

Prospects and Enhancing Factors of Women Representation in Local Governance in the Sissala East District of Ghana

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Abstract

The study set out to investigate the prospects of women participation in local governance as well as factors enhancing election and appointment of women in local governance in the Sissala East District of Ghana. Fifty-six (56) respondents made up of 11 assembly members, 30 Unit Committee members, six women group leaders, three female candidates in the 2015 District Level Election and six Non-Governmental Organization gender desk officers. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the respondents. The main instrument used to gather data was semi-structured questionnaire using interview approach. The study revealed that the majority (76.8%) of the respondents were in favor of more women participation in local governance. Also, the majority (71.4%) of the respondents reported that female candidates had lower chances of getting elected as assembly members than their male counterparts. Factors that could enhance the election of female candidates were adequate financial resources for embarking on electoral campaign, party affiliation, experience and competence, active campaign and strong campaign message and educational qualification level. Similarly, the factors that appointing authority take in consideration when appointing female assembly members included party affiliation, experience and capability, educational qualification, choice by local chiefs and elders, gender balance and ethnicity.

Keywords: decentralisation, district assembly, women participation

1. Introduction

Good governance and the success of local government depend on peoples' participation. However, unequal participation of women and men in governance serves as a drawback for ensuring good governance. It is for this reason that there is increasing demand from development agencies and international financial institutions on nations to ensure the active participation of all critical stakeholders in all development processes. Of particular concern is the need to ensure equal participation of women and men in policy decisions, especially at the local level.

The call for the inclusion of women in decision-making positions worldwide reached a crescendo in the mid 1980s and early 1990s with a series of international conferences culminating in the Beijing Conference in 1995. The Beijing Conference proposed for at least 30% representation by women in the processes of decision-making. The Beijing Platform for Action (1995:74) notes that "without the active participation of women and the incorporation of their perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved". The International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) (1998), states that unless women constitute a "critical mass" of at least 33% of those in decision-making, their presence makes minute difference to the outcomes of governance.

In the late 1980s, the Government of Ghana embarked upon a number of reforms aimed at decentralizing Ghana's political and administrative system from the centre to the local level. This gave birth to the passage of the Local Government Law (PNDCL 207) in 1988 culminating into to the creation of one hundred and ten (110) District Assemblies (DAs) as legislative, executive, planning and rating authorities. However, the Local Government Law 1988, PNDCL 207 was repealed and enshrined in the Local Government Act 462 when the Fourth Republican Constitution came into force in 1993 (Ayee, 2000). To further devolve administrative and political system from the centre to the local level, the number of district assemblies was increased from 110 to 138 in 2004 and to 216 in 2012. The district assemblies are composed of two-thirds of elected members on an individual, non-party basis; one-third appointed members by central government, along with a chief executive. Elections to District Assemblies are non-partisan and are held every four years.

Among others, the essence of the local government system, are to empower communities to be able to effectively participate in the decision-making process that borders on the overall management and development of their areas as well as to decongest the national capital and bring decision-making nearer to the people and quicken the process. Also, is to provide more equitable and responsive development; and provide an avenue for being a training ground for political activity. Indeed, Article 240 (2) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana has affirmed

“Popular local participation in local decision-making” as the main goal of decentralisation in Ghana. Local government is therefore seen as an arena of government that is closer to people and their daily concerns.

Generally, in the literature, local governance is viewed as a concept that encourages meaningful participation of citizens in identifying problems, mobilizing resources, implementing programmes, evaluating results and holding leaders accountable within a well defined area working through procedures specified by law. According to Aye (2003: 21), local governance can be defined as a process through which representatives of local residents of demarcated area constitute the major decision makers in determining what their utmost needs are, what and how resources are raised to deal with those concerns, and managing those resources. Representatives of these local residents, however, remain accountable to (and removable by) the people through procedures specified by law. Local self-governance therefore comprises a set of institutions, processes, and mechanisms through which citizens can articulate their interests, and needs, and exercise their rights and obligations at the local level. Good local governance therefore is not only about service delivery but also the engagement of the citizenry, and creation of democratic participation (Shah, 2006). Moreover, the argument is that people will be more interested and active in local than in national politics because the former deals with matters that are of most importance in their day-to-day lives—such as solid waste disposal, community infrastructure, the provision of services such as health care, child care, and water (Smith, 1985: 26; Fisman and Gatti, 2002).

It is argued that women must fully be part of the local governance and have full access to the decision-making structure. The International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) (1998a) argues that from a gender stand point, local government is the level of government that is accessible to women. This is because the services there are provided and the decisions by local governments have a direct impact on the domestic demands of women as they are traditionally seen as the providers of such services. Evertzen (2001) adds that local government is the level of government women can break into and may also be used as a catalyst for national politics. This is because, qualifications for local level positions are less stringent and that the duties of local government can be combined easily with reproductive roles of women. From the above, it could be seen that women participation in local governance is critical for the sustainable development of communities.

According to Parry, Mosley and Day cited in Allah-Mensah (2003: 140) participation is defined as “taking part in the process of formulation, passage and implementation of public policies.” Gaventa and Valderrama (1999) state that some time ago, the concept of participation in the development discourse generally connoted the involvement in community development projects; however, the concept “is being related to rights of citizenship and to democratic governance”. As succinctly stated; the main purpose of participation, according to the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, is whether “people who were previously treated as mere objects, known and acted upon, can now actively know and act upon, thereby becoming subjects of their own social destiny” (Actionaid Ghana, 2002 ;12).

Brown, Ghartey and Ekumah (1996) identified three main variables associated with the concept of participation as: interest; capacity; and volition. Interest here means that before one participates in any action one must possess, first of all, the inner drive to do so. Also, to participate meaningfully in the action situation, the person must have the capacity to do so, which may include mental, physical, or material, or all of these simultaneously. The capacity needed to be possessed by the participant may be inborn or acquired externally, for example, through sponsorship. On volition, motivation to partake in an activity would take into consideration the nature of engagement and the benefits that may be expected. Taking these three variables into consideration, the questions one may ask concerning the low participation of women in local governance in the Sissala East District are: is it the lack of interest, or capacity on the part of women or a lack of observable rewards and sponsorship that serve as a constraint on women from participating in local governance in the district?

Decentralisation is defined as the transfer of authority and power to plan, make decisions and control resources, from higher to lower levels of the organizational chain of command, to ensure efficient and effective service delivery (Rondinelli, 1981:137; Smith, 1985:1). Proponents of decentralisation argue that local governments can more efficiently administer development programmes than centralized governments and can be held directly accountable to individuals. Among other things, the literature steadily mentions improved efficiency; improved governance; improved equity; improved decision making; enhanced growth and poverty reduction; accountability; responsiveness; the promotion of competition; empowerment and training in political leadership as the benefits of decentralisation (Rondinelli, 1981; Smith, 1985; Kulipossa, 2004). Government at the local level is also expected to be more representative. For example, decentralized political systems are sometimes promoted in order to allow national minorities to gain representation and defend their collective interests at the sub-national level, thus contributing to integration and promoting the legitimacy and stability of

the national political system (Smith 1985: 27).

Making reference to the theory of democratic decentralisation propounded by Carole Pateman, Ohene-Konadu (2001) asserts that decentralisation of authority to local governments helps to promote the participation of the vulnerable in local level activities. Osmani (2000) contends that decentralisation can play a key role in poverty reduction if it promotes effective citizen participation at the local level. It allows people to express their needs and preferences which can improve local service delivery and make local development efforts more appropriate, effective and inclusive. However, critics of decentralisation have argued that decentralisation may have certain disadvantages such as: capture of power by local elites; lack of sufficient resources to implement development projects by local government; ethnic divisions; political instability; rising inequalities between regions; non-accountability and control by the central government (Prud'homme and L'oeil 2000:72-73; Kulipossa, 2004). It is worth noting that, both critics and supporters of decentralisation have not focused on the representation and participation of women in local governance.

1.1. Statement of problem

In 1998, the Government of Ghana gave a directive that at least 30% of all appointed members must be women. This made it possible for District Assemblies that would not have had any women to do so for the first time. Numbers of women Assembly members were increased somewhat by this directive, however, it is noted that women appointees rarely exceeded this minimum (Offei- Aboagye, 2000). Ayee (1999) also notes that those appointed to the assembly were normally sympathizers of the ruling party.

Again, it was estimated that about 40% of districts assemblies had not fulfilled the recommended quota of 30% of appointed members to be women (ABANTU, 2006). Despite this, the quota was increased to 50% in 2002, and only six of the districts achieved this target (ABANTU, 2006). ABANTU (2006) notes the following factors militating against the district assemblies' achievement of the 50% quota requirement: the perception of local appointing authorities that there are not enough women of requisite capacity to be appointed; the unwillingness of women to take up such appointments due to various reasons such as lack of time, shyness, etc; the inadequate support by husbands; and the lack of reward and motivation for assembly members generally.

In the Sissala East District, Women have taken up positions as assembly members both as elected and appointed members. However, they constituted only a small percentage (about 13%) in 2015 of the total membership of the assembly members, with 75% out of the 13% of the total membership of women in the assemblies being government appointees. Though women make up 51% of the district population they constituted about 4% of elected members in 2015. The number of appointed women did not go beyond the government directive of 50% allocation to women. The objectives of the present study were therefore to investigate the prospects of women participation in local governance as well as factors enhancing election and appointment of women in local governance in the Sissala East District of Ghana.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

Research question 1: What are the prospects of women representation and participation in local governance in the district?

Research question 2: What factors can influence a woman's chances of being elected or appointed to the assembly?

1.2. Significance of the study

The study had some developmental significance. It was intended to help stakeholders in the district to be aware of the prospects of women participation in local governance as well as the factors that can increase the chances of women being elected or appointed as assembly members. The study is also intended to enhance the capacity of all those interested in women participation in local governance with effective strategies to bring about an increase in the number of women in local government structures as well as their effective participation.

1.3. Delimitation

The study was confined to the Sissala East District of the Upper West Region of Ghana. It would have been more appropriate to include other districts in the Upper West Region but this was not possible due to constraints relating to time, money and other resources.

1.4. Limitations

The views from the District Chief Executive and the District Co-ordinating Director which could have provided

an in-depth insight to some issues were not possible as numerous attempts to meet them failed. Moreover, the initial plan to record the interviews was abandoned as most respondents were not willing to be recorded. This slowed down the process of data collection as the responses were verbatim written.

2. Materials and methods

The Sissala East District is located in the north-eastern part of the Upper West Region in Ghana. The district capital is Tumu. The sex composition of the district favours females. Females form a little over half of the population accounting for 51.3 % of the population. The dominant religion in the district is Islam with about 88 % of the population professing the Islamic faith. Literacy rates are lower among females (66.7%) than among males (76.9%). Agriculture is the major occupation of the people with about 83.2 percent (GSS, 2014).

The study is a descriptive case study about the participation of women in local governance in the Sissala East District. The study employed probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Key informants like the women who took part in the 2015 district level elections, assembly women, women group leaders and gender desk officers were purposively selected. The electoral areas of the selected male Assembly members were used to select the unit committee members. All female Unit Committee members of the selected electoral areas were purposively selected, whilst the male Unit Committee members were chosen using the lottery method of simple random sampling. In all, a total of 56 participants were selected. Structured interview schedule was used to obtain quantitative data and in-depth interview to extract information that is not easy to obtain using the quantitative method. Two research assistants were trained to help conduct the interviews and also serve as interpreters. Mock interviews sections were done among the researchers and the two assistants. A pre-test of the instrument involving past assembly members and some members of the general public was conducted to determine the face validity of the instrument and to improve upon the questions.

For easy analysis and interpretation of data, responses given were pre-coded at the interview schedule design stage using answers were deduced from the various literature that were reviewed before developing the interview schedule. The coding framework was entered into the Statistical Product and Services Solutions (SPSS) version 21 software to facilitate the interpretation and analysis of the data in a more meaningful way, and also make illustration with graphs and tables manageable. The SPSS software was used to obtain frequency distributions and percentages.

3. Results and discussions

The background characteristics of respondents were obtained. Table 1 depicts the distributions of respondents and their gender.

Table 1: Category and Sex of respondents

Respondent	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Assembly Member	8	72.7	3	27.3	11	100.0
Unit Committee Member	19	63.3	11	36.7	30	100.0
Women Group Executive Member	0	0.0	6	100	6	100.0
NGO Personnel	4	66.7	2	33.3	6	100.0
Female Candidates in last Elections	0	0.0	3	100	3	100.0
Total	31	55.4	25	44.6	56	100.0

Source: Survey data (2016)

From Table 1, the respondents were made up of 30 Unit Committee members representing 53.6%, 11 assembly members representing 19.6%, six leaders of women groups representing 10.7%, three female candidates in the 2006 District Assembly Elections representing 5.4% and six NGO personnel representing 10.7%. Out of 56 respondents, 31 (55.3%) were males and 25 (44.7%) were females. About 72.7 percent of the sampled Assembly members were males while 27.3 percent were females. Similarly, 63.3 percent and 36.7 percent of the sampled Unit Committee Members were males and females respectively. The higher number of male assembly and unit committee respondents depicts the existing high numbers of males in these bodies in the district. This corroborates similar findings by Offei-Aboagye (2000, 2007) that women representation in local government is inadequate.

Table 2 depicts the average age of respondents by category and sex.

Table 2: Average age of respondents by sex

Respondent	Male	Female	Total
Assembly Member	40.5	43.3	41.7
Unit Committee Member	34.1	37.1	35.2
Women Group Executive Member	-	43.7	43.7
NGO Personnel	29.3	32.5	30.3
Female Candidates in last Elections	-	46.7	46.7
Total	35.1	40.2	37.4

Source: Survey data (2016)

From Table 2, the mean age of the respondents was 37.4 years, with those for the males and females being 35.1 years and 40.2 years respectively. It is evident that the mean ages for female assembly members and female unit committee members in both cases are higher than those of their male counterparts. This is an indication that males enter into local governance earlier than their female counterparts. This trend also seems to support the assertion made by Goetz (2003) that women double duty of work in reproduction and production limits their time and energy for activism in local government until a later date.

Table 3 shows the marital status of respondents by sex.

Table 3: Marital status of respondents

Marital Status	Male		Female		Total	Percent
	No.	%	No.	%		
Married	24	42.9	20	35.7	44	78.6
Single	6	10.7	1	1.8	7	12.5
Separated	1	1.8	3	5.4	4	7.1
Widowed	0	0.0	1	1.8	1	1.8
Total	31	54.4	25	44.6	56	100.0

Source: Survey data (2016)

From Table 3, among the respondents, 44 (78.6%) were married, 7 (12.5%) were single, 4 (7.1%) were separated and 1 (1.8%) widowed. The majority (75%) of those who were separated were women and the majority (85.7%) of those that were single were males. It must be noted however, that 80% of females were married compared with 70.5% of their male counterparts. Moreover, marital status is important especially for women when viewed against the background that in the Ghanaian cultural setting, a married person is held in high esteem and seen as one who is responsible and can be entrusted with leadership positions.

The educational background of respondents was also obtained. Table 4 shows the level of education attained by the respondents.

Table 4: Educational background by sex of respondent

Educational level	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
No Formal Education	5	16.1	9	36.0	14	25.0
Primary	2	6.5	5	20.0	7	12.5
Middle/ JSS	5	16.1	3	12.0	8	14.3
Secondary	8	25.8	2	8.0	10	17.8
College	5	16.1	3	12.0	8	14.3
University	6	19.4	3	12.0	9	16.1
Total	31	100.0	25	100	56	100.0

Source: Survey data (2016)

As shown in Table 4, out of the 56 respondents, 25% had no formal education, 12.5 % had primary education, 14.3 % had their education up to middle or J.S.S school level, 17.8% of the respondents had up to secondary level education, 14.3% had education up to college level, and 16.1% had education up to university level. It is

evident that literacy rates of the women respondents were very low when compared to literacy rates of their male counterparts. The women were mostly without formal education (36%) compared to the males who were mostly secondary school leavers (25.8%). The result is that, the women were unlikely to be well-informed about issues and could not articulate their views clearly. This could also result to a low level of confidence in the women.

Research question 1: What are the prospects of women participation in local governance in the district?

The study sought to examine the perceptions of respondents about the prospects of women representation and participation in local governance. Their views are shown in Tables 5a, 5b, 6a and 6b.

Respondents' views on whether they favored more women participation in local governance were also sought. Tables 5a and 5b present the opinions of the respondents as to whether they are in favor of more women representation and participation in local governance and the reasons for that.

Table 5a: Are you in favor of more women getting involved in local politics?

Response	Number	Percent (%)
Yes	43	76.8
No	13	23.2
Total	56	100

Source: Survey data, (2016)

From Table 5a, forty three (76.8%) out of the 56 respondents indicated that they favored the involvement of more women in local governance whilst the remaining 13 respondents (23.2%) indicated otherwise. The reasons of those who favored more women in local governance are presented in Table 5b

Table 5b: Reasons in favor of more women participation in local governance

Reason	Frequency	percent
Women constitute the majority of the population	11	25.6
Society needs both gender groups to develop	10	23.3
Women understand women problems best	9	20.9
Women will acquire political experience	5	11.6
To break male dominance in local governance	4	9.3
Women are duty-conscious and dedicated	3	7.0
Women have the right to get involved	1	2.3
Total	43	100.0

Source: Survey data (2016)

From Table 5b, about 25.6 percent of the 43 respondents reported that since women formed the majority of the district population, it would be unjust to take decisions without them being adequately represented. This was followed by 23.3 percent of the respondents who cited that society needs the contributions of both gender groups to develop. They contended that women are a resource that no district should ignore in terms of their potentials in different development fields. They have a wealth of experience to contribute, thereby improving the quality of decisions.

Also, 20.9% of the respondents cited that women would understand women situation best. To them, women have very specific needs in health, education, the family, environment among others that needed to be articulated by women themselves, and to be taken into consideration when policy decisions were being made. Women's effective involvement would therefore ensure that decisions that affect women's lives are taken with their input. Again, 11.6 percent of the respondents articulated that women would acquire political experience where it would serve as an opportunity to build a constituency, personal stature and confidence to stand for national elective office. This means that, local government becomes a vital arena for the woman to build up a career in politics both at the local and national levels. The other reasons were to break the dominance of men in local governance (9.3%), women are duty conscious and dedicated (7.0%) and women have the right to participation in local governance (2.3%).

These findings have been supported by several studies. Van Donk (2000) affirmed that, it is easier for women to enter politics at the local level than the national level. Moreover, local politics is a training ground for politics at

the national level and that women can use local politics as an entry point. Additionally, local governments are often responsible for providing public goods and services of most immediate concern to women, such as health, water, child-care centres, transportation and community infrastructure. Also Jayal (2005), notes that, the biological difference between male and female stipulated different needs. Jayal (2005) argues that the representation of women in local governance is based on the belief that their representation in its legislative bodies is necessary for their interest to be articulated and incorporated into policies. Women can therefore articulate their needs better when they participate in local governance. The developmental impacts of such participation have clearly been seen in the issues prioritized by women in India where women have worked towards getting drinking water, sanitation, housing, schools (especially for girl children), primary health centres, day care facilities for children, smokeless cooking stoves, and so on.

Myers (2002) contends that women want and need to be able to participate in the decisions that affect them, their families, communities and countries, so that they change the structures of government to reflect more closely their concerns. Myers (2002) further notes that increased participation and representation by women highlights the intersection of gender interests, social class and race, and that the quest for equity would be a farce without the wider representation of all groups, especially those currently denied access to power and the presentation of all points of view in the process of decision-making.

Those who were not in favour contended that politics is not a woman's job as it is characterised by insults and defamation, and that any 'decent' woman should refrain from it. This collaborates the findings of Ofei-Aboagye (2000: 4) that the deep-ingrained feeling that "political activity is 'dirty' and not for decent women" had made close relatives and husband "reluctant to have their women in the public eye", and that of Myers (2002) that politics is corrupt and "dirty" and therefore a number of women are not willing to run for political office.

Respondents' views were sought on the chances of men and women having equal chances of being elected as assembly members. Their opinions are shown in Tables 6a and 6b.

Table 6a: Do you think men and women have equal chances of getting elected as assembly members?

Response	Number	Percent (%)
Yes	15	26.8
No	40	71.4
Don't know	1	1.8
Total	56	100

Source: Survey data, 2016

From Table 6a, the majority (71.4%) of the respondents were of the view that male and female candidates would not have equal chances of getting elected as assembly members. Only, 15 (26.8%) answered in the affirmative while 1(1.8%) was undecided. The reasons given by the respondents why both sexes do not having equally chances of getting elected as assembly members are shown in Table 6b.

Table 6b: Reasons for male and female candidates have no equal chances of getting elected as assembly members

Reason	Frequency	Percent
Cultural/Male/Religious prejudices	22	55.0
Women's general lack of skills	8	20.0
Low level of confidence on the part of women	5	12.5
Limited resources on the part of women	4	10.0
Inadequate support from fellow women	1	2.5
Total	40	100.0

Source: Survey data (2016)

As indicated in Table 6b, the breakdown of responses of those who said they do not think men and women have equal chances in getting elected as assembly members were cultural/male/religious prejudices (55%), women's general lack of skills (20%), low level of confidence on the part of women (12.5%), limited resources on the part of women (10%) and inadequate support from fellow women (2.5%).

These views have been confirmed by Ohene-Konadu (2001) that financial constraints, institutional cultures, lack of confidence, low literacy levels, and societal attitudes have limited the chances of women getting involved in politics. Also Brown, Ghartey and Ekumah (1996) argue that the obstacles preventing women from being elected into the district assembly are the lack of self-confidence among women; the general apathy among women; the

general inadequate education levels of females in Ghana; the pressure of domestic chores in addition to child bearing and caring. Moreover, ABANTU (2006) note that socio-cultural prejudices and sexist stereotypes where women are seen as not worthy of being leaders in some cultures; the low levels of education of women; the lack of skills in the art of political campaign, lobbying and advocacy; the inability of most women to mobilize resources to fund campaign; household responsibilities that leave little time for women to campaign have been a drawback in getting women elected as assembly members. The International Union of Local Government Authorities, IULA (1998b) identifies the barriers to the equal participation of women in the decentralisation process as: inadequate access to education on the part of women; women multiple roles in society; women's inadequate financial resources for election campaign; women's lack of access to information relating to the public sphere; and the view that public sphere is a sphere traditionally reserved for men.

Research question 2: What factors can influence a woman's chances of being elected or appointed to the assembly?

The views of respondents were sought on the factors that can enhance a woman's chance of being elected or appointed to the assembly. Their opinions are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Respondents' views on factors that can enhance the election of a female candidate (N=56)

Enhancing Factor	Frequency	Percent
Financial resources	50	89.3
Party affiliation	42	75.0
Experience and capability	37	66.1
Active campaign	36	64.3
Educational level	32	57.1
Strong agenda	25	44.6
Family and husband support	18	32.1

Source: Survey data (2016)

From Table 7, majority (89.3%) of the respondents cited financial and material resources. Financial and material resources were needed to conduct campaigns which involved movement from place to place to canvass for votes, coupled with the excessive demands from electorates. Also 75% of the respondents cited political party affiliation of female candidate can enhance her chances of being elected. According to the respondents even though the District Assembly level elections were non-partisan, most of the electorates voted on party lines. The political affiliation of candidates was not difficult to ascertain as candidates were mostly community members where members knew one another very well. Moreover, even though the political party law forbids political parties' support for candidates, in practice, political parties clandestinely supported candidates financially during campaigns. Therefore, a situation where a female candidate was perceived as belonging to the dominant political party in a particular electoral area coupled with no male from the same party standing against her, the chances of her winning the election were high. This seemed to suggest that when the district level elections became partisan and political parties fielded female candidates in their strongholds, the number of elected women would increase. The experience and capability of the female candidate was also cited about 66% of the respondents as a factor that could enhance the election of a female. Skills in advocacy, lobbying, public speaking and problem solving are important for political leaders. What this means is that if a female candidate was seen as most capable and experienced her chances of winning were quite high.

Again, 64.3% of the respondents cited the issue of active campaign as a factor that can enhance the election of a female candidate. Usually, active campaign involved candidates going round canvassing for votes. Apart from financial and material resources, it demanded commitment and dedication where a candidate has to devote her time meeting electorates at market places and in their homes to canvass for their votes. Most women were not able to campaign actively due to marital obligations. Moreover, most women lacked the needed resources to enable them contract people to campaign for them to win.

Moreover, Strong agenda or campaign message was cited as a strong enhancing factor by 44.% of the respondents. According to them, the electorates were more likely to vote the candidate with the strongest campaign message. These included what agenda the candidate would pursue and how he or she would do it. Respondents also mentioned the educational level of the female as a factor that could swing voters to her side. This was so because business in the assembly was conducted in English. Hence, a female candidate's ability to communicate effectively in the English language where she would not be found wanting in articulating,

advocating and lobbying for projects for her constituents stood a better chance of winning. Support from family and that of the husband was also cited as factors that could enhance the chances of a female candidate winning an election. A lack of support from family members and husband indicated a lack of trust in a woman aspirant and this could jeopardize her chances.

One way of increasing the participation of women is by appointing them to the District Assembly. When the question was asked about factors respondents thought would be taken into consideration when appointing a woman as an assembly member, they gave varied responses as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Factors taken into consideration in appointing a female Assembly member

Factor	Frequency	Percent
Party affiliation	51	91.1
Experience and capability	36	64.3
Educational level	35	62.5
Choice by local chiefs and elders	24	42.9
Gender balance	21	37.5
Ethnicity	6	10.7

Source: Survey data (2016)

From Table 8, 91.1 % of the respondents identified party affiliation as the major factor taken into consideration when appointing assembly members. This confirmed the earlier view that representation in local governance in the district had become partisan. On this, a female candidate in the 2015 District Assembly and Unit Committee election had this to say; “for the fact I came out to contest alone, I should have been appointed but rather other women were appointed because they were party members”. This collaborated with Aryee’s (1999) assertion that those appointed to the Assembly were normally sympathizers of the ruling party.

Again, 64.3% and 62.5% of the respondents cited experience and capability, and educational attainment as the second and third most important factors taken into consideration in appointing Assembly women. Ironically, women were disadvantaged in these areas due to socio- cultural prejudices. However, it is worth noting that the appointment of women to the assembly was not just merely based on gender, but experience and capability.

Moreover, 42.9% of the respondents mentioned choice by local chiefs and elders as a factor that could earn a female an appointment as Assembly member. According to them, some appointments were made in consultation with the traditional rulers and for that matter a women chosen by them easily got appointed. A female appointee confirmed that her appointment was spearheaded by the chiefs and elders.

Other factors cited by respondents include: gender balance (37.5%) and ethnicity (10.7%). Appointment of female assembly members may be based on gender just to fulfill the requirement that 50% of appointed members be female. Some respondents contended that appointment of females in the districts did not go beyond the directive that a certain percentage of appointee be reserved for women. For instance, three (50%) out of six appointees in the current Assembly were women. Respondents also contended that a female candidate could get the nod due to her ethnic affiliation. This was so because the appointing authority might seek for ethnic balance.

4. Conclusion

The study sought to investigate the prospects of women participation in local governance as well as factors enhancing election and appointment of women in local governance in the Sissala East District of Ghana.

The study revealed that the majority (76.8%) of the respondents were in favor of more women participation in local governance. Reasons adduced for favour of more women participation in local governance were women being the majority of the population, the contribution of both genders to development, women special needs which are understood best by women, the acquisition of political experience by women and for women to break male dominance in local government bodies. Also, the majority (71.4%) of the respondents reported that female candidates had lower chances of getting elected as assembly members than their male counterparts. This was as a result of cultural/male/religious prejudices against women, the general lack of skills by women, low level of confidence on the part of women, limited resources on the part of women and inadequate support from fellow women.

Respondents also identified factors that could enhance the election of female candidates as adequate financial resources for embarking on electoral campaign, party affiliation, experience and competence, active campaign and strong campaign message and educational qualification level. Similarly, the factors that appointing authority consider when appointing female assembly members include party affiliation, experience and capability, educational qualification, choice by local chiefs and elders, gender balance and ethnicity.

It is therefore recommended that the government, political parties and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) should conduct capacity-building workshops for women aspiring for assembly member positions. The National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) should educate the citizenry to change their misconceptions and attitudes towards women political issues. Also, female candidates should be supported financially by political parties and NGOs. Moreover, Parliament should review the law guiding the district level elections to make the elections partisan where political parties could field female candidates in their strong areas.

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