



Women's Participation And Representation In Local Level Governance In Ghana: A Case Study Of Wa Municipality Of The Upper West Region

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ABSTRACT

The quest for increased female participation and representation in district assembly governance process is a critical concern in Ghana. This is because, it is a fundamental right of women to be given equal chance to contest for political office. In this paper, the study seeks to contribute to the debate on challenges which hinder women's active political participation and representation in district assembly governance process in the Wa municipality. To achieve this goal, purposive sampling technique was used to select the sixty-one respondents for the study. Data for the study was collected through the use of in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. The study showed that socio-cultural practices, inadequate access to financial resources for political campaigns, lack of capacity and confidence coupled with the perceptions that politics is "a dirty game" are the challenges that hinder women's participation and representation in local governance in the Municipality. The findings suggest that the introduction of affirmative action by government and political parties, provision of financial support to potential women candidates who are interested to contest district assembly elections, training and educating women to improve their political consciousness, as well as the introduction of outreach programmes to intensify advocacy on the issue of gender equality in society are likely to improve women's participation and representation in local politics in the Wa Municipality.

Keywords: Political Consciousness, Local Governance, Affirmative Action, Political Participation, Political Representation.

INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades, women's participation and representation in politics has become one of the broadest and most debated policies worldwide. The First World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975 and other successive conferences including the Second World Conference on Women in Denmark in 1980, the Beijing Conference on Women in the 1990s and the World Summit for Social Development in

Denmark in 1995 brought to the fore the issue of gender equality in decision making positions and governance systems. Globally, many countries including Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, France, Netherlands, South Africa, Rwanda, Egypt, Jordan, Argentina, Belgium, Eritrea, Korea, Taiwan have all adopted the advocacy measure and introduced electoral quotas with the goal to increase women's participation and representation in public and political offices (Dahlerup & Lenita, 2005). While the Nordic democracies used to lead the world in the proportion of women in parliament, the list is now headed by authoritarian Rwanda (with almost two-thirds as of 2015), with the top-twenty including authoritarian Cuba and Angola as well as the hybrid regimes of Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Mozambique (Inter Parliamentary Union, 2015). In addition, Arab authoritarian regimes, which for a long time laggards in women's representation, have made progress over the decade. For example Algeria and Sudan moved from single digits to almost one-third, and Saudi Arabia from zero to one-fifth (Hawkesworth, 2012).

The reality is that, women's participation and representation in politics promotes democratic governance, political equality and justice which are the key requirements for effective development (Kurebwa, 2014; Bauer, 2012; Lawless & Fox, 2012). According to Alexander (2012), women participation and representation in politics brings to governments a greater sense of political legitimacy and that globally, women's participation and representation in politics has improved steadily in recent decades. For example, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2013) concedes that as at the end of 2012 parliaments, America had 24.1 percent women Members of Parliament, up from 16.5 percent in 2002. Moreover, European countries have also made considerable strides over the past ten years in relation to women participation and representation in parliaments.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, women's parliamentary participation and representation has also increased tremendously in recent times. As noted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2013), by the end of 2012, the region averaged 20.4 per cent women Member of Parliaments, which was higher than 13.6 percent in 2002. Studies by Bauer (2012), Barnes & Burchard (2013), and Clayton (2015) have posited that the widespread endorsement of constitutional quota systems and or electoral laws for women in many countries around the globe is one of the political developments in contemporary times which has explicitly led to increase in women's participation and representation in politics. As explained by the Inter Parliamentary Union (2013), constitutional quota system and or electoral quotas explicitly place the burden of candidate recruitment not on the individual woman but on those who control the recruitment process.

In Africa, Ghana was one of the first countries to adopt an affirmative action policy which established a quota of forty percent for women's participation and representation in Public Boards, Commissions, the Cabinet and Council of State (Ghana, 1992). In addition, the country endorsed the Beijing Conference Declaration on gender equality and rights in public office in the 1990s. At the continental level, Ghana has also endorsed and adopted the Africa Union's Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality and the Africa Charter Protocol on Women's Rights (Allah-Mensah, 2001). According to Allah-Mensah (2001), these initiatives marked a watershed in improving the public's attitude towards women's equality in politics. Despite these initiatives made by government officials, activists, donor communities and scholars to improve the level of women's participation and representation in political office in Ghana, the gender gap in terms of participation and representation in political office both at the national and district assembly levels still leaves much to be desired. For example, in Ghana, women consist of about 51.6 percent of the country's total population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012), yet, women have low participation and representation in political offices at both national and district levels. Studies carried out by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) published in 2013 indicated that women in Ghana were marginalized and remained the minority in the political landscape. As documented by the report, women in parliament in 2012 were only twenty eight, representing 10.2 percent out of the total two hundred and seventy-five parliamentarians (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2013).

At the local government level, it is a fact that women's participation and representation is unequal with their men counterparts in district assemblies in Ghana. According to Yobo (2012b), since 1994, women's participation and representation in local governance is about ten percent. For instance, in 2010, there were

four hundred and twelve representing 7.95 percent of women out of the six thousand, and ninety -three members in District Assemblies in Ghana (Ahwoi, 2010; Yobo, 2012b), which was far below the United Nations minimum standard of thirty-three percent (Manuh, 2011). Data on the recent District Assembly elections in Ghana conducted on September 1, 2015 also indicated that there were only one thousand one hundred and eighty-two females and seventeen thousand seven hundred and fifty-six males who contested the elections (Coalition of Domestic Election Observers, 2015).

In Ghana, the Wa Municipal Assembly like other districts share similar challenges regarding women's participation and representation in local government elections. Currently, out of the forty-one Assembly Members in the Wa Municipal Assembly, there are only five women, representing eleven percent of Assembly Members in the Municipality (Wa Municipal Assembly, 2015). This leaves much to be desired because the district assemblies are the linchpins of Ghana's local level development, consequently the low participation and representation of women in the local government system is likely to stunt the country's political and economic development (Yobo, 2012b). This is primarily because targeted programmes and policies for women are not likely to succeed in addressing the problems of majority of the rural poor if women are not involved in the formulation and implementation of these initiatives and programmes meant for them (Rodenberg, 2001; cited in Apusigah, 2004).

In addition, Clayton (2015), and Kerevel & Atkeson (2013) also opined that women's participation and representation in politics are key to both long-standing and new democracies because within the liberal democracy environment, the representative system is still a key route to channel citizens' interests, opinions, and demands in policy-making processes. Consequently, an increase in women's level of participation and representation in politics has a positive effect on their political freedom and the promotion of justice within the state.

In view of the above, the paper seeks to examine the challenges that hinder women's active participation and representation in local government politics. In addition, the paper also seeks to provide recommendations to address the challenges facing women's active participation and representation in local government politics in the Wa Municipal Assembly. Premised on this, the paper is structured as follows: The introduction which provides the conceptual and theoretical bases of the study, the methodology, findings and discussions, conclusions and recommendations.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUES

Factors Influencing Women's Participation and Representation in Politics

According to Alexander (2012), one of the key variables which accounts for women's participation and representation in politics is the availability of financial resources for female candidates for political campaigning during the electioneering period. However, in developing countries, women have limited access to financial resources because the division of labour is skewed against women owing to their sex, gender roles and class. Consequently, women become the preferred workforce whose labour is categorized in the lower employment groups. As explained by Alexander (2012), the limited access to financial resources constrain potential women candidates from running for political office, since they need sufficient financial resources to do this.

Similarly, Beaman, Duflo, Pande & Topalova (2012) argue that, in many Third World countries, the electorate do not have trust in women and thus doubt the capabilities of potential women candidates because they see them as lacking the necessary experience and knowledge to perform well in political office although they are equally qualified and capable like their male counterparts. According to Beaman, Duflo, Pande & Topalova (2012), this kind of bias against women in politics arises due to the social stereotypes associated with women; that they are good in performing the traditional gender roles. Consequently, when making decisions on candidates to vote for in an election, the electorate invoke myriad of issues on potential women candidates in terms of their suitability for the position they are vying for. Emphasising the point further, Beaman, Duflo, Pande & Topalova (2012) note that, although sometimes the influence of quota system serves as an advantage to women candidates contesting political positions in many parts of the world, nonetheless, in most cases, the traits and the level of respect giving to male politicians are considered as more crucial for holding political office than women. In addition to

the above, Kanthak & Woon (2014) also argue that the gender role ideology is used as an ideological instrument by patriarchal societies to place burdens on women which are not usually faced by men. According to Kanthak & Woon (2014), in the developing countries, women often face a lot of burden when they contest for political office because, women have a responsibility to their household chores and the family. As traditional caregivers, women have the added responsibility of taking care of the sick and the elderly. As a result, if women involve themselves in politics, they are more likely to take on another responsibility to increase their roles in society. Consequently, most women do not have positive attitudes and commitment to run for political office. This largely account for low level of participation and representation of women in politics in Africa.

Other writers, including Krook & Schwindt- Bayer (2013, p.12) also posit that the nature of politics in the Third World countries is also responsible for the inclusion or exclusion of women in politics. According to Krook & Schwindt-Bayer (2013, p.12), "politics is conceptualized as an articulation, or working out of relationships within an already given power structure". This conception of politics is in sharp contrast with the traditional view of politics as an activity, a conscious, deliberate participation and the process by which resources are allocated among citizens. As a result, politics restricts political activity only to the public arena, hence, the private sphere of family life is rendered as apolitical. Thus, this public-private dichotomy in the traditional definition of politics is used to exclude women from running for political office and even when they are brought into the forefront in politics, they are mainly entered as mothers and wives.

Kittilson & Schwindt -Bayer (2012) also contend that the growing preference for male domination against women in political parties has a great influence on women's political participation and representation in politics in Africa. They further indicated that, in Africa in general, and West Africa in particular, male dominated political parties encourage a male perspective on issues of national significance, whereby women's perspectives are often relegated to the background, which often times do not reflect in the politics of their parties. In addition, in the male dominated political parties, women are mostly giving little attention in terms of the allocation of the executive positions in the party. This widespread gender stereotype restricts the promotion of women's political space and advancement within political parties.

In their investigation into women's low participation and representation in politics, Childs & Krook (2009) reveal that the subordinate status of women vis-à-vis men in politics is a universal phenomenon, even though, there are differences and degrees of subordination across countries in the world. As explained by Childs & Krook (2009), gender role ideology creates duality of femininity and masculinity, by placing them in hierarchical fashion whereby the female sex is by and large valued less than the male sex due to their socially ascribed roles as traditional caregivers. According to Childs & Krook (2009), these primary roles as mothers and wives with competing domestic responsibilities constrain them from engaging in other activities including politics.

In Krook & O'Brien's (2012) study entitled "*All the President's Men? The Appointment of Female Cabinet Ministers Worldwide*" the authors argue that some of the socio-cultural practices in Africa have great influence on women's participation and representation in public office. In explaining their point, Krook & O'Brien (2012) indicate that politics in general require interactions among individuals; either male or female to engage in discussions and deliberations on issues and policies which are vital for the interest and welfare of citizens in society. However, in many Third World countries, some of the socio-cultural practices including sex segregation overtly oppose women's interactions with their men counterparts in society. This kind of socio-cultural practice presents a challenge to women when contesting for political office in a male dominated political environment.

The Feminist Theory

Feminism is an ideology which seeks not only to place women on a higher pedestal, but also portrays the contributions of women in society (Banks, 1986). The feminists' movement is linked with the enlightenment doctrine of natural rights which delineates the contribution of women in society. Feminism as a social movement began in the 16th century (Banks, 1986). This movement sought to oppose women's domination at work places as well as the denial of women's access to right to participate in

public and political offices. The central thesis of the feminist theory is that the difference regarding participation and representation in public and political offices between men and women is viewed to be caused by social and economic conditions as opposed to natural conditions (Ramazanoglu, 1989).

Feminist theory is categorized into three perspectives namely the Liberal feminist perspective, Radical feminist perspective, and Marxist feminist perspective. The common thread underlying the three perspectives is how to end the gender inequality, because gender inequality violates fundamental human rights, thwarts developments and fosters social, economic and political injustices and instability in society. Liberal feminism perspective is the first feminist social movement which began to champion the improvement of the rights and liberties of women in society. The liberal feminist movement focused much on justice and equality of women with men in both public and political life. According to the liberal feminists, women suffer a great deal of social, economic and political injustices due to sex segregation. Arguably, the liberal feminist belief had existed for long time, before it became widespread in Europe and the United States in the mid-1880s (Ramazanoglu, 1989). Although, liberal feminism was the first movement which sought to fight injustice against women in public and political life in ensuring that women are brought at par with their men counterparts in society, nonetheless, the liberal feminist perspective only criticized the practices that discriminate against women in liberal democratic environment without critically examining the sources of inequalities that exist between the sexes. Moreover, scholars of the liberal feminist perspective also failed to appreciate the fact that the relationships that exist between the sexes in society have specific power relations (Cunningham, 2008).

Another perspective of the feminist theory is radical feminism. This perspective criticizes the conventional wisdom by redefining the most intimate of human relations as political rather than private in society. Scholars of radical feminism persistently do not accept the liberal feminist perspective which seeks to get justice through the use of existing social order in society. Radical feminism argues that women are generally oppressed, controlled and physically subjugated by men regardless of whether these can affect women's advancement in society (Ramazanoglu, 1989). In view of this, radical feminists believe that the key strategy to women's empowerment is to get rid of all the restrictions on women that intensify their domination by their men counterparts. In particular, the radical feminists seek to oust the patriarchal system, which subjugate women into positions that intensify their vulnerability. In the view of radical feminists, this variant of feminism could stop if organizations especially Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other women organizations begin to campaign against the restrictions being placed on women in societies (Cunningham, 2008). In essence, although, the radical feminists recognize the role of Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and women groups in helping to addressing the injustices confronting women in societies, the demand for separation between the sexes in society is criticized by other scholars in the field of feminist studies, because it is seen as an orientation towards the western culture.

Thirdly, as noted by Ramazanoglu (1989), the Marxist perspective of feminism relates to power difference that exists among men and women in society. According to Ramazanoglu (1989), women subordination to their men counterparts is seen as a class struggle between the sexes in society. For example, Marxist feminists argue that, capitalism is the underlying cause of women's oppression in society. In explaining the point, Ramazanoglu (1989) indicates that the capitalist system contributes to the creation of economic inequality, in which a particular category of people especially women in the working class are economically exploited in ways that their men counterparts are not treated in the work environment. This capitalist system, according to the Marxist feminists has intensified women vulnerability and thereby creating bias against women in holding positions in public and political offices. According to Marxist feminist scholars, such biases are readily apparent in societies, but the underlying mechanism to erase these biases against women in holding positions in societies remain opaque. The dominant view is that many men in the developed and developing world do not accept the feminist case regarding women's social, economic and political empowerment. In addition, even among the women groups, those who are championing the cause of women's empowerment in both the developed and

developing world are still in the minority and this further explains the low level of women's participation in governance system in most parts of the world.

METHODOLOGY

Study Setting and Research Design

The Wa Municipality is one of the eleven District/Municipal Assemblies in the Upper West Region of Ghana. The Wa Municipality was upgraded from the then Wa District in 2004 with Legislative Instrument (L1) 1800 in pursuance of the policy of decentralization which started in 1988. The Municipality is bordered to the North by Nadowli- Kaleo District, to the South by both Wa East and Wa West Districts, to the East and West by Wa West and Wa East Districts. Wa Municipality lies within latitudes $1^{\circ} 40' N$ to $2^{\circ} 45' N$ and longitude $9^{\circ} 32' W$ to $10^{\circ} 20' W$ (Wa Municipal Assembly, 2015). Wa, the capital of the Wa Municipal Assembly also serves as the regional capital of the Upper West Region of Ghana. The Municipality has a landmass area of approximately 234.74 square kilometers, which is about 6.4% of the region, with a total population of 135,638 (Wa Municipal Assembly, 2015). The implications of the location of the municipality for development include; enhancing bilateral trade and commerce with the Franco phone countries. Wa town has the potential to grow and be upgraded into both an industrial and commercial hub for the North – Western corridor of Ghana. In addition, on distribution of settlements according to sizes, Wa Municipal Assembly has a population of 135,638 which constitutes almost 15.3% of the region's total population. The annual rate of growth of the population is estimated as 2.7%. About 33.7% of the population live in areas classified as rural (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012).

The researchers adopted the case study design in this study. This can be considered to be the most appropriate design because going deeper into a problem and focusing on one context gives the researchers the advantage of providing a more detailed result which enables a deeper insight of the problem. A case study design mostly provides qualitative data rather than quantitative data for analysis and interpretation (Sekaran, 2003). In addition, the purposive sampling method was adopted to select the respondents for the study. From the initial enumeration exercise, the researchers obtained a list of women groups in the Wa Municipality. Out of the lists, forty women were purposively selected for the study. Furthermore, other categories of people were also selected for the study. They were eight senior public servants, eight educationists, four traditional rulers, and the Municipal Chief Executive. In all, sixty-one respondents were purposively selected from Wa Municipality. The purposive sampling technique was used because information sought for the study could only be provided by these identified groups of people.

Methods of data collection

Data was collected from the field through in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions combined with literature review. Data was collected from respondents of different backgrounds from the Wa Municipality from 24th March to 24th April, 2015. The data collection was divided into two parts. The first part focused on gathering data from the women respondents. Data for the second part was collected from key informants including senior public servants, educationists, traditional rulers, and the Municipal Chief Executive in the Wa Municipal Assembly. The rationale behind the study was to analyze the respondents' experiences and perceptions of the challenges which impinge on women's political participation and representation as well as the measures to be taken, if any, to enhance women's political participation and representation in the Wa Municipal Assembly. In order to earn the trust from the women respondents, the researchers visited the communities in the Wa Municipality three times. This gave the researchers the opportunity to get access to detailed data on the topic of study including; factors which serve as challenges for women's political participation and representation, and more general information on the gender prejudices and behaviors which are disempowering women to run for political offices in the Wa Municipal Assembly.

The in-depth interviews were conducted with the relevant actors to collect data for the study. The in-depth interviews were carried out in the evening in the respondents' residence. The choice of the evening for the interview was appropriate because it was difficult to meet respondents in the morning since the respondents leave as early as 7:30 every morning to do their businesses. The interview technique used for the data collection was informal and conventional in nature which made it possible for the researchers

to probe further when the respondents' response to a question necessitated follow-up questioning. This helped to generate more useful and detailed data of the dynamics that have characterized women's participation and representation in politics in the Wa Municipal Assembly. In addition, a focus group discussion was also conducted to generate data for the study. This technique of data collection was in the form of an in-depth interview but with selected groups instead of individuals. In all, five focus group discussions were held for the study. Each group consisted of seven members. Men and women were separated in the discussions. The focus group discussion was interactive processes, consequently, it provided unique advantages to the study. Each focus group discussion lasted between twenty-five and thirty minutes. On the whole, the data gathered through in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions were supplemented with secondary documents for the analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part of the paper discusses the views of respondents on the women's participation and representation in local level governance in Ghana; specifically the Wa Municipal Assembly of the Upper West Region. The issues assessed included the socio-cultural practices, inadequate access to financial resources, lack of capacity and confidence, and the perception of politics as a dirty game.

Socio-Cultural Practices

Socio-cultural practices were found to be one of the challenges that hinder women's political participation and representation even at the local level where they have greater public visibility. These socio-cultural practices which manifest themselves as attitudes and values have gained acceptance over long period of repeated practices in the Municipality. According to the study, the people of the Wa Municipality are largely patriarchal in social organization. As a result, men are the head of families and therefore take decisions on behalf of their families whilst women are socially disempowered and tied to domestic activities such as cooking, keeping the home, and supporting children education. Similar findings emerged from the study were that even women who stood and contested positions with men were discriminated upon by the electorate during voting because the electorate had more trust in men than women in the political sphere. These socio-cultural practices, according to the findings had placed restrictions on women from running for political office in the Municipality. This assertion agrees with Krook & O'Brien's (2012) study which argues that, socio-cultural practices of societies have a greater negative influence on women's participation and representation in public offices.

Inadequate Access to Financial Resources

Access to financial resources is critical to help influence women's willingness to enter into politics, because women would need adequate financial resources to run for political offices (Alexander, 2012). However, this was not the case in the Wa Municipality. It was revealed during the fieldwork that women in the Municipality did not have access to financial resources for immediate use to contest for political positions. The point is that women in the Municipality engaged mainly in informal economic activities such as local cake making, "pito" brewing, selling of shea-butter, petty trading, and trading in food crops. Consequently, they did not generate enough income as compared to men who run large investments and businesses in the Municipality. This, according to the study served as a challenge to women's active involvement in mainstream political activities in the Municipality. During the fieldwork, the interactions with women also revealed a number of interesting results. For instance a former assembly woman, who was initially feeling shy to contribute to the discussions came out boldly and suddenly outlined her opinion as follows:

I contested about three times and lost to my opponents due to financial constrains but when I got financial support from some Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other philanthropists for my campaign, I was able to win the election in my electoral area (Fieldwork, 2015).

Information gathered from the focus group discussion revealed that, the prospective candidate who is contesting for the district assembly elections must also be financially resourced throughout the campaign period, because, a candidate running for political office at the local level is expected to host campaign and fund events. In addition, the most challenging issue is that in some cases candidates are effectively

anticipated to “buy” support within their electoral areas by offering little amounts of money and food to the electorate, as well as giving gifts and make contributions to support fund raising events, funerals, weddings and community programmes. These huge costs present a challenge for women as they tend to be poorer and have little access to financial resources than men, who use their personal resources and their wives’ financial support, and other financial supports accessed through patronage networks for their campaign. This often times make potential candidates particularly women unwilling to contest for political offices thereby giving way to their male counterparts who have financial resources to organize campaigns and political rallies for political position in the Municipality.

Lack of Capacity and Confidence

Lack of capacity and confidence is one of the key challenges that hinder women’s political participation and representation in local politics. Data from the fieldwork revealed that potential women candidates considering running for political offices in the Municipality often think that their lack of education would not favour them because they did not have the requisite experience of public speaking through the use of the English Language. Actually, this should not be a problem to the potential women candidates who are not educated or with low level of education. This is because, according to Section 54 of the Local Government Act (Act 462), a district assembly should organize its assembly sessions in English or any Ghanaian Language common to the district assembly members. Nonetheless, interview with the respondents revealed that, the standing orders and other reports are deliberated in English Language during assembly sessions. This development persistently appears to present challenges to assembly members in the Municipal Assembly who could neither speak, read nor write English language.

The issue of the use of English Language as the medium of communication in all the assembly’s deliberations was probed further during the focus group discussion. A former assembly member remarked: Some of our women assembly members who represent the interests of people in their electoral areas in the Municipal Assembly are always handicapped and cannot make proper contributions due to the use of the English Language as a medium of communication in assembly sessions. Consequently, our election into such position does not actually benefit the people we are supposed to serve (Fieldwork, 2015).

In light of the above, it is clear that, although women constituted about 51.1 percent of the total population they are not interested in local politics because they lack the capacity and confidence to use English language as medium of communication in assembly sessions partly due to their low level of education or complete lack of education. This supports Beaman, Duflo, Pande & Topalova (2012) argument that in many Third World countries, the electorate do not have trust in women and thus doubt the capabilities of potential women candidates because they see them as lacking the necessary experience and knowledge to perform well in political office.

The Perception of Politics as a ‘Dirty’ Game

Women perceive politics as a ‘dirty’ game. This perception reflects the reality of the situation in the Wa Municipality. Data from the fieldwork revealed that women candidates face stigma in the communities because it is commonly perceived that women who engage in politics become *cheap and immoral like prostitutes*; who provide sexual favours to unscrupulous men in leadership positions for financial assistance in order to run for political positions. Sometimes, women are also seen as not having matured mental faculties like their men counterparts. Due to this, women do not have the interest of entering into local politics in the Municipality. The issue of the perception of politics as a "dirty" game was further explored in the focus group discussion. One of the former assembly members in the Wa Municipality remarked:

Women candidates entering into local politics face outright intimidation and disapproval from their communities and electoral areas. In the communities and the electoral areas, such potential candidates running for political offices are depicted as beautiful objects for fashion competitions and film stars than to contest for political office (Fieldwork, 2015).

This perspective suggests that most women do not have the same potential as men. Women are not very good campaigners, organizers and do not have matured mental faculties to debate on public policy.

However, they are only good at helping to solve social problems, such as divorce and the growth of minor crimes in the households level. Such views hardly promote women's sense of self-worth and self-respect or encourage them to take on positions of public responsibility. Thus, for many women, the fear of such stigma is sufficient to stop them from running for a political position in the Municipality. This finding ties in well with Childs & Krook's (2009) assertion which states that women's primary roles as mothers and wives with competing domestic responsibilities constrain them from engaging into other activities including politics.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings and the discussions so far, there are evidences that there are a number of challenges which prevent women from running for political offices in the Wa Municipality. Yet, a number of arguments point to the fact that women's participation and representation in politics is key to their empowerment, fosters fundamental human rights and also enhances the democratization of governance. These arguments are categorized as follows: justice argument, interest argument, and symbolic argument. According to the justice argument, women have a right to occupy a half of the positions in political offices since they make up half of the population. The dominant view underpinning the justice argument is that, this is more likely to help reduce the gender inequality, and therefore helps to improve women's empowerment in society.

In addition, another perspective against gender inequality in politics is best understood through the interest argument. Generally, the interest argument concedes that women and men have conflicting interests, which cannot be represented by men. Furthermore, the interest argument also posits that women are considered as extremely capable in many areas such as child caring and hosting. Besides, the interest argument has established that, women are often viewed as superior to men with regard to traits such as honesty and kindness. Consequently, women should be represented in the public offices so that they articulate their views, strengthen their self-confidence, and also fight to achieve solidarity of purpose in order to represent women's interests with the view to foster their fundamental human rights.

Furthermore, the symbolic argument also holds the view that every female politician acts as a role model for all women. According to the symbolic argument, a greater number of successful female politicians might make other women more likely to consider running for a political office, regardless of the political views or the party affiliation of the female candidates. This, according to the symbolic argument would help to promote equal representation of women and men in political office, which is likely to enhance the democratization of governance in both transitional and consolidated democracies.

In view of the prevailing arguments, it is critical for the Government of Ghana and other civil society organizations including NGOs, and faith organizations to adopt appropriate measures to tackle the teething challenges confronting potential women wishing to enter into local politics in Ghana and the Wa Municipality in particular. The measures suggested are as follows:

First, the Government of Ghana should pass a legislation to facilitate the participation and representation of women in local level elections. For example, the Government of Ghana should adopt a quota system reserving a certain percentage of seats in districts/ municipal assemblies for women. This is likely to help improve women's participation and representation in politics and public office at the local level in the Wa Municipality.

In addition, the Wa Municipal Assembly, Non-governmental Organizations, and financial institutions must economically empower women through financial supports. For instance, if women have access to financial support from the Municipal Assembly, NGOs, and other financial institutions, it is automatic that, they can venture into various income earning programmes such as soap making, shea-butter extraction, weaving and other businesses. This will help them to be financially resourceful and independent, so that, they will not be a burden on their husbands, and thus, they would be able to mobilize the needed financial resources to successfully run for the district level elections with their male counterparts in the Wa Municipality.

Similarly, it was found in the study that there is a relationship that exists between education and women's participation and representation in political office in the Municipality. In view of this, it is crucial that

females' levels of education are enhanced and sustained in the Municipality. To achieve this goal, the Municipal Assembly, NGOs and other charitable organizations as well as individual philanthropists should come together to work in partnership to set up an educational fund to help provide financial assistance to support girl -child education. This would encourage girls to stay in schools at all levels of the educational ladder to learn in order to acquire knowledge and skills, to improve their confidence level. In addition, the Non-Formal Education programme in the Municipality must be well resourced to cater for women in the Non- Formal Education system to be able to read, write and understand issues relating to governance and politics. This will also help to improve the level of women's political participation and representation in the Municipality

Finally, chiefs, religious and opinion leaders must start spearheading crusades to promote the cause of women in their respective communities. These stakeholders must organize campaigns to educate the local people about the significance of women in both national and local politics. For example, as part of the campaign, these stakeholders can include the identifiable women various communities within the Municipality who have excelled in various capacities in both the public and private sectors to showcase to the public especially women groups as role models in the Municipality. This role model approach is likely to improve their confidence level and also motivate them to participate in public or political offices at all levels in the Municipality.

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