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A developmental approach to gender mainstreaming: women and political spaces in Ghanaian government

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WITS SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE
UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

MASTER'S DEGREE IN THE FIELD OF MASTER OF MANAGEMENT

SPECIALISATION IN PUBLIC POLICY

A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH TO GENDER MAINSTREAMING: WOMEN AND POLITICAL SPACES IN GHANAIAN GOVERNMENT.

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Masters Research dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Management Degree in Public Policy at the University of Witswatersrand.

March 2023

DECLARATION

I declare that this research is my own unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Management (in the field of Public Policy) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.



Ruth Dzigbordi Sosu-Awusanya

30 March 2023

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I would like to first thank God for the strength in authoring this research report. Secondly, I would like to dedicate this work to my father and mother for their unwavering support while I pursued my studies. Without your support, I would not be able to reach for the stars.

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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly global world with greater awareness of the role of gender inclusivity, there is also increased awareness of the role and value of women's participation in institutions of government. Ghana is no exception. However, despite efforts and policies in Ghana to facilitate women's inclusion, it is apparent that women are still not participating in their numbers within government spaces. The research dissertation asks to what extent gender mainstreaming can play a role in facilitating effective participation of women in Ghana's local government. Through semi-structured interviews and literature analysis, this research report explores the institutional barriers to women's participation and contribution in local government in Ghana.

The study finds that there have been some inclusive policies to ensure that women are better represented in politics. However, these are met with various setbacks resulting from Ghana's wider social and cultural norms and values. These factors manifest in the local government space in institutional barriers that play a role in inhibiting women from participating effectively. The study finds that gender mainstreaming can play a role in addressing those barriers and encouraging more women to participate in the local government but there remain challenges to their effectiveness.

Contents

DECLARATION ..... **ii**
ACKNOWLEGDEMENT ..... **iii**
ABSTRACT ..... **iv**
CHAPTER ONE **1**
INTRODUCTION **1**
1.2 Problem statement 3
1.3 Women's participation in local government 5
1.4 Research purpose 6
1.5 Research question 6
CHAPTER TWO **8**
LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMING **8**
2.1 Overview of Ghana's local government structure 8
2.2 Historic context of Ghanaian society and women's role 11
2.3 Gender and gender mainstreaming 13
2.3.1 Gender through an African lens 13
2.3.2 Gender mainstreaming concept 17
2.4 The Affirmative Action Policy in Ghana 20
2.5 Socio-cultural practices that hinder women's participation in politics 21
2.6 Theories of women, gender and development 22
2.7 Women, politics and gender quotas 25
2.8 Gender roles 27
2.9 Gendered institutions 28
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 30
2.10 Feminist institutionalist theory 30
2.11 Conclusion 33
CHAPTER THREE **35**
METHODOLOGY **35**
3.1 Research approach 35
3.2 Research tools and their application 36
3.3 Sampling 36
3.4 Demographic overview of participants 38
3.5Data collection process and data analysis 38
3.6 Limitations, feasibility, and positionality 39

3.7 Ethics 40
3.8 Validity, reliability, dependability 41
3.9 Conclusion 41
CHAPTER FOUR 43
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA 43
4.1 INSTITUTIONAL NORMS AND CULTURES 45
4.1.1 Institutional and cultural norms 45
4.2 IDENTIFYING INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS 47
4.2.1 Gendered institutional structures 47
4.2.2 Politics and power 49
4.2.3 Gendered Power Dynamics 52
4.2.4 Socio-cultural practices 54
4.2.4 (i) Marriage 54
4.2.4 (ii) Male prejudice and patriarchy 56
4.2.4 (iii) Family and religious barriers 57
4.2.4 (iv) Attitudes of women 60
4.2.5 Finance or resource mobilization 64
4.3 GENDER MAINSTREAMING ADDRESSING INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS 65
4.3.1 Comprehension of gender 66
4.3.2 Understanding of gender mainstreaming 66
4.3.3 GENDER MAINSTREAMING TO ADDRESS INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS 67
4.3.3 (i) Gender mainstreaming introduced in universities 68
4.3.3 (ii) Reduction of funding fee for women to campaign 68
4.3.3 (iii): Creation of top opportunities for women to occupy local government 69
4.3.3 (iv) Capacity building programs for women 69
4.4 Conclusion 70
CHAPTER FIVE 71
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 71
5.1 Recommendations 75
5.1 (i) Mentorship 75
5.1 (ii) Introduction of only female nominations 76
5.1 (iii) More research needs to be done in the local government sectors 76
5.1 (iv) Change of mindset 77
5.2 Conclusion 77

CHAPTER SIX 79
CONCLUSION 80
References 82
Appendix 1: Semi structured Interview guide 86
Appendix 2: Participant Information sheet 87
Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form 89

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Ghana has been praised by international communities for its sterling example in the West African region concerning good governance in the areas of general politics, the economy, and administration (Accord, n.d). Through its efforts, the Ghanaian government continues to make a conscious effort to "create peace, respect for human rights, the rule of law, democratic principles, and the independence of the judiciary" (Republic of Ghana, 2014; p. 20). Although there has been a considerable amount of praise and development in varied sectors of society, like most African countries, the 'gender question' remains one that has required significant policy and cultural interventions to reach 'global' standards of gender equity and equality. The Ghanaian government has, in some respects, attempted to introduce national policies which aim to address gender disparities, particularly in the public sector. However, these have not resulted in the envisioned transformation of the public sector where gender is concerned. Societal norms and cultures in Ghana have not merged with the national agenda on gender issues and concerns in the public sector.

To remedy this, the Affirmative Action Policy (AA) introduced in 1960 gradually gained prominence in the 1980s and 1990s in Ghana's Fourth Republic from 1981 to 1993 (Constitutional Review Report, 2012). The Policy was an attempt to "address gender and regional disproportions in access to education, work, health, and politics (Tsikata, 2009, p. 33). The Affirmative Action Policy was expected to improve development indicators by reducing inequalities and facilitating the contribution of particular social groups to development" (Tsikata, 2009, p. 34). In addition, the AA policy is intended to ensure equal representation of gender in the social, educational, economic, cultural, and political spheres of the country (National Development Planning Commission, 2014).

The AA policy consists of 45 clauses that serve as a guideline on ways to improve the status of women throughout the country through structural and policy changes. Particularly, the policy stipulates that the government must ensure the appropriate representation of women in decision-making positions (Boateng, 2017). Particularly in public services and ministerial positions (Ohenmeng & Adusah-Karikari, 2018, pg. 21).

According to the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection (2015), “The Affirmative policy makes provision for a 40% quota of women representation in government and Public Boards, Commissions, Councils, Committees, and official bodies, including Cabinet and the Council of State” (Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection, 2015, p. 26; Allah-Mensah, 2007, p. 20).

Although the policy has been successful in improving the male-female ratio in education and the health sector, it has been less effective in improving women's representation in politics and public life (Tsikata, 2009, p. 8). The National Gender Policy identifies that, although the constitution affirms the equality of both men and women in Ghana, societal norms and values embedded in Ghanaian institutions of power continue to be a barrier to the effective participation of women in public office. Some of the challenges include the social prejudices and stereotypes of women, thus impeding them from making meaningful contributions.

Currently women parliamentarians account for only “14 per cent which translates to 38 out of 275 parliamentary seats” (Madsen, Aning & Adu, 2020 pg. 1). This is by far a lower rate than the anticipated percentage indicated in policy papers, and it is lower than other Sub-Saharan African countries which are 20 per cent higher in representation (Ayentimi et al., 2020). For example, countries like Rwanda and South Africa have taken the lead in showing by example that men and women ought to be given equal opportunity to participate fairly in politics through the institutionalisation of the 50%-50% quota. From a developmental standpoint, the active participation of women plays a fundamental role in improving the rate of development within a nation (Waylen, 2014). Therefore, the effective participation of women in politics and formal governments is identified as essential for countries to experience their full democracy and to meet their targeted developmental goals (Zakar, Zakar & Hamid; 2018).

According to Meier and Lombardo (2013, p. 49), Gender quotas are designed as a tool to tackle the imbalance and representation of women within governance spaces and spheres of influence. However, the author argues that “their potential to influence gender relations within the political arena itself must be assessed beyond their ability to affect the substantiative and symbolic representation of women” (Meier & Lombardo, 2013, p. 49). Currently, researchers and the public are advocating for not only increased representation numerically but for emphasis to be placed on a more inclusive approach that will create a conducive environment for the participation of women in political spaces at national and local levels (Iwanaga, 2008).

Concerning the assessment of the reaching effects of the affirmative action policy and the extent to which there is effective participation and representation of women in Ghana's case, women's political participation is within the confines of exercising voting rights and more recently engaging in campaigns as candidates within political spaces (Bawa & Sanyare, 2013). According to Bawah (2013), women's ability to influence policies and participate actively to drive change in Ghanaian politics is weak (Bawah, 2013; pg. 283). Tsikata (2009) further argues that numerical representation of women within governance spaces does not directly translate as substantive or strategic representation and is not indicative of the forms of participation available to women and the interplay of power between men and women within a government institution (Tsikata, 2009, p. 13).

1.2 Problem statement

Although the Affirmative Action Policy aims to address and bridge the gap for low representation of women in various state and public boards, councils of state, and cabinets, and promote full participation of women in public life, the reality is that the current representation and participation of women in these sectors are far from the aim of the policy (Ayentimi et al., 2020; World Economic Forum, 2017) .

Women's representation in political spaces remains a pressing issue and it is important to explore the underlying barriers women face when occupying governance spaces. These may range from cultural to institutional structures in society. The underrepresentation is rather detrimental to the overall development of the country. The inclusion of women automatically results in positive development effects.

It is of equal importance to explore the hurdles women navigate in their participation in governance spaces to determine how these may be addressed to create an environment where women can actively and effectively participate in politics and local governance. Brown et. al (1996) have identified that the inclusion of women in politics and their involvement in policy and decision-making has an impact on the local political establishments in communities (Brown, Ghartey & Ekuma, 1996). For example, African countries that have high women representation have produced inclusive policies that have identified and addressed women and children's needs, leading to increased development (Powe, 2006).

In spite of this advantage, the nature of politics itself has become a barrier to entry for women in Ghana. Clientelism, for example, is evident in many forms in Ghanaian politics, ranging from "vote-buying, preferential access to public employment, social benefits public works, and procurement" (Yıldırım & Kitschelt 2020; p. 1167). In countries like Ghana where there is an increasingly higher level of uncertainty in political institutions, candidates grab the opportunity to be associated with clientelism to navigate these uncertainties (Adams & Smrek, 2018). However, the expectations and needs of constituencies generate financial implications, exacerbating the need for political candidates and members of parliament to build powerful networks. The dynamics at play are often unfavourable towards women, hindering them from actively participating in and contributing to governance. Bjarnegård (2015, pg.10) states that to "maintain a clientelist system, men and women need strategic positioning so they can have access to specific and instrumental resources". These networks are primarily resource-dependent and also gendered, as far as powerful men (within various sectors) often disproportionately have access and the ability to decide how these resources are allocated.

In the existing hierarchies in political structures, Adams and Smrek (2018, p.272) note that "Given power hierarchies in existing political systems, men benefit from turning to other men for this material support, while women must build networks that include men to obtain necessary resources" (Adams & Smerk, 2018; p. 272). Beyond the gendered distribution of instrumental resources, women often do not possess easy access to men's networks (Blommaert, Meuleman, Leenheer & Butkēviča, 2020). This invariably invokes a heterosocial model of networking, which indicates that institutions are gendered, and the institutional foundations influence recurring patterns in who gains the position or momentum within governance structures (Højlund & Madsen, 2020).

Secondly, according to Golder et.al (2015, p. 27), electoral systems and laws have a substantial influence on the structure of partisan competition and representation in governance (Golda, et.al, 2015). In Ghana's case, there is a majoritarian electoral system (winner-takes-all or first-past-the-post) (Boateng, 2017). The presidential candidate is required to secure a 50 per cent plus-one vote to win, while the parliamentary candidate needs to secure a one-vote win against its contender to be declared a winner. Ghana's multi-party democracy operates under two major political parties: the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and New Patriotic Party (NPP), and the government alternates between these two parties. In the recent elections held in 2020, out of the 12 presidential candidates, three were women vying for positions (Akorlie & Kokroko, 2020). This would serve as a memorable event because it was the first of its kind. Additionally,

out of 914 candidates, 126 were women who contested the 275 parliamentary seats. In total, at the end of the elections, 38 women were elected to occupy seats in the Ghanaian parliament. This represents 13 per cent of women who occupy the parliamentary seats in Ghana (Madsen, 2019).

In comparison to past governments, this number and percentage is by far the largest number of women MPs since 2016 (Graphic Online, 2020). However, despite the increase in women's representation, the number of participating women is still far below the 30 per cent quota of women's parliamentary representation. Presently, due to a rising interest globally to create equal opportunities for women's participation and representation, most political parties are considering encouraging more women's participation. One practical application made in the resolve to encourage women to contest in politics is that, in the NDC parliamentary primaries for the 2016 elections, the NDC also set the filing fee for women aspirants to GHC5000, instead of the GHC10000 that men are expected to pay. Despite these steps, women political aspirants are underrepresented in the political arena.

1.3 Women's participation in local government

Women's representation and participation in political parties differs across different countries. In Ghana, the strategy to enhance gender equality began in the 1960s by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of the First Republic, where he elected 10 women into the National Assembly (Dohu 2007; Asante & Attom, 2022). In the 1980s, despite a growing awareness of the need for increased representation of women across Sub-Saharan Africa, inequality across all elected and appointed positions persisted (Paxon & Kunovich, 2007). Since Ghana's independence, there has been a concerted attempt to decentralize governmental and administrative functions from the national to the local level (Ofei-aboagye, 2000). These efforts are aimed at "providing responsive, equitable, and participatory development, bringing government and decision-making closer to the people, expediting processes, and serving as a training ground for political activity."(Ofei-aboagye, 2000, p. 11).

Ofei-aboagye (2000) identifies the efforts of Ghana in making provision for women in the local government. These provisions include "the ability to join the local government without the need to be attached to a political party, the use of local language for the business of the assembly and the discretion in creating additional sub-committees" (Ofei-aboagye, 2000, p. 6).

However, despite various policy execution methods, women continue to be under-represented in Ghanaian local government. For example, in 2019, out of the total number of candidates who stood for elections across 6000 electoral areas country wide in the district assemblies, only 909 women were candidates, while men candidates were 17,601. This number of representatives is by far too few a number (Zaney, 2022).

The matter of under-representation of women in local government is a critical concern: The local government is representative of the central government at a local level. Its representatives therefore have a direct relationship and are conversant in the challenges and needs of communities at the local level (Morton, 2016). However, although the local government plays a key role in attending to grassroot level development, there is scanty research available on women's participation in Ghana's local government, particularly in terms of the role of institutional cultures and norms and their interrelationship with the forms of participation available for women.

In recent times, gender mainstreaming has been embraced as an approach designated to address years of under-representation of women and to ensure inclusivity in policy implementation globally (European Institute of Gender Equality, 2023). This is especially to ensure that there is gender equity for both men and women so they can jointly enjoy the privileges allocated to them in the country. However, this can only be possible with the implementation of gender mainstreaming tactics. Based on the challenges identified, this study aims to explore the extent to which gender mainstreaming can be used to transform institutions of governance for the effective participation of women, with a focus on local government in Ghana.

1.4 Research purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore the extent to which gender mainstreaming can play a role in removing institutional barriers to the effective participation of women in local government in Ghana.

1.5 Research question

To what extent can gender mainstreaming play a role in transforming institutions of governance for the effective participation of women in Ghanaian local government?

(a) What are the institutional cultures and norms that are in existence in local government in Ghana?

(b) In what ways do these cultures, norms, and value systems create barriers within institutions for women's effective and meaningful participation in local government in Ghana?

(c) In what ways have gender mainstreaming approaches in Ghana to date aimed to address these institutional barriers?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMING

This chapter reviews some of the literature pertaining to gender mainstreaming and the participation of women in governance, as well as an overview of Ghana's local government structure and the participation of women historically. The chapter presents a review of literature on several of the thematic debates concerned with women, development, politics, and the gendering of institutions. It presents debates in the literature on the definition and underpinnings of gender and gender mainstreaming, approaching this through an African lens. Taking a historic perspective, it considers the correlation between women's participation, gendered institutions, women, politics and gender quotas and applies this in the Ghanaian context. The chapter then sets out the theoretical framing of the study, located in feminist institutionalist theory, to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying causes of the low participation of women in governance spaces.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview of Ghana's local government structure

Several different types of structure have been purposely established at the sub-national level as part of government decentralization in Ghana. The Regional Coordinating Council (RCC), which is headquartered in each regional capital, is at the pinnacle of these entities. The RCC oversees the coordination and monitoring of the performance of the local government entities in the regions. The Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) are positioned under the RCC, followed by the sub-district sectors comprising the Sub-Metropolitan Council, the umbrella over the town council, zonal council and unit committees (Amponsah et al., 2015).

Ghana's local government plays a pivotal role in the administration and development of local areas. In the decentralised system, Ghana has created a framework that creates room for citizen's participation in policy discourses. According to study by Boateng (2017). The decentralised system in Ghana transfers authority, functions and responsibility as well as human resources from the Central Government to the district level (Boateng, 2017;p. 20). Local Government has a long history that predates colonialism. Prior to independence, local

authorities facilitated decisions in their areas of jurisdiction. After independence in 1957, several governments implemented various forms of decentralisation and local government policies (Institute of Local Government Studies, 2010). However, the current Decentralisation Policy was initiated in 1988 through the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) Law. Asibuo (1991) gives an account of the emergence of the PNDC law. It states "The PNDC law 207 in 1988 was passed to achieve two main objectives: firstly, it is designed to solidify central political control over regional and local institutions by the deliberate placement of centrally nominated politicians in regional and district administrative hierarchies. Secondly, the PNDC administration decentralization initiative is regarded as a means of not just legitimizing its power base but also entrenching itself in power" (Asibuo, 1991, p. 26). Under the PNDC Law 207, the local government has been divided into three tiers which comprises of the Regional Coordinating Council on the first tier, The Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies[1] (MMDA) on the second tier, and the Sub- Metropolitan council, comprising town, urban, area and zonal councils on the third tier. All these tiers are connected to the larger communities serving their needs.

According to Ofei- Aboagye (2000), The local government system is designed as follows: The head of the district assembly are district chief executives or mayors nominated by the President of Ghana who are endorsed by the assembly (Ofei-Aboagye, 2000). The assembly comprises of the representatives of the people in the districts. Two thirds of its members are voted for by the general public. The other third is nominated by the central government in consultation with traditional authorities and interest groups in the districts. To ensure representation of key groups and provide technical expertise, members of the local government are appointed into the assembly (Boateng, 2017).

According to the Local Government Act 1993, the district assembly is the highest political authority in the district and serves as the planning, development, budgeting, and rating authority (Assemblies, 1993, p. 35). Article 10 of the aforementioned Act outlines the district assembly's particular tasks and obligations. In general, the DAs oversee coordinating all local efforts and integrating them into the national development strategy. This is accomplished through the creation and implementation of plans, programmes, and strategies for the efficient mobilization of the resources required for the district's overall growth. They also act as change

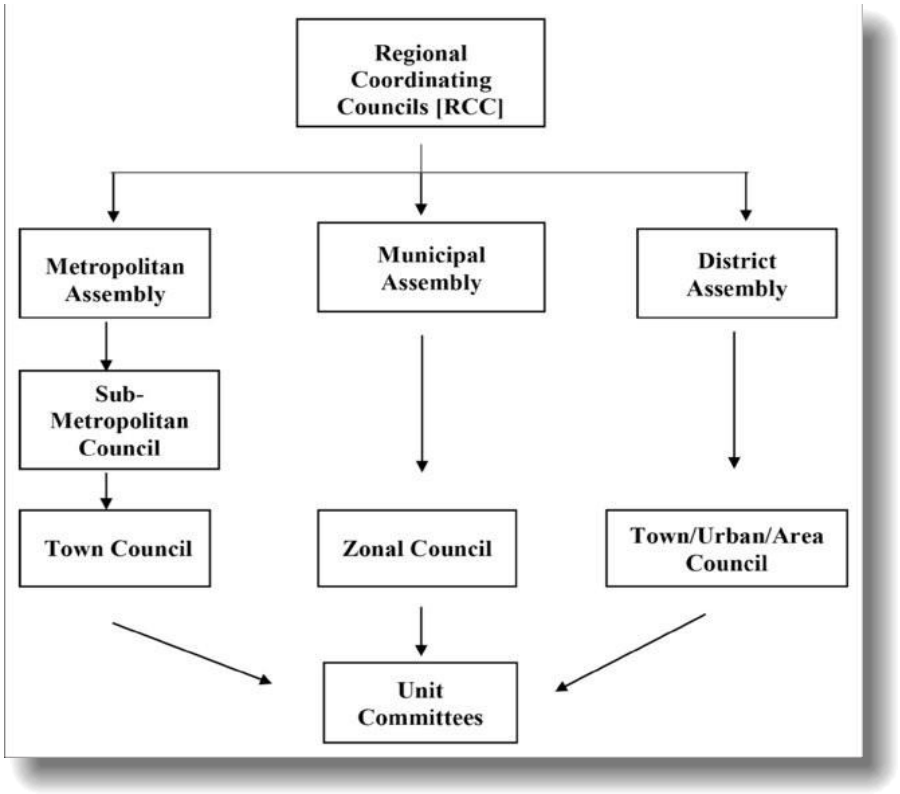
[1] For the purpose of this study, all Municipal, Metropolitan and District assemblies will be referred to as District Assembly (DA).

agents at the local level of government. To achieve this, the District Assembly is tasked with encouraging and supporting the district's economic and social development and removing barriers to it (DEDA, 2023).

According to Kpentey (2019), although the DA is the highest political authority, it is saddled with weaknesses that affect its effectiveness and efficiency. The author identifies that the challenges are related to fiscal and political autonomy. Additionally, Kpentey (2019) identifies that appointee who serves in the capacity of the "executive authority is highly likely to be skewed towards the ruling party and government's mandate, instead of placing focus on the needs of his or her district"(Kpentey, 2019, p. 40).

Figure 1 is a pictorial representation of the Ghanaian local government structure and the decentralization process.

Figure 1: Structure of Ghana's local government



Source: Forkuor & Adjei (2016).

Gender quotas and affirmative action apply in the context of local government in Ghana. The stipulated 40 per cent representation of women is required so there is inclusivity and representation of women's needs and perspectives. However, according to the Institute of Local Government (2010) "the number of women participants is still recorded low, this is evidenced by the data collected derived from the women candidates in 2010 elections. For example, the Institute of Local Government (2010) states, the "District Assembly elections in 2010 recorded 412 (7.95%) female representatives against 6,093 persons elected across 216 Districts Assemblies across the country" (Institute of Local Government, 2010; p. 4).

This study will the focus on members of the district, municipal, and metropolitan assemblies in the local government. The assemblies have been selected they play a critical role in the advancement of projects across its various districts in the local government structure. Through the District Assembly and municipalities, we see the practicality of policy implementation and formulation at a local level and those in charge have direct access to the needs and wants of the people in the various communities. The research study will explore the forms of participation available for women in their district assemblies and their institutions and the challenges that impede them from participating effectively within the Ghanaian local government.

2.2 Historic context of Ghanaian society and women's role

To accurately address and understand the role of women in Ghanaian politics, their engagement, and the contributing factors behind low representation and participation, it is necessary to consider the historical background of Ghanaian women's participation in domestic, socioeconomic, and political spheres. African scholars such as Soothill (2007), whose works focuses on African nationalism and the hunt for Africa's glorious past, have proven that gender relations in pre-historic African nations were egalitarian (Soothill, 2007). African literary reports have not traditionally documented issues of prejudice or injustice within African communities. Instead, women performed a complementary role alongside males in their communities, even though labour was distributed according to sex and there were clear definitions of which function men and women played in their societies in the pre-colonial era (Amoah-Boampong & Agyeiwaa (2019). For example, the Ewe women of the Volta Region in Ghana were skilled food processors, marketers and distributors, while their male counterparts were hunters and fishermen and harvesters of crops (Sebitosi, 2013).

Furthermore, women also had access to public places, with some in positions of power and others actively selling, allowing them to be financially stable and self-sufficient (Amu,n.d) Some women have been documented in numerous traditional communities and ethnic groups to have thrived in affluent positions, such as queen mothers. Aidoo's (1997) work hypothesized that some women in pre-colonial Ghana, within their traditional communities, occupied important positions within their political careers as the office of the 'Ohemaa' which translates as "female ruler" (Döşkaya & Çoban, 2017). The Ohemaa's duties included hearing all judicial cases involving the state's holy pledge and having her own court, where she was aided by male and female advisers and officials (Aidoo, 1977, p. 2).

According to Akeampong & Obeng (1995) "The presence of the queen mother at the highest level of state organization is crucial to the perceived complementary authority of both males and females in Ghanaian traditional culture" (Akeampong & Obeng, 1995, p. 490). Women like Nana Yaa Asantewaa, the queen mother of Ejisu, are remembered in history books for their bravery in commanding an army against colonial tyranny (Dugbazah, 2012). The fact that there is a wealth of knowledge about Ghanaian women in pre-historic periods refutes the prevalent picture of the African woman as a beast of burden (Soothill, 2007), as well as the argument that women are submissive to males due to cultural expectations and gender roles. Women had important roles in pre-colonial African communities as well. The complementary nature of men's and women's duties in the pre-colonial era enabled both to contribute and participate equally in community strengthening.

The development of colonialism in Ghana, on the other hand, resulted in the emergence of gender inequities. Women, unlike men, were discouraged from pursuing formal education, owing to colonial rulers' preference for educating men for government and administration (Döşkaya, 2017, p. 151). According to research, there were major inequities connected to, but not limited to, the educational gender gap by the time school became a feasible choice for women. Furthermore, various courses were presented based on expected gender roles and duties. Women, for example, were given courses on household management. These views have prevented women from obtaining the necessary skills to engage in full political action (Allah-Mensah, 2005, p. 12; Döşkaya, 2017). As a result of the institutional frameworks put in place during colonial rule to restrict and discourage women from being active participants in the public sphere, women's engagement in political and administrative matters has declined.

A steady rise in anti-colonial struggles and the participatory role of African women altered the perceived roles of gender and produced revolutionary movements that promised the emancipation of women and a share in the fruits of liberation (Urdang, 1995; Soothill, 2007). However, these revolutionary movements idealised the reproductive roles of women and their role as mothers. Independence was focused on attempts by successive postcolonial governments to 're-domesticate" women and define the "real African" woman as the embodiment of "tradition" and a symbol of Africanism (Soothill, 2007, p 102). Instead of emancipation and empowerment of women, morality discourses were central to the debate about women's sexuality and often, motherhood was centralised and idealised in such a way that it became central to nation-building and belonging (Soothill, 2007, p. 125).

In the post-colonial era, after the 1957 independence, market women are considered to have been a driving force in the succession of the Nkrumah regime and The Convention People's Party (CPP) (Allah-Mensah, 2005). These women provided financial support as well as the ability to coerce their husbands and brothers to support a new Ghana. These women were "petty traders" selling in the market spaces, who did not necessarily have formal education but had strong influence within their communities(Allah-Mensah, 2005). As such, their contribution played a pivotal role in the advancement and succession of government. In turn, Nkrumah rewarded their challenging work by appointing three women to join the cabinet and by extension the emancipation of women was considered in Nkrumah's seven-year plan (Döşkaya & Çoban, 2017).Women like Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings were also seen at the forefront of nation-building, encouraging and equipping women to contribute by attending to the challenges of women through the establishment of the 'National December Women's movement' which played a complementary role in encouraging women to also be involved actively in voting for their future leaders in the early 2000s (Döşkaya & Çoban, 2017, p. 22).

2.3 Gender and gender mainstreaming

2.3.1 Gender through an African lens

Eckert and McConnell-Ginnet (2012) identify certain principles by which gender is formed. The authors observe that these principles are what serve as guidelines to indicate how gender is performed. Firstly, gender is "learned." This is attributed to the dichotomised nature of gender, right from birth which instantaneously transforms "it" to either he or she (Butler, 1993; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2012), thus assigning the baby to a lifetime as either male or female.

(Butler, 1993). The dichotomy is further entrenched through the 'assigned' or prescribed cloth colours, pink for girls and blue for boys (Kiester, 2021). The concept of gender is normally perceived along the lines of biological creation: the differing reproductive organs males and women possess are used to differentiating between the sexes. As such, these biological representations lead to socially constructed norms and values that guide the behaviour of men and women within society. There is a famous saying by Simone De Beauvoir that "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (Leboeuf, 2015). The same is said for men; the learned nature of gender indicates the never-ending process of moulding men and women right from birth to conform to the socialization of the appropriate behaviour for their sex.

In a sense, the subtle ways by which restrictive guidelines are formed by choice and by extension constrain behaviour and demonstrate how gender isn't only learned but taught and enforced. In totality, gender is deeply ingrained in society's social practices and how individuals understand themselves and others (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003). Furthermore, gender relations are also impacted by other external social factors such as race, class and ethnicity. This impacts "how an individual experiences processes and institutions such as trials and courts and how they interact with other individuals within those institutions" (Sidu & Meena, 2007, p.20).

The second principle, identified by Eckert & McConnel-Ginnet (2003) is that "gender is collaborative"(Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p. 19). This is based on the general premise that gender is divided in terms of individual attributes: "an individual is male or female, masculine or feminine, or performing male or female roles" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p. 19). Where men are expected to be assertive, go-getters, strong, protective and able to provide; women are to be supportive, and nurturing based on the expectations of society (Lomazzi & Crespi, 2019). This focus on the individual obscures the fact that we are unable to achieve gender on our own, but the definition of gender is relative (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003). Despite this fact, identifying an individual sense of gender identity is not solely dependent on individuality but rather because of connecting to the social order.

The third principle is that gender is not something we *have*, but it is something we do. For example, children learn gender by having others do it for them at first, and then they assume accountability for their own performances as well as supporting the performances of others. (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p. 19). "This support involves some direct coercion, but mostly gender is ingrained in our way of doing things so much that gestures and interactions

usually call forth gendered responses in others, with eventually little or no conscious attention to this gendering" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p. 19). Children learn gender by how the people around them do gender and mimic this behaviour. Through this mimicking, the children get into gendered performances. As they grow older, they get better at masking the raw performances, but more importantly, their gendered performances become second nature (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2012, p. 21).

One popular argument brought to light is attributed to the ascribed behaviour of people in their gendering, where women are subjugated or are subservient to men within society because they are "the weaker sex". These social relations between men and women translate into different positions within society (Sidu & Meena, 2007). The concept of gender further translates to the expectations about the characteristics, aptitudes, and likely behaviours associated with masculinity and femininity. Based on the social construction of gender, and the permissible or ascribed behaviours or comportment, Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2012, p. 6) identify that gender is learned.

The big question is, can gender be standardized as an umbrella term and definition in every individual's society? Despite the different debates concerning gender and its distinctions, scholars like Maddie (2019) challenge the overlying debates by indicating that a blanket definition must not be placed on the topic of gender. It is important to note that, the gender question and assigned roles are normally viewed from western cultures. However, the African context must be considered and as much as possible be disassociated from a one-sided lens of thinking. According to Maddie (2019), the imbalance in scholarship concerning the topic of gender has led to an inadequate representation of the gender lens in the global south. As such this underrepresentation leads to misrepresentation and misalignment of the relevant tools that can aid in ensuring that the gender lens in the African context is considered.

Interestingly, the popular argument concerning gender and its ascribed meanings has been questioned by African scholars. While western literature perceives the roles of women in an unfavourable light due to biological representation, on the contrary, African societies (in their historical and pre-colonial social arrangements) perceived women and their expected roles differently. Gender can mean different things to different people (Oyěwùmí,2012). Myopic and misleading western bias serves to obscure other debates on the representation of women. African scholars like Oyěwùmí, point out that connotations and assumptions about women are based on western rhetoric that contrasts with the African reality. For example, one

encompassing argument on gender in western literature is the overall subordination of women in society. Men are given the upper hand thus leading to fewer opportunities for women to thrive in society and by extension pushing the patriarchal narrative.

However, contrary to that argument, African scholars have documented the contributions of women in highly "competitive" settings where they go head-on with male colleagues in making differences and contributions within their society (Oyeˇwumi, 2012). Another universal assumption ascribed to gender argument is the subjection of women and the description of women being the beast of subjugation. While western scholarship throws a blanket definition of gender and women's place within society, that is by far disconnected from the realities of pre-colonial African societies. African women have been documented to play pivotal roles and added contributions socio-economically and physically within their societies. Therefore, having this in mind, African scholars question the subordination argument by indicating that it "disregards how social location based on race, ethnicity, class, colour and so forth confers power and privilege" (Oyeˇwumi, 2012, p. 313).

Oyeˇwùmí (2012) further argues that in Igbo and Yoruba societies the term "women" is not dependent on biological representation (Oyeˇwumi, 2012; p. 190). The author's argument in her book, "The Invention of Women" challenges the western popular definition created by biological means. She argues that in the "Igbo culture, no female is simply a wife" and the term "husband' is not synonymous with "males". "Instead, it is a relational term that identifies members of the family into which a female is married. As such, the perceptions of women in western discourses are derived from an imperialistic projection and reading of western societies which limit women from performing roles outside their assigned parameters" (Miescher et al., 2007). Other scholars have pointed out that, in African societies, women were not always powerless and subjugated to men's rule. Nonetheless, a more accurate description is that there has been provision for women to negotiate their way out of unfavourable situations. As such, westernized popular arguments about the African narrative need to be revised since they are not an accurate description of what happens within each society, especially in the African context and setting. In response to this, more African scholars are to narrate the positive contributions of women rather than the popular negative rhetoric associated with "poverty, prostitution, economic and social disadvantages, social domination, and political and social disempowerment" (Oyeˇwumi, 2012; p. 38).

2.3.2 Gender mainstreaming concept

While gender is described as "a socially constructed term that guides the social behaviour and culturally accepted roles of men and women in each society" (Lomazzi & Crespi, 2019, p. 24), gender mainstreaming tactics are inculcated based on a "specific society's particular perceptions of the physical differences and the assumed tastes, tendencies and capabilities of men and women" (FAO, n.d). While in the most preliminary form, gender is associated with the biological construction of men and women, some scholars identify that the dichotomy of gender and the differences associated with it is due to the creation of the understanding of the challenges they experience. According to Miescher et al., (2007), gender has become a code word that is indicative of the institutionalised "attention to women's search for a cultural and economic agency in the postcolonial male-centred world" (Miescher et al., 2007, p. 371). As such, gender mainstreaming policies are targeted and streamlined to benefit both men and women while understanding that the experiences and interactions of men and women vary. It brings to light strategies tailored toward achieving gender equality and strengthening women's rights by infusing gender analysis and gender-sensitive research.

Due to the varied experiences of men and women in their interaction within society, it is theorized that governments, as well as other well-established institutions, have made attempts to bridge the gap caused by societally assigned gender roles, therefore hampering women's access to areas of governance within certain capacities. These attempts enshrined within policies are identified as gender mainstreaming. The introduction of gender mainstreaming was a "major global strategy for the promotion of gender equality, in the Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995" (United Nations, 2002, p. iv). According to Kotze et al (2021), gender mainstreaming can be identified in two main frames: namely mainstreaming and equality. The conceptualisation between the dichotomy of gender and mainstreaming is assessed by the success of the policies and the positive impact on men and women (Kotze et al., 2021). More so, the United Nations (UN) defines gender mainstreaming as policies that 'entail bringing the perceptions, experience, knowledge and interests of men and women into policy-making' (United Nations, 2002, p. 13).

In Ghana's case, policy documents have identified gender mainstreaming to be a "strategy" for accepting gender equality while considering and embracing the realities of the differing roles played by men and women within society (Anyidoho & Manuh, 2010, p. 52). The principal

aim is to create policies focused on addressing inequalities between men and women, particularly by analysing the mechanisms that underlie the different sectors in people's lives (Lomazzi & Crespi, 2019). Unlike the equality approach which is normally a one-sided focus, the gender mainstreaming approach identifies that unequal roles between men and women are due to "unjust social systems embedded within cultural and patriarchy structures, neo-colonial, colonial and the globalisation process" (Hicks, Janine & Myeni, 2016, p. 339). Therefore, the general principle that should guide policies and actions in attempting gender mainstreaming should be informed by the differing needs, situations and conditions encountered by men and women in their communities (Lomazzi & Crespi, 2019, p. 18).

The core mission of gender mainstreaming is "to ensure that the legislative work and policy-making strategies are of greater relevance to society by considering that the policies formulated are tailor-made specifically to address the needs of all citizens – women and men, girls and boys, thus ensuring that these public interventions guarantee that inequalities are not perpetuated" (European Institute for Gender Equality, n.d.) According to (Kotze et al., 2021), gender mainstreaming is often misconstrued as "increasing women's participation at the expense of men" or side-lining men to prop up women (Kotze et al., 2021; Meier & Lombardo, 2013). Gender mainstreaming is a "traversal approach to promoting gender equality, whereby gender issues should be tackled through all government policy areas, and not only those earmarked for the promotion of gender equality" (Meier & Lombardo, 2013, p. 43). The consideration of gender mainstreaming and its role in introducing transformation is a critical issue. According to Daly (2005) "the signature appeal of gender mainstreaming to change the status quo and bring about instant transformation in policies is highly misleading" (Daly, 2005, p. 11).

The United Nations (2002, p. 16) identifies that gender mainstreaming should be viewed as a process and strategy instead of a goal because of the constant streamlining to best suit men and women. Jewson & Mason (1986) identify that there are two approaches to achieving equality: the liberal and radical approaches. The principle for the former is that equality is achieved when social recognition is accessed by all people because of mechanisms set in place for fair competition by policymakers. Whereas, with the radical approach there is more focus on the need for policymakers to formulate interventions and actively work to amend any inequalities and discrepancies because of unfair or biased mechanisms.

Meier & Lombardo (2013), argue that the yardstick to analyse the efficiency of gender mainstreaming and gender quotas is through the consideration of certain shifts. The authors identify the first shift concerning concepts underlying the policy-making process. They further argue that the first shift of gender mainstreaming must tackle the challenges of a patriarchal system and explicitly address the multiple interconnected factors that "perpetuate and fuel the unequal relations between sexes in fields such as family, work, politics, sexuality, culture and violence" (Walby, 1990; Meier & Lombardo, 2013). These unequal relations bring about an imbalance regarding the different experiences and opportunities of men and women within society. The second shift considers incorporating the gender perspective, intersecting with other inequalities into the mainstream political agenda. This shift prioritizes gender equality in policy implementation thus ensuring that men and women not only have equal opportunities within society but are on a level playing field (Ayola, 2019).

The third shift encourages an equal numerical representation of women in politics to ensure that men and women will at least be numerically part of the mainstream. Lastly, through the fourth shift, a focus on institutional and organisational cultures in the political environment, which considers the relevant changes in policy processes, mechanisms, and actors, needs consideration to achieve gender mainstreaming. This includes gender expertise, including knowledge of the mechanisms that cause and reproduce gender inequality and the means to overcome them (Meier & Lombardo, 2013).

The application and integration of gender mainstreaming policies within the EU are evident in the higher numbers of women in the workforce. This is apparent for example in Germany with Angela Merkel who has served effectively for 13 years as president, while also functioning with enough authority to influence political activity in Germany and serve as an important voice within the EU (DW, 2020). Even though this is a great feat, there is evidence that women experience barriers to entry and struggle to remain in the labour market (Kotze et al., 2021). The European Commission (2020) highlights that the underrepresentation of women is a structural problem often correlated with their affiliation with migrant backgrounds, religious or ethnic minority groups (The European Commission, 2020; p. 7). Despite the EU's conscious effort to achieve gender mainstreaming and gender equality in all areas of policy migrants have not been included in the area of development (Kofman et al., 2000). Moreover, gender mainstreaming understands that the experiences of people are not of a blanket nature, but, in the case of migrants, the policies addressing problems are not tailored to address specific needs, taking into consideration that the problems people encounter may be unique in nature. This,

Kofman (2000) labelled as “gender blind” because women are only addressed in the terms of vulnerability or dependence on a male (Kotze et al., 2021, p. 173).

According to the UN report (2002), there is a need to create “a broad strategy targeted at major institutions and focused on gender relations” (UN, 2002; p. 132). Earlier strategies were targeted initiatives on providing women with more education and resources. “While these initiatives are well intended, there was a clear indication that gender inequalities were not going to be resolved through marginal initiatives but rather, it was important to consider adopting a broad process of change especially in addressing policy at an institutional level (United Nations, 2002, p. 9). Thus, including women in current institutions and processes to foster inclusivity is not enough. Instead, there needs to be a call to rethink structures and practices that perpetuate inequalities of all kinds (United Nations, 2001).

2.4 The Affirmative Action Policy in Ghana

The Affirmative Action policy introduced in Ghana was strategically implemented to correct years of under-representation of women within political office. As such, the policy has been in action since independence after its introduction in 1960 with the main aim of addressing gender in-balances within government (Tsikata, 2009; Boateng 2017). The implementation of the policy was made through the approval of the office of the president of Ghana.

The first republican regime in 1960 was lacking in women legislators. In response, the Representation of People’s Amendment Bill was enacted to reserve 10 seats in Parliament for women in 1961 (Boateng, 2017). This law paved way for the appointment of 10 women as legislators and representatives in parliament under Dr Nkrumah’s tenure, intending to address gender in-balances within the government (Amponsah & Boateng, 2021). However, the affirmative action policy was abandoned by subsequent governments after the overthrow of the First Republican government (Boateng, 2017).

Although Ghana has practised quotas for women in appointed membership positions since 1988, one notable gap in the Affirmative Action policy is its lack of legal sustenance. Boateng (2017) highlights that in 1988 the National Council on Women and Development (also called the National Machinery of Women), recommended that the National Electoral Commission (NEC) encourage political parties to nominate more women to contest Parliamentary seats in Ghana (Boateng, 2017). The National Council on Women and Development is the official body

responsible for cooperation, coordination, and liaison with national and international groups on issues concerning women's rights. The recommendation of a 30 per cent quota of women to be appointed to local and national government positions, however, was not enacted into legislation due to resistance from stakeholders who did not support the policy directives (Boateng, 2017). This lack of support was influenced by discriminatory practices (i.e., customs, traditions, and adages) and many informal systems that upheld male advantage. Additionally, the cultural influence of patriarchy is subconsciously intertwined in institutional relations and has cut across the very fabric of Ghanaian society in all facets of life, including national and governmental structures, making it more difficult for society to witness a higher number of women representatives within government.

Despite resistance, successive governments in Ghana have made conscious efforts to reduce gender inequality (Boateng, 2017). One such effort is through the enacting laws focused on promoting girl-child education and forbid archaic practices that degrade women and compromise their self-dignity. According to Verge and Fuente (2014), “gender quotas could effectively fix different patterns of office distribution” (Verge & Fuente 2014, p. 46). Nevertheless, a “simple” solution cannot automatically subvert the years of entrenched practices that support male dominance (Verge & Fuente, 2014). Taking into consideration the dynamics of policy working, their implementation, and their effectiveness, there does not seem to be a deliberate attempt to keep women out of politics in Ghana. However, the reality is that there are no well-built structures in place to ensure that women do not only participate but contribute effectively to politics.

2.5 Socio-cultural practices that hinder women’s participation in politics

Ghanaians are people who pride themselves on their culture, and this culture is intertwined with the fabric of society. One notable point identified is the prevalence of male domination within Ghanaian society, where men occupy places of power in the household and in society. This is influenced by the socialisation process between boys and girls, beginning from the socialization of gender in the home. In the same way that young girls grow into women and are trained to be ‘ideal’ women within society, men are also trained. This socialisation process differs for both men and women; the expected behaviours ascribed to each of them go a long way to influencing the construction of gender in Ghanaian society (Boateng, 2010).

One cultural expectation is that women are to be carers of their homes in raising their children. However, after independence, there has been the rise of civil rights and women empowerment groups targeted at equipping and educating women to be well-rounded in every facet of their lives and society (United Nations, 2010). The groups, which were headed by women identified challenges of the Ghanaian women and sought to address those challenges. Despite the notable feat of women in Ghanaian society, they are faced with certain challenges that impede them from making as much progress as they ought to (The Conversation, 2020).

Women who are interested in formally joining political structures are faced with the stark reality that they not only compete with men but also with women who discourage them from contesting for government positions. Hence, the limited number of women representatives in governmental positions is the result of gendered power relations at work in Ghanaian society (Boateng, 2017).

2.6 Theories of women, gender and development

Women and development theory's principal focus is on economic production and the strategies implemented for the integration of women in development (Parajuli, & Sijapati, 2022). Women and development theory considers the relationship between women and the development process, rather than purely focusing on the strategies of development for the inclusion of women (Sijapati, 2022, p.76). The concept of sustainable development arises due to the constant change in human perceptions of how they view development (Bayeh, 2016).

Development is usually associated with growth, modernization, social change, and advancement (Agbo, 2006). In totality, development is a multi-faceted project which encompasses social, political, and economic systems in a state to create suitable conditions of living by providing many viable options to improve the quality of life in humans (Reyes, 2001). In most cases, development is measured by the increase in economic value in a country and its ability to generate its revenues.

Although this argument is plausible, Sarkar (2006) contends that “development should not be measured by a one-sided lens in terms of the increase of marketed goods and services, but assurance of human well-being” (Sarker, 2006, p. 56). One important aspect of the concept is that sustainable development must “consider strategies that address present demands without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (UNESCO, nd, p. 12).

Therefore, attention should be paid not only to the present needs of society but ensuring that the solutions will in turn be a stepping-stone for future generations. The women and development approach thus encourages a more holistic view to ensure that women are not only beneficiaries of development but active contributors to it (Cornwall, 2016).

The principal argument concerning the uneven development in Africa is a result of various inequalities affecting economic development, one of which is gender (Hicks, Janine & Myeni, 2016). Concerning the importance of women's contributions to public office, Solomon and Memar (2014) establish that women's empowerment and involvement lead to the attainment of sustainable development at a faster rate. The Global Leadership Forecast 2014-2015 identified that "gender diversity in the leadership pool means a greater diversity of thought, which in turn, leads to improved problem solving and greater business benefits." (Global Leadership Forecast, 2015; IDEG, 2021). In addition, Quorum Analysis, a research firm in the USA found that women are more efficient at securing deals than their male peers and possess collaborating skills compared to men (The Boardist, 2016). The equitable participation of women in our democratic governance is a collective responsibility. The Executive, Judiciary, political parties, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and even the electoral management body all have a role to play (IDEG, 2021).

Good governance and politics are complementary in increasing development and improving the lives and the general well-being of the citizens. Muyela (2012) establishes that a critical component of development is the contribution of women to governance, development, and gender issues. For example, the inclusion of women legislatures in the highest levels of government and decision-making positions in Rwanda has led to increased spending in areas of education and health, especially in support for the children of poor families (Hunts & Samman, 2016).

Women and development theory focus on the productivity of women within society in response to market structures and private properties (Parpart, Connelly & Barriteau, 2000; Muyayeta, 2007; Boateng 2017). The proponents of the women and development theory were inspired by Marxist feminists who advocated against private property disregarded the problematic nature of gender inequality and gender relations for women (Rathgeber, 1990; Muyayeta, 2007; Boateng, 2017). Women are among groups of people in society who are directly affected by societal cultures, practices, systems, and patriarchal structures. As a result, the contribution of women towards development will be influenced by men and other social relations. The earlier

approaches to development envisioned women as just mothers and as such focus was placed on issues of reproductive health. With time, the focus led to the integration of women into economic development (Coles, Gary & Momsen 2015). However, Code (2002) argues that generalising the experiences of all women into unified gender equality leads to the risk of denying women cultural and individual agency. The women and development theory opposes placing women into one homogenous category because each woman's experience is distinct and different (Coles et.al, 2015).

Bawa and Sanyare (2013) claim that prehistoric evidence has underlined the crucial roles women have had in contributing to progress, taking a critical look at the relevance of incorporating women in politics. Furthermore, their diverse experiences and knowledge contribute vibrancy and distinctiveness to their contributions to political spheres, which assist the overall concerns of the Ghanaian women's community (Bawa & Sanyare, 2013, p. 285). As such, the inclusion of women in politics is seen as a critical component of state development (Strachan, French & Burgess, 2011). While there is substantive research to prove the correlation between women's participation in politics and economic increase, it is not the reality for many African nations due to a myriad of reasons. For example, according to Odame (2010, p. 77), women's contribution to development is curtailed because of societal "rules, cultures, practices, systems, and patriarchal structures". In Ghana, Madsen (2019; pg:81), argues that the intertwining of patriarchy is within the fabric of society and control is reproduced every day.

That said, considering the prevalence of patriarchal influence within the political sphere, simply adding to the number of active women in local government will be insufficient in providing worthwhile change because these foundations restrict the full operation and participation of women without the influence of men and other social relations (Boateng, 2017). These barriers are detrimental to ensuring equality and development. Considering the disparities in cultural expectations and the unequal distribution of power, diverse discussions over the inclusion of women in traditionally male-dominated positions, the provision of equal rights and opportunities to women, and the creation of gender-neutral institutions are all issues of interest. The emphasis is on women's empowerment and the various methods that might help to solidify them. Several of the intricacies that surround, and influence gender construct norms eventually prevent men and women from breaching "boundaries" outside of accepted standards or behavioural patterns (Brown, 2020).

In response to a critique of the women and development theory, the gender and development theory has identified that women may be involved in development but may not be direct beneficiaries of it (Moyoyeta 2004; Hicks, Janine & Myeni, 2016). The reality is that the potential of women is under-utilized because of male-centred developmental projects that overlook women's needs (Demeke & Gebru, 2015, p. 9). The main aim of the women and development theory is to liberate women from different forms of subordination using practical and strategic needs to achieve gender empowerment and equality (Boateng 2017; Sakar, 2006). Gender and development theory, by contrast, takes a holistic perspective looking at the totality of other factors such as social organisation, and economic and political life to "understand the shaping of particular aspects of society" (Boateng, 2017; p. 140). Unlike other theories, this theory considers and highlights gender relations rather than studying women's challenges in isolation (Boateng 2017).

Scholars have established an argument that the lack of inclusive policies for women slows down the rate of development because of the notable gap in policy processes, discourses, and formulation (Ayentimi et al., 2020; Bayeh, 2016). Taking into account these barriers, the context of gender and development theory was to ensure a holistic approach to addressing women's challenges (Odame, 2010, p. 78). The central approach to the gender and development theory is the empowerment of women (Razavi & Miller, 1995): "women are identified as agents of development not merely passive recipients of developmental assistance" (Hicks, Janine & Myeni, 2016, p. 339).

2.7 Women, politics and gender quotas

Ghana recorded approximately 30.8 million citizens in the 2021 census according to the Ghana Statistical Service (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). Women make up a higher number of the population, outnumbering men in 10 out of 16 of Ghana's regions. A total of 50.7 per cent of the population are female, while men account for 49.3 per cent (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). Globally, women make up 50 per cent of the world's population, hence the importance of including women in governance (Institute for Democratic Governance, 2021, p. 10). Despite this, gender is an overlooked factor in African politics. Although women constitute a larger percentage of the voting population in Ghana, more men are seated and operating at the helm of political affairs (Kibuka-Sebitosi, 2013, p. 120). According to Coetzze & Naidoo (2000), women are the biggest consumers of services, however, they are often disadvantaged by the

lack of delivery of basic needs such as water, sanitation, and electricity (Coetzze & Naidoo, 2000). In Africa, it has been identified that men are more dismissive of gender issues thus affecting the degree to which women have influence in the continent (Hassim & Smith, 2012; Kibuka-Sebotisi, 2013; p 1).

Gender quotas are mechanisms created to counter discrimination and are used as a measure to increase the number of women represented in political positions to ensure that they are not merely token actors in the political arena (Tanjali & Hoofar, 2011). Gender quotas are measures that seek to overcome the obstacles which have led to women's underrepresentation in politics, as well as to increase the currently slow speed by which the number of women in politics is rising (Tanjali & Hoofar, 2011). As such the rationale for gender quotas is to correct some of the obstacles that prevent women's equal access, especially in response to systemic and institutional barriers while ensuring that the minimum percentage of women and men are always represented at major electoral decision-making bodies (Tanjali & Hoofar, 2011).

Politically women are under-represented in numbers in political offices, especially in parliament and their invisibility can be documented at all levels of government in Ghana. This is because of two interrelated factors. Firstly, the political sphere is identified by society to be a "male-oriented area", where women are unwelcome and ineffective (Munemo, 2017). Another factor is that most women actively engaged in politics are members of the elite (Boateng, 2017). Highly educated and financially sound, these women's political agenda reflects their class, rather than their gender interests. (House-Midamba, 1990).

Scholars argue that gender quota do not place men at a disadvantage in the selection process, they further argue that gender quotas do not discriminate against men, instead, they are an answer to the systemic discrimination against women. Therefore, quotas serve as a guideline to ensure that neither sex should make up more than a certain percentage in each political configuration (percentage of seats in parliament, political party etc) to stop reproducing hierarchies and disparities (Cornwall, 2004; p. 81; Tanjali, 2011). Additionally, gender quotas act to address deep-seated and anti-democratic discrimination (Tanjali, 2011). Many supporters view gender quotas as a conduit to ensure that a minimum percentage of genders are equally represented.

The second argument in support of gender quotas is that they will force political parties to recruit and include more women in their leadership structure (Tanjali, 2011). Researchers have indicated that there is a "tendency of political parties-all which are male political elites- to

favour men based on the assumption that women are not electable (due to cultural or religious practices)" (Tanjali, 2011, p. 140). As such, gender quotas are a necessary tool to counter the historical exclusion of women from the political system across democracies. Thirdly, quotas will ensure that both men and women will be part of decision-making and will advance democracy by ending the exclusion of women (Tanjali, 2011).

On the other hand, authors such as Dhanda (2000) present counterarguments against gender quotas. One of their main arguments is that quotas may result in unqualified women displacing more qualified men, because of the need to ensure equal representation of women in political spaces and the solidarity in supporting women's empowerment (Dhanda, 2000). Quota advocates however point out that what constitutes merit is a matter of debate. This is due to the biased nature in which women will be elected to meet quotas and seats while they are not qualified for the job. While identities are commendable, filling in spots to create even representation can make women uninspired to work hard to prove their competency. Therefore, gender quotas are not necessarily the best tool for addressing gender mainstreaming.

The second counterargument brought to the fore by Dhanda (2000), is that quotas emphasize the sex of politicians over their qualifications and political beliefs. Because of the pressure to meet quotas and ensure that women are represented in numbers within the organization, there is a tendency to overlook the competency of women in filling positions to meet gender quotas.

Thirdly gender quota critics such as Phillips (2003) argue that women are not a single interest group. This argument counters the position of gender quota advocates who argue that women constitute an interest group with common needs and interests which differ from those of men (Tanjali, 2011). Phillips (2003), who argues that women are highly diverse, with differing opinions, and that their diversity does not constitute a group, thus deems quotas inappropriate (Phillips, 2003).

2.8 Gender roles

Gender inequality runs on similar lines to gender roles, due to the dichotomy between what is known as the public and private sphere and the assigned roles men and women are to play. The political environment of Ghana is dichotomised into gendered lines of the public and private spheres (Bawa & Sanyare, 2013). The public sector is understood to be male-concentrated while the private sector remains a preserved sector for women (Allah-Mensah, 2005). Singh

(2016) argues that patriarchy runs on a similar concept of gender roles where there are ascribed sets of behavioural and social norms as guidelines within society. For example, Moser's (1993) perspective about gender roles is guided by the framework of the triple role for women: "productive, reproductive and community functions" (Boateng, 2017, p. 52). This framework identifies the role of women entailing goods and service production for consumption and trade (World Bank, 2020). These roles are a means to earning an income across the civil, public and private sectors. According to Boateng (2017), the productive activities take place in the formal and informal areas such as banking, petty trading, fishing, farming, transportation and food processing (Boateng, 2017).

In the Ghanaian home setting, women contribute to family maintenance through the proceeds of their income earned from paid jobs or trading (Boateng 2017). Despite the "financial status of women in Ghana, the stark reality remains that some women encounter difficulties in accessing resources such as land, credit and technical assistance that will enable them to increase production and engage in politics" (Bugri, Yeboah & Agana, 2014; Boateng 2017, p. 140). Coupled with productive roles, many Ghanaian women juggle reproductive roles and domestic activities in their daily lives. The reproductive requirement is not only restricted to bearing children but maintaining and caring for the home including caring for the sick and aged in the family (Ramashala 2016).

2.9 Gendered institutions

Over the years, there has been keen interest by scholars in gender and politics, with their particular interest being analysing gendered institutions and their inclusion of women (Mackay & Waylen, 2009). Despite policies formulated to ensure the inclusivity of women, these can only be facilitated and made effective by institutions. Tamale (2000) emphasizes the significance of analysing the institutions through which African politics is played out while discussing the inclusion and lack thereof of women's engagement in politics. According to Mahoney and Thelen (2010), institutions are identified as conduits that enforce rules and norms that structure behaviours within political and social lives. Due to their rigid nature, institutions and their culture cannot be instantaneously changed (Waylen, 2014). Institutions are identified to play both formal and informal roles in shaping the political life of parliamentarians. Therefore, women's inclusion and achievements are highly dependent on institutional norms (Maylen, 2014).

Despite the constitutional and legal support from governments, the political and social environments are unfriendly and hostile towards women politicians (Meier, 2008; Zakara, Zakara & Hamid, 2018). Engaging this in context concerning the relationship of women in governance and gendered institutions, Cornwall (2004) argues that political spaces are not "neutral". It is important to bear this in mind when assessing the participation of women and other marginalised groups in policy processes. The author further identifies that "power relations are created within participatory spaces, thereby reproducing hierarchies and disparities" (Cornwall, 2004, p.81). Lowndes (2019) analyses the role of institutions and their relationship with gender by classifying mechanisms of regulation, obligation and persuasion to resist and constrain actors along gendered lines (Lowndes 2019, p. 154).

Within institutions, "gender emerges not simply in institutional structure, but in the balance of activities on a day-to-day basis" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p. 3). Gender binaries are also reinforced within the workplace for example, the "rational" or "impassive" male is considered a better candidate for managerial work (Lowndes, 2019). Women, who climb the corporate ladder are considered instead to bring value in terms of their "nurturing" and "cooperative' ways within their organisations (Alvesson & Billing, 2009). While there are arguments focused on the value of the new skills women bring in the workplace, their skills are instead associated with the fact that they are female. This reinforces gendering of women in workspaces. As such, "linking women's value in the workplace to the new skills they bring effectively erases women's ability to do what men have been doing all along" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003; p 4). For instance, because certain "character traits" are associated with women, other traits are downplayed as though women cannot handle male assigned tasks (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003) .

Feminist scholars have argued that gender is implicated within institutions in two ways: nominally and substantively (Waylen, 2013). Nominally, gender is implicated through higher numbers of men occupying positions of power compared to women, further translating to less inclusive policies which address all groups within the society (Kenny, 2009). When it comes to forms of power in public office, the reflection of male domination and under-representation of women is identified within political party structures and decision-making positions. Substantively, "participation by women is variable and even where women dominate in numbers, they are not necessarily able to achieve "voice" due to power relations ingrained in our world's societal norms (Gouws et. al, 2012). These norms, formal and informal, are gendered and by extension frustrate the process, limiting the impact of reforms advocating for

equality" (Lowndes 2014; Lowndes 2019 pg. 687), The gendered nature of institutions is described by Madsen (2019) as how culturally assigned gender roles are reinforced within the Ghanaian parliament. Madsen (2019) labels it "the kitchen in the parliament", arguing that female parliamentarians are asked to serve meals to their fellow male parliamentarians (Madsen 2019; p. 20). These culturally assigned roles of men and women and the spilling over of their 'acceptable' behaviour and responsibilities into the workplace indicate how institutions are gendered in many ways and limit women from making significant strides within political and social settings.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research dissertation adopts feminist institutional theory as the theoretical framework for this study to understand the operations of institutions and how they influence behavioural constructs.

2.10 Feminist institutionalist theory

Feminist institutionalism questions the foundations of both new institutional theory and institutions themselves (Thomson, 2018). The approaches of new institutionalism and institutional theories have minimised the interplay of gendered relations. In comparison to feminist institutionalism, the new institutionalism arguments theory has been gender-blind and ignored, despite the fact that political institutions have established equality through gender quotas, gender mainstreaming policies, and state feminist efforts. Therefore, "feminist institutionalism is an attempt to address this oversight and to think more fundamentally about the role of gender in political institutions" (Thomson, 2018, p. 179).

Feminist institutionalist theory seeks to understand the distribution of power within institutions (Holmes, 2020). This theory was developed in the mid-2000s when feminists were examining neutral structures, norms, rules, and practices that constitute institutions and how these produce gendered effects (Chappell 2006; Kenny 2007). The central premise of feminist institutionalism is reflected through the analysis of power and its relationship with inequality (Kenny 2007). The theory engages discourses within institutions while highlighting the complexities and the gendered interplay between political discourses and the interrelations of institutional arrangements (Kulawik 2009; Kantola 2006). The major argument of feminist institutionalism is that institutions are characterized by the dynamic nature by which they are created. They are not static but "dynamic entities that constrain or enable the behaviours of

social actors working within and outside of them" (Chappell 2006, p. 224; Holmes 2020, p. 215). Due to the dynamic nature of institutions, it is easy for social actors to make or break them. Thus, feminist institutionalism brings four major contributions to institutionalism, namely: 1) an understanding of gender; 2) an understanding of the role of informal institutions' roles and norms; 3) a greater understanding of newness; and 4) an understanding of power (Chappell, 2006).

Understanding gender entails understanding the gendered nature of institutions and working from a structural view of gender concerning institutions (Thomson, 2018). Feminist institutionalism assumes that all institutions are gendered and hence serve as constructs of masculinity and femininity where certain behaviours are enmeshed in the daily culture or 'logic' of political institutions ascribed to the construction of gender (Acker, 1992; Krook and Mackay, 2011, p. 6; Thomson, 2018; p. 179). In effect, feminist institutionalism theory can facilitate an understanding of the relationship between the output of institutions, actors and how these experiences reinforce gendered institutions (Thomson, 2018). Accordingly, institutions are theorized as "rules of the game," which provide a "structure of incentives and disincentives to political actors while expressing norms of acceptable behaviour between males and females" (Lowndes, 2014). These rules are tied to societal cultures and expectations of how men and women conduct themselves. In the political sphere, feminist institutionalist scholars recognize the gender dynamics within institutions and the extent to which women are included in these institutions. According to Holmes (2020), the theory "demonstrates the demarcation of political institutions and the private lives of social actors" (Krook and Mackay, 2011: 5).

According to Thomson (2018), Feminist institutionalism examines the gendered ways by which formal and informal institutions interact (Thomson, 2018). While new institutionalism theory observes the relationship between formal and informal institutions, it fails to access the gender approach. Feminist institutionalism theory, on the other hand, looks at the "appropriate behaviours" that dictate how men and women are to behave within these institutions. It thus delves into the "logic" that dictates the behaviour within institutions. According to Thomson (2018), feminist institutionalist theorists "argue that the informal is thus a key aspect to appreciating the gendered nature of institutions and that 'monitoring *inaction*, *silences*, and *lacunae*' must form a key part of the analysis" (Thomson, 2015; Thomson, 2018; p 179).

Feminist Institutionalism also looks at understanding newness by considering transformative ways of feminist politics. These transformative ways understand the growing nature of societies and, therefore, consider options that are gender inclusive for the benefit of all actors (Thomson,

2018).

Lastly, an understanding of power is important factor feminist institutionalists consider in assessing the ways institutions operate. In relation to power interlinking with politics, feminist institutionalist theorists argue that power is critical in a feminist institutionalist paradigm. Feminist institutionalism has a more acute grasp of power than the numerous guises of new institutionalism (Lowndes, 2020). In general, new institutionalism does not place a strong focus on the function of power (Kenny, 2007). However, an appreciation of gender as articulated above centres on awareness of power. Given its gendered premise, feminist institutionalism 'foregrounds power' (Kenny and Mackay, 2009, p.275; Mackay et al., 2010, p. 573). Gender power dynamics structure decision-making and access to hierarchies inside institutions: "the power relations that support political processes are formed and reproduced through gender" (Thomson, 2018)

“Case studies offer two models of feminist institutions. In advanced industrial societies, feminist institutions tend to emphasize representation and voice, giving women new access to policymaking bodies through independent commissions or ombudspersons” (Cole, Manuh & Miescher, 2007; p. 40). The assumption is that higher women representation would lead to an influence on policy implementation towards inclusivity for vulnerable groups in society (Madsen 2019). The representation of women would mean higher numbers backing policies that are beneficial to vulnerable groups and women within society. “Voice” on the other hand means that there is a creation of a conducive platform where women can easily express their views and suggestions on matters regarding addressing women’s challenges without fear of rejection (Lowndes, 2020).

In postcolonial settings, feminist organizations and institutions are inclined towards positioning and mobilizing women to participate in national development (Cole, et. al., 2007). This is because of the value of women’s contributions when it comes to development policies (Lowndes, 2020).

Given the feminist institutionalist theory, we have seen the problems that exist within systems of governance. The theory will allow the researcher in this study to examine how these dynamics of power and inequality work within institutions. Within the Ghanaian context, the use of this theory will be critical in providing an analytical lens for determining and gaining

insight into the institutional value systems and norms existing in governance which create challenges and barriers for women to participate effectively in local government.

Further to this, feminist institutionalism is useful in being able to assess the underlying issues within institutions of local governance that have allowed for prevailing practices to persist despite the introduction of policies meant to reform local government as far as gender equity and equality are concerned. Finally, feminist institutionalism allows for the analysis of how gendered power dynamics within institutions have a significant impact on how people experience these institutions, and how resources are allocated disproportionately based on institutional value systems, norms, and cultures. Olsen (2011) reveals that these "power dynamics between institutional actors and the scramble to access resources are tied to rules and worldviews" which lead to gender bias (Olsen, 2011, p. 46).

Feminist institutionalists also shed light and offer insight into the problematic nature of the implementation of gender mainstreaming by looking at resistance to gender initiatives and how this resistance can further be implicated within institutions (Lowndes 2020). The main aim of feminist institutionalism is to create an understanding of the framework of the interrelationship of gendered institutional subjects and their environments. Additionally, the theory provides insights into the ways re-gendering is attained in institutions.

While the argument of feminist institutionalism highlights how representation and voice can make a difference in how power relations are conducted within institutions, it has received criticism. This is due to the shortfall of the theory in being beneficial to all. Although the growing awareness of gender inclusion is dominant, men are still represented in higher numbers compared to women and thus have a higher influence in policymaking, the policy areas to be addressed and implementation of policies.

This theory is relevant to the study because it identifies the challenges that women face within governance spaces. It also identifies the underlying premise of the distribution of power within institutions and how women navigate their ways to contribute effectively within the spaces.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the varied debates concerning how people view gender and its underpinnings. It further went on to discuss the African narrative of gender in comparison to the 'popular' discourse of gender. Similarly, the chapter narrowed in on the Ghanaian narrative

and the efforts made by the government to date to address the inequalities and gender biases within society. Furthermore, the chapter focused on the theoretical framework of feminist institutionalism and its value as a means of understanding and approaching this research study. The next chapter focuses on the methodology of the study, highlighting the mode of data collection, the sample size and target, as well as the mode of analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methodological approach used in this research, as well as the procedures and methods for gathering the data. It addresses the feasibility and reliability of the study, research design, sampling methods and identification of data sources, as well as the mode of data collection. The ethical considerations of the research are also set out. Using a snowball sampling technique, 15 women were interviewed from various levels of Ghana's government assemblies, namely: representatives from municipal assemblies, district assemblies, local level representative assemblies, Members of Parliament and Directors from other local governance institutions. The details of this approach are set out below.

3.1 Research approach

This research adopts a qualitative research methodology, taking into consideration that the study is focused on women and gender mainstreaming in Ghanaian political spaces. According to Abedsaeidi and Amiraliakbari, (2015, p. 20), "qualitative research methods is an organized method of describing people's experiences and feelings". Chappel (2006, p. 36) also adds that qualitative research "is an enquiry process which consists of an interpretive material that makes the world visible" (Creswell, 2007; p.36). Qualitative research strives to establish a framework or image, particularly when the inquiry includes meanings, human reactions, or values. According to Mouton (2001) and Schurink (2003), one of the important aspects of qualitative research is that it aims to comprehend people based on their knowledge and perceptions of the world. Qualitative research methods are obtained from data collected from the researcher through first-hand observation, interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, and participant observation.

Using a case study analysis of Ghana, the research explores the individual experiences of women involved in parliamentary affairs and government positions in all aspects of local governance to examine the extent to which governance institutions and their requisite cultures inhibit women from actively participating or contributing to these political spaces. Case studies

are a multi-faceted research approach that allows in-depth analysis of complex issues in a real-life context (Crowe et al., 2011). The exploration of the complex nature of gendered institutions and their dynamics in hindering women from effective participation in political spaces is very crucial in understanding how these mechanisms work.

In addition to a case study approach, this research uses the interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm understands that reality is multi-layered and complex, therefore the paradigm allows the researcher to understand how people interpret and interact within their social environment, which is dependent on the social norms of the society. The paradigm is best suited to answer the core research because it incorporates the use of interviews. The study seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of how these institutions compromise women's ability to effectively participate in these political spaces. By the adoption of an exploratory approach, it analyses the relationship between gender mainstreaming and how culture and institutions can be merged to bridge the gaps identified, and further highlights the relevance of feminist institutionalism. As such, the case study approach enables an adequate understanding of the matter at hand.

3.2 Research tools and their application

The study draws its information from primary and secondary sources of data. The primary sources of data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Kumar (2019, pg. 22) defines interviews as a "written set of instructions, open-ended or closed, prepared for use by an interviewer in a person-to-person interaction". The use of interviews allowed the researcher to delve deeply into the context of the research and by extension give the participants an in-depth knowledge of the research paper's interests, goals, and expectations. Twenty women were reached out to via telephonic call and referrals by other women. However, only 15 women were willing to participate in the study. Each participant was interviewed individually, either through telephonic call or face-to-face-interview. The duration of the interview was dependent on their willingness to respond to the interview questions. On average it took about 20-30 minutes to interview each participant.

3.3 Sampling

The study adopts a qualitative research method, using snowball sampling in the data collection process. Snowball sampling is applied when the sample with the target characteristics is not easily accessible. The researcher adopted an exponential non-discriminatory sampling

snowballing method where interviewees gave multiple referrals until the sample size was achieved (Wagner, et. al, 2012). The targeted participants, who are public figures, were difficult to access and their identities had to be protected. The researcher asked participants who had been interviewed for referrals based on their background experiences. Snowball sampling is suited because its nature allows participants to refer the researcher to access other participants who will be key to contributing to the quality of the study.

The objective of this was to give the researcher an in-depth understanding of how local government institutions in Ghana work and the experiences of women in the government space. The intended target participants were women in Ghana who are actively involved in decision-making in local government i.e.: Municipal Chief Executives (MCEs) and District Chief Executives (DCEs) and members of parliament (MPs) who are engaged in all levels within local the government. The selected sample not only has first-hand knowledge but first-hand experience of the practice of gender mainstreaming in the Ghanaian context as well as insights into its impact. They were also key in discussing how the society's culture may play a role in inhibiting women from fully exploring and participating in local government.

The researcher interviewed 15 women who occupy government positions within Accra and are key experts on the research topic. These participants were interviewed in their personal capacity and not as representatives of the various local government ministries within which they work. The respective participants were identified because of the number of years they have been engaged in politics and their understanding of Ghana's local government system in relation to the challenges they encountered personally.

Additionally, the participants were selected because of their hands-on experience in policymaking, lobbying and implementation. The small sample size and varied experiences were not a representation of every Ghanaian woman in politics or local government. The interviews were conducted using technological tools such as zoom, skype, and telephonic conversation. Due to the busy schedules and distance of the majority of participants, it was almost impossible to have face-to-face in-person interactions. In-person interviews were conducted for women who were able to spare some time.

The semi-structured interviews were voluntary for participants to engage in. The participants, upon agreeing to engage in the research study, were given the details of the purpose of the research study and what it will be used to achieve. The participants were made aware of the possible implications of participating in the study. They were given the option to remain anonymous if they felt participation in the study may pose a risk to their professional career

(see appendix as well as section 3.6 of this chapter on research ethics).

3.4 Demographic overview of participants

The study interviewed 15 women who occupy various positions within Ghana's local government. Two are representatives from municipal assemblies; two are local level assembly members; four are from district assemblies; two are political party representatives in the youth wing; three are directors in local government institutions; and two are members of parliament from the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and National Political Party (NPP). These participants were women from across different parts of the capital city, Accra.

The study targeted women in local government from different areas in Accra to explore their various experiences and the nature of institutional cultures and norms across the city. Participants' responses were thus informed by their experiences and interactions with society and Ghana's broader political culture. In reference to the participants' years of experience, ten of the participants had been in their respective positions for 5-10 years. This was followed by three participants who had 11-15 years of experience and two participants who had at least 16 years of experience within the local government. This was relevant to the study because their years of working in local government may shape their experiences and perspectives. The age of the participants is also viewed as important data to capture, in order that the responses of older participants could be compared to those of younger participants.

Tables 3.4(a) and 3.4 (b), below, provide a summary of the sample, indicating the membership of the participants, their age group, and years of experience.

Table 3.4 (a) Participant demographics

Demographics	
Membership	**No. of participants**
Local level Assembly	2
Municipal Assembly	2
District Assemblies	4
Political Parties representatives	2
Member of Parliament	2
Directors of Local government institutions	3

Age Group	
30-40	2
41-50	7
50+	6
Years of experience	
5-10	10
11-15	3
16 and above	2

District assembly leaders are the largest number of participants interviewed (4), followed by directors of the local government institutions (3). Members of parliament, political parties, assembly women and municipal assembly members were each represented by two (2) interviewees[2]. For purposes of anonymity, in this report participants are referred to by a number (P1- P15).

Table 3.4 (b) Breakdown of participant information

Participant Number	**Participant rank**	**Age**	**Years of experience**
P1	Member of Parliament	56 years	7 years
P2	Assistant Director, local government institutions	45 years	15 years
P3	Director General, local government institution	55 years	22 years
P4	Political Party representative (NPP)	30 years	5 years
P5	Political Party representative (NDC)	32 years	5 years
P6	District Assembly representative	48 years	14 years
P7	District Assembly representative	42 years	16 years
P8	Municipal Assembly	45 years	11 years

	Representative		
P9	Assembly woman[1] (Local level assembly)	40 years	6 years
P10	Member of Parliament	53 years	8 years
P11	Assembly woman (Local level assembly)	50 years	6 years
P12	Director, local government institution	45 years	15 years
P13	District Assembly representative	47 years	9 years
P14	Municipal Assembly representative	35 years	5 years
P15	District Assembly representative	40 years	10 years

3.5 Data collection process and data analysis

Semi-structured interviews were the best fit to achieve the study's outcome. According to Wagner et.al (2012), interviews are valuable sources of information because they allow participants to easily express themselves by giving ideas, beliefs, and opinions on the subject matter. Semi-structured interviews were conducted for this study, targeting women who are either engaged actively in politics or governance spaces or who are parliamentary members.

This interview type was adopted because it allowed the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue wherein changes were applied considering the participant's responses and allowed the interview to probe salient contributions that arose during the interview (Smith & Osborn 2003, p. 7). The use of semi-structured interviews also helped participants to express their views discursively without the restrictions of a confined set of questions. Through these interviews, the researcher gained rich descriptions and reflections on the experiences of the participants. This provided the researcher with an understanding of the interrelation of gender, culture, and institutions based on the responses provided during the interviews.

Each interview took approximately 20-30 minutes to complete and was communicated in

[1] The Assembly woman plays a role in community development and is a liaison between the district assembly and community members.

English as all the participants were fluent English speakers. Interviews were conducted either telephonically or in person at a preferable location due to the country's fuel price hikes and the participants' busy schedules.

Lester et. al (2020) define data analysis as the process that involves categorizing, examining, tabulating, and recombing data from a study. To avoid bias and distortions, the interviews were recorded. The responses derived from the semi-structured interviews permitted the researcher to make her observations by analysing the differing ideas and perceptions of the interviewees concerning the study. The observations further allowed the researcher to identify recurring patterns within the data and group them into themes. The data gathered from the in-depth, semi-structured interviews was recorded either through personal notes, voice recordings, or meeting recordings, and were transcribed after the fieldwork, to produce a document of the responses gathered after conducting the research. The constant themes, ideas, and patterns of thought that came out of the interviews were recorded with a voice recorder and transcribed verbatim. The researcher used the artificial intelligence app Otter ai. to transcribe the data and further categorised it into themes.

Interview transcripts were thematically coded using a coding system following Braun and Clarke (2006). The collected data was coded and developed into a set of candidate themes on Microsoft Word for analysis. Thematic analysis of data allows the researcher to identify common ideas, patterns, and meanings during the interviews. From a learning and teaching perspective, thematic analysis is a method on its own rather than a methodology (Balogun & Johnson 2004). According to Norris, and Nowell (2006), thematic analysis is a process of identifying themes in qualitative data. (Norris & Nowell, 2006). These common patterns helped the researcher understand the interconnection between the varied arguments presented. In the write-up of this report, these patterns of ideas and views on the relationship between gender, culture, and institutions were coded and grouped into the constant themes that are drawn out from the interview excerpts. The theme of gender mainstreaming, institutional cultures and norms were used to categorize the data. The fundamental nature of the thematic analysis is its ability to provide an in-depth understanding and skills that help conduct other analyses.

Additionally, the researcher explored secondary data such as policy papers, legislation, research contributions and or frameworks existing within local governance structures in so far as they pertained to women's inclusion and participation in Ghana's governance. Academic books that tackled topics concerning gender, gender mainstreaming, and women's participation, especially focused on the African context and Ghanaian setting, were used to inform the research paper. These sources gave the researcher background knowledge and helped draw logical and analytic

ideas concerning how institutions in Ghana play a role in either giving women an advantage or a disadvantage and how they interact with each other. It also informed the study about the efforts of the country in reference to the measures adopted in achieving and ensuring the inclusivity of women in political spaces. This helped build a strong contextual frame for conducting the study.

3.6 Limitations, feasibility, and positionality

One limitation of the study is that the availability of data concerning women occupying political spaces in Ghana is scanty, perhaps because it has not been a point of note for other researchers. Another reason is that Ghana's database is not easily accessible to researchers. Most of the literature is not accessible in digital copies but in hard copies and these copies are limited in number. However, previous research by Odame (2010) and Boateng (2017) has been done on women occupying political spaces in Ghana. This will serve as a premise for the researcher to analyse how institutions and cultural underpinnings play a role in inhibiting women and how these same factors can be a cause for change in the political sphere.

The second limitation identified is that due to the COVID-19 restrictions at the time, the possibility to travel and engage in face-to-face interviews was almost greatly reduced. However, the researcher overcame this challenge by utilising technological platforms such as Zoom meetings or Skype to conduct the interviews and gather the relevant data to complete the study. However, since very few people in the Ghanaian society are conversant with technology, the researcher travelled overseas to have direct access to her sample population.

A further limitation was the availability of the selected sample of participants. Women in governance spaces are not easily available. There is also a distrust in society concerning the possible use of the information given and a fear amongst prospective participants that sections of their opinions will be framed and misinterpreted. Some participants would either give abrupt excuses or show disinterest in participating in the study. The hesitance by some potential participants to willingly engage in the study had a significant effect on the ease of conducting the research.

3.7 Ethics

The research incurred minimal risk to those interviewed because the questions directed to them did not in any way interfere with their position or their careers. Also, there is no ethical implication concerning the intended group because the researcher does not have the power to

exert any influence on the interviewees. Nevertheless, those who agreed to be part of the semi-structured interview were handed a consent form which they were to sign to indicate that the researcher was given consent by the participants to document their views and opinions in the study. The parts of the interviews where consent was given were used in the study as data gathered. All primary data collected is limited to use for research only.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Witwatersrand granting the researcher permission to undertake the research project. Before the start of the interviews, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants. Participants were also informed that their contributions to the study are voluntary and that their details and responses will be kept anonymous. They were also informed about their right to withdraw from participating without fear of victimization and penalty. During the introduction to the interviews, it was specified to the participants that there were no direct benefits or risks associated with participation in the study. Verbal consent was obtained from the participants first and, later, written informed consent was provided by participants as confirmation of their consent to participation and interview recording.

3.8 Validity, reliability, dependability

The validity and reliability of the research are key to its quality. Concerning the research question stated and the intended sampling method, the research will have high validity. This is because the intended participants that will be sampled are women in governance spaces. The semi-structured interviews will enable the participants to easily express themselves and share the experiences encountered in their careers. The sample participants and their responses represent experiences of Ghanaian women in local government but are also likely to speak to the patriarchal nature of the society broadly. This makes the study credible, dependable and confirmable because the challenges indicated are likely to cut across women in Ghana. The design methods adopted through semi-structured interviews are suited to contributing to the existing research on gender mainstreaming and cultural and institutional barriers. In terms of positionality, the researcher was in no way affiliated or associated with anyone within the government or who occupies governmental positions. She relied solely on her network of friends or acquaintances who were connected to the targeted participants for the study.

The reliability of the study is derived from the other research papers used during the study to support the data gathering process. Reliability and validity are essential concepts to be measured

(Neuman, 2014). The underlying themes that are consistent in the sources served as a guideline for the researcher on how to frame the questions to gain the most relevant responses in addressing the research question. Additionally, the ability of the researcher to analyse data from a neutral standpoint based on participants' responses also plays a role in the reliability of the research.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the research methodology by looking at the research design adopted for the study, the population sample, and the limitations of the study. It further discussed the process of analysis and the research tools and application. Additionally, the ethical implications of the study were discussed. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University to allow the researcher formal clearance to undertake the interviews. A total of 15 participants engaged in interviews for the research and were identified using a snowball sampling method. The transcripts of interviews were thematically coded and transcribed using the AI Otter program. However, the ease of progress of the study was impeded by certain limitations such as COVID-19, limited sample size, restricted accessibility to participants, and general distrust amongst some of the participants approached for interview. All ethical considerations were complied with.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The overall purpose of the study is to explore the extent to which gender mainstreaming can be used as a tool to transform local government institutions for the effective participation of women in Ghana. Despite the efforts put in place by the Ghanaian government to include women in policy-making positions through the affirmative action policy, the number of women representatives is still few and remains far below the policy quota of 40 per cent female representation.

This chapter presents an analysis of the responses provided by interview participants from different levels in the municipal and district assemblies, political parties, parliament and women opinion leaders within Ghanaian local government[2].

The analysis covers three critical areas, namely: 1) existing institutional cultures and norms in local governance; 2) how these cultures and norms create institutional barriers to women's participation; and 3) how gender mainstreaming has helped in addressing these institutional barriers.

This chapter is divided into three main sections which introduce the main themes, namely: existing institutional cultures and norms; barriers that inhibit women's participation; and gender mainstreaming tactics adopted to address these barriers.

4.1 INSTITUTIONAL NORMS AND CULTURES

The first research question sought to identify *the institutional cultures and norms in existence in local government in Ghana*. The analysis below presents the participants' responses concerning institutional barriers that stem from Ghana's sociocultural beliefs and norms. Notably, some participants' reluctance to answer some of the questions posed in the interviews was perhaps an indication of the ways in which Ghanaian societal cultures and norms play a role in shaping women's participation and their willingness to discuss their experiences.

[2] Due to the unavailability of women to participate in the study, women from metropolitan assemblies are not represented in the data. However, the other target sample views are equally relevant to provide responses that would help to answer the research question.

4.1.1 Institutional and cultural norms

The first question posed to participants in the interviews concerned their general understanding of institutional cultures and norms in local governance. The questions asked by the researcher were aimed at gaining insight into the participants' understanding of institutional cultures and norms in general and the local government. The first question sought to identify how the participants defined institutional cultures and norms.

Out of 15 participants, six had difficulty expressing their thoughts on institutional cultures. Four of the participants did not know what institutional cultures and norms referred to, and five of the participants had a common definition in their understanding The responses of two of the participants who had a common view are expressed below.

"What I understand is institutional cultures, they have to do with the collective practices and, let's say, the norms that guide the individuals or the employees within the local government." (P9, assembly woman representative)

"I understand institutional cultures and norms as values, opinions, of you know, a group of people, a collective belief, other values, opinions, that guide that group of people with regards to their decision-making" (P4, Political Party representative NPP)

The participants who had a common understanding related institutional cultures to collective practices that serve as a guideline for individuals in decision-making processes.

The subsequent question in the study asked participants whether there are institutional cultures and norms at play in local government in Ghana. The participants' responses indicated that diverse institutional cultures and norms exist in local governance, influenced by Ghana's broader socio-cultural practices and value systems. The culture and values in Ghanaian society are replicated within institutions and translated by the interaction with gender. The participants' responses were linked to their broader understanding of Ghanaian culture. Participant nine's response is presented below:

"I will say that our family system, marriage institutions, how our roles are defined in our society as men and women, who are supposed to be a leader in the family, religious traditions, leadership styles, etc., are many of these institutional cultures that impact on our local governance" (P9, local level assembly representative).

The data responses revealed that the participants linked institutional cultures and norms to the broader value system and cultural behaviours in Ghana. Four of the participants (P1, P3, P8,

and P9) linked institutional cultures and norms to wider societal beliefs in Ghana. These practices stem from family system beliefs that influence the interactions of men and women and are replicated within institutions government.

However, although uncertain of the meaning of institutional cultures, participant eight had a different view, instead linking institutional cultures to the formal structures built within her particular institution of government:

"Institutional cultures? I don't know if I'm really right. I will say Institutional culture is like our reporting time". (P 8, municipal assembly representative)

Her contribution identified the formal system of reporting as a norm and culture that distinguishes her institution in local government from others.

4.2 IDENTIFYING INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS

The second research question sought to explore the ways in which institutional norms and values create barriers for women to participate effectively in local governance. The major question posited was, *how institutional cultures and norms create barriers for women to participate.*

All the study participants felt that institutional cultures and norms in Ghana create barriers to women's participation in local governance. This section presents themes that are noted as institutional barriers.

4.2.1 Gendered institutional structures

The gendered institutional structure is the first theme that sprung up in the discussion when participants were asked about their views of the nature of institutional barriers. In identifying institutional barriers, participants highlighted the norms and values that create barriers for women in Ghanaian local government. The participants' contributions identified that formal structures within their institutions do not entirely favour women. This is because, apart from performing in the public sphere, women have additional responsibilities and expectations to attend to in the private sphere. These expectations and responsibilities, coupled with the rigid nature of institutional rules, affect women in ways that prevent them from fully participating in the local government. Participant two, who is an assistant director at one of the municipalities stated:

"What I think are some of the challenges like our reporting time like this, if you are a woman and you are supposed to come at eight and five, let's take it like we have a family to take care of. I think there should be some kind of flexibility for women to be able to be effective, more effective." (P2. Assistant Director in municipal assembly).

The study observed that participants identified institutional barriers as the structural processes within the local government. They went on to link how these structures, although standard in the public sphere, are not entirely friendly for women because of women's added responsibilities expected to be carried out at home. Participant two identified that her municipality applied the same rules for men and women in terms of reporting hours. However, women carry a bigger burden because they are expected to attend to the needs of their family, especially their children, while juggling these family obligations with performance-related expectations at work.

Participant ten, who is a member of parliament, expanded on how institutions cause barriers and inhibit women from participating effectively. She referred to the ways in which local government institutions are lacking socially. She highlights how women find difficulty in juggling between attending to the needs of their families and attending to the needs of the district. For example, women who are members of parliament and have young children are forced to choose between caring for their children or focusing on their careers. She explained how the location of the office buildings for the ministries (local government offices) are not child friendly. The fact that schools or after-school clubs are not stationed nearby to cater for the children of politicians creates a barrier for the women who work there. Mothers who are in the political field thus feel as though they have to choose between their careers or being present for their children. As a result, most women feel discouraged from participating in, or vying for high positions within, local government.

However, participant ten's view varied slightly from that of participant two. Participant ten highlights that not all local government institutions have a standard rule for men and women. Instead, she highlighted that nursing mothers are allowed to report to work at a later time and leave at 3 pm. Although there is a consideration for nursing mothers, however, she notes that it is not enough: the traffic for mothers who live in the big cities still affects the quality of their time spent, juggling between attending to matters at home and at work.

The inputs of these participants echo the findings of scholars who have highlighted the institutional barriers women face. Several studies in Ghana, including Bawa and Sanyare (2013) and Tagoe and Abakah (2015) emphasize that the responsibilities that women perform as spouses, mothers, and caregivers prevent them from competing on an equal playing field

with men. Therefore, the part women play in the private sphere gives them little or no time to participate in political activities. While participant ten's contribution identifies that the Ghanaian government has in some ways created provisions for women by adjusting reporting time, this effort is still not enough in creating a bridge for women between the burden of societal expectations and their political careers.

The study observes through these findings that Ghanaian men are, comparatively, not saddled with social obligations that constrain them from participating effectively. Although there is a slight improvement in the number of women interested in engaging and participating in local government compared to twenty years ago, several participants (P3, P7, and P6) nonetheless argued that women are faced with the choice between preserving their homes or developing their political careers because of the attachment that women are 'caregivers.' They further stated that men, on the other hand, hardly face that dilemma. Participant six, for example, noted that married men in Ghana who want to venture into politics are not bothered about choosing between investing their money in politics or taking care of the home financially. However, in the case of a woman, she is expected to consider domestic factors.

Participant six's contribution correlates with Goetz's (1997) study, who identifies that women, more so than men, are impacted by various intangible constraints when planning their lives and choosing their goals, both outside and inside their households. These constraints are known as gendered institutions, limiting women's opportunities both in access to resources and their agency (Goetz, 1997, p. 420). Women are expected to make sacrifices for the sake of the future of their children. To further understand the impact of gendered institutional structures, Simone et al. (2018) argue that political space is an unwelcoming domain for women (Simone et. al., 2018). Women, although having the same opportunities as men, are hampered by exclusionary mechanisms ingrained in many civilizations' cultures, and frequently exclude themselves (Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Krook, 2010; de Simone et al., 2018) – a point to which we return.

4.2.2 Politics and power

The study also set out to explore the correlation between power dynamics and gendered institutional structures in local government. The purpose was to identify the interaction between men and women in the political field. The first question asked of participants concerned *whether there is an equal distribution of men and women occupying top management positions elected within the Ghanaian local government.* Five participants agreed that the distribution of top positions is equal, while seven disagreed. Three of the participants neither agreed nor disagreed.

Participants who agreed that there was an equal distribution were representatives from the district and municipal assemblies. The District Chief Executive (DCE) is a "representative of the President at the local level. The DCE is nominated by the President and approved by two-thirds of the members present and voting in a session convened for that purpose and consequently appointed by the President" (Institute of Local Government Studies, 2010, p. 37). These representatives are nominated with the consideration of the Affirmative Action Policy to address gender imbalances. This group of participants stated that their deputy directors were women, hence they do not think there are power differentials experienced in the local government. Participant nine responded:

"In this institution, I will say men and women are given equal opportunities to take higher positions, just like I mentioned earlier. Our coordinating director for instance is a woman. Most top positions are occupied by women. They also have opportunities for advancement." (P 7, District assembly representative assistant director).

However, according to a report issued in 2020 by the National Association of Local Authority (NALAG) – a governing body that oversees local government participation in all sixteen regions in Ghana – women occupying directorate positions are few. The report states that, of the candidates who stood for election in 2019, women candidates were 909 compared to the 1,7601 male candidates in more than 6000 electoral areas countrywide (NALAG, 2020).This number of candidates is extremely low compared to the male candidates. At the end of the election , 216 women won seats, accounting for 8.1 per cent which is still by far lower than the percentage quota of women to be represented at local government (Zaney, 2022).

The representation of women is far lower than the proportion of women who comprise Ghanaian society; women account for 50.7 per cent of the total population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). According to the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, in her keynote address in 2020, only 8.1 percent of representatives are women in the local government compared to over 90 percent who are males are in local government (NALAG, 2020). Participants in this study who believed that there was equal gender distribution of senior posts responded based on their experiences in their immediate surroundings and institutions. However, this does not appear to be reflective of women's representation in local government overall.

Participants who disagreed that there is an equal distribution of women represented across all levels in local government were Members of Parliament. These members of parliament are also

representatives of the district assemblies at the national and local levels. Accordingly, out of 275 parliamentary seats, only 38 (14 per cent) are occupied by women parliamentary members - far below the 40 per cent target of the affirmative action policy. This research found that the participating members of parliament were more informed about the reality of women's representation in local government and the norms and value systems that create barriers to women's effective participation.

Comparing the correlation between power dynamics and gendered institutional structures, the study asked participants about their views on equal representation and its correlation to equal contribution. Participants were asked *whether an equal number of women representatives translates as equal contributions.* Four participants (P6, P7, P9 and P14) affirmed that it did. Their responses were based on the awareness of issues of gender equality in local government and a conscious effort on the part of the central government to create room for equal contributions between men and women. The participants further explained that power dynamics in their institutions are equalised. Their contributions are highlighted by two of the participants below:

What I can say is that we have a fairly gender-equalized power situation so we don't normally have issues with that. So, decisions are taken from the opinions from the department responsible or even if it's a woman giving suggestion, once it's on point it's being welcomed. So basically, due to equality, gender equality, be able to make substantial decisions. (P 14, Municipal assembly representative).

You know men and women have different perspectives, perspectives of viewing situations and finding a solution in terms of long term and short term. so they bring opinions on board then, we weigh and find the best solution to every situation and plan that we have to work with. (P7, District assembly representative).

On the other hand, five participants (P1, P3, P4, P5 and P13) stated that an equal number of representatives does not translate as equal contributions within the local government. The suggested that the weight of contributions hinges on the ability of women to lobby, exude confidence and be visible. Having some of these qualities are how women's opinions and suggestions will be considered. Participant one expressed this as follows:

"No. we do not have equal distribution here but if you, as a woman, if you are forceful, if you have the confidence, if you're out there, I think the men will support you. So, we have to be seen, playing the role. I think double role, you know, as a woman if you want to go into

politics you should behave like the men" (P1, member of parliament)

How many women do we have in politics, as compared to the number of men in there? So when you are there, you just need to be hard, you just need to be firm, you just wouldn't let go for the men to take over. (P 13, director general in local assembly).

Gendered power dynamics are replicated within local government institutions based on the woman's ability to possess certain qualities. Participant 13 remarked that, to survive in the political arena, women have to be hard and firm. She likened the political space to a jungle where women must play and outplay to contribute effectively. The contributions of these participants on how power dynamics are dependent on women's ability to be visible demonstrate the gendering of institutions and interrelation of power dynamics in the political sphere. This creates a barrier for women and helps us to understand one of the reasons why there are few women representatives in local government.

4.2.3 Gendered Power Dynamics

One of the themes revealed by the data is gendered power dynamics, which presents itself as a norm creating barriers for women in local government. Participants stated that gendered power dynamics are a critical barrier to women's effective and meaningful participation. These dynamics are present in the form of leadership styles adopted by men. While women aspire to occupy and thrive in local government positions, they are met with the stark reality of male-dominated, autocratic and 'mechanical' styles of leadership. They are therefore forced to find ways to navigate this in order to participate meaningfully. These gendered power dynamics are informed by the reality that the political sphere is largely male-dominated. Participant five's view is expressed below:

"Men are naturally too mechanical. That is the nature of men. They are mechanical. For men, one plus one is two. Since you are not getting two, don't waste your time. But women have a very subtle way of analysing things and getting results. So, the balance is very crucial. (P 5, member of parliament)

Although participant seven expressed that men and women analyse and address problems in local government differently, several participants (P5, P15, P12 and P10) stated that it is not easy for women to include different strategies in addressing the needs of the Ghanaian people

in local government. Participant 15 expressed her views on these different approaches as follows:

"People are used to the style of men, but men and women are different. So how a man will go about his duties to achieve whatever he wants to achieve is usually different from a woman's strategy. But because people are used to the men's strategy when a woman is leadership, and she used a different strategy, they say "eiii she's this, she's that". So because of that a lot of women want to use the men's strategy. At the end of the day, they don't survive." (P 15, member of parliament)

Participants noted that women often must adopt men's strategies to thrive in the political space. Gendered power dynamics are demonstrated by women wanting to avoid criticism for their approaches and thus adopting the tactics or leadership styles used by men, even if these methods prove unsuccessful. Some participants felt that adopting the same approaches used by men is a key that will accord them recognition and allow them to participate effectively. However, participant 15 states that, ultimately, most women do not survive because they don't have the sustaining power. Women who want to chart a different approach often face frustrations in the system because their approach is so frequently compared to that of their male counterparts.

Gendered power dynamics also present themselves in the ways women have to push hard and over-perform for their contributions and efforts to be recognised. The contribution of participant three reflected upon the extra efforts required by women:

"***When the woman is in charge, I'm not saying that women are wholly perfect, no! We have some who are failures, but you know, because the space is male-dominated, I always say that when a man takes one step in leadership and is deemed as successful, the woman will have to take our three steps before it is noticed. It is a jungle that you have to how to outrun and over outplay. Before the recognition will be given." (P3, Director local assembly representative)***

One participant plainly stated that, unlike men, women are limited when it comes to risk-taking. This is not because they cannot take risks, but because the consequences, if negative, are held against them. This can create serious barriers for women and limit their influence.

This gendered power dynamic creates inequalities for women in their political contributions and echoes the findings by Chappell (2006) and Holmes (2020), who indicate that "gendered power dynamics are characterised by behavioural patterns of social actors within institutions."

(Holmes, 2020, p.56). This finding further highlights the complexities and gendered interplay between political discourses and institutional arrangements.

4.2.4 Socio-cultural practices

Ghana's 1992 constitution recognises women as having equal rights to men in all spheres of life. Despite this, however, Ghana's socio-cultural norms, which are replicated within institutions, present themselves as barriers to effective participation in local government. Several sub-themes related to socio-cultural practices emerged during the research interviews including marriage, male prejudice and patriarchy, family norms and religious and cultural barriers, and the attitudes of women. These themes will be discussed below.

4.2.4 (i) Marriage

According to participants, traditional gender roles include confining women's potential to childbearing, taking care of children, cooking at home, and looking after their household. For women who want to participate in the political and governance arena, these household expectations and responsibilities sometimes create barriers to their effective participation . This is especially so when they do not have supportive husbands and juggle between keeping their family and their political career.

In society, marriage is held in high esteem and the society looks out to know the marital status of the women. This is mainly due to the assumption that, if she is married it means she is responsible. Marriage was found to be one of the institutional cultural barriers influencing the participation of women in local governance. Within traditional socio-cultural expectations, the voters in the society are keen to know if their candidate is married and family-oriented before they consider the women's competency.

Participants indicated that, sometimes, unmarried women are looked down upon and, sometimes, both men and women may hurl derogatory names at them if they occupy senior-level positions but are single. Instead, married women and those with greater work experience are more likely to be considered for senior roles and political appointments in the local government. Most participants linked their achievements in reaching a position within local government to their marital status and further stated they are seen as responsible women and are therefore respected in Ghanaian society. Therefore, this makes them a suitable candidate for local government nomination. Participant one remarked:

"For instance, I am a politician. I am a wife. I am a mother even before being in politics. I was a mother. I was a wife. And I was a woman in full employment – all these things so far as society and our culture are concerned. In academic parlance, we say that they are all six credit scores. So, you need to give each of them the maximum attention" (P1, Member of Parliament).

This participant's contribution to her achievements reflects societal expectations before choosing to vote for a candidate in local government. Others judge the woman's competency and accord her respect based on her ability to have a husband and keep the home. While women are rated on their competency skills in relation to their personal life, men, on the other hand, do not experience the same prejudice and are therefore bolder to vie for political positions. They are not limited by obstacles linked to socio-cultural practices. Nyarko (2013) and Boateng (2017) state that marriage, which is a rite of passage in Ghana between men and women, determines the Ghanaian status of a lifetime achievement within their families (Boateng 2017).

Due to the importance of marriage in the Ghanaian social system, it is difficult for an unmarried person to easily enter the political field without encountering forms of resistance. The opinions and contributions of unmarried women are looked down upon by other women and some men. Participants four and five, who were unmarried and younger than the other participants, felt that their marital status was a huge stumbling block to their effective participation and their occupation of places of power. Men, however, do not receive this prejudice and are not judged based on their marital status. The broader societal acceptance (and encouragement) of men's roles in the political sphere translates into their confidence to compete for political positions. The result is that policy decisions, debates and strategies are often left in the hands of men, generating male dominance in policy and governance spaces.

This finding is consistent with Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's work (2012). The traditional gendered binary relating to the division of labour permeates through societies: "The gendered division of labour in western and African societies relies heavily on the allocation of women's function to the domestic, or private, realm and men's to the public realm" (Eckert &McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p. 250). While the private or domestic sphere is concerned with reproduction and caregiving, the authors argue that it is limiting. In Ghanaian society, it is assumed that women are better caregivers of the home, hence their sacrifices are focused on running and maintaining their homes.

The study findings also align with Umar's (2011) research on Ghana's traditional family system where men are at an advantage. The participants indicated that men have an upper hand

when it comes to decision-making in the family, and this is replicated within local government, further exacerbating gender inequalities and gendered power relations.

4.2.4 (ii) Male prejudice and patriarchy

The nature of Ghanaian society is highly male-dominated in terms of top-level positions and appointments. As a result, patriarchy and male prejudice in society play a role in shaping and limiting the participation of women.

One perspective raised by participants is that some men believe that women do not perform when they occupy high places of power and thus look down on women and doubt their competency. This prejudice demotivates women and limits the opportunities for their participation in higher political positions. Those who do reach such positions are sometimes demotivated by their interactions with men. In Ghanaian socialisation, men are considered the head of the family and are decision-makers. The behaviour patterns of male domination are replicated within local government, making it difficult for women to participate effectively. This is captured in the view of one of the participants:

"To me, it's because we still have a male-dominated society. Because our male counterparts are not comfortable that women should lead. Or women should not be given the opportunity to do some activities. They still think that 'once a woman, always a woman'. And so even if you are educated, even if you have the capabilities, even when you think you can do it, they wouldn't create the space for you. The whole of Ghana, not a particular tribe, country or even all the 16 regions, all male-dominated communities. So, from the beginning of the socialization process, you know that men are ahead of their family, what they say is final" (P7, district assembly representative).

This quote emphasises how widespread this attitude is, as well as its roots in socialised norms and cultures. The gendered ways by which men and women interact with each other are replicated within the district assemblies. Participants six, seven and fourteen shared that, at times, the notion of patriarchy influences how men interact with women in the institutions. Participant Six noted her experience:

"I had a problem with a male colleague, he wanted to be bossing me around and the approach was as though he had met a child. (P6, district assembly representative)"

This participant added that her male colleague threatened her that, "if she had no respect for

her husband at home, she cannot bring that nasty behaviour to his face". She further went on to say that she was instead scolded by her colleagues (especially the women), who advised her to learn how to speak, especially when relating to men.

According to the experiences of these participants, male patriarchy deeply influences gender interactions which are replicated in local government spaces. Men who have been brought up to think women are in second position are seen exhibiting forms of passive aggression towards women, especially women who are vocal about their rights. Participants' contributions demonstrate how patriarchy and cultural bias play a role in influencing how men interact with women.

4.2.4 (iii) Family and religious barriers

Cultural barriers and religious barriers are also institutional barriers against women's effectiveness and efficiency. Traditions in Ghanaian culture continue to stress women's main duties in the home, limiting them to the role of mothers and housewives. A strong patriarchal value system favours gender-separated roles and traditional cultural values that work against women's active involvement and progress in political processes. Kassa states that "all over the globe, societies are dominated by an idea of a woman's position" (2015, p. 40).

Of the participants interviewed for this study, 6 out of 15 felt that cultural norms in the family play a role in shaping women's perceptions about leadership and their operation within the local governance system. Additionally, these cultural norms are replicated in the family and religious settings, creating barriers by discouraging women from wanting to be in leadership positions. One participant gave her view on this theme:

"In some families and their upbringing, the woman's place is always at the second position. Those are families and how individuals are raised. And because of that, too many women don't want to come into the limelight." (P3, Director local assembly representative)

Participant eight was of the same view about the gendered ways that boys and girls are raised at home. She expressed her worry that the young girl is not given the opportunity to make mistakes and, in cases where girls falter, they are reminded about their mistakes. She felt that boys are raised more leniently. Participant 11 shared a similar view concerning the family structure and how these norms begin from the home:

"The boy sees daddy always the only person taking decisions and mommy is always just the

listener taking the instructions of daddy. So close up like that, and comes you know he grows up and the thought is very tight in the mind. To him, there's a sharp division between the role of females and the role of men. And it's been in the world all over and some cultures, especially the African culture, it's very tight up there, that you the woman are just a listener, you just have to follow and obey instructions." (P 11, member of parliament)

Two of the participants who come from the same ethnic group recounted their experiences of how culture poses a barrier to their effective participation. According to Participant ten, the woman's mind is conditioned from the childhood phase where she is not encouraged to aim for higher things:

"***You see the women always following and obeying instructions and because we've gone through this, the girl child grows up and all they are thinking is about what I must do to survive. What I must do to have a happy home, what I must do to have a good husband, that's the thinking of the girl child growing up. So those days, you hardly find a woman wanting to do a first-second-degree, second-degree, third-degree, eighth-degree, whatever available degrees. She just thinks that "when I have a little bit of education, I must marry for the man to look after me. So that's it. Leadership is meant for the men. They should be at the helm of affairs." (P9, assembly woman representative)***

Although things have improved and more women are educating themselves, the socio-cultural beliefs in Ghana go a long way to conditioning the mindset of both men and women in the various communities. Participants stated how these sociocultural beliefs influence how men and women alike discourage women from venturing into politics because leadership is best suited for men.

This premise is imbibed through the construction and expectations of gender. These norms influence the behavioural characteristics of women, making them timid, inferior, un-open and passive observers. This was seen as reflecting in government and policy interactions. As one participant observed:

"In family decisions, whatever the decision is, you have to go by it. Why can't I be part of the decision-making? In land, do I own land as a woman? No. Why can't I own my own land? Why is it that my husband can own land, or my brother can own land or whoever, but I can't own my own land? Why can't I be a chief? My father is chief but it's like today, if he (my father) passes on, there is going to be another chief. They are looking up to my brother, but not me. So why can't I? because I'm senior to my brother. Just because I'm a woman, I don't have a say. So this is a barrier" (P 6, district assembly representative)

Participant six, whose ethnic group has restrictive cultural norms against women, gives an example of how women are restricted in varied ways. For example, women in her ethnic group are not allowed to own land or occupy a chieftaincy position. These are ways by which women are subjugated by culture. They pose as a barrier because women are not empowered enough to fund their aspirations. Additionally, by virtue of the fact that women cannot own land or be chief, they are reliant on their spouses or male family members to cater for their needs. Such forms of power and freedom are not available to women. Two participants remarked:

"There's some families the support won't come, So without getting a supportive husband, the women become more tired. Or life becomes so stressful, and the women become easily agitated. People say that "when you have women leaders, they are there "too something"" because she's stressed from home and when she comes to work she's stressed. (P1, Member of Parliament)

"Some husbands because of pride will not allow their wives to join politics. You know sometimes our meetings keep long and at times the woman will not be able to get home early, but her husband will still expect her to be on her feet to cook. He would not lift a finger. At times the husband thinks when she becomes a politician, a lot of eyes will be on his wife, she will get a lot of attention and she will start disrespecting him. Why do you think, most of the women in politics are divorced? It's because of that." (P8, municipal Assembly Director)

Notably, some husbands may not approve of their wives being active in politics. Participants eight, nine and one stated the importance of having support from their spouses when taking up a political career. The participants stated that women who were married were expected to ask for permission from their husbands before they decided to engage in politics. The participants stated the difficulty some women face in their households, where women are expected to attend to their husbands by cooking and attending to their needs. Without an understanding and supportive husband, the marriage has a high chance of falling apart.

Madsen's (2019) study on politicians in Ghana asserted how there was the "kitchen of the parliament" where women were expected to play traditional roles as women. For example, women were the ones who would serve food for their male colleagues. These beliefs and norms also affect the mentality of women themselves. There is a subconscious thought that, in the presence of men, women are subordinate and must therefore be slow and careful when speaking to avoid stepping on toes. The attitudes of women themselves to their participation in politics is picked up below.

Participants felt that some religious and family traditions do not advocate for women leaders, or frown on women leadership. This view is observed in both Islamic and African traditional religions as well as in some Christian denominations. Some traditional beliefs, practices, and value systems within religious institutions discourage women from aspiring to leadership positions in their various places of work. When asked if they believe culture and religion influence the participation of women in government, participants agreed. Below is a view of participant 15:

"There is a lot, especially in the African context where I'm coming from, I come from the northern part of this country, where religion plays a major role, where traditions play a very major role. We see so it plays a lot. Because religiously, it looks like they don't advocate for women leaders, you see? like, the Imam is a man leading the prayers, why is it that I, a woman, cannot lead prayers?" (P 15, member of parliament)

4.2.4 (iv) Attitudes of women

A few of the participants argued that women themselves were their own barrier to effective participation in local government. The behaviour of women - including lacking self-belief and hesitance to support other women - inhibits them from maximising their influence to drive change in institutional and policy arenas.

"It's not about the numbers, it's about the women. Even in the ruling party I belong to, I have not seen any of the women trying to help other women into power. It's hard. They should be the ones backing the other females in the other constituencies". (P 5, political party representative)

Although there are arguments that women should support other women because of the unequal number of representatives, in this study, participants expressed that women are more hesitant to mentor and support other women and are instead often critical of other women within the local government space, thereby discouraging them. Some of the participants explained that the lack of support or mentorship from senior women in the local political space arises from the fear that they will have fierce competition. However, men on the other hand are more willing to support, equip and train younger men whom they believe have a future and potential in the political space.

While one group of participants felt higher numbers of women representatives would encourage women to be bold in addressing matters of local government development, another

group believed that numbers do not necessarily translate into effective participation. Rather, the hostile attitude of women towards other women plays a role in the level of participation and influence of women within local government.

Younger participants (P4, and P5) who are political party representatives of the youth wing in the NDC & NPP political parties had an interesting take on how the attitude of women poses an institutional barrier. They stated that, although women's opinions seemingly count, there are limits to the extent that a woman can contribute. Women who are charismatic, energetic and interactive are viewed as unladylike and disrespectful. Sometimes, these women are referred to as being "too known" - a slang term that is indicative of someone who 'knows it all'. To avoid being called names, some women prefer to be in the background or be silent observers.

Another participant explained that women's attitudes are a response to the way they interact with males in senior roles compared to females in the same role. Participant Seven lamented::

Everybody will want to put you down. So, you just have to be extremely firm. Someone will say, unnecessarily firm, so that you can operate. Even your own colleague woman wants to frustrate the system because you are a woman. So, to thrive you have to apply the rules, when it's time don't hesitate. (P7, district assembly)

The attitude and non-cooperation of women in the local government system, therefore, also play a role in inhibiting and discouraging other women from participating effectively. The above participant's view suggests that human attitudes are presenting the obstacles that prevent formal mechanisms from working, with the effect that women's participation is limited within local government. Participant 7 also stated that her male colleagues do not encounter the same challenges when it comes to implementing organisation rules such as reporting time, issuing queries to people who falter and disciplinary actions within her institution in the district assembly. This contribution is influenced by the cultural belief in the respect for men in senior positions of power and the belief that men must be accorded the appropriate respect. The findings also indicate how the traditional Ghanaian setting influences political appointments, resulting in men dominating the decision-making area in local governance. This is consistent with the studies made in Ghana by Odame (2010) and Boateng (2017) who report that women who are interested in joining the political scene, are faced with the stark reality that they not only compete with men but also women, who discourage them from contesting for government positions. The attitudes fuelled by gendered power struggles are driven by the perception that 'women are to be seen and not heard'.

This lack of self-belief was also highlighted by participants in this study, who reported

receiving advice from other women that the world of politics is for men, and for those who can fight: a woman is not expected to be engaging in the political environment as a result. The participants indicated that this attitude was a major barrier to women's effective participation in local government. Low self-belief stems from the socialisation process of the girl child, who is raised to not speak up but to be a listener. The behaviour is further exhibited within the political space, where women keep their thoughts to themselves or sit on the fence when they are needed to contribute their views. This also discourages women from supporting other women within institutions. Participant Three narrates how she plays a role by pushing women to be active participants in the local government.

"I use myself as the first female to be appointed as the Director General in a male-dominated industry. Before that, because I'm a feminist. If I were not, I would just be interested in posting men to leadership positions. But I made a conscious effort to put women in leadership positions when I assumed office. I noticed that the women keep to themselves but if you look at that you will end up not supporting women. And I was very adamant, you need to do things like this if your male counterpart moves one step, you need to take extra steps to cover" (P 3, Director, local assembly representative).

Most women keep to themselves and are passive onlookers in instances where decision-making concerning critical things is involved. Men on the other hand are seen to be more engaging when debates are held that lead to policy making and implementation. Participant Four narrated an instance where members of parliament were to discuss and make amendments to the budget in her constituency. However, the budget was created by the men; the women were passive participants and were unwilling to contribute:

I joined the place., I went to a meeting at the district Assembly, they were reading a budget, and we had to approve budgets. You know, we had to look for the loopholes, and then we are asked to reject or approve. There are women, present but when the moment I stood up to talk everybody looked at me, surprised. (P4, Political party representative)

Based on the contributions of various participants, it is evident that the passive behaviour of women has been somewhat normalised such that, when a woman is engaged and vocal, this comes as a surprise. Women's attitude and non-participation, for participant 14, reflected women taking their positions for granted:

"***Here is the problem, in as much as gender mainstreaming has allowed to all of these some of the women, when they get the position, they are dormant. They just take pride in the fact that "I'm a member of this board in Local government". But when you go deep down (and***

it's not because of hatred), they are not doing anything. They are just occupying on the fact that they are the women. So, at a point, even though the woman is part of them, they (the men) tend to make decisions behind the person's back. Not because they don't regard the view of the woman, but sometimes in most cases, she's just there for being a "woman's sake" not because she is willing to contribute." (P 14, municipal assembly representative)

Participant Six similarly noted:

"The government is doing its best to push women, but we women are not forcing, we are not making the effort we have some of the men have some mentality that 'Oh, I am just a woman, what else can I do?' Upon all the campaigns that we are doing on advocacy, some still have the perception that because they are women, they can't do anything. They look down on themselves and other women." (P 6, district assembly representative)

Amponsah et al., (2015), explore the reason for women's passive approach when it comes to contributing meaningfully to their local government. They state that women frequently lack expertise and competence in public life because of long-standing disadvantages and discriminatory policies, as well as skill deficiencies in formal education, public speaking, and the art of politics (Amponsah et. al, 2015, p. 150). This strengthens the widely held belief that politics and political positions are unsuitable for women, who are better suited to support and service functions. However, this lack of self-belief is detrimental to policy balance because of the one-sided lens and approach utilised by men in addressing challenges that impact the constituencies, including women, in the local government.

Lastly, participants also noted that women themselves were the reason for the under-representation and ineffective participation, often not availing themselves of positions in local government. limiting women's representation.

4.2.5 Finance or resource mobilization

Another barrier identified by the participants in this study was a lack of finances or resource mobilization. The participants stated that the campaign process was an expensive one and involved financial investment to be able to contest. Apart from the filing fee which political candidates have to pay, the constituencies have personal needs that must be attended to for the political candidate to gain favour in the eyes of the voters. Unlike male candidates who can easily pull these funds from different sources, women are limited. One participant remarked:

"Funding is a big challenge, a lot of my funding came from friends, and my own business, and then some relations supported my funding. The party does not give. I thought the party gives. But what I realized was that the party may just give you t-shirt support, you know, and that is it. And maybe capacity building, they will hold programmes to your build your capacity." (Participant 12, member of parliament).

This participant's contribution demonstrates that the political party nominees in the constituencies are not giving enough support in terms of funding to women to encourage them to stand for political campaigns. The support given is only minimal ('t-shirt support[3]), although the political parties are aware of the financial implications of campaigns.

Women who do not have enough support from friends and family face challenges in contesting. Participant 12's contribution, above, is consistent with Maddie's (2019) study of women's participation in Ghana which indicates that women fall into huge financial debt in funding their political campaigns. Participant One, when asked how she funded her campaign, mentioned that her savings, as well as the financial support from her husband, made it possible for her to contest. The majority of the political candidates for local government are men - made possible because of men's greater access to financial and support networks.

Yildirum and Kitsschelt's (2020) study of Ghana also states that the nature of politics itself has become a barrier to entry for women; the dynamics at play are often unfavourable towards women, hindering them from actively participating in and effectively contributing to governance. Clientelism, for example, is evident in many forms in Ghanaian politics, ranging from "vote-buying, preferential access to public employment, social benefits public works, procurement" (Yıldırım & Kitschelt 2020; p. 1167). In countries like Ghana where there is an increasingly higher level of uncertainty concerning the outcome of election results in political institutions, candidates grab the opportunity to be associated with clientelism to navigate these uncertainties (Adams & Smrek, 2018). Adams and Smrek (2018, p.272) note that "men benefit from other men for material support, whereas women on the other hand must also build their networks that include men to obtain necessary resources." This means that, men are easily able to connect with other men who can assist them.

Most women, on the other hand, do not have the financial resources required to campaign and, more often than not, their support system is not strong. Apart from the filing fee, the constituencies have personal needs which have to be fulfilled to gain favour in the eyes of the

[3] T-shirt support means that the political party nominees are given branded or customized t-shirts as a campaign strategy for party followers, in order to gain more votes.

voters. Unlike women, men can easily pull from different sources using clientelism. Women who are more financially sound or are backed by support from family and well-wishers are the ones who get the opportunity to campaign.

4.3 GENDER MAINSTREAMING ADDRESSING INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS

The third research question of the study concerned *the ways in which gender mainstreaming approaches in Ghana to date have aimed to address institutional barriers.* To address this question, the researcher obtained insights from participants of the study through diverse questions, setting out to explore participants' comprehension of gender and gender mainstreaming and their knowledge of the ways in which gender mainstreaming has been applied to address institutional barriers. This section first sets out participant's conceptualisations of gender and gender mainstreaming, before discussing their view on the approaches adopted by Ghana to implement gender mainstreaming in the local government.

4.3.1 Comprehension of gender

The concept of gender was one of the key indicators that evolved from the data obtained from participants. Of the 15 participants, 11 defined gender as male and female, relating gender to biological representation. For them, the anatomy of men and women is what demonstrates the difference between males and females. However, Participant Eight connected gender to the social roles played by males and females, meaning that gender for them was not limited to the biological representation only but social expectations as well:

"Gender is the role we play, the role that society ascribes for us either male or female" (P8, municipal Assembly Director).

This contribution is consistent with the socially constructed norms and values in Ghanaian society. The concept of gender is normally perceived along the lines of biological creation: the differing reproductive organs men and women possess are used to differentiate between the sexes. These biological representations lead to socially constructed norms and values that guide the behaviour of men and women within society (Butler, 1993; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2012).

4.3.2 Understanding of gender mainstreaming

The input of the interview participants show a clear understanding of the issue of gender

mainstreaming by most of the participants. Below are some of their responses:

"Gender mainstreaming is finding ways to equalize gender for equal and gender equality in every area we find ourselves in, being education, health and the likes." (P 12 member of parliament)

"I will say gender mainstreaming is where we try to include gender into the public domain or the main domain. So, gender mainstreaming entails including gender in all spheres of life. It shouldn't be about female, this is the female, this is the male, no" (P5, Political party representative).

"Gender mainstreaming, I think has to do with gender equality, right? Gender equality like giving men and women equal opportunities for them to contribute and benefit from all aspects of development" (P 10, district assembly representative)

The study observed that most of the participants understood gender mainstreaming as equality between men and women where there is the creation of balances in all spheres of life, in both the public and private domain. Although the participants linked gender mainstreaming to equality, Participant Three had a different understanding from the other participants:

"My point of view has to do with balances and fairness, equity not necessarily equality, but for me, equity, fairness in sharing of resources. And so, you look at the sexes who have a benefit in something more than the other sex? And looking at the resources that we have around us, you realize that this one part that is more advantaged and the other is disadvantaged in some spaces is that the males are more disadvantaged than the female and then in some instances that the females are more disadvantaged." (P3 Director local assembly representative)

Participant three expressed that equity is a better word to adopt than equality. In her opinion, equity would lead to fairness in distributing resources in the local government. She further explains that, with equity, one looks at the direct needs of the sexes and apportions what is needed, while equality on the other hand does not consider the external factors that might enhance inequalities in the local government setting.

According to the European Institute of Gender Equality, the core mission of gender mainstreaming is "to ensure that the legislative work and policy-making strategies are of greater relevance to society by considering that the policies formulated are tailored specifically to address the needs of all citizens - women and men, girls and boys, thus ensuring that these public interventions guarantee that inequalities are not perpetuated" (European Institute for

Gender Equality, n.d.). Participants' responses indicated that gender mainstreaming was practised in different forms within their institutions with equal opportunities given to women in the local government. However, based on participant three's contribution, there was also a sense that women are given opportunities but, comparatively, looking at the hurdles women face, there is a lack of equity.

4.3.3 GENDER MAINSTREAMING TO ADDRESS INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS

In addressing gender mainstreaming issues within the local governance system, participants were asked whether they had seen or observed gender mainstreaming in their own institution. The study sought to ascertain whether gender mainstreaming has aided in addressing institutional barriers for women to participate effectively in local governance.

All the participants agreed that gender mainstreaming can help address institutional barriers to women's effective participation in local governance. The participants identified the ways in which gender mainstreaming has helped to address institutional barriers to date. Several participants (P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, and P11) said that they had seen gender mainstreaming at work in their institution. Participants eight and nine indicated that they have seen balances to equalise representation and the policy considerations of both men and women:

"Staff go through training programs; we make sure the beneficiaries are balanced. We make sure that we have both males and females representing and then we wouldn't have any gender imbalance." (P 8, municipal assembly representative)

Gender mainstreaming in our institution is seen in decision-making. Also, there is the opportunity for women to take on higher positions. Our coordinating director for instance is a woman. Most of the top positions are occupied by women, women also have opportunities for advancement" (P 9, municipal assembly representative)

On the other hand, Participant Six lamented that she had not seen gender mainstreaming at work in her institution:

"I don't see it. Even though we have a gender department in the district assembly, they virtually don't do anything. The gender there is all paper. But virtually, they don't do anything. You don't have clear guidelines as to what they should be doing. They don't have an actual plan just like, how the action plan or maybe your job description as to what you should be doing in a particular scene, they don't have it. I don't see gender mainstreaming

activities in my district" (P6, district assembly representative).

Participant Six's contribution indicates that structures in terms of the policy have been "built." However, the implementation of the policy is not evident in her district because of the lack of clear-cut guidelines to shape how gender mainstreaming can be utilised. With this lack of implementation, there is much more work to be done.

4.3.3 (i) Gender mainstreaming introduced in universities

The strategy of gender mainstreaming has been implemented in Ghana's universities to encourage the girl child to participate in courses that are normally occupied by males. Participant Nine narrates the experience of mainstreaming in Ghana's universities:

"You know that gender mainstreaming was introduced at the Universities. In Ghana, the cut-off point for women to register was extended and that got a lot more women doing law, doing medicine. The reason is that at home, women have less time to learn. The woman is supposed to be in the kitchen, helping the mother to cook, wash, and clean the house and the male child has a lot of time for himself, so back then a lot of ladies could not meet the deadline, and you would realise more males were available in those courses" (P9, assemblywoman representative).

Other participants indicated that the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection has allocated a "National Day for the girl child". That day is dedicated to empowering young girls and allowing them to visit Ghana's First Lady to demonstrate that it is possible to attain certain heights. The children are given talks about the possibilities of high attainment and emphasis is placed on the importance of going to school and focusing on the studies. The girls are also further encouraged that "what men have been able to achieve women are also able to."

Some participants (P9, P15, P10) also stated that in their little way of contributing to empowering young girls, they invite children to attend parliamentary sessions at the lobby of the Ghanaian parliament so that the children get to see how the parliamentary debates are held. More importantly, however, the aim is to show young girls that it is possible to be a woman and still attain political heights. In this way, the young girl's mind is conditioned to understand that everything is possible.

4.3.3 (ii) Reduction of funding fee for women to campaign

Some participants stated that they have been beneficiaries of gender mainstreaming efforts by

the Ghanaian government. Ghana's government has implemented mechanisms to facilitate greater inclusion of women by reducing the filing fee for women who are interested in campaigning for a political role in local government but do not have enough financial muscle to fund it. Participant One noted that there is an effort at the party and government levels:

"For instance, in my party, NPP, if the female is confident enough to vie for nomination, a filing fee is reduced by 50 per cent. That is a way to ensure that if finances are the issue for the woman or the female, at least they reduce the filing fee by 50 per cent" (P1, Member of Parliament).

The reduction of the filing fee for women was a way to encourage women to stand as candidates for campaigns and to occupy positions in the local government. As indicated, the National Democratic Party (NDC) gave a discount to women by charging them GHC5,000, compared to men who are expected to pay GHC10,000. The discounted filing fee price is considered because the government understands that not all women are as financially sound as men.

4.3.3 (iii): Creation of top opportunities for women to occupy local government

Some participants stated that the government has reserved high levels of opportunities for women to occupy within the local government, this incentive is so that, women will feel encouraged to want to avail themselves of political positions in local government. Participants seven and ten noted that there are women who are directors and deputy directors in their institution. Additionally, the study observed that the majority of the women who were interviewed in the district assemblies were occupying high positions within their institutions. Participant 10 further stated that certain positions are intentionally preserved, and women are nominated to occupy those positions.

4.3.3 (iv) Capacity building programs for women

As part of inclusivity, the Ghanaian government also adopted capacity-building programs to prepare women for political positions. There are two main approaches adopted by the Ghanaian government to bring the local government's attention to women's needs and also encourage women to participate. Participant 12 identifies that capacity-building programs are designed for women who are interested in joining local government so that they can navigate their way. According to her, the building program focuses on building confidence, communication skills and advocacy.

This contribution aligns with the Local Government literature which identifies that capacity-building programs have been designed for women, and are aimed at building their confidence, their communication skills and also to train them on their roles, functions and assertiveness in the district assembly (Institute of Local Government Studies, 2010).

So far, gender mainstreaming has been used as a tool for advocacy to create awareness that women are also an important voice within communities. Therefore, in order to make a difference and create relevant policies that address women's challenges, women also need to be active participants within the local government.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the perspectives of the interview participants, in particular their views and contributions on institutional norms and cultures, and how these norms and cultures act as a barrier to women's participation. The chapter also identified that these institutional barriers are influenced by Ghana's socio-cultural norms and broader societal beliefs, often centred on the respective gender roles of men and women in Ghanaian society. The chapter also identified the ways gender mainstreaming has been used to date as means to address these barriers.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing the core research question of the study, this chapter outlines the extent to which gender mainstreaming can play a role in transforming institutions of governance for the effective participation of women in Ghanaian local government. The findings presented in chapter four indicate that gender mainstreaming does play a role in transforming institutions of governance in Ghana. However, this can only be possible if cultural and social barriers that inhibit women from effective participation are also removed.

Globally, the inclusion of women into political spaces has been a topic of interest. As such, several measures have been put in place in numerous states to ensure that women are given opportunities to be representatives in government. Ghana has also been steadfast in its resolve to include women. Through the introduction of the Affirmative Action Policy, the country has made efforts to ensure that space is created for women to be actively represented in government. This is identified through the allocation of the 40 per cent quota (Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection, 2015).

However, while these efforts by the government are commendable, challenges still remain as reflected by the continued under-representation of women in Ghanaian local government. More so, the impact of women represented in local government is not felt. Higher numbers of men translate to policies that are advantageous for men, or at least do not sufficiently or adequately address the needs of the women in the country. For example, in Ghana, the introduction of the import duty tax that incurs an additional 30 per cent tax on sanitary pads for women, because they are "luxury goods" indicates how a higher number of men in politics leads to policies that sometimes disadvantage women (GRA, 2023). Without women, representatives in government, matters like these cases are overlooked.

The data suggests that gendered institutional structures, gendered power dynamics, male prejudice and patriarchy, cultural and family barriers, and finance mobilization are some of the ways in which barriers are manifested within local government institutions in Ghana, therefore influencing the effective participation of women. The study identified that these barriers are a result of deep-rooted social norms in Ghanaian society which are further manifested within the local government institutions.

The study identified gendered institutional structures by indicating that political spaces are not

neutral but rather skewed in a way that men and women do not operate on a level playing field. In fact, these gender imbalances are present in the ways that local government is organised, reinforcing deeply engrained gender inequalities. Socially, women are expected to be present mothers and to be hands-on in attending to their families, and as such they feel the burden of care. However, juggling between their home duties and political careers does not give them enough opportunity to be active participants in politics. The limitations of institutional arrangements in local government are seen, for example, in the lack of childcare facilities or spaces close to women's places of work. This prevents women from being able to drop their children in a safe environment while they attend to their political and professional duties.

Unlike women, who fulfil a primary care role, men do not experience the same burden, while women have to juggle between their responsibilities to their children and their political careers. Typically, the political field is more favourable for men, because the structures were built by men. These gendered institutional structures limit the effective participation of women in local government.

The study also found that male prejudice and patriarchy manifest as barriers to women's effective participation. This prejudice is reflected in participants' experiences of male colleagues looking down on women's capabilities and competencies, demotivating women and impacting their effectiveness in the local government. Additionally, the study identified that women who want to overcome these challenges often feel forced to adopt the same strategies and tactics used by men in order that their opinions and suggestions are recognised. The study also found that women who are who are confident and outspoken on important national issues are able to thrive, although it isn't an easy task when they are sometimes faced with pushback: their attitude is sometimes perceived as inappropriate for a woman and thus sometimes misinterpreted as pride or disrespect.

In spite of these setbacks, women's participation and influence are connected to certain character traits and skills learnt, such as their ability to lobby and show confidence. These learnt skills, in turn, increase the effectiveness of their participation because they are better able to navigate their way against the pushbacks they may face. They are also able to counter stereotypical assumptions that women do not perform, despite being given opportunities. This latter view was shared by interview participants, who stated that in order to thrive women have to play a double role and act like the men so that their voices and contributions are heard.

In reference to the presence of patriarchy, prevalence of male domination within Ghanaian society begins from the socialization process at home: young girls are trained to be women who

are listeners and passive contributors and men are encouraged to be outspoken. The cultural influence of patriarchy is subconsciously intertwined in institutional relations and has cut across the very fabric of Ghanaian society in all facets of life, including governmental structures. Due to the socialisation process, the study observed the replication of accepted social behavioural patterns in local government itself, such that women who are more outspoken are seen as brash or too opinionated. This is supported by the study by Boateng (2017), who reported that the lack of support for gender mainstreaming in Ghana was influenced by discriminatory practices (such as customs, traditions, and adages discussed earlier) and many informal systems that uphold the male advantage.

This finding thus infers that, despite the inclusion of women in politics, women are still subjugated in various forms thus affecting the ways they too can contribute. This finding contrasts with that of Miescher et al. (2007) who argue that the Westernised popular narrative of women's subjugation, and political and social disadvantages in Africa, needs to be revised because it is not an accurate description of what is on the ground. The data gathered for this study indicates that, although there is a history of the important role of women in the pre-colonial period, their participation nonetheless remains constrained by norms and practices of subservience. Women in Ghana still face barriers that indicate that they are subjugated in different ways.

Furthermore, the study found that institutional barriers are manifested in the reinforced gendered norms and expectations that limit women's effective participation. These gendered norms include the expectation that women are raised to be submissive, and are expected to replicate this behavioural "quality" in the political space. For women who are outspoken, their behaviour is misinterpreted as disrespectful. These reinforced gendered norms correlate with the feminist institutionalist theory which indicates that societal norms and values subtly present rules that serve as guidelines for the 'acceptable' behaviours of men and women. These societal norms are replicated within the local government space and thus influence the extent of participation available to women in government.

The data presented also identified that the attitudes of women themselves also play a role in forming institutional barriers to their own effective participation in the local government. These attitudes are reflected in forms of passive participation where women are sometimes not active participants when their opinion in policy making and implementation is needed. The data reflected two ways that such attitudes pose a barrier: a lack of confidence on the part of women representatives; and a hesitation to support other women.

In terms of a lack of confidence, the researcher observed that many of the participants found it difficult to express their opinions, which could in part be because women's opinions in the local government are overlooked and undermined to the extent that they are not encouraged to contribute. This seems to be influenced by the broader socialisation of the girl child in Ghana, which often produces subservient women who defer to the decisions of men. This observation is buttressed by that of the Institute of Local Government (2010), which reports that women are shouted at in assembly proceedings or are ignored when they (women members) want to make interventions (Institute of Local Government Studies, 2010).

The second barrier can be found in women's hesitance to identify, train and mentor other women who have an interest in engaging in politics. Participants in this study expressed that this attitude amongst some women is influenced by a fear that the mentees will upstage their mentors by being disloyal to them, undermining them, or trying to take over their political positions. The significance of this contribution highlights the mindset of women, feeling that their achievement in becoming a politician is the highest achievement they can attain. Additionally, due to the way the political environment is an unfavourable terrain for women, where they have to constantly lobby for their contributions to be valued, there is the fear that their positions are not permanent. Due to the challenges, they experience, they are unable to achieve their set objectives. Training someone who may grow to be better at the craft than them makes some women feel that their positions are not secure. Secondly, society is wired in a way that puts women against each other. This means that women see each other as "rivals" who are unpredictable and are waiting to throw one other under the bus. This leads to a general distrust such that fellow women in the political field are seen as competition instead of allies.

Finance mobilization was another barrier identified through engagements with participants. Women felt that they were at a disadvantage when it came to producing the finances needed to complete for elected positions. The majority of women who may be interested in joining politics are unable to sustain their political campaigns because of a lack of funds. Although the government and political parties have identified this challenge and addressed it by decreasing the filing fee for female candidates to 50 per cent of the original cost, women are still not able to afford the cost. This is buttressed by forms of clientelism that are evident in many forms of Ghanaian politics. However, the ability to engage in clientelist practices, where money reigns, is more accessible to men (Yıldırım & Kitschelt 2020; p. 1167).

Linking the institutional barriers to what women face in local government, feminist institutionalist theory demonstrates how power dynamics are interplayed within institutions. While feminist institutionalism highlights societal rules and cultures which guide behaviour,

we see this replicated in the interaction of the women and men within local government, where male prejudice and patriarchy are at play. This study highlighted a belief that women are supposed to behave a certain way in order to be accepted. Women who do not behave according to the required norms and beliefs are perceived in a negative light.

To address these barriers, gender mainstreaming tactics have been employed in Ghana to ensure the inclusion of more women in local government. Gender mainstreaming approaches can be found in the form of advocacy programs and the introduction of gender quotas in universities. These approaches help in raising a calibre of women who are not only educated but highly skilled and thus are able to think critically and contribute to policy implementation strategies. Additionally, the filing fee for women candidates is reduced by half. However, in spite of these measures, there are still few women represented in government. Although some room is created for women to be active participants, broader societal norms and perceptions, internalised by men and women, are forms of resistance that pose a continued barrier. For example, men's prejudice stemming from the belief that women are only capable of handling certain tasks and, additionally, cannot perform, is an example of how gender mainstreaming initiatives are met with resistance.

5.1 Recommendations

In spite of the efforts by the government to include women in the local government, they are still faced with challenges inspired by broader Ghanaian societal norms and beliefs. In order to bridge that gap therefore, there is a need for more work to be done to empower women, especially through exploring effective methods of introducing gender mainstreaming so that barriers against women's participation are removed. In totality, gender mainstreaming will help cement the application of the affirmative policy that will help the occupation by women of 40 per cent of representative positions at all levels of government and be a useful means for removing barriers to women's participation. The following recommendations can be considered as a step in the right direction:

5.1 (i) Mentorship

While gender mainstreaming takes into consideration addressing the needs of men and women and incorporating this into policy implementation, it is not enough if women are not adequately equipped to take on the challenges of the future. According to the participants in this research, it is important that women who are already involved in politics in local government identify

younger women and mentor them, to equip them for the future. Mentorship will allow the women who have succeeded in politics to train and better equip other women so that they are not held back or experience the same barriers. Mentorship can form part of upskilling and capacitating women to navigate the political space and contribute to local government.

Mentorship can start by identifying young children who have the zeal and interest to be involved in participating in politics so that their interests are nurtured and further developed into the added skills needed. Girls who have the potential to lead should be given the opportunity to be nurtured and coached, especially once they are adults. This will help girls to be better equipped with the requisite skills needed to operate in local government and other political and governance spaces.

5.1 (ii) Introduction of only female nominations

The second recommendation is that, as identified by participants in this study, female-only nominations could be introduced in certain regions identified as political party strongholds – where there is a high possibility that the political party in the region would win. The female-only nominations would automatically translate as safe seats, resulting in a higher representation of women in politics.

This would also encourage more women to stand as candidates for political positions in the local government. In areas where female populations are higher than those of men, the opportunity for women only to contest should be encouraged in order to help Ghana reach it's 40 per cent gender quota in government.

5.1 (iii) More research needs to be done in the local government sectors

The study noted that there was inadequate research published concerning the data on women and women's participation in local government. More research needs to be done in this area on women's participation and the role of institutions of local government. This is a valuable study because it advises policymakers as to what measures can be taken to strengthen women's representation in the local government. This study has made a start by highlighting the forms of cultural and social barriers that replicate within institutions. More research on the impact of institutional barriers would be helpful in future policy formulation in order to highlight areas of focus for intervention. Further research can be done on how to streamline gender

mainstreaming tactics to fit Ghanaian culture and increase the participation of women in local government.

5.1 (iv) Change of mindset

The last recommendation is that all initiatives and measures can only work as long as the wider Ghanaian society has a change of mindset on how women are perceived. The first change has to be in Ghanaian society not believing that women have enough capacity to bring about meaningful contributions to the society. The mindset of men and women would need to change in order for real change to be made.

The change of mindset would also mean having gender sensitive conversations and perhaps rethinking ways to lessen the burden of care for women, so they can pursue their political dreams and participate meaningfully. This mindset can be changed through constant educational programs that address the negative aspects of the Ghanaian social culture and the socialisation process of boys and girls from the home. More emphasis needs to be placed on the fact that men and women make the society. Working together, identifying each other's strengths and weaknesses and giving room for everyone to operate is what strengthens the society.

5.2 Conclusion

This chapter presented the main overall findings and conclusions of the study. These findings helped to understand the various barriers that manifest themselves in local government, impacting the effective participation of women. The significance of these findings demonstrates that women indeed are given the platform to operate in political spaces. However, they are met by many barriers that, in turn, pose challenges to their meaningful participation in government. The study found that gender mainstreaming can play a role, but it is not enough to make transformations to the local government institutions. There also needs to be a conscious effort to break down cultural and socially ingrained gender norms in Ghanaian society.

The chapter also identified that, although efforts have been made to ensure that women are included and the number of women representatives is increased, these efforts are still not enough to encourage women to participate effectively. This is not just in terms of women's numerical participation, but in respect of their active participation by expressing their views

and suggestions, leading to policy implementation. This will lead to more inclusive policies that address challenges of the broader community and protect the rights of women and children. To address these challenges, there is a need to explore and adopt more innovative ideas that will help ensure that women are numerically and effectively represented in local government. The recommendations presented in this chapter provide some suggestions to further the inclusivity and effective participation of women in local government.

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CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the research study by briefly summarising the key research findings and indicating the value and contribution of the study. It provides a brief reflection and conclusion to the study overall, the methods applied and data gathered, and provides a summary of the value of the study. The chapter closes off by reviewing the limitations of the study. The chapter also presents the value of the research study and the ways gender mainstreaming can be used as a tool to transform local government institutions.

The study aimed to explore the extent to which gender mainstreaming can play a role in removing institutional barriers to the effective participation of women in local government in Ghana. It found that although there have been some laudable efforts by the Ghanaian government to facilitate a higher representation of women in local government, challenges remain. This is further translated into the low number of women representatives in local government. To better understand the challenges underpinning institutional norms and cultures, feminist institutionalism was the theoretical framework used to understand the topic and guide the research.

To achieve the study objectives, this study interviewed 15 women representatives from across municipal, parliamentary and district assemblies in the various local governments in Accra. The study employed a qualitative research method using semi structured interviews. The participants were selected using the snowball sampling method. The study participants' contributions and experiences concerning the ways institutional barriers were presented were documented in the experiences of the study participants. The study also discussed women's understanding and experiences of gendered norms and cultures and the kinds of institutional barriers they face.

This gave the researcher an understanding of the precluding factors that inhibit women's effective participation in local government. Additionally, the study used other secondary sources (research documents on women's participation in Ghanaian government, and policy analysis papers and commentaries) to inform the research. These sources complemented each other because they gave the researcher an in-depth analysis of the context of institutional

barriers informed by Ghanaian society's cultural and social beliefs and their interrelation.

The results indicated that institutional cultures and norms in local government are themselves influenced by broader Ghanaian societal culture and norms. These culturally embedded ideas of gender are replicated in government institutions and processes and influence how men and women interact with each other. The conceptual understanding of feminist institutional theory noted that the forms of participation available for women are gendered and are influenced by the broader Ghanaian societal norms and cultures. As indicated in Chapter One, the formulation of the Affirmative Action policy is yet to take full effect because women still experience barriers that limit and threaten their effective participation in local government. These barriers are structural and are unfriendly towards women in the political field.

The first research question sought to identify the institutional cultures and norms that exist in local government. The study found that social norms inform and shape institutional barriers. These barriers are manifested as gendered institutional structures, gendered power dynamics, and socio-cultural practices and are replicated within local government thereby affecting women's meaningful participation. Another barrier highlighted was the lack of financial mobilization for women.

The study however, found that despite these barriers, gender mainstreaming approaches such as advocacy, the introduction of gender quotas in universities, the reduction of filing fees for political campaigns, and capacity training programs for women were some of the ways in which government has attempted to begin addressing the barriers to women's participation. Although there has been some progress in these areas, there is still more work to be done in encouraging women to not only represent their constituents and other women but also to be active and influential participants in the local government.

The majority of the participants who were identified declined to be interviewed because they were either uninterested or were generally distrusting about what the study would be used for. This affected the ease of the research. However, it did successfully identify 15 women who were willing to participate from across local government.

6.1 Conclusion

This chapter summarised the aims and objectives of the research paper. It identified how the methods of research adopted helped to inform the research study. It also identified the various mechanisms that presented themselves as barriers against women's participation and indicated

how gender mainstreaming has been used by the government in addressing those barriers and create room for more women to participate in government.

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Appendix 1: Semi structured Interview guide

1. What are your perceptions of how gender mainstreaming has played out within the governance institution you have worked in?

2. What are the challenges at play with relation to gender and mainstreaming within governance institutions? are there power dynamics? and what are some of the experiences?

3. What is the nature of the institutional barriers that women in government face?

4. How do you navigate your way around these barriers to contribute your quota effectively?

5. What do you think can be done to address these institutional barriers?

6. What about representation? Do you think higher numbers of women representatives can play a role in changing how the power dynamics work?

7. Having looked at the policies that have been used to create even representation within political spheres, in what ways have you found the policy to have worked to your advantage?

8. In what ways do you think gender mainstreaming can be useful in addressing these institutional barriers?

9. What is your general understanding of institutional cultures and norms in local
10. governance in Ghana?

11. In your opinion, what are some of the institutional cultures and norms that you are aware of in Ghana's local governance?
12. In your opinion, does institutional cultures and norms create barriers for women to
13. participate efficiently in local governance in Ghana? Yes/No

14. If yes, how does institutional cultures and norms create barriers for women to participate efficiently in local governance in Ghana?
15. What is your general understanding of gender mainstreaming?
16. . In what ways does gender mainstreaming address institutional barriers for women to participate efficiently in local governance in Ghana?

Appendix 2: Participant Information sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

31 May, 2022

Dear Madam,

My name is **Ruth Dzigbordi Sosu-Awusanya** and I studying for a Masters of Management in Public Policy in the School of Governance at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of my studies, I must undertake a research project, and I am conducting a study on **a developmental approach to gender mainstreaming: women and political spaces in Ghanaian Government.** The aim of this research project is to explore the extent to which gender mainstreaming can play a role in transforming cultural and institutional barriers for the effective participation of women in local government in Ghana. The theory used will be feminist institutionalism, which will explore the roles of institutions in effective implementation of policy making.

I have chosen this topic of research because of my interest in politics and development and empowerment particularly for women.

As part of this research, I would like to invite you to take part in this interview. This activity will involve a face-to face interview, telephonic or online interview and will take about 45 mins to complete. With your permission, I would like to record this interview, using a recording digital or audio device, this will enable me effectively transcribe the information without misinterpretation in the research paper. If a follow up interview is required, I will seek your permission again before recording. The information obtained will be solely used for the purpose of this research and will be stored in a password protected computer or an external hard drive which cannot be accessed by anyone other than me. The research will be anonymous, and the responses obtained during this interview will be treated with confidentiality.

You will receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for participating. You may withdraw at any time or refuse to answer questions you do not want to. The interview will be confidential and anonymous as I will not

be asking for your name while recording. Instead, I will be using a pseudonym (alias) to represent your participation, In my final research report. If you experience any form of distress during the interview, we will stop the interview and resume at another time.

If you have any questions afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below.

This study will be written up as a research report. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you upon request. If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the Human Research Ethics Committee telephonically or via email: + 27(0)11 717 1408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Researcher: Ruth Dzigbordi Sosu-Awusanya, 1765694@students.wits.ac.za, +233256970509

Supervisor : Professor Heidi Brooks, heidi.brooks@wits.ac.za

Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form

WITS SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE
UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Title of project: A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH TO GENDER MAINSTREAMING: WOMEN & POLITICAL SPACES IN GHANAIAN GOVERNMENT.

Name of researcher: Ruth Dzigbordi Sosu-Awusanya (student number: 1765694)

I, ..., agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his / her research report	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.	YES	NO

…… (signature)
…… (name of participant)
…… (date)

…… (signature)
…… (name of person seeking consent)
…… (date)