partisan solidarity. The slogan "Vote the Umbrella" ties the party's symbol directly to empowerment, giving the metaphor cultural weight. Like many campaign materials, this post mixes policy promise with cultural symbolism. The umbrella is more than a logo; it becomes a visual metaphor for protection, inclusiveness, and support for women's businesses. The upbeat, inclusive language, combined with original imagery and high engagement marks it as a clear attempt to energize the base and rally regional supporters online.

Another tweet by Hanna Tetteh celebrates the re-election of her younger sister (frame 2), Honourable Gizella Tetteh-Agbotui, as Member of Parliament for Awutu Senya West. Hanna Tetteh frames her message women in politics. The post emphasizes her sister's success in a tough electoral battle, highlighting resilience and competence in a traditionally male-dominated space. By showcasing Gizella's re-election, Hanna indirectly communicates that women can withstand electoral pressures, thereby challenging stereotypes about women being

too soft for competitive politics. Phrases like *“This was a tough fight”* project an image of determination, endurance, and victory against odds, attributes often coded as masculine in political discourse. By attributing these qualities to her sister’s campaign, Hanna is reframing political toughness as equally applicable to women leaders.



4.3.3 Economic Policy and Development

Both NDC and NPP communicators frequently posted about economic issues. For the NPP, a common strategy was to share presidential statements on financial relief or projects. For instance, Adwoa Safo retweeted a post from President Akufo-Addo on August 8, 2022, where the former president declares that the government is *“determined to bring relief to Ghanaians. #BouncingBackTogether.”* This example shows a development/policy that focuses on macroeconomic measures. The language is formal and persuasive, with hashtags underscoring unity. The visual is an official press graphic in party colors, featuring the President’s photo and quoted text. This combination of presidential quotes and conservative framing is typical of NPP posts on economic issues.



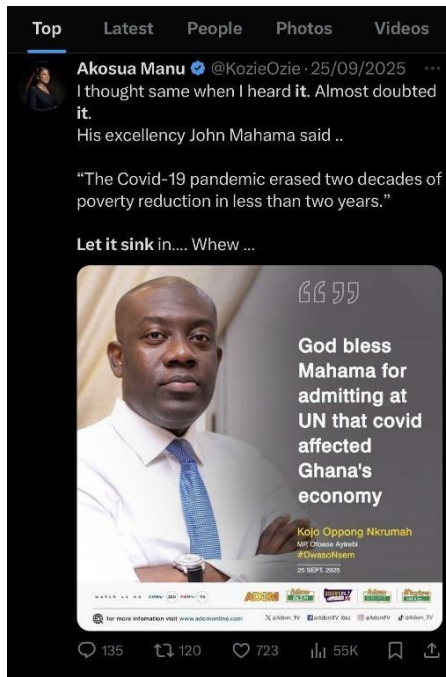
4.3.4 Health and Social Welfare

Public health topics also appear, often underscored by humane appeals. In Sep 2025, Akosua Manu tweeted an image from Ghana’s Ministry of Health about Sickle Cell treatment inclusion. The graphic shows a mother and child at a health clinic and reads: *“Ghana has included treatment for Sickle Cell Disease in our NHIS. This demonstrates equity in action...”*. Akosua’s accompanying text praised this policy when she included that *“The visionary @MBawumia, you said it was possible!”*. This post’s theme is health/development. The tone is celebratory, thanking the Vice President. The image foregrounds a female health worker and child, visually highlighting social welfare. Thus, social policy is conveyed positively, using formal but emotive language.



4.3.5 Economic History and Accountability

Posts often compared party stances or reminded audiences of past issues. For example, Akosua Manu's tweet on September 25, 2025 sarcastically echoed former President Mahama's own words: '*The COVID-19 pandemic erased two decades of poverty reduction in less than two years*'. She called on her followers to '*Let it sink in*' as she attached a news graphic of Ho. Kojo Oppong Nkrumah praising Mahama for this admission. This illustrates the themes, economic history and accountability. The tone is somewhat ironic because the phrase '*Let it sink in... Whew...*', suggesting disbelief that an NDC leader made such a frank confession. Language here is informal and colloquial ('*Whew...*'), contrasting with the formal policy content. The image (an Adom News graphic) shows the minister with text. Combining a respected news frame with a colloquial caption is a strategic mix as it propagates a political critique through semi-informal language.



4.3.6 International Context and Comparisons

Less frequently, posts touched on international affairs or comparative politics. A striking example was Beatrice Annan (NDC) on Feb 2025 warning Ghanaians about international political pitfalls. She tweeted a screenshot of a Twitter thread contrasting Ghana’s situation with Kenya’s 2022 election. Beatrice Annan’s 25 June, 2024 tweet (NDC) comparing Ghana to Kenya. She admonishes voters not to ‘*fall for the bait*’ of a strong vice-presidential candidacy. The theme here is international politics. The tone is urgent and cautionary ‘*Read this slowly; Kenya fell for the bait*’. The image is an X screenshot containing Ghana and Kenya-related text and profile icons. By repurposing content about Kenya, Beatrice sought to inject an international lesson into Ghanaian discourse. Language is informal, mixing English with a local exclamation ‘*De3 hmmm*’, and contains a cultural reference. This exemplifies how communicators sometimes use global parallels to frame domestic choices.



4.3.7 Language Styles, Tone and Visual Elements

Many posts were formal and policy-focused especially when quoting official statements, but several used emotional language to connect with the public. Use of local idioms or exclamations was occasional, mostly to emphasize points informally. Tone was generally positive and reinforcing for one's own party, but critical toward the opposition. Posts avoided explicit hostility or abusive language, focusing critique on policies rather than personal attacks.

About half the posts included images or videos. These ranged from official infographics to candid photos and news graphics. All embedded images found were professionally styled, either party graphics or media screenshots. No memes or casual user-generated images were seen. However, most images did not focus on the communicators themselves none of the six women posted personal selfies except for media and public programmes that their images are on the posters; they mainly showed leaders, supporters, or illustrative actors. This suggests the

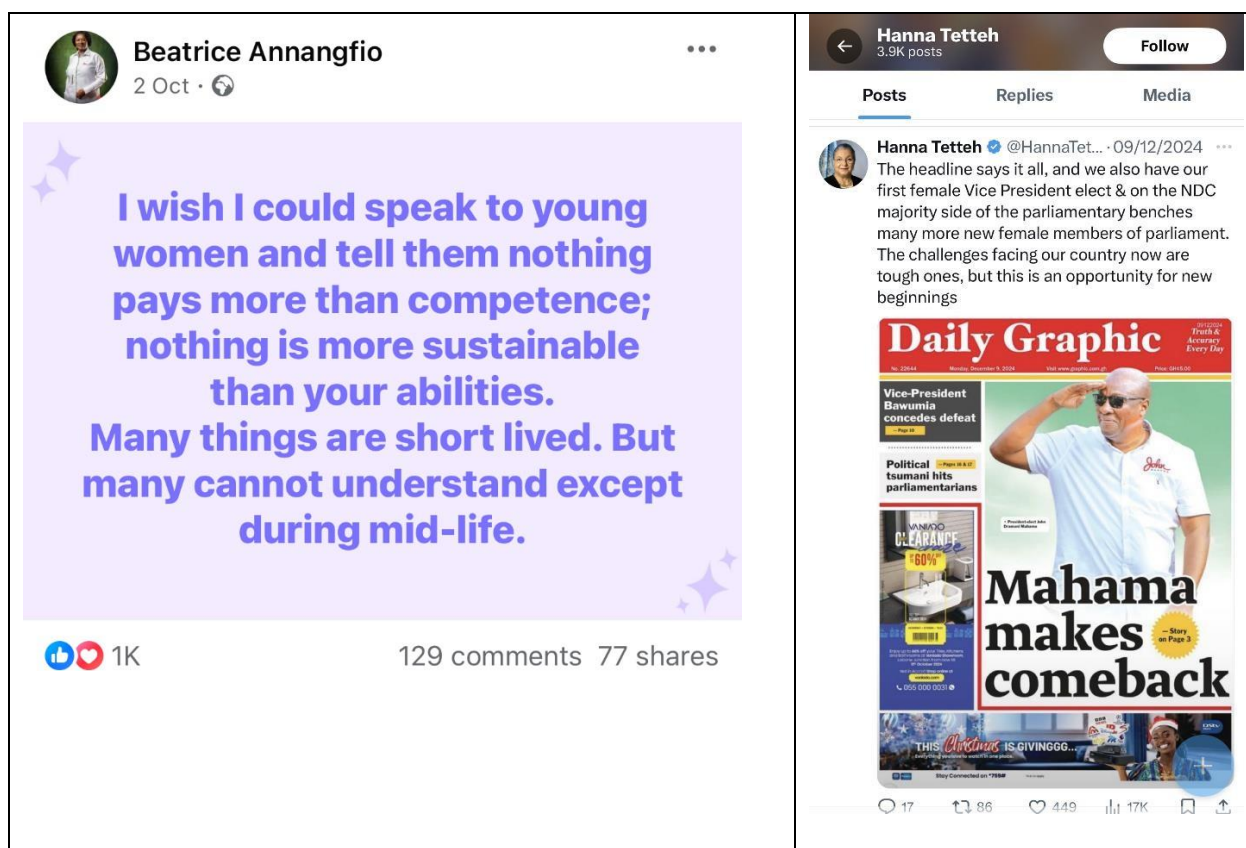
communicators used images instrumentally to convey message content, rather than for self-portraiture.

In summary, the content reveals that female communicators post primarily about substantive policy and party issues governance, economy, development—with campaign mobilization and occasional international framing. Their language and visuals tend to reflect professionalism and encouragement rather than gender-specific appeals. These findings echo research by Ruiloba-Núñez and Zuazu (2024) who found limited emphasis on women or inclusive language even in gender-balanced elections, noting that gender was rarely foregrounded in candidates' campaign discourse. Similarly, our data show scant explicit focus on “women’s issues” as a category; the posts center on general national issues. However, when social concerns arise (e.g. healthcare access), they are sometimes framed in gender-neutral or family terms.

4.4 RQ3: To what extent do gendered biases manifest in the themes, language, and visuals utilized by female political communicators on these platforms?

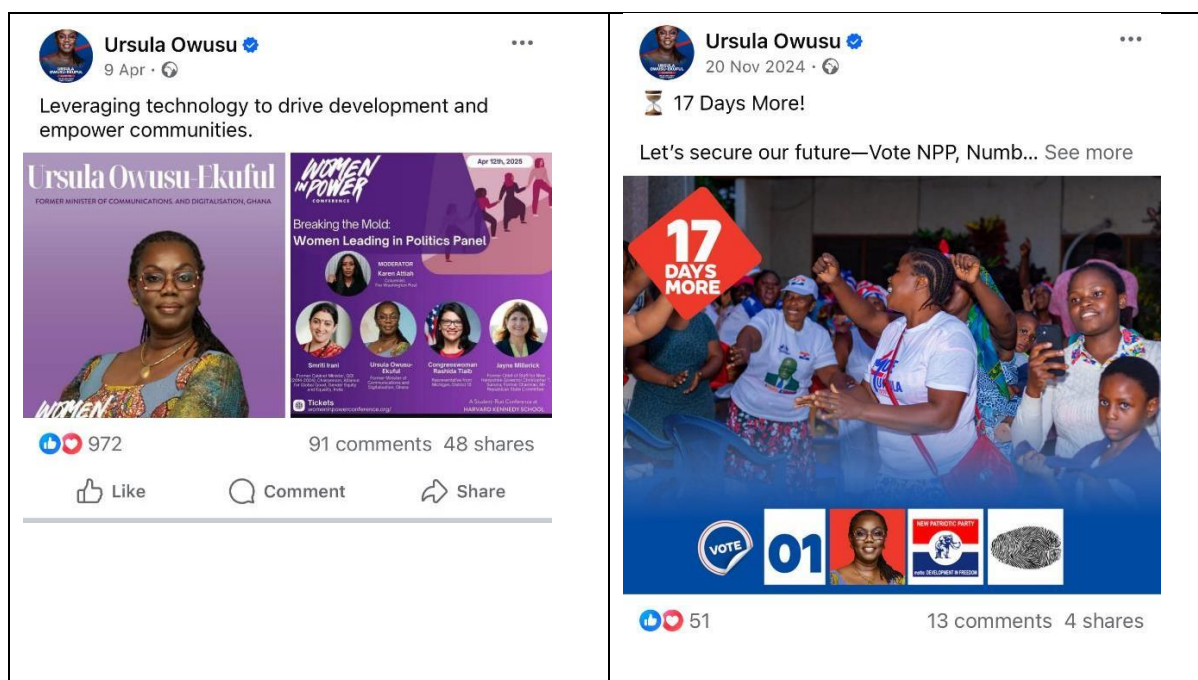
The next thing that was examined was whether the posts themselves exhibited gendered biases or references. Interestingly, explicit gendered language was rare. Both parties' women leverage gender in messaging, but differently. Hanna Tetteh explicitly used sisterhood and motherhood imagery, and she even signed off using including “all of my sisters”, highlighting gender solidarity. Her role as UN envoy may also prompt her to emphasize women’s issues and global leadership, which reflects a feminist emphasis on representation (Kemp, 2016). NDC’s Annan and Hanna Tetteh sometimes invoked girl-talk empowerment and call for more female participation in parliament respectively on their Facebook pages. On the NPP side, Sarah Adwoa Safo often references her identity as a mother and wife in media stories, which she uses to deflect criticism and assert moral authority. For example, in interviews she cited caring for

family as part of her sacrifice. Although direct citations are not available, this dynamic was evident in her media persona: emphasizing personal roles to humanize political engagement, consistent with Tripp’s (2003) notion of women politicians balancing public and private identities.



None of the six communicators habitually used gendered slurs or stereotypes against opponents: their criticism targeted policies or competence, not personal attributes. In terms of content, the women did not frequently mention “women” or “girls” specifically but their choice of images for their posts sometimes alludes to that. For example, Ursula’s Facebook post on 9th April, 2025 spoke about leveraging technology to drive development and empower communities. However, she used two posters with one having herself on it, and the other showing other women and herself with the title ‘Women in Power’. Also, leading to the December 2024 elections, most of her posts reflected used female images. Ursula’s posts

deploy gender visually rather than textually, using women-only leadership imagery and female-dominant rally scenes to signal solidarity and mobilize women, while her language stays policy and competence-centred, in this case technology and development. This is a counter-stereotypical empowerment frame that avoids gendered attacks and positions female leadership as modern and effective.



Visual gender cues in their posts varied. As noted above, some images featured women and some featured men. The decision of what images to use did not appear systematically gendered; it aligned with content rather than the communicator's identity. For instance, Adwoa Safo's retweeted graphic is of a male president, reflecting NPP's message of national leadership, and not because she is female. Similarly, Ursula Owusu's social media output often depicted her alongside colleagues or at public events, without emphasis on her being a woman.

Crucially, the study found no evidence that these women downplayed their gender to fit stereotypes. Their messages focused on competence and professionalism. In fact, by virtue of holding visible communication roles, they implicitly challenge the traditional media portrait of

Ghanaian women as passive. However, consistent with Ruiloba-Núñez and Ruiz de Zuazu (2024), their discourse showed limited use of inclusive language and infrequent foregrounding of women. That is, they seldom invoked gender equality or feminist appeals in their posts. This suggests that even female communicators prioritize general political themes over explicit gender advocacy.

In terms of user reactions, public replies sometimes contained gendered comments, including sexist remarks about specific individuals, but such responses are outside the scope of this chapter's content analysis. Overall, the thematic framing chosen by the communicators themselves was largely gender-neutral or positive, focusing on issues of public concern rather than on gender identity. This neutral-to-empowering stance aligns with feminist media theories that highlight how women in politics must navigate public discourse by asserting their voice on shared national issues (Fraser, 1990).

4.5 RQ4: What is the nature of user interaction with posts from female political communicators on Facebook and X?

The earlier analysis indicated that general engagement was moderate and mostly limited to politically active supporters. Examining interaction by issue theme reveals that users reacted differently to various content with certain subjects regularly garnered greater visibility, whereas others elicited slower and a more dialogic engagement. The following themes were generated under this research question:

1. Campaign and high-salience political posts

Posts that were obviously partisan, such as rally flyers, tour notices, endorsements for the flagbearer, or responses to significant party events, achieved the most and quickest interactions, particularly on X. For instance, Joyce Bawah Mogtari's Volta tour advertisement on 24 January

2025 garnered more than 200 likes and 20 retweets in a brief period, indicating strong appeal among NDC-supporting users in the area. Likewise, when Adwoa Safo shared a post from President Akufo-Addo (22 August 2022), the repost gained over 1,000 likes, illustrating that connection with prominent party leaders attracts the wider party base rather than solely her individual followers. This trend indicates that content associated with campaigns and leaders gains from network effects — users are more inclined to like, retweet, and tag others when the content relates to the party’s national agenda, rather than solely to the specific communicator.

2. Economy, cost of living and governance critiques

Posts addressing economic difficulties, taxation issues, or governance-related matters such as rule of law, media freedom, and electoral integrity also saw significant engagement, although the sentiments expressed were more varied. On X, these posts frequently garnered quote-tweets and contentious responses with advocates boosting the critique, while government-aligned users contested it. This affirms that economy/governance is a divisive topic because it may not consistently yield the straightforward figures of a campaign leaflet, but it generates more substantial discussion threads. Regarding Beatrice Annan's comparative tweet on Kenya, some supportive responses endorsed the caution, while others challenged her perspective, illustrating how critiques of governance/economics can elicit both agreement and disagreement within the same comment thread. Thus, for this theme, the nature of interaction was conversational and confrontational instead of merely additive.

3. Service-delivery, constituency and social-sector posts

In instances where the women shared information on local initiatives, school visits, health outreach, or sanitation efforts, Facebook outperformed X. These types of posts usually garnered

moderate likes and a greater number of comments such as ‘thank you’, ‘well done’ and ‘come to our area too.’ In other words, the interaction focused on relationships and community instead of going viral. These posts address local audiences so the individuals who engage are those within or near the community. On X, identical content often yields lower performance due to the platform being less localized and more focused on agendas.

4. Gender equality and women’s leadership

Posts centered on gender, such as International Women’s Day, celebrating women in leadership, or advocating for increased female representation in governance, generally received supportive and predominantly positive engagement, though typically in the tens rather than the hundreds. Users endorsed the messages like ‘more women!’ and ‘we are proud of you’, but did not share them as broadly as campaign material. In other terms, gender posts have strong sentiment but average reach. This suggests that followers recognize the validity of female leadership, however, the algorithmic and partisan motivations continue to favor campaign and economic content over gender-normative posts.

5. Pan-African / foreign policy / national unity messaging

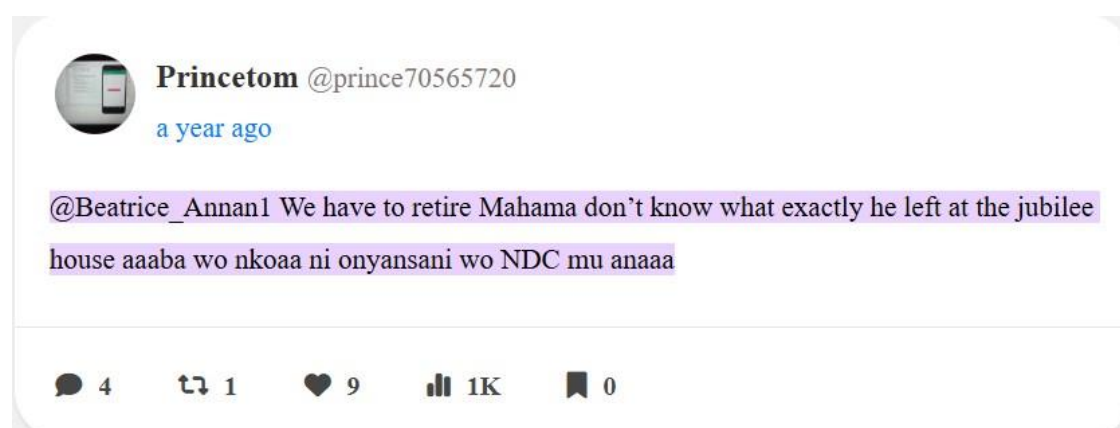
For individuals such as Hanna Tetteh, posts mentioning AU, ECOWAS, or continental leadership garnered significant interaction from elite or well-connected followers but received less engagement from the regular partisan base. On X, these posts received likes and were occasionally retweeted by policy experts, journalists, and other diplomats, yet they did not lead to extensive comment threads. The type of engagement here was focused on professional/elite enhancement instead of widespread involvement.

6. Hashtag-driven or networked posts

Throughout the various themes, posts that engaged with an ongoing hashtag such as #FixTheCountry, #MahamaThePresident, and #BouncingBackTogether gained more traction as they became visible beyond the women's direct follower network. Individuals looked up the hashtag and found the communicators' posts within that flow. Tagging political accounts, news organizations, and research institutions functioned similarly by increasing exposure and occasionally leading to retweets from larger accounts.

7. Sentiment and polarization

Within these themes, sentiment varied significantly. Posts aligned with the campaign and its leader garnered the most favorable feedback. Economy/governance posts elicited the most diverse reactions, featuring overt partisan resistance like 'retire Mahama' and sarcasm. Service-delivery positions and gender attracted the least conflict. This indicates that the audience is categorizing women's content based on political risk: as the post more directly confronts or supports national political authority, the responses become increasingly varied.



When combined, the separated outcomes reveal that user engagement with posts from these six female political communicators is significantly reliant on themes and continues to be limited

to politically enlightened audiences. Posts that were evidently partisan or linked to significant campaign events garnered the fastest and broadest engagement as they could leverage established party networks and the prominence of national figures, while posts on divisive governance and economic struggles produced medium-to-high interaction but in a more confrontational tone, with supporters reinforcing and opponents challenging the narrative. In contrast, updates on constituency, education, health, and sanitation reached fewer people but elicited more consistent, community-focused responses on Facebook, indicating a relational instead of a viral form of interaction. Gender and women's leadership roles were viewed positively but shared only modestly, indicating symbolic endorsement without the algorithmic promotion typical of electoral or crisis-related content. Pan-African or diplomatic positions were primarily highlighted by elite and policy influencers rather than the broader partisan base. Consequently, the overall trend supports the wider Ghanaian observation that social media primarily enhances a core, partisan, politically engaged audience: content that resonates is politically significant, partisanly understandable, or connected to larger discussions, whereas routine or developmental information is recognized but not broadly disseminated (Amankwah, 2025; Tawiah, 2025; Baba et al., 2024).

4.6 Discussion of Findings

The communicators exhibit a mix of traditionally feminine and masculine rhetorical traits. For instance, Hanna Tetteh's use of warm, familial language and inclusive pronouns reflects what feminist communication scholars label cooperative speech style (Tannen, 1990), often associated with women. Her emphasis on sisterhood and gratitude aligns with the 'soft power' approach sometimes advocated for female politicians (Celis et al., 2008). Conversely, Joyce Mogtari's assertive admonitions against 'fake news' in her May 12, 2024 post show a more

confrontational stance typically expected of seasoned politicians. This duality suggests that these women are not strictly bound by gendered expectations. Indeed, research on female MPs in Ghana (Arthur, 2013) notes that they often adopt male-coded assertiveness to gain credibility, especially on contentious issues. Mogtari's threatening tone on her May 12, 2025 X post '*You will be dealt with...crime has no expiry date*' is clearly authoritative. She balances that with more encouraging rhetoric elsewhere, indicating strategic code-switching.



The analysis reveals that female political communicators in Ghana use social media much like their male counterparts: focusing on party messaging, national issues, and campaign events. Thematic emphasis on economy, policy and campaigns aligned with the agendas of the NDC and the NPP. However, examining their content through a gender lens shows a few notable points. First, the communicators did not heavily lean on gender identity in their messages. They

did not routinely promote ‘women’s issues,’ nor did they appear constrained by gendered norms in their speech. This aligns with theoretical expectations from digital public sphere scholarship which postulates that in some ways, social media gives space to female voices, but those voices often adopt the same discourses as mainstream politics (Ruiloba-Núñez & Ruiz de Zuazu, 2024).

However, the communicators did leverage gendered appeals when useful. For example, Hanna openly rejoices in a female victory and frames it as a victory for all women in her family. This could be seen as playing to an ‘audience of women; a known phenomenon where women politicians address female voters’ interests (Fridkin & Kenney, 2008). Similarly, Sarah Adwoa Safo’s emphasis on family and sacrifice in her interviews can be interpreted as appealing to traditional Ghanaian values of womanhood to elicit empathy. Interestingly, none of the posts analyzed openly confronted misogyny or gender bias. Their avoidance of explicitly gendered grievance channels suggests a strategic neutrality they prefer to be seen as politicians first, and women second. This is consistent with Mukund (2016) who argues that Ghanaian female politicians often underplay gender identity to appear universally appealing.

Second, the communicators’ posts often contrasted the two parties’ narratives without explicit sexism. This suggests that the women can assert political stances publicly without visible penalty in their messaging style. Recent studies on digital and feminist counter publics have demonstrated that online environments often contain networked publics where women, minorities, and politically marginalized individuals share interpretations that do not completely align with the dominant public sphere, yet still engage with it directly (Lee, 2023). Research on digital feminist counter publics within social media shows that women utilize mainstream platforms, alter official narratives, and redefine controversial posts to embed gendered and accountability-focused viewpoints into broader political discourse (Walston, 2023; Peng, 2025). Research in Africa on digital media and discursive conflict also contends that social

platforms allow women and other marginalized groups to engage with and challenge prevailing political narratives simultaneously (Mpofu, 2022; CIPESA, 2023; Toumaras, 2025). In this context, when female political communicators in Ghana reshare official government content (like Adwoa Safo's 22 August 2022 reshared post featuring President Akufo-Addo) or interpret opposition material through their unique partisan perspective (as seen in Akosua Manu's 25 September 2025 X post addressing Kwabena Mintah Akandoh on sickle cell), they participate in a modern digital counter public: they operate within the major-party communication framework while contributing specific, gendered, and communicative knowledge that gradually expands the range of voices in Ghana's public discourse. These results align with 2024–2025 descriptions of African Twitter/Facebook as platforms where women control visibility, create supportive communities, and challenge dominant narratives rather than merely replicating them (Chikafa-Chipiro, 2025).

Third, compared to traditional media portrayals of women, which often focus on personal attributes or fixed roles, these communicators emphasized competence, policy, and organizational success. This finding supports content analyses in other contexts showing that women leaders on social media tend to project expertise in governance rather than stereotypical gender roles. Indeed, research suggests women in politics may emphasize empathy and collaboration while maintaining professional tone (Abbas 2022; Rosenblum & Parish 2023). The study realized a mix of empathetic framing in social topics but direct policy focus in economics.

The coding also suggests that certain gender-centred themes were under-emphasised. Recent Ghanaian governance studies already note that, although the country has moved toward an Affirmative Action/Gender Equity regime, women's concerns are not consistently articulated in everyday party communication (UNDP, 2023; ACEPA, 2024). In line with broader African work on women politicians' social-media strategies, female party communicators in this

sample appeared to prioritise partisan, governance and service-delivery messages over explicit frames such as ‘women’s empowerment’ or ‘representation’, a pattern Matsilele (2023) and Holm (2024) attribute to the need to remain legible to party hierarchies and to avoid niche-ing themselves on gender. This means that a female voter or activist looking for sustained advocacy on gender-based policy would indeed find little of it in these feeds. The gap therefore warrants further study: it may reflect deliberate self-presentation choices by women communicators who want broad partisan appeal, or it may simply mirror party-level prioritisation patterns repeatedly flagged in recent Ghanaian gender equality and social inclusion and women-in-politics reports (NETRIGHT/Star-Ghana 2024–2025; ABANTU 2021; MFWA 2024; CDD-Ghana 2024)

Scholarship on women’s political communication warns that online platforms open opportunities and replicate biases (Darkwa & Iheka, 2025; Koch et al., 2025). The study’s data lean toward the empowering side where these women did not act as passive tokens. Yet they also did not radically shift discourse norms. For example, although social media allows direct citizen interaction, the study observed minimal two-way engagement. This suggests that, as some scholars have argued, social media use by politicians often remains unidirectional (Michener & Weissman, 2020). To be transformative, communicators might need to adopt more interactive strategies.

To conclude, the content patterns support some expectations such as women post on serious issues, engage modestly, and rarely use self-deprecating ‘feminine’ language, but also challenge any notion that female communicators are fundamentally different online. Their posts mostly mirror the polarized, informational style typical of Ghanaian political media. The theoretical implication is that gender in digital political communication may be a hidden variable: these women’s presence is notable, but their messages do not self-consciously

foreground gender. Future research should further investigate whether this is a product of party strategy, cultural context, or the choices of the individuals themselves.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate how women political communicators in Ghana use social media and what their online content indicates about gender dynamics in political communication within Ghana. To accomplish this, the research utilized a qualitative content analysis approach that concentrated on the Facebook and X posts of six female party communicators spanning five years. These six communicators were purposively chosen due to their significant roles as party spokespersons or communication team members, representing each of the two major political parties. The sample consisted of three women from the National Democratic Congress (Joyce Bawah Mogtari, Hanna Tetteh, and Beatrice Annan) and three from the New Patriotic Party (Sarah Adwoa Safo, Ursula Owusu-Ekuful, and Akosua Manu).

Regarding scope and sampling, the analyzed content included posts published from January 1, 2020, to October 31, 2025. This period was selected to encompass a full election cycle and the adjacent years, thus reflecting both regular political discourse and heightened campaign-related efforts. Throughout this time, a multitude of social media posts was gathered from the official Facebook pages and X profiles of the six women. The data gathering was extensive, seeking to cover every pertinent post by these communicators to establish a strong foundation for analysis. This produced a comprehensive dataset that enabled both quantitative and qualitative analysis of their online political discourse.

Initially, the research assessed the extent of social media participation of every communicator by analyzing metrics like posting frequency and engagement across each platform. This established a foundational insight into the level of engagement each person had in the digital political conversation and which platform (Facebook or X) they used more frequently. For

example, the combined counts showed that Facebook had significant usage (almost 15,000 posts among the six women) in contrast to approximately 6,552 posts on X during the timeframe, emphasizing a stronger dependence on Facebook for outreach.

Additionally, a qualitative content analysis was conducted to determine main themes, language styles, and visual components in the posts. Employing a coding system, the researcher methodically analyzed the content of posts to identify common themes and persuasive techniques. This thematic analysis examined the major political topics addressed, the language's tone and register, and the incorporation of visuals such as photos, infographics, or videos to strengthen communication. The aim was to analyze the messaging strategies of the communicators and evaluate how these corresponded with or differed from standard political communication methods.

Furthermore, the research focused specifically on the gender-related aspects in the content. It examined if the posts by female communicators displayed signs of gender-based framing or bias such as allusions to women's topics, gender-specific language, or stereotypes. This element examined if and how the gender of the communicators affected their online messaging. Ultimately, the study analyzed how audiences interact with the posts of communicators, concluding the study's analytical framework. Engagement metrics were examined to assess how the audience reacted to various types of content. The study evaluated the reach and impact of the communicators' messages by analyzing the amount and type of reactions, comments, and shares, while noting differences across various post themes and between Facebook and X. This diverse analytical method provided a thorough approach.

5.1 Summary

In general, the six female party communicators consistently participated as active members in Ghana's online political discussions from 2020 to 2025. They kept a consistent posting activity on both Facebook and X, with engagement increasing during crucial political times like the 2024 election season. Many of these communicators shared content regularly, often several times each week during high-traffic periods, showing ongoing interaction with their audiences. Individual activity levels varied: while many contributors were very active, Sara Adwoa Safo's account was mostly inactive by 2025. Nonetheless, collectively, the group's online activities suggest that Ghanaian female political communicators are significantly engaged in utilizing social media as a key component of their political communication strategy.

The essence of their posts centered on fundamental political issues and mirrored the dominant stories in Ghana's political landscape. The analysis revealed multiple key thematic areas in their communications, such as governance and public policy, economic development efforts, social welfare initiatives, campaign mobilization and party activities, technological advancements, and sporadic international references or comparisons. These subjects resonate with the widespread development and governance concerns that usually prevail in Ghana's political discussions. In shaping their messages, the communicators frequently presented issues in ways that promoted their party's narrative – for example, highlighting government successes or, in the situation of opposition figures, criticizing the ruling party's performance. Communication often maintained a formal and informational tone, regularly citing official statements or statistics, although it was occasionally mixed with a colloquial or emotional touch for emphasis or connection. Each of the six women strategically utilized multimedia components with posts frequently featuring visuals like event photos, campaign flyers, infographics, or brief videos to boost engagement and effectiveness. This combination of content implies that their method of

using social media reflects the conventional tone of Ghanaian political discourse while also leveraging the platforms' interactive and visual elements.

Although the communicators had shared themes, the research also observed variations influenced by political affiliation and context. The three communicators from the National Democratic Congress (NDC), functioning from the opposition, frequently took a more critical and issue-centered approach in their social media engagement. They highlighted national issues such as financial difficulties and governance concerns, and specifically utilized X to provide swift analyses and critiques of the NPP administration. Their communications in dissent generally upheld an upbeat, unifying tone to portray their party as the answer to the problems highlighted, urging citizens to make informed choices and referencing national symbols for cohesion. Conversely, the communicators of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), being part of the ruling government for most of the study's duration, expressed their messages in a more practical and responsive way. Their content frequently focused on promoting government initiatives, supporting policy choices, and addressing controversies or criticisms promptly. Occasionally, particularly when facing public scrutiny, the posts from NPP communicators adopted a defensive tone – a behavior anticipated from the ruling party confronted with opposition criticism. These differences suggest that the women's digital communication approaches were influenced not just by personal preference but also by their party positions and whether they were addressing issues from a stance of opposition or being in power.

Significantly, content related to gender was mostly missing from the daily messaging of these communicators. The study revealed that the six women seldom mentioned 'women's issues' directly or used clearly gendered language in their posts. There was no sign of any consistent focus on gender issues; when gender was mentioned, it was portrayed positively or neutrally, such as recognizing a woman's leadership success, and did not overshadow the conversation. Importantly, being a woman did not seem to limit what these communicators talked about or

the way they conveyed their thoughts. They discussed the same political issues as any party representative might, and there was no indication that they had to minimize their identity or adhere to gender norms to be listened to. They completely steered clear of stereotypically feminine tropes or self-deprecating gendered language, disputing any idea that female political communicators create a fundamentally different online persona from their male peers. Basically, their presence held symbolic importance, yet their content did not explicitly highlight their gender.

Ultimately, the patterns of audience interaction with these women's social media content mirrored the usual dynamics of online political discourse in Ghana. Engagement levels were generally moderate as numerous posts received several hundred reactions and dozens of comments, particularly when the content related to prominent national events or significant policy announcements. Nonetheless, the communicators typically did not utilize their platforms to foster interactive conversations with the public. Consequently, interaction was predominantly one-sided. The reactions that took place generally reflected the divided character of Ghanaian politics with allies of the communicator's party amplifying and commending the messages, whereas opponents frequently replied with criticism. These interaction patterns suggest that although the six female communicators successfully shared their parties' messages online, they did not greatly alter the nature of political discussions on social media. Their engagement on social media bolstered party messaging and mobilization initiatives while remaining largely consistent with the established patterns of Ghana's political dialogue.

5.2 Conclusions

The following conclusions were generated from the study:

In research question one, the study found that female party communicators in Ghana have created a robust and dynamic presence in the online political arena. Each of the six women sustained strong engagement on social media, frequently using Facebook and X, and boosting their activity during significant political occurrences such as the 2024 elections to share information and connect with the public. This elevated level of engagement, akin to that of their male counterparts, shows that women in these communication positions are actively participating in online political discussions. In reality, female communicators act as engaged participants in the digital public sphere, utilizing social media similarly to their male peers to promote party agendas. They used these platforms to enhance their parties' messages. Therefore, the response to research question one is that female political communicators in Ghana actively participate in social media campaigning and outreach, challenging the idea that they are insignificant or infrequent participants online.

The analysis of content concludes that Ghana's female political communicators focus their social media posts on conventional political themes and utilize communication styles characteristic of Ghanaian political discourse. Their posts primarily concentrated on policy matters, governance and development themes, as well as campaign or party activities, rather than personal or unconventional topics. In expressing these themes, the women incorporated a mix of formal, informative language along with occasional informal or local phrases to engage with audiences. They consistently utilized visual components to amplify their messages. In conclusion, the answer to research question two indicates that these women communicators engage with social media in a way that reflects traditional political communication standards. This suggests that their communication methods on Facebook and X are in strong alignment

with the overall party communication strategy and do not significantly diverge into distinctive or gender-specific content styles.

The research reveals minimal signs of explicit gender bias or communication differences based on gender in the social media posts of female communicators. In addressing research question three, the key conclusion is that gender did not emerge as a significant or controversial element of their communication. The women rarely highlighted their gender or issues specifically related to women in their posts. They refrained from using gender-based slurs or stereotypes towards others, and they also avoided self-referential gendered terms. The content reveals no proof that these women minimized their gender to conform to stereotypes and very little use of feminist or women-focused appeals. Their messages highlighted competence, policy, and party stances, suggesting they prioritized communication as politicians first instead of as ‘female politicians.’ Any gender signals were typically positive or symbolic and were not central to their overall story. Consequently, being a woman did not significantly change what or how these communicators opted to share. This conclusion indicates that the female party communicators managed their online roles without introducing gender bias, aligning their communication with mainstream political discourse rather than utilizing their platforms to emphasize gender issues.

In response to research question four, the study finds that engagement from users with content by Ghana's female political communicators was reasonable in amount and mainly mirrored existing partisan divisions. Engagement trends reflected what is common in Ghanaian political social media: posts about prominent partisan issues such as campaign events and significant policy declarations received the highest engagement, mainly from supporters of the women’s party, whereas opposition backers sometimes reacted with criticism. In general, the women’s content garnered a consistent yet unremarkable amount of engagement suggesting a commendable presence among politically engaged audiences. Nonetheless, the character of this

interaction was primarily unidirectional. The communicators seldom pursued or encouraged interactive interactions and, therefore, did not foster extensive dialogue with their audience. Supporters enhanced the messages through likes, shares, and reiterating party rhetoric, while opponents utilized replies to express dissent, reflecting the divided atmosphere of political discourse. Importantly, the presence of women in these positions did not significantly alter audience engagement; the trends stayed comparable to the typical social media activity of any political figure in Ghana. Research question four indicates that the social media posts from female communicators generated engagement that was moderate, partisan, and mainly supportive or critical according to party affiliation, failing to promote new types of interactive political discussions.

Beyond the specific research questions, several broader conclusions emerge from this study, offering insights into political communication practices, the role of digital platforms, and the question of gender in Ghanaian politics:

Continuity in Political Communication Patterns: The results suggest that social media has primarily expanded the current trends of political communication in Ghana. Women party communicators, although emerging voices in the digital arena, mainly discuss significant matters and adopt a tone that reflects the divided, information-focused discussions characteristic of Ghanaian political media. Their presence contests any belief that women communicate in inherently distinct manners; indeed, the content challenges any idea that female communicators are fundamentally different online. Conventional political narratives and agenda topics persistently prevail, indicating that the digital platform is utilized to enhance traditional message tactics. Essentially, political social media content, even with increased representation of women, continues to align with the tone and emphasis of Ghana's longstanding political communication traditions.

Use of Digital Platforms as Broadcast Tools: The study highlights that Facebook and X serve as significant platforms for political communication in Ghana. However, they are primarily used as one-way broadcasting tools instead of spaces for discussion and debate. The six female communicators successfully incorporated these digital platforms into their communication strategies, broadening the audience for party messages and leveraging platform-specific dynamics. Nonetheless, the interactive possibilities of social media remain largely untapped: the communicators failed to encourage two-way conversations with citizens, as shown by the few invitations for dialogue and the minimal direct responses to followers. Consequently, in this scenario, digital platforms function to enhance and speed up partisan messaging, but they have not fundamentally altered the top-down essence of political communication. Social media is broadening the reach of political figures to online audiences, yet its application remains more akin to conventional mass media broadcasting than an interactive ‘digital town hall.’

Gender as a ‘Hidden Variable’ in Political Discourse: A key broader understanding is that enhancing the visibility of women in political communication roles does not necessarily lead to a heightened focus on gender issues in political discussions. In this research, the presence of female communicators stands out, but their messages do not consciously emphasize gender. One theoretical implication indicates that gender in digital political communication could be an unseen factor, yet it often stays unrecognized regarding content topics. Social media has provided these women with a platform and a voice, yet it has not fundamentally changed gendered patterns of political discourse in Ghana. The women often emphasized widely recognized national concerns rather than gender-focused advocacy, suggesting that structural influences such as party platforms and cultural standards affect their communication strategies. This results in a wider conclusion that although Ghana has progressed in including women in the political communication arena, the essential substance of political communication has largely stayed consistent. Gender factors appear only in nuanced forms, indicating that the

presence of female communicators on Facebook and X alone has not shifted the political discourse toward different subjects or more inclusive stories. Their involvement is a significant move for representation, but it has not yet been utilized to integrate explicit gendered viewpoints into mainstream political discourse.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations were derived:

5.3.1 Female Political Communicators

As their current roles predominantly reflect party messaging with little focus on women's issues, these six communicators need to incorporate more gender-related topics into their content to utilize their distinct viewpoints and engage new audiences. They ought to progress past one-sided broadcasting by encouraging greater audience participation through questions, polls, or live chats, to promote two-way conversation and enhanced involvement. Ultimately, expanding their platform usage by incorporating visual-focused networks such as Instagram or TikTok in addition to Facebook and X would enable them to reach younger female audiences outside of their existing followers.

5.3.2 Other Female and Male Political Actors

Other political figures, regardless of gender, can draw insights from these trends to improve their online communication. Women politicians need to more explicitly tackle gender equity topics in their social media communications, as this study found that even female communicators frequently adhered to a gender-neutral party platform. Male politicians and party leaders must also promote and endorse gender-oriented content, acknowledging that

women's viewpoints are still insufficiently represented in the online political conversation. Politicians of all genders should transition from one-sided communication to engaging in dialogue with followers, as actively addressing comments and feedback can expand their reach and lessen the polarized echo chamber effects seen online.

5.3.3 Policymakers

Policymakers need to establish a more supportive digital landscape for inclusive political dialogue. Making sure social media stays affordable and accessible, along with digital literacy programs, is essential for women and marginalized groups to engage fully in online political discussions. Governments and pertinent organizations, alongside civil society, ought to invest in empowering women in political roles through capacity-building initiatives. For example, government and pertinent organizations can fund workshops on the effective use of social media, practices for digital security, and handling online harassment. Moreover, electoral and media authorities need to ensure polite online campaigning. Well-defined guidelines or codes of conduct addressing sexist or abusive content, implemented in partnership with social media platforms, would aid in preventing gender-based violence and safeguarding the voices of female politicians.

5.3.4 Academia

Scholarly investigation ought to broaden this study by exploring a larger variety of women in politics, rather than just primary communicators, to determine if the patterns noted here are applicable generally, and by investigating why numerous female communicators choose a gender-neutral tone in their communication. Researchers should also examine audience interactions, such as contrasting public replies to male and female politicians, to identify

variations in engagement and the level of gender-related harassment in responses. Ultimately, it is advisable to conduct cross-platform comparisons and longitudinal studies extending past 2025 to understand how online gendered political communication develops alongside evolving social media trends.

5.3.5 Civil Society Organizations

CSOs must partner with the government to enhance women's digital participation by jointly organizing workshops that provide female politicians with social media strategy expertise, digital security awareness, and techniques to address online harassment. Considering the evidence that female politicians endure unequal harassment on social media, civil society organizations need to track and reveal this abuse while urging platforms and authorities to ensure that offenders are held responsible. Ultimately, civil society can promote more stringent standards for online political behavior by supporting ethical codes for campaigning that penalize hate speech and sexism, enhancing official efforts to create safer digital environments for women.

5.4 Limitations

First, the study's sample was limited to six individuals in the NDC and NPP parties, which may not capture diversity across regions, ages, or party factions. It also did not analyze posts from 2025 fully, and the timeframe emphasized election-related content; patterns in non-election years could differ. Second, although Facebook and X were treated equally, the study relied more on accessible posts and images. Future work should obtain systematic datasets from both platforms for comparison. Third, the analysis focused on content characteristics and not network analysis. As a result, it could not measure the real-world reach of each post beyond

anecdotal metrics. Finally, while the study noted audience reactions qualitatively, it did not conduct sentiment analysis or user surveys, which could provide deeper insights into public perception. These gaps suggest caution in generalizing beyond the six cases, but the findings nonetheless illuminate important trends in Ghanaian digital politics.

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APPENDIX

CONTENT ANALYSIS CODING SHEET

Below is the table structure coding spreadsheet, aligned with my research questions, to analyse the activities of female political communicators on Facebook and X in Ghana.

The coding sheet has been divided into two parts. The first analyses general data about each post, comment or contribution. The second tailored towards the specific research question at hand.

General Coding Sheet

Column	Coding Category	Description / Codebook Notes	Example Values
A	Post ID	Unique identifier for each post	F1-2023-07-12-X01
B	Date	Date of post	12/07/2023
C	Post Type	Format of content	Text / Image / Video / Live / Mixed
D	Time of Posting	When does the communicator normally post	Morning, Afternoon, Evening, Night
E	Visibility of Women	What is the focus of the post	Women centered / Mixed gender / Men centered.
F	Following	What is the number of followers on Facebook and X	Akosua Manu has 50k follows on X and 300k on FaceBook

Coding Sheet Based on Research Question

Variable ID	Coding Category	Description	Example
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Research Question 1: What is the level of involvement of females in political communication on Facebook and X in Ghana?			
1.1 Platform	Facebook / X (Twitter) / Both	Identifies the platform where the post appears.	Post from “Hon. Abena Osei-Asare” page = Facebook.
1.2 Post Frequency	Daily / Weekly / Monthly / Rare	The frequency with which the communicator posts political content.	Four political posts per week = Weekly.
1.3 Post Type	Original post / Shared post / Retweet / Quote tweet	Distinguishes whether the communicator created or circulated content.	Retweet of party campaign material = Retweet.
1.4 Role of Communicator	MP / Minister / Party official / Activist / Other	The political role or designation of the communicator.	Deputy Minister of Finance = Minister.
Research Question 2: What themes, language styles, and visual elements do female political communicators in Ghana use on Facebook and X?			
2.1 Themes	Governance / Policy / Development / Gender issues / Corruption / Elections / Campaigning / International relations / Other	The main subject matter of the post.	Post on improving access to healthcare = Development.
2.2 Language Style	Formal English / Local language / Mixed / Informal / Satirical / Inspirational	The type of language used in framing the post.	“Let’s fix our schools, not just promise” = Informal.

2.3 Tone	Positive / Neutral / Negative / Critical / Persuasive	Emotional or rhetorical character of the message.	Criticism of corruption scandal = Negative.
2.4 Visual Elements	Photo / Video / Infographic / Meme / Livestream / Mixed	Types of visuals accompanying the post	Campaign rally video = Video.
2.5 Multimodal Indicators	Text-only / Text + Image / Text + Video / Text + Emoji / Mixed	Combination of modalities used.	Tweet with photo and emojis = Text + Image + Emoji.
Research Question 3: To what extent do gender biases manifest in the themes, language, and visuals utilized by female political communicators?			
3.1 Gender References in Text	No gender reference / Implicit gender framing / Explicit gender framing	Identifies if the post uses gendered language.	“As women, we must...” = Explicit.
3.2 Visual Gender Cues	Neutral imagery / Feminine-coded imagery / Masculine-coded imagery	Representation of women through clothing, setting, or symbolism.	Political communicator wearing party “battle-ready” attire = Masculine-coded imagery.
3.3 Bias Indicators	Stereotyping / Tokenism / Empowerment / Neutral	Presence of gender bias or empowerment.	“First woman to...” framed as novelty = Tokenism.
Research Question 4: What is the nature of user interaction with posts from female political communicators?			
4.1 Engagement Type	Likes/Reactions / Comments / Shares/Retweets / Mentions / Hashtags	Identifies the form of user interaction.	150 retweets = Retweets.

4.2 Engagement Level	Low (0–50) / Moderate (51–200) / High (201–500) / Very High (500+)	Volume of user responses.	600 comments = Very High.
4.3 Sentiment of User Responses	Positive / Neutral / Negative / Mixed	Overall tone of user comments or replies.	Praise for a new policy = Positive.
4.4 Interactivity Cues	Call to action / Direct address / Question / None	Whether the communicator prompts user participation.	“Tell me what you think in the comments” = Question