

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

**THE ROLE OF ELITE WOMEN IN THE YENDI MUNICIPALITY OF
GHANA. THE CASE OF SELECTED WOMEN LEADERS.**

BY

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
AWARD OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN AFRICAN STUDIES DEGREE.**

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I, Clement Kwasi Mensah hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**THE ROLE OF ELITE WOMEN IN THE YENDI MUNICIPALITY OF GHANA, THE CASE OF SELECTED WOMEN LEADERS**” is my original research work produced under supervision whose findings have not been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere, and that all citations in this work have been duly acknowledged.

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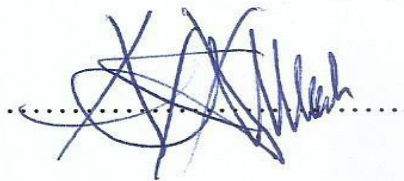
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ABSTRACT

The role of women in politics and decision-making is one of the current blazing governance issues because of the perceived and acknowledged potential and contribution of women to governance and national development processes. Effective and meaningful participation is a process of empowerment that enhances the self-worth of individuals and groups. This study examines the state of women leadership, their contributions, challenges, and how they are represented and perceived in terms of their roles in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana. This was done by using two elite women namely; female Chiefs (Gundo Na & Kpatu-Ya Na) and one *Magajiaa* as case studies. The duties of *Hajias* and wives of chiefs were investigated as well. The study purposefully sampled and interviewed 30 respondents to solicit for data in the field to achieve this kind of purpose. Qualitative research designs and techniques were employed during the study. Primary and secondary data were collected and analyzed qualitatively. The study reveals that most recent scholarly works in the study area highlight the achievements and challenges of women in modern political systems, while little or nothing is documented on the roles and challenges of other equally important elite women who are not necessarily active in the modern political structures, but contribute greatly in diverse ways towards the development of their communities. It was shared that apart from the female chiefs (*Paunabas*), whose roles and position are revered by majority of the people in Yendi, the same could not be said about other elite women such as the female Tindanas and Hajias. They are less recognized and valued because of some endemic sociocultural and religious perceptions about the position of women in public life. The study revealed that elite women in Yendi of Northern Ghana are constrained by inadequate finance, low levels of education, sociocultural and religious beliefs, lack of confidence, and intimidation. Consequently, the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), government, political parties, and civil society organizations do organize sensitization and training programmes to empower some elite women into governance and decision-making processes in the Yendi Municipality. Despite the social and structural challenges identified in the above, the study documented the following during the case studies as some of the duties performed by women leaders in the Yendi Municipality; serving as mouthpiece for women, settlement of marital disputes, mobilizing of women for religious, community, and political party work, serving as role models for young girls, and lobbying for loans and technical support from banks and NGOs respectively. In spite of these efforts, there are only few elite women who are found on key decision-making bodies in the Yendi Municipality. Due to the little number of elite women on major decision-making bodies, their impacts and influences are also limited, making it difficult to deconstruct the strong patriarchal systems and sociocultural norms which are used to marginalize women in most aspects of their lives.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family; parents (Mr. Brenya Francis and Mrs. Veronica Adwoa Fatiah), siblings, loved ones, and most especially, all teachers and lecturers who taught, guided, and supported me throughout my educational life.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

MMTDP	-	Municipal Medium-Term Development Plan
NORSAAC	-	Northern Sector Action Awareness Centre
UN	-	United Nations
NPP	-	New Patriotic Party
NDC	-	National Democratic Congress
NCCE	-	National Commission for Civic Education
CHRAJ	-	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
IWY	-	International Women's Year
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organization
MGCSPP	-	Minister of Gender, Children, and Social Protection
CPP	-	Convention Peoples' Party
UNSCR	-	United Nations Security Council Resolution
DFID	-	Department for International Development
GSS	-	Ghana Statistical Service
PHC	-	Population and Housing Census
MAs	-	Municipal Assemblies

DAs	- District Assemblies
PNDC	- Provisional National Defence Council
USAID	- United States Agency for International Development
CIDA	- Canadian International Development Agency
UNRISD	- United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
TBA _s	- Traditional Birth Attendants
FGD _s	- Focus Group Discussions
HR	- Human Resource
GFA	- Ghana Football Association
MOE	- Ministry of Education
CEDAW	- Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women
UK	- United Kingdom
LI	- Legislative Instrument
MPCU	- Municipal Planning and Coordinating Unit
MARGSS	- Municipal Analytical Report of the Ghana Statistical Service
MCE	- Municipal Chief Executive
MP _s	- Members of Parliament

- SHS - Senior High School
- NYEP - National Youth Employment Programme
- IWD - International Women's Day
- IRI - International Republican Institute
- CHBPS - Community Health-Based Planning and Services
- PNC - People's National Convention
- AICC - Accra International Conference Centre

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

The role of women in the socioeconomic and political development of every human endeavour cannot be over-emphasized. It is against this background that the issue of gender parity and removal of all forms of unfair treatments against women's progress have received international recognition since the early 1970s. A number of international corporations, heads of state, religious institutions, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are vital in the activism for women's involvement and their representation in social, political, and economic circles of humans (Essien et al. 2014).

Olu (2000) asserts that the state of women's decision making and participation in all aspects of human lives and societies are still not encouraging. She points out that while many governments, social institutions, and civic organizations have accepted the idea of gender balance in decision making, the gaps between men and women in many respects still persist, and making women to continue to be under represented at the community, district, ministerial, and sub-ministerial levels, as well as the highest levels of the corporate sector.

Furthermore, a number of United Nations (UN) conferences were held in Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), Beijing (1995), and New York (2000) to discuss about women's issues. The general concern of all these conferences has been to improve women's status and find solutions to the problems of inequality and social injustice to which women are the most victims. In Africa for instance, the Khortoum (1988), Arusha (1990), and Abuja (1995) declarations were made and

called for the full participation of women in governance and decision-making processes at all levels of society (Olu, 2000).

Olu (2000) indicates that nations and disadvantaged groups within them are struggling hard in recent times to obtain social, political, and economic rights in order to throw away the shackles of bondage and oppression, and assume full status of 'humans' who deserve all the human rights which are usually accorded only privileged members of society.

Opong & Abu (1987:25) argue that Ghanaian women and girls are not fairly treated as men when it comes to accessing school placements, promotion, decision-making, vocational training opportunities, and access to credit facilities. It is added that only aspects of women's roles and resources have been documented and greater parts are yet to be recorded in government official statistics.

Mary Wollstonecraft, who is arguably one of the earliest Western feminist theorists, asserts vehemently that, women's capacity to reason is equal to men and that biological sex differences are irrelevant to the granting of political rights (Barriteau, 2000). She proclaims further that women sometimes appear to be intellectually inferior because of their inferior education, and therefore a result of inequality rather than a justification for it.

Nonetheless, historical accounts show that men and women have economically and socio-politically worked together to move the world forward. It has been proclaimed that dual political systems existed among some ethnic groups in some parts of Africa where women and their male sons ruled side by side. The Igbo of Nigeria for example, practiced this kind of dualistic chieftaincy system in which women ruled side by side with their male sons and had their own

cabinets where cases were settled. For instance, there was a ‘mother,’ thus, the *omu*, and under her was a female cabinet who adjudicated over matters of concern (Fallon, 2008, Odame, 2014).

Other prominent examples of these dual traditional political systems were practiced among the *Swazi* of Mali, the *Mende* of Siera Leone, the *Crebo* of Liberia, and the *Beng* of Cote d’Ivoire. The Crebo of Liberia still keeps both male and female council of elders in all towns and villages where the women contribute to community decisions (Fallon, 2008).

Additionally, many traditional women leaders in Africa have contributed positively to bring societies where they are today. Notable among them in Ghana is Hema Dekyi XIII, the Omanhene (paramount chief) of the Upper Dixcove, in the Ahanta West District. During her 38 years of reign (1964-2002), she never experienced any chieftaincy disputes in her traditional area (Odame, 2014: 381).

Also, in the Frafra and the Mamprusi societies of Northern Ghana, the chief’s wife played vital roles in the enskinment of a new chief. The chief’s first wife (*Paani*) among the Mamprusi for instance, was also enskinned as the queen mother and leader of the women in her jurisdiction. Her duty was to look after the regalia of a dead divisional chief during the period within which a new divisional chief was to be enskinned (NCCE, 2011, Odame, 2013, p.388).

Furthermore, the queen mothers among the Akans, Ewes, and the Gas of Southern Ghana played some roles in the nomination of a new king. The queen mother of the Akans for instance, always attended council meetings and took part in matters that were deliberated upon in the palace (Odotei & Awedoba, 2006, NCCE, 2011).

Moreover, the king's wives in Dahomey (now republic of Benin) worked as administrators for the king. Similarly, the female chiefs among the Dagombas in the Yendi traditional area of Northern Ghana were duty-bound to report to the Ya-Na (the paramount chief of the Dagbon traditional area) the wrong doings of his sub-chiefs and sometimes lobbied for individuals who wanted to be enskinned as chiefs (NCCE, 2011).

More so, the queen mothers in the Ga societies of Southern Ghana did play and continue to play focal roles in conflict resolution and management in the Greater Accra region of Ghana (Rafai, 2015).

Despite the above pivotal contributions of women in the past, their position in community leadership, politics, and decision making in society today is woefully inadequate.

Anyidoho et al. (2016) and Fallon (2008) are of the view that the unequal relations we see today, especially in Ghana and Africa as a whole, could be attributed to the alterations of Africans' traditions and cultures by colonial ideas and practices. They believe that rather than creating a fair and just society, colonialism reinforced inequalities in West Africa.

For instance, it is said that during colonialism in the Gold Coast (now Ghana), women were less likely than men to enter school and when they did, would receive a substandard education that emphasized domestic over technical skills that might not gain them access to the growing formal sector (Anyidoho et al. 2016).

It is asserted that women faced serious backlash during the military coups that characterised the West African sub region in the 1960s and beyond. These political unrests further undermined

women's leadership and sometimes neglected them from taking part in many national issues such as contesting for positions and voting in an election (Fallon, 2008, Anyidoho et al, 2016).

Conversely, scholars such as Olu (2000) and Anyidoho et al. (2016) believe that gender relations in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in some aspects were complementary even though men and women had different, but equal roles in society where their independence and economic contributions were valued, and their rights to properties and in relationships protected.

It has been maintained that despite the constraints created by colonialism, women maneuvered and created spaces for themselves in the informal sector as traders and as food crops farmers (Anyidoho et al. 2016).

However, a cursory review and analysis of scholarly works show that the attention has always been drawn to only women who are serving in public offices to the neglect of other equally important women leaders who may not be visible, but remain very indispensable in our society. There are only scanty aspects of such women's economic activities that are recorded in most national statistics (Vaughan, 2005, Hoare, 2009).

It has been emphasized that women have not been considered in important studies of agricultural activities, and much of their income-earning and informal productive activities remain unrecorded in official statistics (Oppong & Abu, 1987).

My impressions about the literature point to the fact that reward systems and processes for decision making have always been skewed towards a few women in modern political structures; such as parliament, political parties, district assemblies, and other public sector works and

agencies, while losing sight of millions of women who are working hard to preserve cultures, values, settle disputes, nurture children, and produce food to feed the world.

It is however appropriate and worthy to commend and bring to the notice of readers a few known elite women who are serving as chiefs in some jurisdictions in the Northern region of Ghana. They are Paunaba Abeliwine Dalin Kiima, who is the paramount queen of Gumbo divisional area and Paunaba Akuolug, who is also the chief of the people at the Bongo traditional area respectively (NCCE, 2011, Odame, 2014). *Paunaba or Paugnaba* means ‘female chief’ among the Dagaati’s and the Dagombsas who are both found at the Northern part of Ghana.

Nevertheless, the female chief of Yelizoli (community) traditional area, Gaa-Naa Hawa Shanka has expressed concerns about their exclusion from major decision-making processes in the Northern region and therefore called for their inclusion in the Regional House of Chiefs’ meetings. She made this request on behalf of the female chiefs in Dagbon during the launch of the Northern Sector Action on Awareness Centre in Northern Ghana (NCCE, 2011).

From the foregoing, it is important at this juncture to set out the main focus of this work. Consequently, the key concern of this study is to move the discussions about women’s leadership and participation in decision making away from those in frontline modern politics and public office holders, and concentrate on the roles of other *influential women leaders* in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana whose activities are less known and therefore not properly documented.

The study therefore focuses on three selected women (one each from the first three categories of the following elite women) in the study area; *Paunabas* (female chiefs), female *Tindanas* (overlords of the land), *Magajias* (who are selected as the queen mothers of traders or producers

of a particular commodity by virtue of their wealth, influence, and achievements), *Hajias* (women who have performed the hajj), and wives of a chief in order to achieve the objective of this study (NCCE, 2011, Odame, 2014).

In order to achieve the goal of the study, the historical and modern contributions, as well as the changes that had occurred in the present roles of the selected elite women indicated in the above have been examined. Finally, the challenges faced by these elite women have also been explored extensively in this work.

Conceptually, the individual women leaders referred to as “*influential women leaders*” in the above are dubbed *Elite Women* in this work. **One may therefore ask who is an elite woman.** Elites in general are a group of people who are considered superior in a particular organization, OR associations of persons who have some amount of control over others due to the powers they wield through wealth, influence, and privileges (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 10th Edition).

The International Network for Elite Women (2018) explains that elite women are a network of individuals, leaders, organizations, and businesses coming together with a shared mission of enhancing the economic position of women. Therefore “**elite women**” used in this thesis (refer to thesis title) simply refers to women who are considered influential, powerful, and superior in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana based on their wealth, privileges, and the positions they hold.

This work has developed a theoretical framework which draws on three conceptual structures namely; culture, colonialism, and globalization to explain how women’s leadership should be approached in order to deal with the fundamental issues that are inimical to women in their

everyday lives. Detailed analysis of the framework could be found on page 10, subsection (1.3) of this thesis.

1.2 Problem Statement

The calls for women's involvement and inclusion in community leadership, democratic systems, and processes have taken a centre stage in many debates across the globe (Dawda, 2013). Although women represent a greater proportion of Ghana's population, their impacts and contributions to decision-making processes in the household, locality, and national levels still remain low, especially, in parts of Northern Ghana (Osei-Kuffour, 2001, Odotei & Awedoba, 2006, NCCE, 2011, Dawda, 2013, Odame, 2014, Anyidoho et al. 2016).

The population of Ghana according to the Population and Housing Census (2010) was estimated at Twenty-Four million, Two Hundred and Twenty-Three Thousand, Four Hundred and Thirty-One (24,223,431). Out of which women constituted 12,421,770 (51.28%), while males constituted 11,801,661 (48.72%), with a difference of 2.56% females over males. Despite the large number of women in Ghana, there are only 45 women legislators out of the 275 parliamentarians in the Ghanaian parliament which was constituted in 2017.

It is asserted that women should be part of decision-making bodies, first as a matter of social justice, since women comprise at least more than half of the population of most countries, but also because women's perspectives and experiences add new dimensions to deliberations (Olu, 2000, p7).

The issue of good governance speaks directly to the problem of women's participation, and as Christtister once said "without women's voices, what any nation has is a male dictatorship masquerading as democracy" (Olu, 2000, p.4).

Dawda (2013) believes that women have special caring prowess which make them sensitive to problems that face individuals in society. He is also of the view that women behave as such because; it is they and children who suffer the most during any uprising.

Olu (2000) points out that women have some leadership skills which need to be tapped to complement that of men. She also notes that women have the potential to transform politics and decision making from a male constructed point of view to one that could be understood by all.

Dawda (2013) elucidates further that the philosophy that women have special caring prowess makes them accountable and good managers of national resources. Therefore, it is believed women in leadership positions and decision-making capacities would bring those attributes such as caring and sense of accountability to bear in society.

Tamale (2004) maintains that if more women are excluded from participating in critical issues of society such as decision-making, sometimes render them ineffective in accessing resources such as land, labour, capital, and entrepreneurship. She opines that these inequalities and bias with respect to access to the wherewithal needed for women's welfare render them hopeless, alienated, and frustrated. She adds that societies that regard women as players of the domestic arena refuse to count them in the non-domestic sphere (Tamale, 2004).

It is evident that women's political participation and their contribution in decision making everywhere are lesser than men. However, the cumulative effect of women's efforts to the

economic, social, and cultural lives of people is overwhelming. The challenge is that society has failed to highlight the contributions of women who are not into public spaces and front-line politics (Tamale, 2004).

Women and their activities are neglected in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana which is a patriarchal society. It is clear from the literature that there is lack of information on women's leadership in most societies in Ghana and beyond, but the case of the Dagombas in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana is a very serious one given that only a few women have been lifted up through the leadership structures in the area.

This study therefore seeks to provide information about women whose efforts and contributions are neglected, probably because they are not holding modern political positions or are not found in public offices. This is done by exploring the state of leadership among elite women, their roles, representation, and how they are perceived by others in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

1.3 Theoretical framework

Culture, History (colonialism) and Modernity (globalization).

It is evident from scholarly materials that women bring varied views and styles to the political discourse. A number of concerns have been raised to buttress the point that women's political position, their participation in decision making, and politics must be upgraded as a matter of urgency.

This theoretical framework is based on analysis of scholarly materials found in the literature which provides some explanation to the issue of women's roles and participation in decision making in governance and community leadership in most societies across Africa.

To begin with, my impression is that culture, colonialism, and globalization are the key concepts which mostly influence norms, values, beliefs, aspirations, institutions, behaviours and attitudes of people and their understanding about women's roles, participation in politics, decision making, and leadership in most societies, especially the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

Also, this framework is developed using those three concepts (culture, globalization & colonialism) because the literature has clearly shown that colonialism, sociocultural norms, and other forms of Western ideologies and concepts imported into Africa, Ghana, and the Yendi Municipality have always served men better than women.

Furthermore, scholars such as Olu (2000) recounts two reasons why it is imperative to be mindful of historical and cultural contexts in order to have a fair idea about how women's leadership has evolved and survived overtime.

The first reason he mentions is that, we must understand the pre-colonial practices and the way they were altered by colonial and post-colonial experiences. He adds that in proposing policies, policy formulators must understand fully the present situation within society and the particular modifications of gender relations that have been developed over time (Olu, 2000).

Secondly, Olu asserts that earlier perspectives on gender, power, and decision making must always be cautiously examined by researchers when describing local institutions in Africa. According to her, this is vital because the greater part of studies conducted in Africa in the past were influenced by Western and patriarchal ideas. These studies were used to define the way women, especially those in political cycles and other leadership positions should conduct themselves (Olu, 2000).

Some scholars have created the impression that inequality has never existed in most African societies in the past, and that the inequality we see today is a colonial creation. The crux of the matter is that male sex is sometimes valued more than female sex in the Yendi Municipality just like other societies on the African continent for purposes of succession and other obvious reasons. This in my opinion is a reality and has been the foundation of inequality in most African societies, especially the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

I am not going to pretend and sing along with the scholars who believe there was a system of equality in terms of decision making and leadership in some African cultures. Although the situation in some of the societies we would be looking at shortly was somehow fair, the fact is that inequality has always been deep rooted in the culture (norms, languages, values, traditions, marriages, beliefs) of many African societies, including the people of Yendi in Ghana.

However, to make this framework more comprehensive and practical, the background of African societies in the pre-colonial times must be set out so that the colonial impacts could be well understood and appreciated in this analysis. It is for this reason that I have cited some scholars who feel there was equality between males and females in pre-colonial Africa. An attempt has also been made to share some accounts by scholars which highlight impacts of colonialism and globalization on the social institutions and culture of the African people.

The purpose of citing these scholars is not to blame colonialism and globalization entirely for women's subordinate position in the Yendi Municipality and elsewhere on the African continent. However, this is to make room for a comprehensive analysis and to demonstrate that there are some practices and ideas learnt from colonialism and globalization which have enhanced the existing injustice and inequalities faced by most women in their daily lives.

It must be emphasized that concepts which were developed by earliest Western scholars to describe Western societies were later applied to African societies which further put women at a disadvantaged position (Olu, 2000).

It is worthy therefore to understand the power relations that existed in some African societies during the pre-colonial era, since power was embedded in the norms and values which run through institutions. In most cases, these norms determined the limits of women's engagement to some extent, especially those that were culturally accepted rights and duties of spouses (Olu, 2000, p.10).

To begin with, the political position of women in pre-colonial Africa was characterized by greater differences in political systems of ethnic groups in Africa. Nevertheless, differences existed between egalitarian hunting and gathering societies and agricultural societies, and between centralized and non-centralized systems and so forth. Women's economic contributions to their household as farmers, traders, and healers should not be underestimated in such societies (Olu, 2000).

Notwithstanding the differences that existed in the political systems of ethnic groups in Africa, some women had retained public decision-making roles through the positions allocated to queen mothers, upper class women in established kingdoms, and those occupying leadership positions in community associations. Indigenous systems of patriarchy in those societies did not prevent women from running their own affairs without males' interference (Olu, 2000).

Nonetheless, gender inequality was set out through marriage systems such as gift marriages, ghost marriages, widow inheritance, and forced child marriages etc. Other sources of inequalities

emanated from the spread of Islam which established the institution of seclusion that restricted women's public movements. New social construction of norms was adopted to define an ideal woman which altered the boundaries of women's domestic negotiations (Olu, 2000).

Finally, the influence of so called Westernisation through colonial administration has had detrimental effects on the leadership roles of women in Africa. It is noted that the alliance between the colonial administration, the traditional male elites, the Christian mission and Islamic religion worsened the situation in gender relations in favour of male domination in the decision-making structures (Odame, 2014).

This part expatiates on some of the alterations caused in Africa by colonialism and globalization. It is a fact that most African countries gained their independence around the 1960s, however, the impacts of the colonial architecture are evident in many counties across Africa. Colonialism has metamorphosed into what is known as neocolonialism. I am therefore going to use colonialism and globalization interchangeably throughout this section because I believe both of them are still ongoing, even though colonialism is said to have ended in principle.

To begin with, European women were confined to private spheres and were economically dependent on males for survival during the rise in capitalism in Europe. This era brought about significant alterations in the gender relations between men and women in the subregion. The impacts of capitalism on gender relations in Europe were then smuggled into Africa as the foundation of the private/public divide framework adopted in democracy (Olu, 2000).

Secondly, the form of democracy practiced in Africa for instance, is mostly a liberal democracy which is built on the ideas of free and rational individuals who enter into a social contract and

consent to be governed within certain limits, generally defined in terms of the private-public divides. Government is able to regulate the public domain, but is unable to do same for the private sphere (Barriteau, 2000).

In Nigeria for instance, the public/private ideology was skillfully adopted to explain the organization of women's social life and undermine their political aspirations. The private sphere in the public/private framework was considered apolitical, domestic, and the field of women and children. Women who were given roles in the public arena were given positions that were subordinate in nature (Olu, 2000).

For instance, wives of government officials in Nigeria were incorporated into programmes that dealt with the welfare of women and children which were not part of the mainstream government projects and programmes that were rolled out in the country (Olu, 2000, Pereira, 2004).

Some Western feminists like Pateman and Phillips have asserted that the abstract individual in democracy is theoretically a male, who is able to interact in the public sphere outside the home, having secured the subordination of his wife in a sexual contract in which the latter is not only unfree but is perceived as lacking in rationality and other qualities that make her fit for political life (Olu, 2000, p.13).

Meanwhile, democracy as a system of governance is supposed to be the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It is one of the tenets of good governance which requires that mechanisms are put in place to ensure effective and equitable participation of all groups in society and that particular attention is paid to the most marginalized (Anyidoho et al. 2016).

It must be pointed out that the kind of democracy which is practiced in Ghana is so expensive. Once democracy is expensive to practice, the benefits accrued from it are mostly enjoyed by men

since they control the greater part of the economic resources and other requirements needed to practice it. This goes to refute the fundamental principle that democracy is the system of government that creates a fair and just society where the public can contribute to deliberations.

Additionally, during colonial administration in the Gold Coast (now Ghana), the colonizers made deliberate policies that compelled women to fit into certain prescribed roles and behaviours. As indicated in the introduction of this thesis, Ghanaian women were offered a unique education which made them suitable for domestic jobs (Anyidoho et al. 2016).

Finally, globalization has brought about the introduction of modern technologies such as improved seeds, agro-chemicals, and machines (cultivators, tractors, ploughs, planters, combine harvesters etc) into farming. The idea is to reduce the hours spent by farmers on the farm and increase efficiency. However, these technologies sometimes increase women's labour hours and reduce the hours spent by men on the farm (Boserup, 1990).

Women have to spend extra hours to sow, control weeds and pests, harvest, process, package and sell the farm produce to consumers. These activities can take women several months to be completed because the work that a machine does within few hours cannot be completed by several women in many days. This shows the extent to which technology is appropriated by men to reinforce the existing unfair household division of labour in most farming communities, especially the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

However, women who have enough money to pay for the services of machines and hire labour also spend few hours working on the farm. Nonetheless, only hands full of woman in the Yendi Municipality have money to hire machines to assist them on their farms. Poverty has pushed

majority of the women into peasant farming and shea butter extraction, and therefore cannot afford the services of machines to cultivate their crops.

It must be added that women's agricultural activities in the Yendi Municipality are seasonal in nature. Farming does not keep women busy throughout the year as Boserup tries to put it, yet, women do a lot of work on the farm than men.

The fact is that, different farming activities are done at different times of the year, thus, sowing, pests and weeds control, harvesting, and packaging are not done simultaneously, and therefore in between these activities, women have some time to do other things.

My impression however that is childbearing and childcare are the main reasons for women's inability to play active roles in leadership and decision making in the Yendi Municipality. These life processes are so demanding than any form of work including farming activities.

The moment a woman becomes pregnant; her entire life course changes because she goes through a lot to carry the baby in her womb and goes to the hospital for periodic checkups etc. Aside marital duties and household chores that most women perform, they do spend a lot of time caring for their children and managing their households.

Although pregnancy and childbearing are biological processes of women's life, the roles that follow these are defined by the social construction of norms which are defined by the culture of the people. These keep women busy and leave them with little or no time to enter into active politics and community leadership. Dawda (2013) shares that the workload of women in Northern Ghana is so massive that they are the last people to go to bed in the evening and the first to wake up in the morning.

Conceptually, every society has got a culture. It is that culture which regulates their way of life and enables them to live in harmony with one another.

In its broadest sense, when the legacies of colonialism and ramifications of global norms (external factors) come into contact with the culture of any society through globalization, some reactions take place. These reactions cause changes in the social systems and institutions such as family, marriage, health, religion, economic, political, and education etc. Also, the norms, values, beliefs, and traditions in those societies are being transformed to suit the aspirations of the people.

What I am trying to establish in the above paragraph is that after reactions take place, a system of subordination is established by the new development which is then appropriated by those who have much influence in terms of power, decision making, and control over resources. Most scholars and policy formulators have not paid much attention to this for many years.

Whatever interventions made in the Yendi Municipality to upgrade women positions which overlook the patriarchal nature of the culture of the Yendi people will yield little or no positive results. I am making this assertion because I have come to realize that colonialism and globalization have always thrived on dominance which for me is a direct prototype of what exists in the culture of the people in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

In the same vein, there has always been a system of dominance and inequality in most societies, whether large or small. The few individuals who act as gatekeepers and control most decisions in such social groupings or societies often times appropriate any new innovation or culture that

finds its way into their community. They do so in order to maintain their status quo of dominance and control over other less privileged groups who are mostly women.

Relating this to most cultures, norms, and values in the Northern part of Ghana, especially Yendi Municipality, it becomes clear why most traditional and religious beliefs oppose women's movements and interactions in public lives since the people, especially men believe that those spaces have not been the rightful places of women per their sociocultural norms and beliefs.

From the above analogy, one can partially conclude that the gender norms which will continue to enhance males' dominance in the Yendi Municipality will always be promoted since it is men who dominate most decision-making processes in the area. This is reflected in the organization of social and traditional institutions in the Northern part of Ghana which are mostly dominated by men.

The practice of patrilineal system of inheritance in Northern Ghana, especially in the Yendi Municipality, places women at a subordinate and vulnerable position. Succession passes through the males' line which automatically gives men the resources and power which are needed to influence decisions in their favour, hence the neglect of women's leadership and their activities.

Most women in Northern Ghana are denied the opportunity to take important decisions regarding their reproductive health, children's education, and family planning. Economically, they are not supposed to own property, keep large livestock or lands, and for that matter are unable to provide for most of their needs and those of their families (Odame, 2014).

In conclusion, sociocultural norms and traditional beliefs, coupled with the other alterations caused by Western cultures brought about by colonialism and globalizations contribute greatly to

most of the inequalities inhibiting women's leadership and their contributions in decision making in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

It is believed that increased participation in governance and community leadership will produce inadequate results, unless there are essential changes in society's perception of the "female" and the way community life is organized.

1.4 Objectives of the study

1.4.1 General Objective

This study examines the socio-cultural, political, and economic contributions, and challenges of elite women, as well as their changing roles in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

1. To assess the state of women's involvement in decision-making processes in the Yendi Municipality.
2. To explore the contributions of elite women in traditional and modern political systems in the Yendi Municipality.
3. To investigate the challenges faced by elite women in their daily lives in the Yendi Municipality.
4. To examine the opportunities for women's involvement in community services in the Yendi Municipality.

1.5 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions;

- a. What is the level of women's involvement in decision-making processes at the community level in the Yendi Municipality?
- b. What are the salient contributions of elite women in community leadership and party politics in the past and present at the Yendi Municipality?
- c. What are the main barriers that hinder equal participation of elite women in their economic, social, and cultural lives in the Yendi Municipality?
- d. What are the most effective strategies for enhancing the involvement of elite women in community services in the Yendi Municipality?

1.6 Profile of the Yendi Municipal

The Yendi Municipal Assembly used to be a district before 2007. It was established as a district in 1988 by the PNDC Law 207, Act 462, and LI 1443 to facilitate the smooth operations of the decentralization policy of 1988 (PHC, 2010).

Yendi Municipal is among the 54 Municipal Assemblies we currently have in Ghana. It is the capital of the Dagbon kingdom in the Northern Region. The Municipal Assembly is the main political administrative body that is mandated to carry out national policies on behalf of its people (PHC, 2010).

The Local Government Act 1993 (Act, 462) mandates the Municipality to make laws and provide relevant information that is required to spearhead development in the area. In sum, the

assembly is charged with the entire development and administration of the Yendi Municipality (2010, PHC).

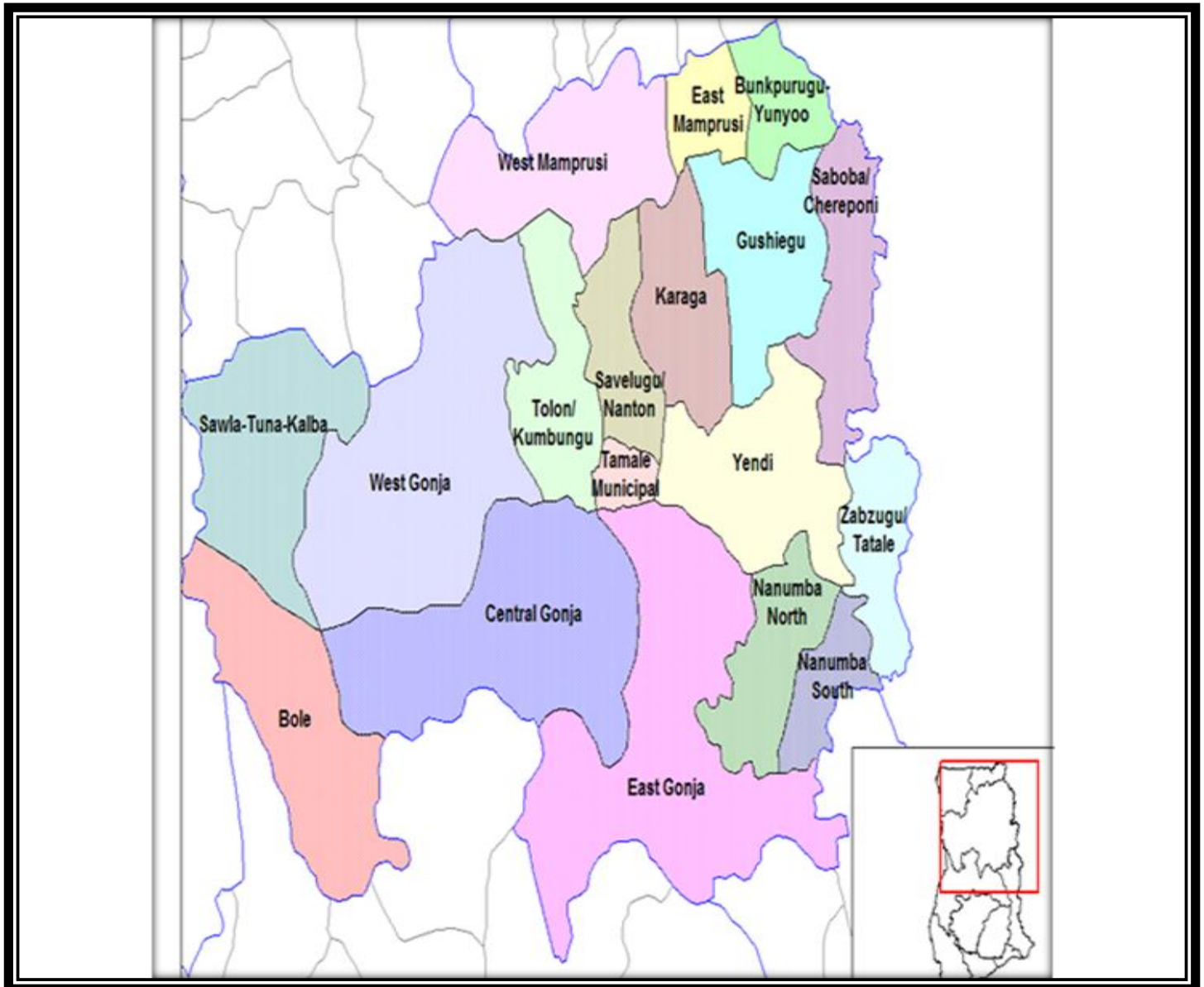
1.6.1 Location and Size

The study was conducted in Yendi which is located in the northern part of Ghana. Yendi is the traditional capital of the Dagbon kingdom. It is also the capital of the Yendi Municipality.

The Municipality shares boundaries with six other districts. They are Saboba district to the East, Chereponi and Sabsugu districts to the South, Nanumba North district to the South, Gushiegu and Mion districts to the West.

The Municipality is strategically located at the middle of the eastern corridor of the Northern region and has a landmass of 1,446.3 sq.km. Yendi is about 90km from Tamale which is the Northern regional capital city in the upper part of Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010).

Figure 1.1 Map of Yendi Municipal



Source: Ghana Statistical Service (GSS)

1.6.2 Population Size

The population of the Yendi Municipality according to the (2010) Population and housing was estimated at one hundred and seventeen thousand, seven hundred and eighty (117,780) which

represents 4.8% of the entire population of the Northern region of Ghana whose population is estimated at two million, four hundred and seventy-nine thousand, six hundred and forty-one, thus 2,479,641 (PHC, 2010). Males constitute 50.0% of the population while females constitute 50.0%. Although males and females seem to be equal in terms of sex ratio, males tend to be slightly ahead of females.

1.6.3 Scope of the study

Due to the vast nature of the Yendi Municipality, resource constraints, and accessibility challenges, the study was limited to the Kpatu-Ya Na Yili (Kpatu-Ya chief's house) and its environs, Belegu North electoral area, Gontegele traditional area, *Nayili Fong* (Chief's quarter or area), and the Gundo-Na traditional area. The targeted population for the study comprised of *Magajias*, wives of chiefs, *Hajias*, female *Tindanas* and women chiefs (*Paunabas*).

1.6.4 The Administrative Setup

The assembly has a functioning structure. These are departments, general assembly, and secretariat, zonal and urban councils. Administratively, the Municipality has 32 electoral areas under one constituency. The assembly has 45 assembly members, 32 elected and 13 government appointees. The 32 elected members represent 2/3 of the 45 members in the assembly while the 13 government appointees constitute 1/3 of the 45 members in the assembly.

There are 119-unit areas with each having one representing the Unit (Unit Committee member). The Municipality has three town councils, namely; Yendi zonal council, Malzeri zonal council, and Gbungbaliga zonal council. The Municipal Chief Executive is the political head of the Municipality. He chairs the Executive Committee of the assembly. The Municipal coordinating director is an administrative head of the Municipal assembly. He is also the head of the

Municipal Planning and Coordinating Unit (MPCU). There are 268 communities in the Yendi Municipality. About 56.1% of the population in the Municipality lives in these 268 communities.

1.6.5 Traditional Administrative setup

There are two gates from which a Ya-Na is chosen. The Ya-Na is the paramount chief of Dagbon and people of Yendi in Northern Ghana. There are 45 Sub-chiefs in the Yendi traditional area who pay allegiance to the Ya-Na within their respective traditional areas (PHC, 2010). There are also two important women chiefs in the area.

They are the Gundo-Na and the Kpatu-Ya Na respectively. The Gundo Na and the Kpatu-Ya Na are the oldest daughters of the Ya-Na respectively. Sometimes, the granddaughters of the Ya-Na can become the Kpatu-Ya Na or the Gundo-Na if the Ya-Na has no older princesses to occupy such positions.

The mode of ascension to the skin (throne) of the Ya-Na is through the “gate” system (a gate is one branch of a royal family). The Ya-Na and his king makers, as well as his council of elders work together to enskin sub-chiefs. Upon the death of the Ya-Na or any of the sub-chiefs, a regent is selected from the eligible gate to act as the chief until the final funeral rite of the late chief is performed before a new one is enskinned (PHC, 2010).

The traditional authorities in Yendi did not only assist in the provision of security, conflict resolution, peace building, and arbitration for disputing parties before and after colonialism, but also form part of the Municipal Assembly structure that seeks for development for its people (PHC, 2010).

1.6.6 Ethnicity & Religion

The Municipality has varied ethnic groups with Dagombas constituting the majority. The other ethnic groups include Kokomba, Akan, Ewe, Basare, Moshie, Chokosi, and Hausa with few foreign nationals from Nigeria, Togo, Burkina Faso, and Mali. The main religious groupings in Yendi are Moslems (67.2%), Christians (17.4%), Traditionalists (13.2%), and others who constitute 2.2% (PHC, 2010).

1.6.7 Occupation/economic activities

Almost three quarters (72.9%) of households in the Yendi Municipality are engaged in agriculture. Most agricultural households (96.2%) are into crop farming. The majority (48.3%) of agricultural households are into livestock rearing with those in poultry (chicken) farming forming the majority with 30.0% (PHC, 2010).

According to the Municipal Medium-Term Development Plan (MMTDP), a greater part of the populace in the Yendi Municipality is engaged in crops and animal farming to feed themselves and their families. Arable land constitutes 481,000 hectares out of the total land area of 535,000 hectares. The farmers are able to cultivate just 15% of the entire land of the Municipality (MMTDP, 2010-2013).

A section of the people is employed in some other economic activities but on a small scale. These areas include shea-butter extraction, weaving, fish and meat processing, transport services, whole sale, and retail of general goods (PHC, 2010).

The Municipal Analytical Report of the Ghana Statistical Service (MARGSS) shows that the Municipality has enormous potential in agriculture. The land is suitable for the cultivation of a

good manner of crops. Animals reared in the Municipality include cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and poultry for family and commercial purposes. A good number of the people are engaged in small scale manufacturing businesses such as blacksmiths, bakers, mechanics, and groundnut oil extraction (MARGSS, 2014).

1.7 Relevance of the study

The information obtained from this research would be useful for institutions such as the Municipal Assemblies (MAs), District Assemblies (DAs), government agencies and departments, Traditional authorities, the Bureaucrats, Universities and Colleges of higher learning, Women Advocacy groups, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) and other development partners to identify new areas of women roles in order to channel their energies into productive ventures.

Also, the study could provoke thought, stimulate insightful and new ideas and serve as literature for the research community, especially those who may embark on further studies in a different social setting.

Finally, the study has the potential of encouraging individuals to fully acknowledge the critical roles of women in their localities and the need to integrate them in everyday administration of their societies.

1. 8 Organization of the thesis

The study has been organized in 5 broad chapters. The first chapter comprises the background of the study, problem statement, theoretical framework, research questions, objectives of the study,

profile of the study area, relevance of the study, and organization of the study. Chapter two entails review of related literature.

Chapter three comprises research methodologies; designs, techniques, and tools. Chapter four covers presentation of data, analysis, and discussion.

Finally, chapter five covers the summary of research findings, major findings, conclusion, and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

It is argued that women are important players in the social and economic development of societies. The contributions of women to their countries are also more than half of all efforts of the population put together, despite their multifaceted roles in child birth and childcare, and those in the productive ventures. These notwithstanding, their inputs in informal and modern political systems where major decisions are taken to distribute societal resources are always limited (Furzana, 2005).

Due to the rising acknowledgment among women's momentous exclusion from power arrangements worldwide, a global commitment has been made to rectify gender partialities in decision-making. The enhancement of women's involvement in leadership structures is seen as the key to remedy gender inequalities in the world (Farzana, 2005).

It is as a result of the growing urgency to upgrade women's political position in society that this chapter reviews literature on the roles of elite women in community, traditional, and modern decision-making structures, and processes in Ghana and beyond. This is done by exploring the sociocultural, political, and economic roles of women leaders in different societies across Africa.

The writings on women and women leadership in Africa, as well as women traditional leadership in the pre- and post-colonial periods across Africa have been examined under this chapter. The impacts of the changes in the trends of these political systems among women in the formal political structures have also received some attention in this section. Attention is paid to women leaders such as wives of chiefs, female Tindanas (overload of lands and communities), and

female chiefs. The chapter starts by reviewing literature on women historical roles across some societies in Africa.

2.2 Historical roles of elite women

2.2.1 Leadership/political roles of women

Firstly, the symbols of the community head of the Nsukka political culture among the Nigerians were the *Onyishi Umunwoke* (oldest men) and the *Onyishi Umunwanyi* (oldest women) in the village. The British colonial government defied this political culture and chose a lady by name Ahebi as its own leader who served as their interpreter (Achebe, 2003, pp. 57).

Ahebi later became a chief and served in the highest office of the British court of Enugu-Ezike in October, 1918 due to her hard work, ability to speak Pidgin English, and dedication to the colonial officers. Once she was made the warrant chief, a divide developed between her and the British colonialists at one side, and the recognized leadership of the male elders on the other side which resulted into a number of conflicting and combatant situations (Achebe, 2003).

As a warrant chief, she turned her palace into a court and settled cases between individuals and collected money for those services. Her palace was also used to rescue women whose husbands had abused them (Achebe, 2003).

Secondly, it has been noted that men and women, thus, women and their male sons ruled side by side as chiefs in most African societies prior to colonialism. A good number of these systems and the ethnic groups which practiced them have been highlighted under chapter one at the introduction section of this work.

Thirdly, in Ghana, towns such as Wenchi, Mampong, and Juabeng were founded by women leaders. It has been argued that before colonial rule, numerous women chiefs and leaders were found along the East African Swahili coast (Fallon, 2008, p.19).

Also, historically, women chiefs and women traditional leaders were instrumental in mobilizing for change in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa in the pre-colonial era. It is asserted that Ghanaian women played pivotal roles in many ways whenever there was a war to assist the warriors and soldiers on the battle field. The women on the battlefield treated injured soldiers and fighters and also supplied water, food, and ammunition to them as well (NCCE, 2011).

For instance, it has been said that women such as Yaa Asantewaa of Ejusu, Dokua of the Akyem people, and princess Adisa of the Nanumba were all great leaders and fighters who led their people in some battles. Yaa Asantewaa for example, led the Asante kingdom to fight the British in 1900 (NCCE, 2011, Odame, 2014).

Additionally, the Gundo-Na (female paramount chief in Yendi of Northern Ghana) was consulted by sub-chiefs in the past to lobby for them at the chief's palace to speed up their enskinment processes. She is currently one of the most powerful female chiefs and the oldest daughter of the Ya-Na in the Dagbon traditional area of Northern Ghana (NCCE, 2011).

Moreover, in the Builsa and Tallensi areas of North-Eastern part of Ghana, Magajias were seen as the overall heads of women who were tasked with the responsibility of settling disputes among their followers. However, in recent times they do lobby for credit facilities for women to enable them start their own businesses in their respective communities (NCCE, 2011).

Besides, the oldest woman in the chief's lineage among the Mamprusi of Northern Ghana is known as the *Pua Kpeim*. For instance, in the past, she served as the leader of all the other women in the palace. Her duty was to intercede whenever there were disputes between the wives of the chief. During funerals, she prepared food that was used for the performance of ritual activities. The above duties were key responsibilities of the old women in the Mamprusi society and are still relevant duties of old women in the Mamprusi society today (NCCE, 2011, Odame, 2014).

Furthermore, studies and conversations with some resource persons also point out that, in the traditional Dahomey (now the state of Benin), the king's wives were assigned to the various sub-chiefs as mothers of provincial rulers and were required to attend court whenever a viceroy was needed in court. The wives were supposed to work for the interest of the king. In fact, they served as their husband's spies.

More so, the female Tindana was one of the important women leaders found in the Northern part of Ghana. Basically, they were leaders of acephalous societies in their respective communities. Simply put, Tindanas were the priestesses or priests and chiefs of communities that did not have centralized political systems, as well as chiefs. It is not clear if the position of the Tindana still remains an important one, especially now that majority, if not all societies, have centralized traditional political systems (Oppong, 1973).

Nevertheless, few Tindanas still operate under some chiefs outside Yendi town, but they may not be regarded as chiefs since most of them were conquered and slain as indicated by the conquest story of the Dagombas in Northern Ghana (Oppong, 1973).

Upon pondering over Oppong's argument about Tindanas, I am tempted to believe that over 95% of the duties of Tindanas might have been taken over by the district assemblies and the chiefs in the Dagbon traditional area of Northern Ghana.

The current state of Tindanas in Dagbon (traditional home of the Dagombas in Ghana) and the level of their influence and importance, as well as their duties should be the concern of all researchers. Perhaps, Tindanas are employed by chiefs nowadays to perform only rituals and sacrifices on their behalf since they were known in the past as the earth's priestesses.

Nonetheless, female chiefs and female *Tindanas*, and older women in Northern Ghana were responsible for settling disputes between and among women. They also settled disputes among new settlers over land issues in the past, while the oldest wives of the chiefs and the women chiefs addressed misunderstandings that arose among couples and wives of the sub-chiefs (NCCE, 2011, Odame, 2014).

This part of the literature highlights some roles of women leaders in Southern Ghana even though this study is situated in Northern Ghana. The goal of this section, as well as the entire thesis is not intended to compare the roles of women in Northern and Southern Ghana, but to embark on a comprehensive review which will contribute to knowledge.

Firstly, it has been argued however that women in leadership positions in Southern Ghana tend to have much more influence in decision making than their northern counterparts. For instance, the oldest women in Southern Ghana provided advisory services to chiefs, sub-chiefs, and other traditional authorities in their societies. They still perform these duties in their modern-day societies (NCCE, 2011).

The oldest women in the Akan traditional system of Southern Ghana were and are still consulted for family histories because they are known for being the repositories of important information about the stools and traditions of their clans and societies (NCCE, 2011).

In addition, it is noted that the queen mother among the Akans also occupied an important position in their governance structure. Beside the chief, the queen mother followed as the second most important person in the Akan society. She has always been consulted during the selection of a new chief. It was her duty to look after the women in her family, as well as those in her communities (Odotei & Awedoba, 2006, Odame, 2014).

Moreover, one major responsibility of the Akan queen mother was to attend all meetings which were held on daily basis in the palace. She was supposed to be present whenever there was a court case being tried at the palace, except when she was in her menses (Odotei & Awedoba, 2006).

Furthermore, in the past, when the chief died or was distooled in the Akan political culture, it was the queen mother who announced the new successor. She did that with the help of other clan heads through discussions and consultations until they all decided on a particular candidate. She has the authority to publicly rebuke everyone in the palace (Odotei & Awedoba, 2006).

To the best of my knowledge, one person does not take a decision to rebuke or remove a chief from office even if he violates traditions or norms that warrant his removal from office. The king makers such as the sub-chiefs, clan heads, queen mother, abrewa (oldest female in the Akan clan of Ghana), and council of elders usually meet to take such a decision.

Therefore, saying that the queen mother has the sole prerogative to rebuke or remove a chief from office beats my imagination and makes her powers appear to be absolute, which may not entirely be true.

Probably, the queen mother may be the one who pronounces the outcome of a determination made by the elders in the chief's court to a chief who has broken a norm, and therefore should not be misconstrued to mean the queen mother takes the decisions solo without any consultations or whatsoever.

These notwithstanding, I am of the conviction that the queen mothers of the Akans in Southern Ghana still occupy an enviable position in their societies and continue to perform most of the duties stated in the above, but what one cannot confirm is whether or not their influence in the traditional Akan society is the same as it used to be in the past. Although that has not been the focus of this work, it remains an interesting area that should be investigated later by other researchers.

2.2.2 Sociocultural roles of women

Oppong asserts that the allocation of roles in Dagbon of Northern Ghana for both boys and girls start at age five. The individuals go through a series of traditional education which constitutes a number of methods (Oppong, 1987).

Oppong & Abu (1987) identify the roles of women using a model known as the *seven roles of women in Ghana*. In the framework, they have classified women's roles into parental, occupational, conjugal, domestic, kin, community, and individual roles. They have argued that every woman at any point in time performs a number of these roles in the course of their life.

Oppong further categories women's roles into recruitment, achievement, and ascribed roles. She notes that the recruitment roles are compelling; thus, one is mandated to perform them, example, drumming for men and singing of appellations by women to the chief. The achievement roles are usually a choice whereas the ascribed roles are transitional, but may have varied degrees of compulsion (Oppong, 1987, pp. 62).

The above roles, according to Oppong & Abu are intertwined to the extent that it becomes difficult to identify boundaries between and among them. It is asserted that the social and economic demands in the Dagbon traditional area of Northern Ghana oblige women to honour a number of roles in their life time, unless they die earlier without attaining adulthood.

Oppong adds that women are socialized in a manner that prepares them for specific responsibilities right from childhood. This is to equip them with the attitudes and skills required to be recruited and assigned some specific and general roles during maturity.

However, it is pointed out that the changing patterns of work and the scattering of kin through migration are noted to be among the structural changes affecting women's occupational and kin roles, and subsequently affect the cost of parenthood. Hence, women are spared with little time to consider venturing into full time leadership positions (Oppong, 1987: 10).

Moreover, it is shared that community and traditional female leaders such as female chiefs, as well as queen mothers in Ghana were very active in organizing various rites of passage; outdoorings, puberty rites such as *dipo*, and training of adolescent girls for marital home management and equipping them with vocational skills to prepare them for living in the world as

morally sensitive and good women who could shoulder their responsibilities in their various communities (Nukunya, 1992).

Conversely, in the wake of religion, migration, and education, many of these rites, especially puberty rites are getting extinct due to religious beliefs and myths surrounding these initiation rites which portray them as evil and make them less attractive.

The few people who continue to initiate their daughters using such traditions do that in secrecy in order to avoid public criticisms and ridicule. I think the focus now should be shifted to the new forms and modes that these rites have taken and the specific roles women continue to play in these new arrangements if there are any.

Finally, the senior most wife of every couple among the Dagaabas of Northern Ghana is called *Yii Daponma*. Her duties in the past, just like those of the *Pau Kpeim* of the Mamprusi in Northern Ghana were to accompany the *Yidandon* (household head) to funerals and saw to the cooking of meals during marriages and funeral ceremonies. She also took care of newly married couples in the lineage (NCCE, 2011, Odame, 2014).

2.2.3 Economic roles of women

Apart from women's care taker and nurturing roles to their children and the provision of solid foods and ingredients, they also played important economic tasks in the northern traditional settings of Ghana (NCCE, 2011, p. 41).

Also, in the past, shea-butter extraction was considered the first major economic activity of all women in the northern part of Ghana. Farming attracted the chunk of women, followed by

trading. Weaving also employed a section of the women, although the number of women who were engaged in this sector was quite small (NCCE, 2011, pp. 42).

Furthermore, it has been argued that Ghanaian women have played a comparatively active role in economic life, especially in trade and agricultural production than women in other parts of the world, including the industrialized countries (Oppong & Abu, 1987).

Finally, according to Anyidoho et al. (2016), by the late 1980s and beyond, female traders in Ghana had gained much power and used it to become a formidable economic and social force. It is however asserted that most women's power in Ghana for the past decades had been dislocated due to their limited access to some key resources such as education and land (Oppong & Abu, 1987: 25).

2.3 Modern roles of elite women

The installation of a queen mother at the Kaleo District in the Upper West Region of Ghana was received by a section of the populace with joy since it was the first in its kind in the area. The installation was therefore accompanied by some hope because it was believed that this was going to pave way for women to begin serving in the Regional House of Chiefs (Odame, 2013).

The main idea behind this new concept of women leadership in Kaleo is to empower women in areas of trade, handiwork, networking, and mobilization of resources for community development (Odame, 2013). However, some chiefs received the news about the new tradition with mixed reactions because they felt that was an attempt to usurp their authorities and powers.

It has been maintained that women leaders do not only mobilize other women to embark on self-help projects and form working groups to help one another, but also help in the growing of the

economy through trading, farming, and other activities. Others also act as Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) in their respective communities (Odame, 2014).

Currently, with the establishment of health care centers in the remotest parts of Ghana, usually known as CHBPS (Community Health-Based Planning & Services) compounds have affected the operations of TBAs. In the past when their services were needed most, training programmes were organized for them to improve upon their skills in managing women who were in labour and had no qualified nurse (s) to attend to them.

The International Network for Elite Women (2018) outlines a number of roles performed by elite women in modern societies for the development of women and their communities. I find those roles useful to this work and decide to share them. They include;

- Provision of leadership roles, counseling support systems, and empowering women to progress economically.
- Educating and generating the next generation of women leaders, as well as providing formal and informal education to young women to prepare them for leadership positions both in the formal and informal sectors of society.
- Mobilizing women to form networks of business associations and partner NGOs and other human rights groups whose mandate is to deal with gender inequalities and issues of women exclusion from positions of authority and access to resources.
- Putting measures in place to make women economically viable, enhance their growth, and promote the welfare of all women and girls.

2.3.1 Women's political participation at the national level

The ability to make informed decisions in society has historically benefited men better than women. When we interrogate the democratic systems of ancient Greece up to this 21st century politics, one can conclude that there has always been an asymmetry of a modern and traditional or a public and private structure deliberately crafted to get women out of important leadership positions where major decisions are always taken (Dawda, 2013).

Basically, the question that comes to mind is who defines what is private and public? This is important to be unpacked because; sometimes a person can become a family member and at the same time a chief in a particular community. In such a scenario, where should the lines of public and private divides be drawn, especially when the chief receives visitors and performs his duties as a chief in his house (palace), and also attends to his family matters in the same palace? These questions are critical and need further interrogation by researchers.

The most common means that is adopted to access the participation of the citizenry in many societies by political parties, governments, and scholars is the use of political participation. In the past, individuals' participation in politics was only determined by the number of people who registered and possessed party identity cards and voted for those parties in an election (Dawda, 2013).

Of late, political participation can be measured in many ways. Now individuals use social media platforms such as facebook and whatsApp groups to broadcast government policies to the citizenry as a way of political participation. It is also exhibited through signing a petition and calling onto radio and television programmes whenever lines are opened for listeners to share their views on an issue (Dawda, 2013).

There can be a meaningful improvement in women's political life if a strong commitment is made by government and the few women who are privileged to enter into the formal political structures to dialogue and make deliberate laws in order to achieve this kind of purpose. Legislation could also be passed in the form of a national policy to facilitate women's political participation in the country (Essien et al. 2014).

Since the start of the first republic, a high level of enthusiasm and urgency has been shown by some Ghanaian women in many areas at different levels of the political divide. Despite the series of challenges being faced by women political leaders, some success and progress are being made over the years just that the pace at which this is moving has been slow (Allah-Mensah, 2005).

The interest of most governments of Africa in women's political participation is to take advantage of women's numbers to win election, but not to address the grievances of women. Governments may have other reasons why they would want to promote women's involvement in politics which one might not be privy to, but the main motive has always been to capture a political power or capital (Dawda, 2013, Essien et al. 2014).

However, participation can sometimes become a threat to government existence, especially when community people join forces and resources together to embark on developmental projects in their societies. Nevertheless, community participation has been touted by development pundits and the academia as an effective, economical, and sustainable means of bringing development to people, especially the poor and the disgruntle people in society (Rahnema, 1993: 117).

It is asserted that if a critical attention is paid to the communal spirit and the rural social structure, there could be devolution of certain responsibilities from central government to local

groupings, and organizations to be administered at the grass root, without government necessarily wasting resources to travel down to the people (Essien et al. 2014).

It is believed this kind of participation which takes the form of a self-help approach is an effective way of sustaining government programmes and projects since the beneficiary communities will see the projects as their own and will work towards their sustainability (Essien et al. 2014).

2.3.2 Women's participation in political parties

Mainwaring argues that although many people have lost interest in the activities of political parties and governments, parties still remain the main tools for bringing people together to participate in the administration of government policies and programmes. He also maintains that parties are the key stakeholders through which a person can be elected into key leadership positions in most democracies across the world (Mainwaring, 1999: 11).

It is pointed out that women's political affiliation can influence their possibility of winning elections. It is an indisputable fact that woman who contest on the ticket of ruling parties have higher chances of winning a political position than those who run as individual candidates or have their parties in opposition because of obvious reasons (Allah-Mensah, 2001: 124-125).

Allah-Mensah's assertion cannot entirely be true because sometimes if the party in power is serving its last term in office, most electorates anticipate for a change and that can help a woman from an opposition party to win over someone contesting on the ticket of a ruling government that is serving its last term. A woman who is contesting for the first time has little chances of

winning over an incumbent unless she works harder or hails from a constituency which is a strong hold of the party she represents.

There is evidence to buttress the point that business women were keen enthusiasts of the CPP who offered various kinds of services such as financial and mobilization of followers to the party. It is added that women were good at organizing party followers for party works and campaigns even when they were only told to do so at a short notice (Manuh, 1997: 109).

Finally, it has been established that Ghanaian women were a key force to reckon with in grassroots mobilization of political party followers in the immediate post-colonial periods and beyond. In Ghana for instance, market women, especially Makola market women supported the Convention People's Party (CPP) which was led by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (Allah-Mensah, 2005).

These market women disseminated the policies and programs of the CPP and mobilized funds to support its activities at the time. They equally resisted policies of the government that did not inure to the benefit of the citizenry through picketing and demonstrations that were adopted as some revolutionary measures to protect the rights and freedoms of the masses (Allah-Mensah, 2005).

Tsikata on the other hand upholds that the main job of women in the CPP in the 1960s was to develop a formidable women's front or wing and to also organize a youth league for the party. This initiative received a massive support from the highest echelons of the party and included it in the party's structure to have women's league at all levels as a tool for mobilizing women in the party (Tsikata, 1999: 75).

2.3.3 Women's participation in local government

The Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) government introduced some new changes in Ghana's local government system in 1988. This initiative had a massive impact on the existing decentralization system in the country. The new changes made in the systems provided an opportunity for women to participate in politics due to its flexibility and the fact that it was non-partisan in nature (Ahwoi, 2010).

The available positions in the system were opened to everyone to contest devoid of party regalia and influence as it has always been when general elections were being conducted. The idea was to keep the elections from political party influence since the new changes made were to keep the system completely non-partisan. In order to ensure that men did not hijack the system, some district assemblies introduced sub-committees within the districts to give women pivotal roles in the development discourse of the districts (Ahwoi, 2010).

In modern day decentralization processes practiced in Ghana, government mostly appoints women to form part of the 1/3 appointed membership in the local assemblies. These assertions made by Ahwoi support some views shared earlier by Allah-Mensah.

2.3.4 Women participation in public offices

There is a strong need for women to be included in public offices because gender issues are not taken seriously in the analysis of public policies. This is vital because women who are employed into public offices do not get the opportunity to influence major decisions because most of them are usually found at the base of the political system. It is just a hand full of women who are found at the top of the political structure or managerial levels where major decisions are mostly taken (Dawda, 2013).

2.4 Challenges of women in politics & community leadership

2.4.1 Ideological factors

The first and foremost challenge of women leaders in most societies in Africa and beyond is patriarchy. It is a system by which males have control over women and use that power to influence their relationship with women in areas of decision-making and politics. It is also used to construct social norms and gender relations between males and females where women are always kept at the bottom of the social structure with limited privileges (Odame, 2014).

Odame adds that patriarchy and males' dominance were the major hindrances to women's political participation when she interrogated the concept of chieftaincy and its contributions to development in Kaleo of the Upper West region of Ghana.

Also, it is asserted that male dominance is not only pervasive in Ghana. It is experienced in many societies across Africa and beyond. For instance, male dominance is so widespread in Nigeria that men alone occupy 90% of elected positions of party politics in the country (Abamba & Okpilike, 2013).

Furthermore, Essien et al. (2014) have also shared that patriarchy was used to discourage assembly women from sharing their views at assembly meetings in the Wa Municipality of the Upper West region of Ghana. Their findings further revealed that women who insisted to speak during assembly meetings were shouted at to keep quiet for men to speak first.

Moreover, Dawda (2013) affirms that assembly women whose voices seem to overpower their male counterparts are nearly beaten for challenging men and being disrespectful during assembly

meetings in parts of Northern Ghana. This makes some of the assembly women timid, especially those who have little education and are unable to effectively express themselves in English.

Finally, even though women have the same political rights to vote and be voted for, they can sometimes be discouraged to do so. This kind of male dominance becomes pervasive to the extent that it affects women's confidence levels, deny them the right to information, and limit their access to resources. What it finally does to women is that it reduces their status and places them at the subordinate position of the political system in their countries (Tamale, 2004, Dawda, 2013).

2.4.2 Political factors

To begin with, women are given the opportunity to be elected into less influential positions within their parties because the males do not want to allow women to control sensitive positions of the party. Even if women are able to penetrate into the party's structure, the men intentionally schedule important meetings at odd hours just to discourage them from attending those meetings (Farzana, 2005, Dawda, 2013).

Also, Essien et al. (2014) affirm that Assembly women in the Upper West region of Ghana bemoan that their male counterparts usually give them short notices for assembly meetings. This seems to suggest that deliberate attempts are being made by some men to deny women the opportunity to make their inputs at assembly meetings.

Moreover, apart from the short notices received by women for assembly meetings, they are seriously affected by the high cost of transportation that is incurred during assembly work (Dawda, 2013, Essien et al. 2014).

Besides these, as indicated earlier by Dawda, women are sometimes treated harshly by their own colleagues and men alike. Sometimes, most male elected members exhibit unfriendly attitudes towards the few female elected members who work with them on the same committees.

Furthermore, there is evidence to support the above assertion made by Dawda. In 2014, I came into contact with a woman organizer of one of the two major political parties (NPP and NDC) in the Wa Central constituency of Ghana who narrated her friend's ordeal to me during a field work.

According to the women's organizer, her colleague Assembly woman was nearly beaten by an Assemblyman during an assembly meeting. The Assemblyman's reason was that his colleague Assemblywoman did challenge him while he was sharing his views on a matter being discussed.

Finally, it has been pointed out that women candidates in Sierra Leone face a number of social, political, economic, and structural difficulties when they are being elected into positions of authority and other offices. Examples of the challenges include lack of solidarity and support in the form of sensitization, lack of education and experience, limited funds and unsuitability of women holding political offices, passing of moral judgement on women, hostile attitudes and potential violence among men and women towards the candidates, and finally, the candidates are told to stay at home because that place is suitable for them not public spaces (Hoare, 2009, p. 54 & 55).

2.4.3 Socio-cultural factors

To begin with, studies conducted in Ghana have shown that superstitious beliefs and sociocultural factors contribute over 90% of all the factors which result into low involvement of women in decision-making in the northern part of Ghana (NCCE, 2011, Odame, 2014).

Secondly, it has been maintained strongly that woman's subordination has gradually become widespread, however, there are differences in the way and manner in which this kind of subordination is exhibited across societies in Ghana and beyond. Men and women are always put on strata in which the male sex is valued more than the female because women are perceived to be good at performing domestic and childcare roles (Dawda, 2013).

Thirdly, it is argued that gender disparity is so deep seated in Nigeria to the extent that it has been embedded in most basic ways. For instance, a woman could be discriminated against on the basis that she does not belong to a particular sociocultural setting, a political party, religious group or not being financially viable (Pereira, 2004, pp.88).

Moreover, Pereira adds that although there is a struggle over who comes from a particular locality or state between men and women for purposes of contesting in an election, the conditions under which such battles are fought sometimes differ greatly for women as compared to men. For example, women who had contested and won genuinely to enter into politics have been faced with deliberate public denial of their rights to contest those positions (Pereira, 2004).

It is further elucidated that women who suffer such unfair treatments are those who contested in areas where their husbands were natives as much as it has been applied to women who contested in places where their fathers were natives. The uncertainties faced by marriage women in public

spaces undermine the idea that citizenship is basically about the relation between individuals and the state. Male contestants do not usually have their citizenship contested on marital grounds as the case has been with female contestants (Pereira, 2004, p. 89).

Finally, it is opined that chieftaincy which is a major traditional institution in Ghana with the responsibility of performing all kinds of customary duties and ensuring peace within society has served men better than women in the northern part of the country. While their southern counterparts are privileged to have queen mothers who see to the welfare of all women, most traditional kingdoms and all royalties to the skin in Northern Ghana are managed by the chief and other sub-chiefs who are mostly men (Dawda, 2013).

2.4.4 Lack of Social Capital and Political Capacity

Women sometimes do not have the required support in their localities because they are often not the heads of communities, tribes or kinship groups, resulting in the absence of constituency base for them and means of political participation such as political skills, economic resources, education, training, and access to information (Hoare, 2009, NCCE, 2011, Dawda, 2013, Essien et al. 2014).

2.5 Opportunities for women in politics

It is emphasised that democracy can be more meaningful and effective if women play active roles in politics, civil societies, and government decision-making bodies. These are the features of modern-day democracy. Democracy without the full participation of women refutes the purpose and the principle governing its practice. It is logic to say that any country that leaves behind half of her citizens will find it difficult to progress. It is elucidated that democracy will

thrive suitably when women are made to play a central role because its success is sometimes premised on the welfare and progress of women (Tamale, 2004, Melanne, 2010).

Secondly, education is the surest way to improve women's decision making and political participation in society. It makes it possible for women and girls to access employment in areas where they could not have ventured into because those professions are being considered as males' dominated jobs. It is heart-warming that some young graduates have permeated male-dominated professions and disciplines such as engineering, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Economics, Medicine etc., and are excelling in their respective jobs and receiving competitive and attractive remuneration (Essien et al. 2014).

Also, it has been asserted that woman's education increases their income levels and agricultural productivity by 10% and reduces infant mortality and fertility rates by another 10% (UN, 2003, cited by Essien et al. 2014, p. 24). The money accrued from the above economic ventures could be invested in building women's capacities and their political programmes.

Furthermore, it can be said without any doubt that educated women have confidence and courage to refuse harmful social norms and cultural practices which are injurious and violate their rights. They are able to also report cases of abuse to the right institutions and authorities to seek for justice and redress whenever their rights are being trampled upon (Adamczyk, 2011).

Moreover, it is believed that educated women would not expose their lives and that of their children and family members to harmful cultural practices and health hazards. They do socialize their children to internalize some of the values and norms they have acquired in school to make their wards fit well in society (Adamczyk, 2011).

Finally, Adanczyk (2011) indicates that educated women are more likely to avoid risky sexual behaviours and immoral acts because they are more informed to know the consequences and can decide whether to accept a man's decision or reject it. Adanczyk is also of the view that educated women are ten times likely to become richer than their female counterparts who are uneducated.

In conclusion, this chapter reviews varied literature on the historical and present contributions of women leaders in traditional, community, districts, political parties, and national decision-making structures in Africa and beyond. The challenges inhibiting women's participation and involvement in leadership, as well as opportunities for women's effective decision making in society were also reviewed.

The literature shows that despite international movements which are established to empower women globally in areas of leadership and access to resources in society, their efforts and impacts at all levels of decision-making and resource acquisition still remain low. It is also elucidated that women's population across the globe is higher than men, however, this has not been translated into equitable distribution of societal resources.

Development experts have postulated that any society that has half of its citizens being excluded from accessing resources, information, and key decisions will achieve little in terms of growth and development since the greater part of its human resource and skills remain untapped.

The literature shares that, in the past, women traditional and community leaders were pivotal in the selection of chiefs and preservation of clan and family histories. There were women in Sub-Saharan Africa who served as nurses and leaders during wars. Others took part in wars, kept

ammunition, provided water, food, and treated wounds of injured soldiers and fighters at battlefields.

Some women leaders lobbied for promotions on behalf of sub-chiefs and sped up enskinment and enstoolment processes in their various palaces. They also took part in deliberations and trying of cases in the chief's court. A significant number of these important roles were interrupted by colonial rule and authoritarian regimes which became widespread in most African countries in the 1960s and beyond.

It is also asserted that patriarchy, preferences for males' education over female education, and the perceived division of society into private and public spheres by structures of politics and governance where the female services are limited to only domestic arena works which are the major challenges that militate against women's leadership and authority in Ghana and beyond.

It is recommended in the literature that girls should be sent to school since educated women are less likely to accept abusive relationships, and are more likely to avoid risky lifestyles and unhealthy traditional practices and beliefs which usually obstruct their leadership and decision-making aspirations in their societies.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises of the various designs, techniques, approaches, and tools which were used to conduct the study. It also highlights the various processes that were followed to analyse the data and how it is presented for easy understanding by readers and the research community. Finally, it discusses the challenges which were confronted by the researcher in the field.

3.2 Study design

Qualitative research designs were employed in order to have an in-depth knowledge about people's perceptions, feelings, and views about the roles of elite women in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

Three case studies were respectively conducted on two female chiefs (Gundo Na and Kpatu-Ya Na) and one Magajia at the Gundo, Kpatu-Ya, and Gontegele traditional areas in the Yendi Municipality. These elite women were chosen because they constitute part of the most respected women leaders one can find in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana, however, no proper studies have been conducted on them; hence only scanty information about their activities can be found in the literature.

The details collected on these three case studies have been presented and discussed extensively in chapter 4, sub-section 4.4.1 (General roles of elite women in the Yendi Municipality) of this thesis.

The case studies investigated the past and present roles of the selected elite women, as well as the challenges they face while discharging their duties. The case studies also helped to collect in-depth data on the elite women, especially their emerging roles in modern day community leadership.

The duties of Hajias and wives of chiefs were also investigated, but these groups of elite women were not treated as case studies. Hajias and wives of chiefs were studied because they constitute an important component of the elite women in the Yendi Municipality but were not the prime focus of the study and therefore did not fall into the case studies that were conducted.

During the process, data was collected from a wide range of sources using different methods such as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and interviews. These provided an avenue for effective interaction between the researcher, respondents, and the elite women (cases) being studied in order to have in-depth knowledge about the cultural beliefs of the people, their perceptions, and views on the subject being studied.

3.2.1 Sources of data collection

The study collected data from primary sources and secondary materials.

Primary Data

Primary data was collected using interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and questionnaire administration. The purpose of in-depth interviews was to collect data from knowledgeable people who were abreast with the roles and challenges faced by elite women such as female *Tindanas*, *Paunabas*, *Hajias*, and *Magajias* in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

Secondary Data

Insights were drawn from relevant secondary sources such as books, published and unpublished documents, journal articles, newspapers, annual reports, speeches, Internet sources, and so forth. The information obtained from these sources have been duly acknowledged.

3.3 Target Population

The study targeted the Municipal Chief Executive (MCE), wives of chiefs, female chiefs (*Paunabas*), Female *Tindanas*, *Magajias*, Hajias, opinion leaders, selected civil servants (teachers, NCCE & CHRAJ officials, health workers etc.), elders (old men), old women, market men and women, women organizers of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), Assemblymen and women, and Unit Committee members.

However, the Municipal Chief Executive (MCE) who was targeted as a respondent could not be interviewed due to busy schedules so he directed the researcher to interview some of his subordinates who were also knowledgeable in the topic under consideration.

The head of the human resource department, the MCE's receptionist, the Municipal Coordinating Director, and one other retired educationist were consulted at the district assembly and eventually interviewed.

3.3.1 Size of sample and sampling techniques

The study sampled thirty (30) respondents to collect data for the study instead of initial plans to interrogate 100 respondents. It was realized that one could not interview 100 subjects in the field given the limited time and the resources available to the researcher. The researcher therefore

administered questionnaires and conducted a number of in-depth interviews and one Focus Group Discussion in order to gather relevant data for the study.

A two-day pre-test exercise was carried out to try the tools and the techniques in the field in order to assess their effectiveness and appropriateness ahead of the main research work. After the exercise, the respondents exhibited little knowledge in answering the questionnaires.

The reasons could be that they probably did not understand the questions well, or it was a deliberate attempt to avoid further engagement with the researcher. The researcher believes that the respondents showed little interest at the pre-test stage of the data collection process probably because, the study was taking place at the time most of the respondents were fasting and therefore unwilling to answer or share any information with the facilitator (s).

Majority of the respondents had started their fasting between 10th and 15th of May 2018, whereas the field work also commenced on the 21st of May, 2018. This coincidence made the data collection process a difficult one, but it became successful at the end of period.

As part of measures to ensure that respondent understood the questions well, steps were taken to moderate them and those that looked ambiguous were re-framed and given back to the targeted respondents to be answered.

It was later found out from some informants that the apathy on the part of some of the respondents at the beginning of the data collection process was due to the bribe allegations leveled against the Ghana Football Association (GFA) president by Anas Aremeyaw (the Ghanaian undercover journalist). Some of the respondents were afraid to be interviewed because

they felt they would be secretly recorded and humiliated later using the audios and videos as exhibits. This sounded strange to me but that was the information I gathered in the field.

However, my impression is that respondents were only meticulous about their engagements with the researcher because he was new to them. It must be added that respondents might be unwilling to engage the researcher due to the fact that there had been unresolved chieftaincy issues in the Municipality at the time, and not because of any corruption allegations made against the GFA president.

Nevertheless, other respondents attributed the disinterest of their colleagues in the study to Anas' corruption allegation video which he had promised to show to the whole world on June 4, 2018.

The 30 respondents who were sampled for the study were distributed as follows; five (5) respondents who constitute an Assemblyman and four (4) Unit Committee members were selected for a Focus Group Discussion. Fifteen (15) respondents who had in-depth knowledge about the topic were purposefully sampled from the Municipal health directorate, Municipal Assembly, National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), and were offered questionnaires to answer.

Out of the 15 questionnaires issued, 8 were self-administered, thus, the researcher was privileged to personally interview those 8 respondents using the questionnaires and at the same time recorded their responses during the process.

The remaining 7 questionnaires were given to the respondents to answer and return them at leisure. This category of subjects was so busy that they could not find time to discuss the questionnaire with the researcher in a face-to face manner.

Finally, (10) key informants were selected for in-depth interviews. The researcher conducted ten separate key informant interviews using the selected respondents on different occasions to collect detailed data for the study.

The key informants included the women organizers of the two major political parties in the area namely, NDC and NPP, the director of NCCE, the Kpatu-Ya Na and her spokesperson, the Gundo-Na and her spokesperson, two *Magajias* and a *Hajia*. The rest of the respondents included business men and women who were knowledgeable in the topic.

The data collected from the above key informants covered the origins and selection processes of elite women, issues of male dominance, ways to address challenges of elite women, the existence of queen mothers in Yendi, the roles of wives of a chief, female *Tindana*, *Magajia*, and *Hajias*, as well as knowledge about possible conflicts among women leaders.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 Techniques for data collection

The techniques used to collect the data were questionnaire administration, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs).

Interviews

Both structured and semi-structured interviews were used to gather the data. The structured interviews were used to restrict respondents to give specific answers to certain questions while the semi-structured interviews allowed respondents to provide detailed answers with illustrations and examples where necessary.

As mentioned earlier, the researcher conducted ten separate interviews using ten different key informants. Two women organizers, thus, one from the New Patriotic party (NPP) and the other one from the National Democratic Congress (NDC), and the NCCE director were among the ten key informants. The director of health at the Yendi government hospital, the head of human resource department at the Yendi Municipal Assembly, the spokes persons from Kpatu-Ya Na's palace and Gundo Na's palace, as well as *Hajias* and *Magajias* were also engaged for detailed interviews to ascertain relevant data for the thesis.

Questionnaire Administration

Questionnaire administration was employed as a technique to assemble ideas and opinions in the field. Under this method, questions that were already prepared by the researcher were issued to the respondents to answer. The first page of the questionnaire captured the bio-data (age, sex, educational status, religious affiliation) of the subjects.

The subsequent pages of the questionnaires captured broad areas such as respondents' experiences in women's leadership, their past and present contributions, and challenges they face in their daily lives as women leaders. These questionnaires were mostly given to busy civil servants such as teachers, health workers, administrators, NCCE and CHRAJ officials to answer and return them later.

The questionnaires contained structured, semi-structured or unstructured questions. The structured questions restricted respondents to choose specific answers from a list of alternatives without any room to explain their answers further. Example, *what is your assessment about the*

level of women's representation in political parties at the Municipality? [Very low], [Low], [High], and [Very high] etc.

The semi or unstructured questions were those that allowed the respondents to express themselves into detail. They also made it possible for the researcher to ask follow up questions, as well as to probe respondents in order to acquire further explanations and clarity to their answers.

Probing was also used whenever the questionnaires were self-administered, thus, asking the questions and recording the responses at the same time. An example of an unstructured question that was asked in the field was *what do you think can be done to encourage women to become active in decision-making in this Municipality?*

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) which constituted an Assemblyman of Belegu North electoral area and four Unit Committee members was organized and solicited for their views on the general roles and challenges of elite women in the Yendi Municipality. They were interviewed on issues such as the contributions of women during assembly elections, the level of women's involvement in community decision-making processes and politics in general.

3.4.2 Tools for data collection

The tools for the field work included an interview guide, Focus Group Discussion guide, questionnaires (closed and open-ended/structured and unstructured).

One other tool which became very useful to the researcher was the field note book. This was the case because the researcher could not record or tape any of the interviews that were conducted due to ethical issues.

Most of the respondents pleaded to remain anonymous during the interview. They also refused to be taped for fear of being intimidated with the voices in the future. They were keen to remain anonymous partly because Anas Aremeyaw (the Ghanaian undercover journalist) had announced earlier in May, 2018 that he was going to air a video in June, 2018 which had alleged to have captured the then Ghana Football Association president (Mr. Kwasi Nyantakyi) for taking bribe from his clients. The video was dubbed “number 12.” It was subsequently aired on 4th June, 2018 at the Accra International Conference Centre (AICC).

A relationship can be drawn between Anas’ video and respondents’ unwillingness to be recorded on tape because I went to Yendi on 19th May, 2018 to conduct my field research. Unfortunately for me, rumours about the video had spread all over Ghana and beyond in the previous week before I got the Municipality to start the field work.

I commenced the data collection exercise on 21st May, 2018, whereas the video was going to be shown on 4th June, 2018. The data collection and the airing of the video were very close events. In view of this, one could partly conclude that the “number 12” invariably scared most respondents from being recorded either on tape or camera.

Focus Group Discussion Guide

The focused group discussion guide was made up of readily typed and printed questions which followed certain pattern and guided the researcher to ask questions in a chronological order whenever there was a meeting with respondents.

The FGD guide was used during a focus group discussion which involved an Assemblyman and his four Unit committee members at the Belegu electoral area in the Yendi Municipality. The FGD guide helped the researcher to moderate the discussion process and remain focused on the main subject matter being interrogated.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was a field tool which was used to collect data from respondents. It followed a pattern by which the study was organized and helped the researcher to interrogate all the areas that mattered in the study.

Interview Guide

It was a list of already prepared open-ended questions which were raised during in-depth interview sessions to help obtain first-hand information from respondents.

3.5 Challenges faced by the researcher

The following factors slightly impeded the data collection processes in the field.

Time is of essence in any research discourse. Unfortunately, the study coincided with the Ramadan period which started between 10th and 15th May, 2018 and Anas' video (number 12) on corruption allegations against the then GFA president of Ghana (Mr. Kwasi Nyantakyi) both of

which happened the same time the study was ongoing. These two events slowed down the process because the researcher could not use all his tools (tape and cameras) as planned.

Also, majority of the respondents were Muslims and therefore became tired and weak during interviews that were conducted after 1pm because of the fasting. This compelled the researcher to conduct most of the interviews between 8am and 1pm each day which was very stressful.

The researcher had to take notes at any interview session. This demanded for additional hands which made the data collection process too laborious and time consuming. Some respondents turned down offers to be interviewed while a few questionnaires could also not be traced because the respondents travelled and did not return in time.

Despite these challenges, the required data was obtained, however it took the researcher additional days to finish a task that could have been completed in few weeks. The challenges were addressed using careful and effective planning and time management skills.

One of these strategies was the engagement of research assistants which helped to speed up the data collection processes to avoid undue delays.

Furthermore, finance was one of the major problems that hindered the study in a way. Financial resources for printing, stationary, research logistics, accommodation, and personal upkeep posed a challenge.

The cost of internal transport was another drain on the researcher due to the vast nature of the Municipality. However, the researcher hired the services of “yellow-yellow” (a local name for tricycles) for his internal movements in order to easily reach out to respondents in the field.

Language barrier and accessibility to respondents obstructed the study. The services of an interpreter were sought where necessary to address the language barrier which was sometimes faced in the field. However, language barrier was encountered only on few occasions because most of the respondents interviewed were educated and could communicate in English language.

It must be concluded that these challenges are only highlighted for purposes of credibility and objectivity; however, they did not in any way affect the validity, content, and the general findings of the research. The researcher put measures in place with the help of key informants which enabled him contact most of the targeted respondents ahead of time.

3.6 Data presentation and analysis

Firstly, the facts gathered in the field were edited, processed, and converted into usable and desired forms before they were analyzed. This process involves editing for clarity and consistency of information, review of the data for its accuracy and appropriateness.

The findings were analyzed qualitatively by assessing the content of the data and putting it in tables where necessary to give a clearer picture of the situation being investigated. The responses were translated into absolute figures and converted into percentages in some cases.

Also, in the analysis process, the responses that ran through the data during the assessment were first identified, organized in broad themes, and analyzed qualitatively. The organized themes were analyzed in a descriptive form by providing the number of times a particular issue was mentioned in all interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) sessions.

Finally, the findings of the research are organized around the main objectives and the themes that emerged from the analysis; the social-cultural, political and economic contributions, and

challenges of elite women in the Yendi Municipality. There are instances where direct quotes from interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) are presented as examples of the cogent perspectives being shared by the respondents.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter encapsulates some aspects of the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics. These demographic characteristics include respondents' educational status, religious affiliations, sex, and marital backgrounds. It also presents and discusses data on the sociocultural, political, and economic contributions and challenges of elite women in the Yendi Municipality.

The main sub-themes around which data is presented and analyzed under this chapter include respondents' knowledge and experiences about the level of women's participation in community leadership, contributions of women leaders in the past and present, barriers to women involvement in decision-making, opportunities for women's involvement in community leadership and politics, and ways to enhance women's interest in accepting leadership roles in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

Broadly, this study examines the socio-cultural, political, and economic contributions, and challenges of elite women, as well as their changing roles in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

The following are the key concerns and research questions the study sought to answer in the field and therefore became the focus around which the study was organized.

- a. What is the level of women's involvement in decision-making processes at the community level in the Yendi Municipality?
- b. What are the salient contributions of elite women in community leadership and party politics in the past and present at the Yendi Municipality?

c. What are the main barriers that hinder equal participation of elite women in their economic, social, and cultural lives in the Yendi Municipality?

d. What are the most effective strategies for enhancing the involvement of elite women in community services in the Yendi Municipality?

It is important to note that this data is presented and analyzed in relation to the focal areas which the study sought to uncover. This is to establish orderliness in the process of the analysis and makes it easier for assessors and the research community to comprehend the arguments, discussions, and conclusions that are made after reading the thesis.

4.2 Demographic characteristics of respondents

4.2.1 Age distribution of respondents

Table 4.1: Age Distribution of respondents

AGE	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL	PERCENT AGE (%)
18-24	1	0	1	3
25-34	3	3	6	20
35-44	4	3	7	23
45-54	2	5	7	23
55-60+	7	2	9	30
TOTAL	17	13	30	100

Source: Field Survey, June 2018.

The age of a person plays an important role in the extent to which he or she could go when it comes to taking decisions in some critical aspects of their lives within society. In Ghana and Africa for instance, seniority is considered as one of the key ingredients in determining one's level of independence, participation, and the depth of knowledge in many respects.

The constitution of Ghana is emphatic about the age one should attain to be guaranteed the right to vote or voted for in an election. Undoubtedly, one must be eighteen (18) years and above before he or she can actively involve himself or herself in all kinds of political activities and major decisions within the country through voting.

It was not surprising that young men and women declined to be interviewed during the study. They said that they were too young to discuss women issues. Some also felt they would be punished if they were seen granting interviews without the consent of their elder brothers and sisters, husbands, or their parents. Interestingly, all these people had attained eighteen years and above, yet did not have independence over decision making.

The trajectories with respect to decision-making among males and females are clearly reflected in the ages of the respondents who were sampled for this research. Apparently, most women declined to be interviewed as it has clearly shown by the number of males and females in table 4.1.

From the table, more young men (8) representing 57.1% were interviewed than young women (6) who constituted 42.9%. This reflects the sample that was selected. Besides, it also in way or the other reflects the unwillingness on the part of some young women to be part of the study.

Generally, more men (17) representing 56.7% out of the 30 respondents were interviewed than women (13) who constitute 43.3%. From the same table, older men were interviewed than older women.

4.2.2. Sex distribution of respondents

The study purposefully sampled thirteen (13) females representing 43%, and seventeen (17) males which constitute 57% of the 30 respondents who were sampled and interviewed. It must be added that the researcher did not pay any specific attention to a particular sex, but allowed men and women with firsthand information and knowledge about the topic to be fairly represented.

The researcher found it easier recruiting males for the study than females, probably due to marital constraints and sociocultural beliefs which guide women's decision-making, and the boundaries they could cross as married couples. There is detailed data in subsection 4.5 which reveals that marital constraint is a major setback to women's leadership and decision making in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana.

Key informant interviews revealed that the education of women in the past was not a priority as compared to that of men due to some sociocultural norms and beliefs which were practiced in the Yendi Municipality. However, much improvement has been made now, but the gaps still persist. The analysis about males and female's education will be expatiated shortly in the subsequent paragraphs.

4.2.3. Level of education attained by respondents

Table 4.2: Educational level of respondents

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	MALES		FEMALES		TOTAL	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Primary	3	17.6	1	7.7	4	13.3
JHS	3	17.6	2	15.4	5	16.6
SHS	3	17.6	3	23.1	6	20
Tertiary	6	35.2	4	30.8	10	33.3
None	2	11.8	3	23.1	5	16.7
TOTAL	17	100	13	100	30	100

Source: Field Survey, June 2018.

Table 4.2 reveals the level of education attained by the respondents who were interviewed in the field. The data presents the number of respondents who have had basic, secondary, and tertiary education, as well as those who had never been to school before. The older respondents attained higher educational levels than the younger ones who were interviewed. This was the case partly because the study focused on elite women whose activities were best known to the aged.

However, the researcher did not put any special interest in the educational level of respondents during the sampling process. In fact, the researcher only looked for subjects who had in-depth knowledge about women's roles and their challenges in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana. It was therefore coincidental that about 90% of the key informants who were sampled for the study turned out to be educated.

Apart from the Kpatu-Ya Na and her linguist, the Gundo Na and her linguist, and one *Magajia* (making 5 people), who were not educated, the rest of the respondents interviewed had at least, primary or basic education and beyond. It is clear from table 4.2 that 15 out of the 17 males

interviewed had tertiary education, while 10 out of the 13 women sampled were also educated. Generally, 10 (6 males and 4 females) out of the 30 respondents sampled had tertiary education whereas 6 (3 males and 3 females) attained secondary education or high school education.

A cursory look at the table shows a higher educational level for males than females even though from the table, the difference was not that wide. However, discussions with an educationist at the Yendi Municipal Assembly and the data collected in the field revealed a low level of education among women in the Municipality. This was also mentioned as one of the major challenges inhibiting women’s effective decision-making and leadership in the Yendi Municipality.

4.2.4. Religious affiliation of respondents

Table 4.3: Religious affiliation of respondents

RELIGION	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Islam	22	73.3
Christianity	8	26.7
Traditionalists	0	0
Others	0	0
TOTAL	30	100

Source: Field Survey, June 2018.

Table 4.3 clearly shows that the respondents sampled were predominantly Muslims. This affirms the 2010 report of the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) which shares that Moslems constitute about 67.2% of the entire population of the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

Religious distribution within society sometimes has some influence on the norms and values of the people living in those communities. It determines the extent to which roles are assigned to men and women in the household and the community levels.

For instance, 55-year-old *Hajia*, and former women’s organizer for one of the major political parties in Yendi shared that in Islam, a woman is not supposed to lead prayers in the mosque nor speak in a gathering that comprises men and women.

She added that some religious beliefs in Islam require women to remain indoors, but since society is changing, most of these beliefs are being relaxed in the Municipality.

The religious beliefs and practices which have become part of the culture among the people of Yendi are believed to have some impacts on the decisions and roles that are carried out by males and females in their daily lives.

4.2.5 Marital status of respondents

Table 4.4: Marital status of respondents

MARITAL STATUS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Married	25	83.3
Single	5	16.7
TOTAL	30	100

Source: Field Survey, June 2018.

From the above table (4.4), over two-thirds of the respondents who were interviewed were married. It is clear from the table that out of the 30 respondents sampled, 83.3% were married while the remaining 5 who constitute 16.7% were single. 3 out of the 5 respondents who were single occupied important leadership positions in political parties and women associations in their respective electoral areas and localities.

Some women expressed disinterest in politics due to marital constraints and the kind of workload which is associated with it. The inability of women to meet marital duties and also have time for leadership responsibilities was found to be some of the major challenges of most elite women in

the Municipality. A *Hajia* in her mid-fifties pointed out that those marital constraints sometimes bring separation in marriages if a woman insists to occupy a position that often keeps her busy.

4.2.6 Categories of respondents

Table 4.5: Categories of Respondents

RESPONDENTS	MALES		FEMALES		TOTAL	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Unit Committee	4	13.3	0	0	4	13.3
Assembly Members	1	3.35	1	3.35	2	6.7
Traditional Leaders	2	6.65	2	6.65	4	13.3
Party Executives	5	16.67	2	6.63	7	23.3
Others	5	16.67	8	26.63	13	43.3
TOTAL	17	56.64	13	43.36	30	100

Source: Field Survey, June 2018.

Table above table presents the positions, categories, as well as the occupations of respondents who were interrogated in the field. The word '*others*' used in the table included students, traders, teachers, health workers, and opinion leaders who were also interviewed during the study.

From table 4.5, the percentage of men in the various categories of the respondents was 56.64% whereas women constituted 43.36%. No woman was found at the Unit Committee category probably because there are generally fewer women who occupy positions in the assembly. We would learn in subsection 4.3.4 that only 3 females were part of the 45 assembly members in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana as at June 2018.

4.3 Level of women's representation/participation in community leadership

4.3.1 Knowledge about women leadership

The researcher asked a “YES” or “NO” question to solicit for respondents' knowledge, experiences, and perceptions about the existence and activities of *Magajias*, *Hajias*, *Paunabas*, and Females *Tindanas* in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

At the end of the exercise, 29 out of the 30 respondents answered ‘YES’ which constitutes 96.6% of the responses given. It is clear that more than 90% of the respondents knew about the names and activities of most of the elite women, especially the *Paunabas*, *Hajias*, and *Magajias*, but were not sure whether these women leaders existed only in Yendi town or the whole of Yendi Municipality.

However, one respondent indicated she had no idea about the work of the above women leaders, but knew they existed and performed certain roles within the Yendi Municipality which she did not know about.

Another 8% of the respondents thought *Magajias*, and *Paunabas* were queen mothers just as those we have in Southern Ghana. Nevertheless, an interview with an official at the NCCE disclosed that there were no queen mothers in the Dagbon traditional area, likewise the Akans of Southern Ghana. He asserted that the word “queen mother” might have been imported from other cultures by those who do not understand the culture and history of the Dagombas of Northern Ghana.

The study revealed that the position of the female *Tindana* is no more in existence in the traditions of Dagbon, but they had jurisdictions in the past and ruled over their people in communities around the Dagbon kingdom.

It was shared that the new royals who later came to occupy the lands which were formerly occupied by the *Tindanas* expelled the few *Tindanas* they met in the area and took over those lands. The few *Tindanas* who insisted to live there were absorbed to work under the chief as priests or priestesses. Their duty was to perform sacrifices on behalf of the chief (s).

However, another key informant gave a contrary view that a few *Tindanas* still exist in some communities outside the Yendi town, but their ownership and control over lands have been taken over by the chiefs, leaving them with only their ritual roles. The next paragraph discusses into detail the activities and meanings of *Magajias* and *Hajias* in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

Over 95% of the findings showed that *Magajias* are female community leaders whose main duty is to mobilize women for all manner of activities that are developmental, political, social, and economic in nature. The study identified differences among elite women with respect to their roles, power, authority, and procedures for their selection.

It came to light that *Hajias* are women organizers and counselors for women in the Mosque. The study had instances where some women doubled as *Magajias* and *Hajias* at the same time. An example of these scenarios was disclosed by a 57-year-old woman who doubled as a *Hajia* and a *Magajia* at the same time at Gontegele, a suburb of Yendi in Northern Ghana.

Furthermore, the same 57-year-old woman was also the women's organizer in the Yendi Municipality on the ticket of one of the major political parties we have in Ghana. The study

revealed that women are not restricted as far as holding multiple leadership positions in the Yendi Municipality is concerned.

An elite woman can hold two or more positions at the same time once she has the capacity and time to combine them. This is possible because the work of the *Hajias* appears to be a charitable one which arises from the performance of the *Hajj*, and therefore not compelling, but *Magajia*'s roles are mandatory since they are either appointed or elected (thus, if it is a political position).

It was discovered that most of the roles performed by elite in the past have been taken over by assembly members, as well as politicians in recent times. Politicians prefer working with *Magajias* as their women's organizers than other elite women.

Moreover, about 70% of the elite women who were into modern politics were either *Hajias*, *Magajias* or both. It was elucidated that the high demand for *Magajias* as women organizers for political parties is due to the perception that, *Magajias* have much more influence and mobilizing skills than the other elite women when working with their fellow women.

4.3.2 Women's active seasons in political activities

The following responses represent women's active seasons in politics in Yendi.

Table 4.6: Active seasons for women in politics

ACTIVE SEASONS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Assembly Elections	8	26.7
National Elections	8	26.7
Party Elections	10	33.3
Others	4	13.3
TOTAL	30	100

Source: Field Survey, June 2018.

The assessment of activeness of elite women in politics in the Yendi Municipality sought to catalog the times of the year in which women become vigorous, lively, and energetic in decision-making and politics in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

Table 4.6 shows that women in the Yendi Municipality become active in politics during party elections and political campaign times. These occasions represent 33.3% of the total responses gathered, followed by assembly elections 26.7%, and national elections which also constitutes 26.7%.

Furthermore, 13.3% of the respondents believed women have been active in different times of the year other than what appeared in table 4.6, but could not mention those periods to the researcher.

On the contrary, two respondents from the category labeled “others” held that women become active at different times of the political calendar, but become more active in both assembly and general elections. One respondent also shared in the opinions of the two respondents, but went further to assert that women in the Yendi Municipality usually become much more active during presidential, parliamentary, and internal party elections.

A government appointee and Assembly woman at Belegu South electoral area in Yendi revealed that assembly and national elections are only a daily event, but party elections and the work associated with it begins the very first day one wins an election to the year in which another national election is conducted, and could sometimes even go beyond that.

This is what the Assembly woman shared;

...Since I was appointed as an Assembly woman, I have been working hard so that I could be maintained during the next assembly elections. Due to this, I do not rest at all. I was just preparing to go for an assembly meeting when you came in.

She asserted that women politicians remain active throughout the year due to grass root mobilization and campaigns that are carried out towards the subsequent national election.

She however noted that women who do not follow party elections in the Municipality become active only during assembly and national elections, but those who are leaders of political parties remain active until the next elections.

The above views were respectively shared by both the NDC and NPP women's organizers during separate key informant interviews. The NPP women's organizer for instance, held that she always went up and down to campaign for her party to remain in power. She added that she works as an administrator in a mission hospital and sometimes does other things at the Municipal Assembly.

The NDC women's organizer on the other hand shared her experiences with the researcher;

.... I went to town with my secretary to meet some party delegates ahead of our constituency elections. The whole of this month I have not rested. Have you seen these posters? She gave me some to see by myself. I have to share all these posters to delegates and paste the rest before the close of this week. It is not easy but I have to do it because those contesting me are also working hard to win over me so they have started doing a serious campaign.

A twenty-four (24) year old scratch cards seller who was also into mobile money business at the enclaves of the Yendi prison service had this to say which to some extent, sums up what women activeness in politics could loosely mean.

.... I always see a lot of women carrying banners, posters, chairs, water, and sweeping venues for political rallies. Sometimes too, you can see them arguing, insulting, and fighting one another at the market because of politics, as if they would be given something when their parties win. They do also call on radio to campaign for their parties or appear on radio shows at Tamale (the capital of Northern region of Ghana) to campaign for their parties.

Elite women who were into active politics felt they were always busy throughout the year doing party work, and therefore considered that as their busy times on the political calendar.

However, the experiences gathered from the general public showed that majority of women usually perform different roles during national elections, and therefore considers that as the busiest and active political season for women who are into active politics.

Dawda (2013) argues that participation in politics in the past was limited to only voting and number of people in a particular political party. However, in recent times, its scope has included other activities such as signing a petition and joining demonstrations.

4.3.3 The current state of participation among elite women.

Table 4.7: State of participation among elite women

STATE OF PARTICIPATION	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Very Bad	0	0
Bad	4	13.3
Good	23	76.7
Very Good	3	10
TOTAL	30	100

Source: Field Survey, June 2018.

Table 4.7 summarizes the views expressed by 30 respondents on the current state of leadership among the selected elite women in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana. From the table,

76.7% of the responses gathered held that the impacts and contributions of elite women in decision-making at the Yendi Municipality were encouraging and improving gradually.

In addition, 13.3% believed the state of leadership and participation among elite women in the Yendi Municipality is bad. This indicates women involvement in key decisions in the Municipality is not encouraging.

On the other hand, 10% of the subjects felt the state of participation among elite women in the Yendi Municipality is very good. They believed the current state of participation in decision-making among elite women is much more encouraging.

From the table, no respondent mentioned that the state of involvement in decision-making among elite women in Yendi Municipality is very bad. This means that none of the respondents felt elite women were excluded entirely from decision-making in the Yendi Municipality. They only thought that women's leadership should be improved to a much more desirable state.

The following scholars are of the view that the general state of decision-making among women at all levels is low across all political divides in Ghana (Odotei & Awedoba, 2006, NCCE, 2011, Dawda, 2013, Odame, 2013, Essien et al. 2014).

In addition, some key informants shared that female chiefs in the Yendi Municipality do not involve themselves in active politics, but join political parties and vote during elections. The Kpatu-Ya Na for instance, indicated she has always voted during assembly and national elections.

She concluded that there was nothing wrong with voting, because voting according to her, is a duty that every citizen must fulfill. She advised that leaders must however keep their votes secret to avoid hatred and division among their followers.

4.3.4 The level of women's participation in decision-making.

After examining the level of women's participation in politics and decision-making in the field, 70% of responses from in-depth interviews and discussions showed that the level of women's efforts in politics and leadership is low in the Yendi Municipality.

The "level of participation" as used in the study was used to assess the actual number of women who are represented at some leadership positions and decision-making processes. 16.7% of the responses concluded that the level of women participation in the Municipality is high, whereas 6.7% of responses revealed a very low level of political participation among elite women in Yendi of Northern Ghana.

Additionally, 6.7% believed the level of women's participation in decision-making and politics in the Yendi Municipality is very high.

Furthermore, in-depth interviews and FGDs with an Assembly man and his Unit Committees at the Belegu North electoral area shared that only three Assembly women were part of the 45 Assembly members in the Yendi Municipality. Those three Assembly women could not win these positions through the ballot, but were chosen as government appointees by the NPP government at the time.

An assembly woman at the Belegu South electoral area, Hon. A.A disclosed that she was one of the beneficiaries who were appointed by the government. She indicated that prior to the

assembly elections, she received a lot of assurances from her supporters that she would be victorious, but it never happened as assured. She attributed her defeat to allegations from her opponents who accused her for being a stranger in Yendi, and should therefore not be voted for.

It was also revealed during a discussion with an assembly member at the Belegu North electoral area that apart from the women's wings, which are reserved for women organizers and their deputies in all the political parties, women find it difficult to contest any of the remaining executive positions at the constituency level. Even if they do, the outcomes are always poor, so they do not waste their time and resources to contest those slots.

It was added that all the women who actually contested the assembly elections could not win any of the seats. It was discovered that no women had ever contested any positions in the local assembly elections and won those seats in the political history of the Yendi Municipality.

It was mentioned that there had never been any woman District Chief Executive (DCE) or Municipal Chief Executive (MCE) in the Yendi Municipality. However, some women in the surrounding districts, especially the Mion District for instance, once contested and won in an assembly election with the support of the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE).

On the part of parliamentary elections, a senior officer at the NCCE disclosed that only two women had become Members of Parliament (MPs) in the history of the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana, but those positions were contested and won outside the Yendi town.

The said MPs are Rita Tani and Mary Boforo of Gushiegu and Savelugu Districts of Northern Ghana respectively. The NCCE official, Hon. A.G referred to them as the most outstanding women MPs he has ever seen in the whole of Northern region of Ghana.

Hon. A.G was of the belief that the records of these two female MPs would be difficult to be broken by the MPs they have had in recent times. The two MPs were considered the greatest because they did a lot to improve the lives of their people in areas of road and educational infrastructure, provision of portable water, and quality health care services.

4.4 Contributions of elite women in the past and present

This section discusses some of the past and present roles performed by selected elite women in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana, who formed part of the case studies conducted in this research. In addition to the findings of the case studies, a brief background is given about these selected elite women, followed by their socio-economic and political contributions to their communities.

The factors that account for alterations in women's roles in the Municipality have been discussed under this sub-section. Most of the findings presented here were obtained from the case studies which were conducted on the Kpatu-Ya Na, Gundo Na, and one of the Magajias at the Gontegele traditional area.

4.4.1 General roles/contributions of elite women in the Yendi Municipality

Gundo-Na (Chief of Gundo)

Hierarchy of the Female chieftaincy system in Dagbon.

The levels of authority among the female chiefs in Dagbon of Northern Ghana are essential in order to have a clearer understanding of how power is exercised among the female chiefs. The Ya-Na is the overlord of the Dagbon kingdom among the Dagombas of Northern Ghana. All the other sub-chiefs, including the female chiefs are all under him and do pay allegiance to him.

According to (Oppong 1973:21), the first group of the royal chiefdoms in the Dagbon traditional area of Northern Ghana is called the *Doo bihinama* (men's sons' chief ships). She maintains that the first among these is Yendi, followed by three divisional chiefdoms of Savelugu, Karaga, and Mion in that order.

The female traditional political setup has a number of positions which are occupied by the princesses of the Ya-Na. The study revealed that the Gundo Na is the highest in rank to all the female chiefs, and therefore she is found at the apex of the female chiefdom of Dagbon. The NCCE (2011) affirms that the Gundo-Na is an important female chief among Dagombas in the Yendi traditional area of Northern Ghana.

The Kpatu-Ya Na follows the Gundo-Na on the hierarchy, while the *Kugulogu-Na* comes after the Kpatu-Ya Na. The female chief who succeeds the *Kugulogu-Na* is called the *Shelling-Na*. The study revealed that among the chieftaincy system of the Dagombas, once a person is enskinned, he or she cannot be removed from office unless he or she passes on.

A 76-year-old historian and a former spokesman at the Gundo Na's palace shared that the paramount chief (Ya-Na) needs a woman to support him. As a result, there is another woman called *Kpakpan* who is enskinned to support him. The *Kpakpan* could equally graduate to occupy the Kpatu-Na's position in the event that she dies.

Honorable A.G asserted that the first three female chiefs (Gundo Na, Kpatu-Ya Na, and Kugulogu-Na) on the chieftaincy hierarchy must be daughters of the Ya-Na. However, the *Shelling-Na* and the *Kpakpan-Na* need not be daughters of the Ya-Na. They could be his granddaughters.

Nevertheless, if the *Shelling-Na* is the biological daughter of the Ya-Na, she could graduate to occupy the position of the Kugulogu-Na, and later graduate to the position of the Gundo-Na if she is still alive and strong at the time such a vacancy is created.

The responsibilities of the Gundo-Na and the Kpatu-Ya Na according to a 76-year-old historian at Cherefo Yili, are practically the same, because both of them are female chiefs from the same royal family even though they belong to different gates.

The only difference he identified was that the Gundo Na acts as a *Tindana* (land lord) but does not enskin sub-chiefs in her yard, whereas the Kpatu-Ya Na does enskin sub-chiefs in her yard, but not considered as a landlord or Tindana.

The Gundo-Na is a female chief and an overlord of all the people of the Gundo traditional area in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana. She is the oldest daughter or princess of the Ya-Na. Being the Gundo Na is a position a person occupies by virtue of the fact that her father was/is the paramount chief of the Dagbon kingdom. This makes her an influential leader in the Dagbon area.

The Gundo-Na has the power and authority to settle disputes among her people, but when the matter is beyond her jurisdiction, it is referred to the Ya-Na who is the paramount chief of the entire Dagbon traditional area in Northern Ghana to be settled.

During an interview at Cherefo Yili (a village in the Yendi Municipal), a 76-year-old man mentioned that the Gundo traditional area was formerly under the control of a female Tindana in the past, but was conquered and controlled by the Ya-Na.

It is in light of the above that the Gundo-Na is always perceived by a section of the people as a female Tindana, thus overlord of the lands. The daughter of Ya-Na was enskinned to rule over the area, hence the name Gundo Na, which means the chief of Gundo.

The processes and factors that are considered before one qualifies to become the Gundo-Na are the same as those that are applied in the case of the Kpatu-Ya Na which had been discussed earlier under this same section. The duties of the Gundo-Na are almost the same as those performed by the Kpatu-Ya Na.

According to Hon. A.G, the Gundo-Na is an Abudu, whereas the Kpatu-Ya Na is an Andani. This means that the Gundo-Na comes from the Abudu's gate while the Kpatu-Ya-Na hails from the Andani's gate.

Apart from being a royal and the first or oldest daughter of the Ya-Na, some rituals are always performed to seek for approval from the gods and the ancestors before that particular candidate is enskinned as the chief of Gundo.

Hon. A.G added that in the event that the Ya-Na passes on, his son acts as a chief on his behalf until his funeral rite is performed for a new chief to be selected and enskinned. The name given to the Gundo-Na's son who acts as a care taker chief in the event that she passes on is called *Gbala-Na* among the Dagombas of Northern Ghana.

Before one becomes the Gundo-Na, she must first and foremost come and serve under the Kpatu-Ya chief. She then graduates later to occupy the position of the Gundo-Na when she dies as indicated earlier. Put differently, when the Gundo-Na passes on, the Kpatu-Ya Na inherits the throne.

The study discovered that the Gundo-Na is regarded as a man in both the cultural and traditional sense. She could marry other women and bear children with them. Actually, the women are given to some men her family and other sub-chiefs to marry and the children who are born in such marriages become hers.

The Gundo Na does not go to war herself, but has a chief warrior known as *Ombon-Na* who goes to war on her behalf after certain rituals are performed. She does stay at home during wars to perform sacrifices and rituals for a successful battle.

From the study, it was gathered that it was a taboo for the Gundo-Na, as well as the other women leaders in the area to go to the battle field in the past. However, women from Southern Ghana attended wars in the past as mentioned in chapter two.

The Kpatu-Ya Na's spokesman shared that the sub-chiefs and people of Gundo usually mobilize themselves to farm for the chief. After the harvest, some of the crops are sent to her in the palace in the form of tribute.

The chief does not tax her people; however, her subjects willingly pay royalties to her. She also sells lands to raise money to embark on developmental projects such as portable water, schools, and mosques in her area.

The spokesman for the Gundo-Na revealed that when a strange domestic animal was found among ones' farm animals in the past, it was given to the chief until the rightful owner was found. It became the property of the Tindana or the chief in case no one came to claim it.

The stewardship of the Gundo Na is somehow similar to the narrative of King Ahebi Ugbabe of Enuzeke from Northern Nigeria which is shared at the earliest paragraphs of chapter two of this thesis.

Unlike the Gundo Na who comes from a royal family, king Ahebi became a king through her ability to speak Pidgin English. At the latter part of king Ahebi's leadership, she performed a particular ritual which was forbidden to be carried out by a woman. This led to an uprising which finally led to her removal from office as a chief.

The study showed that the district assembly system and the modern political structures have usurped important aspects of the powers of the chiefs in the Yendi Municipality with respect to the authority they had over lands in the past.

There are continued efforts by the assembly to invade lands which were previously under the control of the chiefs. Chiefs have remained care takers of the lands for the assembly and government in recent times.

Despite the encroachment of lands and the usurping of duties of the chief by the Yendi Municipal Assembly, the chiefs still perform some vital roles. The following were gathered in the field as some key responsibilities of the Gundo-Na;

- She is the overlord of the people and the lands in her area. She has lands, people, and servants who are warriors and did go for wars on her behalf in the past.
- She settles land and religious conflicts within her area. The Gundo-Na also mediates in conflicts between the Ya-Na and his sons in Dagbon. She is an arbiter whose decisions on any matter are final, and binding by the parties involved.

- She is the link between the people and their ancestors; thus, she pours libations and performs sacrifices to the gods and the ancestors for blessings, good rains, bumper harvest, and peace among her people and over her lands.
- The Gundo-Na is believed to be the leader (priestess) of all the smaller gods in her area called *Tingbam*. She pacifies the gods whenever someone breaks any of the norms, customs, and traditions of the land and its people in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.
- Finally, the Gundo Na mobilizes her people to embark on community work and other developmental projects in her area.

Kpatu-Ya Na (Chief of Kpatu-Ya)

The study investigated the institution of the female chiefs in two separate case studies using the Kpatu-Ya Na and the Gundo-Na. The previous section discussed the findings about the Gundo Na as revealed by the case studies. This section presents the finding of the case study about the Kpatu-Ya Na.

The spokesman for the Kpatu-Ya Na at a key informant interview in her palace (Kpatu-Ya Na Yili) shared that the Dagombas of Northern Ghana practice the patrilineal descent/system of inheritance. In this respect, the sons of the Ya-Na succeed him upon his demise, while his daughters are enskinned to occupy the skins at Gundo and Kpatu-Ya.

However, in situations where the Ya-Na has no grown up daughters to occupy such positions, any of his oldest granddaughters is enskinned to occupy any of the positions of the female chiefs. The spokesperson added that it is very rare for a granddaughter of the Ya-Na to be made a chief,

but if there is no older daughter of the Ya-Na to be enskinned, the oldest of his granddaughters takes over and inherits the throne of the female chiefs.

The processes for one to become a female chief, according to the spokesman are not based on age, wealth, and prestige. It is rather based on seniority. The Kpatu-Ya Na is usually the second oldest daughter (princess) of the Ya-Na. That is, she must be the second oldest daughter of the Ya-Na. The first and senior most daughter of the Ya-Na however occupies the Gundo Na's skin as discussed earlier at the beginning of this subsection.

As part of the processes for one to be enskinned as the Kpatu-Ya Na, the spokesman asserted that the Ya-Na must first initiate the person by taking her through some rituals at the Ya-Na's palace. This is done to ask for blessings from the gods and ancestors over her life for a peaceful and successful reign.

She is then brought to stay in a special house at the outskirts of Kpatu-Ya to be taken through another one-week purification and counseling session. On the seventh day, she is moved to the Kpatu-Ya Na Yili (Kpatu-Ya chief's house), where she lives for the rest of her life as a chief.

A staff member at the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) shared in the opinion of the Kpatu-Ya Na's spokesman and also maintained that the chiefs at Kpatu-Ya and Gundo traditional areas are known as female chiefs or simply chiefs, but individuals who do not understand the tradition of the Dagombas mistake them for queen mothers.

One of the reasons for calling the female chiefs in Northern Ghana as queen mothers in his opinion, is because their duties are sometimes similar to those that are performed by queen

mothers in Southern Ghana. In effect, he revealed that the elite women in the traditional governance system of Dagbon are chiefs, not queen mothers.

It was further disclosed that the Kpatu-Ya Na does not work alone; she is supported by a team of sub-chiefs who always help her to perform her duties diligently. According to the study, the following are some of the sub-chiefs who support the Kpatu-Ya Na at all times to man the palace. They include Yi Piel-Na, Wula-Na, Jiago-Na, Pomaa-Na, Kpanala-Na, Tuu-Na, Gushie-Na, Tua-Na, Gbor-Na, and Yeji-Na.

The Wula-Na for instance, is the bearer of the chief's spear and one of the seniors most of all the sub-chiefs. He acts as the spokesman for the chief and helps her to settle disputes. He also collects information from the surrounding villages and sometimes tries cases as well. The Kpanala-Na is another spear bearer who is lower in rank to the Wula-Na. The Kpanala-Na performs the roles of the Wula-Na when the latter is not present at the palace.

The Wula-Na and the Kpanala-Na are joined by the other sub-chiefs to visit the Ya-Na usually on Mondays and Fridays. It was elucidated that Mondays and Fridays are special days for the Ya-Na to perform rituals and receive alms from his sub-chiefs. The Ya-Na must be woken up by the sounds of the drums as a sign of greetings on these special days.

During the greetings, the Ya-Na distributes cola nuts to the subchiefs who are in attendance, while the sub-chiefs also pay their respect and offer tributes to him in the form of goods and money. Also, similar courtesies are extended to the female chiefs by the sub-chiefs at different days of the week.

It was added that during these visits, all the sub-chiefs bring to the chief news from their various traditional areas and villages for deliberation. Other cases that arise in the middle of the week are also attended to after the court official at the Ya-Na's palace has informed the sub-chiefs about it. Some of the duties that are performed by the sub-chiefs, apart from those mentioned in the above are roofing of chief's house, weeding the compound, as well as cultivating a farm in her name.

The above findings have been affirmed by Oppong (1973). For instance, she talks about the visit of sub-chiefs to the chief's palace and the presentation of offerings in the form of tributes whenever the Ya-Na and the other female chiefs are visited.

Looking at the work that is done by the sub-chiefs at Kpatu-Ya, it appears that the chief (Kpatu-Ya Na) only acts as a ceremonial chief, while administrative work in the palace is performed by the sub-chiefs and the chief's secretary who are predominantly males. Could this be an attempt by the traditional political structure at Dagbon to make the female chiefs ineffective so that their positions could be taken away from them and given to men in the near future? If so, what efforts could be made to surround the female chiefs with other women from the royal family in order for the institution to gain its rhythm?

Perhaps, the nature of the work at Kpatu-Ya requires that the chief is supported by men not women. For instance, women may not be able to raise mounds and to cultivate a farm for the chief, neither could they roof a house should the need arise one day. These questions need further interrogation by researchers.

Despite the influence of males on the female chieftaincy institution in Dagbon, the research collected the following as some of the key roles of the Kpatu-Ya Na during the case study.

- The Kpatu-Ya Na settles land conflicts and sometimes religious disputes among her people. She also plays roles in the selection, training, and enskinment of new chiefs because she is noted as one of the repositories of the culture and history of her people. She refers disputes and misunderstandings that are outside her jurisdiction to Gundo Na who is her superior.
- Religiously, she pours libation and performs sacrifices to the gods and ancestors for peace, bumper harvest, and good rains. She also serves as a soothsayer who can identify evil doers in her area using her spiritual powers and get them punished or eliminated depending on the nature of the offence committed.
- Politically, she is the second most respected female chief in Dagbon and also the overall controller of all the other chiefs in her area. She serves as the mouthpiece of all women and speaks on their behalf whenever the need arises.
- She meets other sub-chiefs to discuss and embark on community development projects for her people. She is the custodian of the land and therefore can sell part of it to anyone who needs land for building or constructional purposes, but this is done in consultation with the Ya-Na, and the other sub-chiefs under her jurisdiction.
- She also serves as a role model to young girls and helps in the socialization of the girl child.
- She works closely with the Ya-Na and other chiefs in the Municipality for the good and development of the Dagbon kingdom, and the people of Yendi in Northern Ghana.

- The Kpatu-Ya Na is a respectable chief who has the power to enskin other sub-chiefs under her jurisdiction.

Magajia

According to oral tradition, the origins of Magajias could be traced back to migrant trading communities in colonial times that were of Hausa origin from Yoruba in Nigeria. The Magajias at the time were considered as the oldest women in the community who were heads of trading associations in their respective communities.

The idea of Magajia was initiated by a woman who realized that it was not good for women to live individually without groups to solve their common problems. As a result, meetings were held among women folks who eventually led to the emergence of the position of a Magajia among the women in the Yendi community which has survived until today. This oral account was given by Hajia Abiba Wala at the Gontegele electoral area.

Generally, about 90% of the respondents were of the opinion that a Magajia is a woman who organizes other women for a number of purposes in her locality. The reasons that necessitate the need for a woman to become a Magajia could be social, economic, political, and developmental.

Hajia F.W unearthed that there are no stringent processes for selecting a Magajia in the Yendi Municipality. She added that Magajia is sometimes selected by the chief or women within the locality. Politically, she is elected through voting such as women organizers for political parties. In that sense, she is mandated to influence and mobilize women to join her political party as a means to increase the support base of her party.

A historian and a former spokesperson at the Gundo Na's palace indicated that a Magajia is not selected based on age. However, if the women in an area become conscious, and are convinced that a particular woman has certain leadership skills to lead them, she is consulted to become their Magajia.

A 55-year-old Magajia also revealed that a Magajia must have a good economic background, flexible family, and enjoy working with people from different cultural, political, and social backgrounds. She added that one's attitude is mostly considered because the Magajia must be a respected woman in her area who has conducted herself well in many respects.

She maintained further that political parties in Yendi sometimes elect women who are Magajias to be their women organizers. It was asserted that the skills and experiences acquired while working as a Magajia makes them suitable candidates to become women organizers for political parties.

She shared that, she was a woman organizer for a political party at the constituency level, even though she could neither write nor speak English. As a result, her son acts as her secretary and speaks on her behalf whenever she needs to grant an interview in English. In her opinion, she won the position because of her background as a Magajia and not because she possessed any extraordinary qualities than the rest of the candidates she contested with.

According to the Gundo Na's former spokesman, Magajias have assistants and could be found at all localities in the Yendi Municipality. He asserted that there are different kinds of Magajias in Yendi. The reason given was that anytime a woman is chosen to lead a group of people (mostly women), that woman eventually becomes a Magajia. To him, this explains why there are many

Magajias in the Yendi Municipality. He also mentioned that Magajias are sometimes selected to lead traders, manufacturers, producers, importers, apprentices, and political parties etc.

During an interview session with one of the oldest and longest serving Magajias at Gontegele a suburb in the Yendi Municipality, it was disclosed that Magajia is synonymous with women organizer as it is literally translated locally by the people of Yendi in Northern Ghana.

The Magajia at Gontegele revealed further that women organizers of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) are referred to as Magajias by the people since the main duty of the women organizers is largely to organize women for political parties which is similar to the duties of the Magajias in the various women groups and associations.

The duties of one Magajia may differ from the other depending on the group she leads or the context within which she becomes a Magajia. For instance, leading a political party, traders, importers, brewers, growers, and religious groups may come with their specific forms of roles.

However, after examining the institution of Magajias in the field, the following were gathered as the general roles of Magajias in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana;

- Political parties use Magajias to mobilize funds, party supporters, and followers in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.
- A Magajia does advise women in her locality to contribute money through the *susu* system to generate income for their businesses. She also lobbies for funds from NGOs and banks for her members, chiefs, political parties, and mobilizes women for developmental projects, training workshops, and seminars.

- Magajias sometimes serve as the mouthpiece of the chief through whom information is disseminated to his subjects. Thus, she is consulted by the chief before decisions that concern women's welfare are finally taken in the palace.
- The Magajia settles marital disputes and other minor conflicts among women and couples in her locality.
- She serves as a role model for young women and girls, and also mobilizes them for communal labour.
- She fights for higher and good prices for the commodities of her members at the market.
- The Magajias for political parties who are economically sound sometimes buy food stuff, soft drinks, and sugar and donate them to people in deprived communities during Ramadan (fasting).

Hajia

The roles played by Hajias are much more similar to those that are performed by Magajias. Whereas the Hajia engages herself in most religious activities in the mosque, the Magajia focuses mainly on mobilizing women for their socio-economic and political empowerment. A Hajia who becomes a Magajia combines the two roles. The study identified a Magajia who doubled as a Hajia when discussing about Magajias in the previous section.

It was disclosed during an in-depth interview with one of the female executives of the NPP in Yendi that a Hajia is any woman who performs the *Hajj* (a pilgrimage to Mecca). She added that a man who also performs the Hajj is called Alhaji.

The women's organizer of the NPP added that the title *Hajia* alone is not enough to qualify one to become a responsible leader, unless the person conducts herself well and lives an exemplary life. She noted that, without a good character, a *Hajia* remains an ordinary name of a person which value has fallen in terms of respect and prestige. Close to 85% of all the interviews conducted shared in the assertions made by the Honorable NPP women's organizer.

Also, during a key informant interview with an NDC women's organizer in the field, it was mentioned that *Hajias* were most respected women in their communities in the past, but now it is easy to become a *Hajia* and majority of women who are *Hajias* have also not lived any extraordinary lives in the Municipality.

The NDC women's organizer believed some *Hajias* have lowered the value placed on the name *Hajia* in the past. This she said makes it less appealing and attractive these days for others to want to become *Hajias*.

She argued that *Hajias* were highly respected women in the 1980s and 1990s. It was such a great feeling to have a *Hajia* in one's family in those days. The title *Hajia* in her opinion pays a lot because it contributed to her chances of winning the NDC women's organizer slot because she was a *Hajia* and a *Magajia* at the same time.

She felt the title *Hajia* has become less important because some of the *Hajias* these days copy ungodly lifestyles through their exposure to social media, television programmes, and the use of mobile phones most of which are against the teachings of Islam. She bemoaned on how some women dress these days to expose sensitive parts of their bodies and claim that is a fashion.

Furthermore, Hon. Z.A revealed that the impact of social media is neither good nor bad; however, how and what the social media is used for will make it good or bad. One good side she mentioned was that the social media could be used to empower women on their rights.

Nonetheless, Hon. Z.A shared that some women hide behind the media to insult others, and also dress in a manner that is not acceptable in Islam and the culture of the Dagombas. She noted that any dressing that exposes sensitive parts of a woman is a haram in Islam, and forbidden in the culture of the Dagombas in Northern Ghana.

However, a 34-year-old Unit Committee member at the Belegu electoral area argued that some Hajias are responsible women in society. He maintained that Hajias are sometimes consulted during decision-making and help mobilize people for developmental projects in their towns, communities, and villages.

The study catalogued some of the general roles of Hajias that were shared by respondents in the field. It must be added that the duties of Hajias are not limited to what was collected and presented under this section. Therefore, some of the general roles of the Hajia (s) in the Yendi Municipality include;

- ✓ Mobilizing of all women in her area to support men by carrying sand, gravel, and water during constructional works such as plastering and building a mosque etc.
- ✓ Also, settlement of marital disputes and counseling services for couples fall directly under her domain.
- ✓ Serving as an opinion leader, representing women, and being the link between women in the Mosque and authorities in the communities or the mosque.

- ✓ Organizing women for general maintenance such as sweeping, mopping, washing, and fetching of water to fill barrels at the mosque for drinking and performance of ablution (washing of body parts before Salat or prayers).
- ✓ She serves as a source of motivation for young women and the girl child in her locality, and also teaches women about the do's and don'ts of Islam.
- ✓ She contributes to funeral arrangements, as well as marriages within the mosque and the community.
- ✓ Provision of business plans and training programmes to empower women economically.

In sum, Hon. F.W for instance disclosed that the contributions of Magajias and Hajias were most welcomed by many couples in the Yendi Municipality because of the counseling services they provide for men and women and the marital conflicts they settle among couples in their localities.

Wives of the Chief (Ya Na)

The processes and factors considered in choosing a wife for the chief are strictly based on customs and traditions governing marriages of chiefs in the Dagbon kingdom of Northern Ghana. This is not to say that the person should not have a good character and should also not live an exemplary life.

The spokesman at Kpatu-Ya Na Yili (Kpatu-Ya chief's house) shared that the wife of the chief must be submissive, obedient, respectful, and possess qualities that are required for one to become a good wife. He noted the chief's wife is considered as the mother of all people and

leader of all women in the traditional area, and must be accorded with greater respect and dignity.

Chiefs in Africa are usually known for their polygamous marriages. The case of the Ya-Na is not different from marriages of paramount chiefs in some parts of Africa. It was disclosed that apart from the general roles of the chief's wives, they also perform some peculiar duties which arise from the order in which each was married to the chief.

A key informant, Hon. A.G revealed that the chief's palace has four special chambers which are occupied by his first four wives. They perform certain duties in relation to the rooms they occupy in the palace. The study therefore discussed the roles of the first four wives of the Ya-Na and that of her younger wife, how they are called locally, and the chambers upon which they have oversight responsibilities.

The findings on the roles of the chief's wives were gathered during a key informant interview with Hon. A.G, a senior staff member at the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) in the Yendi Municipality. The following are the roles of the first four wives of the Ya-Na which are presented in relation to the order in which they got married to the chief and the chambers they occupy in the palace.

Gbanzaling: The first wife of the chief is called *Gbanzaling*. She is the eldest wife of the chief. She controls the palace and its internal affairs. She ensures that there is enough food for all the people to eat. She also manages conflicts among junior wives if there are any. She advises the chief and influences the enskinment of sub-chiefs.

The Gbanzaling sends delegation to wives of sub-chiefs in her traditional area to come and mourn with her anytime there is a funeral in the kingdom. Upon attendance, the wives of the sub-chiefs are required to bring items such as money, goats, and guinea fowls to support the funeral celebration and to cook for the sympathizers who will be present at the funeral.

Hon. A.G also shared that in the event the deceased is a great chief, such as the Ya-Na, Savelugu Na, Karaga Na, Mion Na etc, a ram is contributed; however, a guinea fowl is provided if the deceased is not a paramount chief. The chief's first wife also plays a key role in selecting subsequent wives for the chief.

(Boaten, 1991, Odotei & Awedoba, 2006, NCCE, 2011) share the above findings and maintain that the oldest women (abrewa) among the Akans and the Ewes of Southern Ghana as well as their queen mothers are known to be good advisers and archives of family histories that are consulted when selecting new chiefs.

The chief's wife also sits in the council of elders during deliberations. Aspects of the work of the Abrewa of the Akans in Southern Ghana are somehow similar to what the first wife of the Ya-Na in the Dagbon traditional area of Northern Ghana does in her jurisdiction.

Katini: The second wife of the chief among the Dagombas is called *Katini*. Enskinment takes place in her room. She controls the enskinment house called *Katini* or *Yilkpani*.

The *Katini* also she controls the sacred room in the palace known as *Kpeemba-Duu* (the room of the dead). It is believed that the spirits of the ancestors live in that room. She enskins termin chiefs in the palace, but chiefs who have promotions are enskinned by the Ya Na in his own yard.

Na-Paga: She is the one who comes after the *Katini*. She controls another chamber in the palace called *Zei*. The *Zei* is a room where herbs are mixed and kept in pots for bathing and purification. The king's regalia are also kept with the Na-Paga in that room.

The same room is usually occupied by a regent. A regent is a temporary chief who is appointed to administer the state of affairs when the chief dies, incapacitated or is a minor.

Galganga: She is the one who follows the third wife of the chief. It is in this fourth chamber of the palace where the chief lives. All the younger women and children live in that room.

The *Galganga* is given some delegation powers by the *Gbanzaling* during her absence in the palace, but once she comes back to the palace, the *Galganga* is not supposed to exercise such powers.

Koyigba: The youngest wife of the chief is called *Koyigba*. She is the closest to the chief. The *Koyigba* prepares private food called *mombila* for the Ya Na. She is usually the youngest in terms of age and her room is the closest to the king or chief's room.

Apart from the specific roles assigned to the wives of the chief in the Yendi traditional area, the elderly wife, as well as the other wives of the chief equally performs the following duties;

- ❖ Reception of visitors on behalf of the chief and reminding and advising the chief to perform his customary duties.
- ❖ Doubling as women's leader, an agent of socialization, and a role model for young girls in the Yendi Municipality.
- ❖ Performing rituals during funerals and being consulted for information about the culture, history, and traditions of the people.

- ❖ Singing appellations during festivals to praise the chief and supporting him in all developmental projects, as well as household budgets, and income generation ventures such as farming.
- ❖ Supervising junior wives and assigning marital roles to younger wives. For instance, she determines whose turn is it to sleep in the chief's room.

4.4.2 Views of respondents on the changing roles of women

While in the field, the researcher asked the respondents a direct 'yes or no' question to ascertain whether or not women's roles have undergone some changes in the Yendi Municipality.

At the end of the exercise, 28 respondents, representing 93.3% of the 30 respondents interviewed indicated the roles of women leaders have gone through some significant changes. The remaining 6.7% of the respondents felt no changes had occurred in the roles of elite women in the study area.

4.4.3. Current roles of elite women in the Yendi Municipality

The study further requested respondents to provide instances for the new roles they have found in the Yendi Municipality based on which they responded in the affirmative to the earlier 'yes or no' question asked about changes in women's role.

It was mentioned that in the past, women did not have what it took to engage themselves in adventures such as medicine, teaching, banking etc, but due to the influence of education, religion, globalization, and technological advancement, some women have been able to penetrate into all kinds of working environments in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana.

On the contrary, investigations and interactions with respondents showed that the emergence of modernity and changes in women's roles have taken some women out of business. It was cited that most traditional birth attendants (TBAs) have been stopped from attending to women who are in labour in their various communities.

However, a few are allowed to handle women who are in labour and do not have any qualified nurses or mid-wives to assist them in areas where there are neither CHPS compounds nor health centres.

Moreover, the following were collected as some of the examples of the newly and emerging roles of elite women in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana. They include;

Economic Roles

In the past, women were found in lesser known economic and non-economic spaces such as shea-butter extraction, petty trading, pito making, child-bearing, and home management, but in recent times due to education and globalization, some women in the Yendi Municipality are now into multi-billion-dollar businesses, both locally and internationally.

Hon. S.A shared that most women in Yendi these days sell all kinds of items such as bread, rice, wigs, cement, nails, iron rods, soft drinks, and alcoholic beverages etc. She added that some of the women even combine their businesses with politics, but the politics is seasonal for others, unless those who are party executives and have taken politics as their major occupation.

Religious Roles

The study showed that there has been a new trend of women preachers coming up in the Christian fraternity in the Yendi Municipality. It is becoming common and worth noting to see women preachers and pastors spreading the word of God in churches, markets, lorry stations, and other public places which was not common in the Yendi Municipality.

A 54-year-old senior administrator at the Yendi Municipal directorate said the two most recent jobs which have employed most women in the Municipality are politics and preaching. She added that those professions were difficult spaces for women to enter in the past, but it is now becoming a common practice for some women in the Municipality.

She felt this has become widespread due to the proliferation of Pentecostalism being spread across the world through globalization. The study indicated that beside these changes, elite women in the mosques and churches mobilize women to embark on economic and developmental projects in their respective places of worship.

Mediation and arbitration

The study discovered that the role of the Gundo-Na, Kpatu-Ya Na, Magajias, and Hajias in resolving religious, marital, and land disputes are the most common duties of these elite women in the Yendi traditional area of Northern Ghana. From the study, conflict resolution was named the number one responsibility of all the elite women according to the respondents who were interviewed in the field.

Hon. A.G was of the conviction that, but for political influence, the Gundo-Na could have done her best to resolve the conflicts in Dagbon if she had the needed resources, support, and cooperation from all the parties involved.

Even though the arbitration role of the elite women is not an entirely new thing to the people in the area, it has become a very reliable and an alternative conflict resolution method which had been adopted over the years. The Magajias and Hajias have saved a number of marriages through these processes. There is enough evidence on the contributions of elite women in conflict resolution under subsection 4.4.1 of this thesis.

Activism and community mobilization

In recent times, communal work has not seen much patronage due to the role of Assembly men and women, Unit Committee members, and other government appointees in the Yendi Municipality.

However, it was revealed that women, especially Magajias and female chiefs in the Municipality are key agents of development who organize women and men alike to embark on community development projects in their respective areas.

The elite women have developed lobbying skills which enable them get NGOs and politicians on board to address some of the socioeconomic problems that affect them. According to the study, funds are raised through these programmes to serve as start-up capital for women associations and chiefs to provide social infrastructures such as toilets and markets for their people.

Apart from these, it was also disclosed that seminars and workshops are organized periodically by women organizers of political parties, NCCE, and NGOs to educate and empower women to

help them overcome some of the sociocultural, religious, and economic challenges they go through in the Yendi Municipality.

Female headship (Land lady)

The study found a new pattern of household leadership in the Municipality. About 25% of the entire interviews showed that a few women in the Municipality have built their own houses and assume the status of a land lord or land ladyship. These privileged few elite women have rented houses/rooms to tenants and pay a number of bills such water, electricity, and hospital for their families and sometimes tenants.

A clear example was shared by an assemblyman at Belegu during a key informant interview. He stated categorically that land ladyship is becoming a common phenomenon in Yendi these days. He argued that it was not easy in the past to find women who were household heads in the Yendi Municipality.

The assemblyman at Belegu electoral area added that these days, one could find a number of women who are teachers, Unit Committee members, Assembly women, contractors (school feeding), security personnel (police, prison officers, arm forces), and drivers.

A mobile banker also shared that there are few wealthy women in the Municipality who are into constructional works. What they do is that, they assist individuals to build houses or store rooms at a fee which is paid to them later by installment over a period of time.

Some even give loans to market women to be paid back in few weeks or months with little interest. It could be said that about 35% of the respondents made similar comments affirming

what has been shared in the above concerning women's landlady ship and the support they give to people in the area.

Journalism/communication

The study discovered that a section of the educated women elites has become spokes persons or serial callers for political parties, chiefs, and women groups. They usually go to sit on radio talk shows to discuss about the concerns of women and children, and propose how best they could be addressed.

Hon. F.W for instance, believed that some educated women in the Yendi Municipality are making good use of social media such as WhatsApp, facebook, twitter etc to discuss and comment on issues bordering on their rights and privileges.

Over 70% of the respondents maintained that during phone-in segments, some women leaders call to express their displeasure about the way women in the Yendi Municipality are generally treated in marriages, politics, and business circles, and plead with authorities to come to their aid.

Two respondents who were identified as Hon. A.G and Hon. S.A lamented that mass media is affecting the culture of the people of Yendi. Hon. A.G for instance, noted that young men and women who are known as serial callers sometimes call to insult chiefs, pastors, Imams, elders, presidents, DCEs MCEs, and MPs without being seen or caught, let alone to be punished.

According to the respondents, the youth in Yendi now have the penchant to challenge authorities which was not a norm in the Municipality for the past decades.

However, Hon. S.A shared a contrary view;

...in the past, women were much more respectful than those we have today. But now majority do not respect and at the same time dislike going to the farm to work. They dress anyhow to town without permission because they are not afraid of anyone. These could not have happened in the past. The use of phones has changed their lives; they tell lies, talk rubbish, and cannot even write letters.

A 24-year-old mobile vendor asserted that;

...women in the past respected much more than those we have in Yendi today. Now women farm for themselves not their husbands. Today, most women in Yendi do politics much more than men. Sometimes, I see them beating one another because of politics.

4.4.4. The causes of change in the roles of elite women in the Yendi

This section interrogates some causes of changes in the duties of elite women currently experienced in the Yendi Municipality. During the field work, the researcher posed a question to examine whether or not women have taken up new occupations in the Yendi Municipality. The respondents answered in the affirmative. However, the changes in women's roles were noted to have been caused by economic, political, social, and global factors.

Economically, it was explained that women who express interest to contest for positions within the various political parties sometimes receive financial, technical, and moral support from faith based organizations such as (NGOs, Churches, Muslim associations), political parties, government, family members, NCCE, and banks (Bonzali and Bahoba financial institutions) to enable them mobilize resources, people, and materials required to make their dreams a reality.

In reacting to the same question, Hon. F.W admitted that when she was contesting for women's organizer on the ticket of NDC in 2016, she received some financial support from her party leadership, Bonzali and Bahoba banks, and also from some NGOs as well.

Elite women who have businesses and jobs also noted they mobilized some funds from the above banks and organizations to embark on their campaigns, buy logistics, and freebies to entice supporters during rallies and elections. This has made it relatively easier for women to have some edge, thereby creating changes in their roles as compared to what used to exist in the past.

The women's organizer of the NPP, Hon. S.A gave a contrary view that she has never received any support from any political parties and financial institutions since the beginning of her political career. She added that her campaigns have always been financed with her own salary and some support from her family members.

Socially, it was gathered that families and individuals are beginning to appreciate the fact that some women are good leaders in modern times and therefore, most of the sociocultural practices that were inimical to their welfare and decision-making are getting relaxed. A lot of public education by churches, NCCE, and NGOs is making some positive impacts on the existing social systems and decision-making processes in favour of women.

Two key informants (Hon. A.G and Hon. F.W) were of the view that education is gradually getting some cultural and religious beliefs relaxed in the Yendi Municipality which has encouraged some women into leadership positions.

The study revealed there has been an improvement in the levels of education among some of the elite women which has boosted their confidence, skills, and knowledge in electoral processes, as well as their communication skills. This has enhanced their entry into public and private environments which were hitherto a no-go area for women.

Peer pressure, family and economic demands, as well as development of new lifestyles were identified as some other factors which have pushed women out of the kitchen to look for better and higher paid jobs. Women do this in order to cope with the pressure posed on them by changes in economic paradigms and the influx of Western cultures.

Global and national policies in modern democratic dispensations were noted to have also paved the way for women with passions to get into public offices. Quota systems were also identified as key ingredients in the Municipality to get more women to be appointed into positions at the constituency, regional, and national levels.

The study shared that religious marriages, taste for Western lifestyles and goods, exposure through travelling, watching of television, listening to radio, encouragement from husbands, family members, political party influences, global movements, and policies of the state have influenced women's ideas in the Yendi Municipality, and encouraged them to accept new roles which were previously regarded as males' jobs.

Finally, it was highlighted that some husbands have not been supportive these days so the women have taken upon themselves to aspire for higher positions and additional jobs to enable them provide for their children and families. In an attempt to make ends meet, women end up settling for jobs which eventually bring changes in their previous roles and statuses.

4.5 Challenges/barriers to women's decision-making and politics

4.5.1. Domination of decision-making in the Yendi Municipality

After posing the question “who dominates decision-making in this Municipality” in the field, all the 30 respondents felt that decision-making processes are being dominated mostly by men in Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

Hon. S.A lamented on male dominance in decision-making as follows;

...The men have hijacked all the decision-making processes in this Municipality, including all the jobs, leaving women without jobs. Ask this man if he will be sincere to admit that...pointing at a co-worker. Just that the men will not say the truth; otherwise you would have realized that what I a m s a y i n g i s t r u e .

Hon. S.A pointed out that, there has always been perceptions that woman must be in the kitchen, while men sit outside to chat, rest, and sometimes play games. From this kind of orientation, the education of women according to her, does not receive equal attention as does the education of males.

It was added that in recent times, the trends are changing; yet, the gaps still persist since most of the people in Yendi still do not appreciate why women will insist on going to school up to the level of their male counterparts.

Dawda (2013) affirms the views expressed in the above and adds that women's representation in decision making and structures of authority in Northern Ghana has been sluggish due to the belief that women are mothers, sisters, wives, caregivers, cooks, and organizers of economic resources.

Also, more than 75% of the respondents asserted that Islam does not permit woman to lead in the midst of men during prayers and other public gatherings. Respondents felt it is this religious belief which has accentuated males' dominance in decision making and all kinds of meetings that involve men and women in all public spaces in the Yendi Municipality.

Hon. A.G emphasized that in Islam, women's voices are not supposed to be heard outside the room. They are also required to remain indoors. Women cannot stand before males to talk during public meetings, as well as worship hours at the mosque. He linked these beliefs to patriarchy and other sociocultural practices that are found in the area.

Honorable A.G argued that patriarchy is an inborn trait in most men which makes it difficult to be suppressed. To him, patriarchy is like a natural law which many people want to change, but find it difficult to do so. He concluded that a time will come for men to be looking for women to intercede on their behalf, but will find none due to what women have been subjected to in the name of patriarchy.

The study disclosed that patriarchy is a widespread phenomenon among the Dogombas of Northern Ghana which is exhibited in all aspects of life, especially in decision making processes, leadership, inheritance, and their chieftaincy systems. The Dagombas practice the patrilineal inheritance in which transfer of power, resources, descent, and authority generally pass through the males' line.

It was divulged that any woman who tries to flout these patriarchal structures is tagged as being disrespectful, a prostitute or living on alcohol. It was added that since most women do not want

to be called by such derogatory words, they humbly submit to the instructions of men in order to avoid criticisms.

4.5.2. Occasions for women dominance in decision making

After establishing that men did dominate most of the decision-making processes in the Yendi Municipality, it became necessary to investigate further and find out if there have been instances where women took decisions without males' influence. The following data was collected after exploring the possibilities of female domination in some activities in the Yendi Municipality.

Firstly, a senior officer at the NCCE, Hon. A.G stated that, culturally women are very active during festivals, naming and marriage ceremonies, and other rites of passage in the Yendi Municipality. The study showed that women in particular do have more say in the Yendi Municipality during the celebration of these rites due to the fact that they are the repositories of culture and history when it comes to how the above rites are being performed.

As a result of women's focal roles in the celebration of the above rites, they tend to be more vocal and able to control most of the decisions that are taken during some of these occasions. Over 90% of the respondents thought that women have a greater influence when it comes to the performance of funerals and marriages in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana.

Secondly, the study discovered that when positions are solely reserved for women, for instance, positions such as women organizers for political parties, *Magajias*, female chiefs, and female *Tindanas*, those spaces become no go areas for men, and therefore decisions that are taken in such capacities are mostly controlled by women with little or no male interference.

Additionally, educated and economically vibrant women were noted by the study to have maintained some level of influence in terms of decision-making. These categories of elite women were considered as essentially independent, who could afford most of their needs without necessarily depending on men whenever they want to take any major decisions about their lives.

Similarly, the study revealed that during elections, women do have absolute rights to take decisions that they feel will inure to their benefit. In the process of casting their votes, there is usually no man available to decide for them. As a result of this, it becomes an opportunity for women to decide for themselves what pleases them. Although men may try to influence women's decisions to vote for some specific candidates ahead of an election, these suggestions are ignored since no one sees who they vote for while they are in the ballot box.

The study unearthed that greater privileges exist for women to decide which types of foods they should prepare for their families when they are in the kitchen. Men may have some influences on the choice of foods their wives should cook, but the onus lies on the women to take the final decision on how best they could manage the home given the resources at their disposal.

Similarly, associations such as pito sellers, shea-butter processors, fish, and yam sellers whose members are all women have the privilege to take decisions on very important issues without fear or favour. This is because members of such associations see themselves as colleagues who have come together to address their common concerns. They are able to find solutions to issues which could not have been possible if they were in the midst of men.

Finally, over 30% of the respondents shared that single or divorced women appear to have most opportunities when it comes to taking decisions on their own. A woman tends to be entangled

with marital problems immediately she accepts a marriage proposal, primarily because the man eventually becomes the head of the marital home, and takes most of the decisions in the family.

4.5.3 Determinants of women's decision making in Yendi

The following were shared by respondents in the field while exploring the factors that could enhance women's decision-making opportunities in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana.

Education was noted as the first determinant or factor that enhances women's decision-making opportunities in Yendi. It was argued that educated and career women who are not married are usually independent, economically viable, and self-reliant and have higher chances of taking decisions on their own than uneducated ones, who do not have any reliable sources of income and would have to depend on others for most of their needs.

It was emphasized that, it happens that way because the educated and rich women are more likely to ignore acts that are against their will than poor women who may have limited options because they depend so much on their husbands for most their needs.

Also, the respondents elucidated that women who are single, divorced or widowed and independent may not be under the control of their husbands who might subject them to abusive treatments and burden them with marriage and its associated challenges. The only control they will suffer may come from their parents, uncles, and brothers which would be lesser than what they would have suffered if they were married.

As an adage goes "united we stand divided we fall" it was revealed that women who have formed associations in the Municipality become empowered and more likely to resist some negative treatments in the locality due to the expertise and the resources they have within those

groups. They are sometimes being educated and empowered by their colleagues who are well informed to reject any decisions that would be inimical to their rights and progress in the Municipality.

Additionally, the study gathered that the age of a woman has an influence on her decision-making abilities. It was mentioned that older wives and old women in the Yendi Municipality tend to have much more control over younger wives, young girls, and boys at the household level.

It was explained further that, the culture of the people in Yendi entreats young people to keep mute when the aged are taking decisions. This kind of belief plays out in the social lives of the people in the Municipality. What it finally does is that, it either enhances or hinders women's abilities, especially younger ones in sharing their views on matters of public concern.

Furthermore, religion was pointed out as another key factor which affects the kind of decisions women are capable of taking in their daily lives in the Yendi Municipality. In effect, it was emphasized that the religion a woman practices affects her level of decision-making or enhances it.

As discussed earlier under religious affiliation of respondents, Islam discourages women from leading when they are in the midst of men. This belief affects women's decision-making processes in many ways, but if the religion is flexible on women leadership, then there could be room for most decisions to be taken by women.

Finally, it was shared that it is a taboo for women to go to certain shrines in Yendi Municipality. This belief was identified as a hindrance to women's movement into certain spaces and their

ability to share their problems with the gods and their ancestors. Women can only go to such places through the help of men which also amounts to abuse of their privacy.

4.5.4. Effects of male dominance on women

The first impacts which accounted for about 40% of all the effects of male dominance were that, male dominance makes women feel sad, intimidated, and useless. As women suffer these, they tend to feel neglected and inactive. Women who are affected by these begin to think that they are good for nothing since no one allows them to share their views on happenings around them.

Secondly, another impact of male dominance from the field was that it makes women dull and timid to fight for their rights and interests. As these persist, women's confidence levels and self-esteem are affected. This probably explains why most men in the area felt women were not fit for taking key decisions and contesting for political positions in the Municipality. Apart from the fact that women are being denied political appointments, they are always side lined and relegated to the margins of the social structure in the Municipality.

Also, the study disclosed that male dominance is a key catalyst to domestic violence and sexual abuses which are suffered by some women in their respective homes. A section of the respondents, about 20%, believed that women are being abused on daily basis but because most women feel shy and intimidated to contribute to family decisions, it becomes a challenge for these abuses to be reported and would therefore continue to live in those exploitative relationships and environments.

Furthermore, it was uncovered that male dominance creates a continued system of subordination and dependence for women who are found in such environments. In situations where all major

decisions are narrowed down to men, women become the end receivers of males' decisions. This creates avenues for women to shirk all their burdens and needs upon men.

Moreover, other effects of male dominance gathered were sense of hopelessness and fear of being divorced. It was shared that women who are afraid to be divorced may not challenge their husbands on many issues even if these are against their best interest.

Over 90% of all the responses shared in the above assertion indicates male dominance negatively affect women in many ways.

Finally, about 6% of all interviewees were of the perception that as male dominance develops stronger, it causes psychological self-doubt and disbelief among women.

It was elucidated that women's ideas may be neglected under the above circumstances and those who cannot live in such relationships and stressful environments may start to feel upset and disloyal in the long run.

The study disclosed that if women are persistently treated unfairly, they may be tempted to resist and that resistance would lead to misunderstandings and domestic violence.

4.5.5. Barriers/challenges of women leadership

The challenges facing women leaders have been grouped into two components (A & B) under this section. The first part (A) highlights the challenges that are faced by only the female chiefs in the Yendi Municipality.

The second part (B) also presents the general challenges faced by all women who are serving as leaders in different capacities in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

A. Challenges facing female chiefs in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana

During the study, the following challenges were outlined as the main obstructions facing the female chiefs (Kpatu-Ya Na and Gundo Na) in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

The first challenge of the female chiefs in the Municipality according to the study is political interference. Hon. A.G stated that politicians have put chains on the necks of women chiefs in everything that they do as far as the administration of their kingdoms is concerned.

Politicians sometimes decide which releases they are to make and those they are not supposed to make. This was mentioned as the main reason why the Dagbon crises has persisted until recently, because politicians kept on manipulating and twisting the facts about the issue for political gains.

Secondly, the women chiefs are faced with a serious financial challenge. The chiefs are in need of money to feed their people and do other developmental projects in their respective jurisdictions.

Funds for these activities are very limited because sometimes the individuals who are charged with the responsibility to monitor and manage financial resources such as lands and properties misappropriate the monies which are accrued from those transactions.

The Kpatu-Ya for instance shared that...

...Look at me; I am now an old woman so I cannot do any business to raise money as I used to do in the past. I cannot farm too. I have to depend on family support and the gifts that I receive from visitors and my sub-chiefs to manage this palace. I have to also take care of my dependents.

It was shared that the government pays the paramount chiefs some monthly stipends, but that money was considered as nothing to write home about. The study showed that lands are sold to

individuals and corporate institutions to support projects funding, but the monies which are realized from those transactions are usually pittance which are unable to fund those projects.

Also, a high illiteracy rate among the female chiefs was another serious problem undermining their daily activities. It was argued that illiteracy was not a problem in the past, but with the advent of modernity and application of best practices around the world, it has now become a major challenge. It was indicated that because the chiefs are not educated, their powers have been usurped by their secretaries who have become active in the palaces than the chiefs themselves.

Furthermore, chieftaincy conflicts in the Dagbon kingdom of Northern Ghana was mentioned as one of the major problems facing women chiefs in the area. The families of these chiefs used to dictate for them as to what to do or say due to the crises facing the chieftaincy institution.

It was opined that, until recently when the new Ya-Na was installed, the chiefs were only called upon to come and thumb-print whatever decisions their families and politicians have taken on their behalf. What this means is that but for the recent installation of the Ya Na, politicians dictated for female chiefs in the Yendi Municipality.

Finally, it was explained that, traditions governing the work of the female chiefs affect them so much. For instance, if a gift or money is given to the chief, she is obliged by tradition to share it for everyone present to have their share.

This kind of traditional practice increases the financial burden of the female chiefs since resources are usually fragmented to the extent that only little are left to manage the entire palace and its people.

B. General challenges facing all elite women in the Yendi Municipality

Table 4.8. General challenges affecting elite women in Yendi

CHALLENGES	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE (%)
Financial Constraints	11	22.9
Sociocultural and Religious Beliefs	9	18.8
Marital Constraints	8	16.7
Insults & Intimidation	8	16.7
High Illiteracy	7	14.6
Lack of Confidence	5	10.4
TOTAL	48	100

Source: Field Survey, July 2018.

Table 4.8 shows the distribution of 48 responses (challenges) which were gathered from 30 respondents while interrogating the barriers of elite women in decision-making processes in the Yendi Municipality. The challenges collected are grouped into six broad themes as shown in the above table. Averagely, each respondent gave more than one challenge, but there were instances where one respondent gave up to four challenges and even beyond. Below are the discussions on the general barriers to women's decision making in politics in the study area.

Financial Constraints

The study revealed that elite women in the Yendi Municipality are constrained by financial and material resources to organize people and logistics such as stationary, vehicles, and motor bikes needed to be effective in politics and decision-making.

Financial constraints constituted 22.9 % of all the challenges hindering elite women from playing active roles in decision-making in the Municipality. Even though a number of the

women in the area were engaged in commercial activities, the funds realized from those transactions according to the study were inadequate for effective leadership.

It has been mentioned that male dominance, religious beliefs, and patriarchal systems make it difficult for women to take independent economic decisions through which funds could be generated to finance campaigns and reach out to supporters and communities that are outside the Yendi town.

It was noted at a key informant interview that women politicians who consult rich men for financial assistance sometimes face sexual abuses. These men sometimes request for sexual favours before they would grant them assistance. If the women refuse those sexual advances, these men end up calling them prostitutes just to dent their images and make them unpopular.

The outcomes of focus group discussions and key informant sessions identified financial constraint as a deterrent to women's activeness in household, community, constituency, and national governance structures. It was disclosed that holding a political or a leadership position is a very expensive venture in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana.

Two women leaders (from NPP and the NDC) stated that in order to influence voters, they sometimes had to buy sugar, salt, seasoning, sweets, and fuel for motor riders and other supporters which make politics an expensive business in the Municipality.

Elite women are also obliged to embark on vigorous campaign which encompasses the cost of transporting voters, observers, followers, logistics, and soft drinks to influence voters. It was indicated that the high demand for school fees, hospital bills, and others from elite women is a big blow to their leadership aspirations.

During the study, a section of the respondents disclosed that people demand for money from elite women these days before they would allow themselves to be served. That is, most people request for money from authorities before they will sit down and listen to any kind of education being offered to them.

One elite woman and a male civil servant (NCCE official) shared their experiences; the first one was shared by a 45-year-old hospital administrator and a politician in the Municipality as follows;

...As a woman organizer, I sometimes use my own money to hire the services of resource persons, buy materials, and pay for transport just to go to communities to train women on how to acquire skills in soap, salt, shampoo, footwear, and tie and dye making. After the program, the trainees do ask me to give them money for making time to participate in the training. Now the cost of leading or doing politics here in Yendi goes beyond winning an election, to paying community members to sit down and learn skills for their own good. This is making the work too difficult for us as women leaders.

The NCCE official affirmed the views of the above women's organizer and went ahead to also shared his experiences;

...I went to a nearby village to educate the people on family planning methods and after delivering the message the people kept sitting down as if something was not clear to them. When I was about to leave a man told me that my attitude was not good at all because, anytime I come to their village and I am going back to Yendi, I do not give them anything, rubbing his fingers as if he was counting money. I told them I did not have money on me that day, so if I get money during my next visit, I will give it to them and since then, I have not gone there again.

The study gathered that the idea of requesting money from leaders and public servants has become widespread in Yendi, and has worsened the already expensive nature of politics and leadership faced by elite women in the Yendi Municipality. The huge cost of mobilizing people

and materials during elections and the high levels of poverty among elite women pose a serious threat to women's leadership and their inability to compete with males for positions.

Sociocultural and religious beliefs

From table 4.8, sociocultural and religious beliefs constitute 18.8% of the challenges gathered from 30 respondents in the field.

Reports from the (2010) Population and Housing Census show that Islam constitutes about 67.2% of the entire population of the Yendi Municipality, and therefore not surprising that most women are precluded from leading in the Mosque and other public spaces in the Yendi Municipality.

The belief that women must not question their husbands, talk when men are talking, lead in the mosque, visit certain shrines, as well as the perception that women are not good leaders and must consult men before taking decisions were emphasized as common challenges thwarting efforts of elite women from participating in decision-making and political processes in the Yendi Municipality.

In light of the cultural orientations discussed earlier, women's education has always been given a lesser priority as compared to men. These socialization processes deny women the basic skills to understand and contribute effectively to decision-making and vie for political positions in the Yendi Municipality.

Marital constraints

Marriage was identified as an institution whose activities consume most of the precious time available to women. It constituted 16.7% of all the factors which result in women's inability to actively take part in decision-making in the study area.

Multiple roles of women as leaders, wives, mothers, laborers, care givers, and home keepers put a lot of burden on them. It was explained that elite women need to spare time for maternity, childcare, food preparation, laundry, gathering of fuel, trading, and other home management activities which become a drain on their time, energies, and health.

A twenty-six-year female trader (Salma, not her real name) shared her views on the challenges of elite women;

...Marriage is a big problem. The moment you marry, the man will leave the entire burden on you alone so you cannot have time, and money to provide for most of your needs, let alone thinking about politics or decision-making. The women who have money and time to do politics are also not educated and sometimes do not even respect t h e i r f e l l o w h u m a n b e i n g s .

Dawda (2013) affirms the views expressed by the twenty-six years about the burden marriage brings to women. He also asserts that the workload of women in Northern Ghana is such that they are the first people to wake-up in the morning and the last to go to bed in the evening.

Dawda continues that some women even farm for their husbands, in addition to their normal household chores which leave them very tired and little time to spare for other activities such as assembly and national elections.

An assembly woman and two women organizers shared that meetings are sometimes scheduled at odd hours which makes it impossible for some women in the Municipality to attend community, assembly, and market association meetings. This affects women to the extent that only a little time is left at their disposal to consider entering into politics or any public work.

Women in the study area are believed to be assets of their husbands who have no rights to engage themselves in front-line leadership. Failure to be submissive to men results in marriage breakdown and allegations of infidelity. The pressure that always comes from in-laws and family members sometimes discourages some women from being active in community leadership.

Consequently, women who are afraid to lose their marriages refuse offers of political appointments because they do not want to put their marriages in jeopardy. This point was emphasized as one of the key issues which from taking part in decision-making and politics in general.

Dawda (2013) & Essien et al. (2014) shared similar sentiments in studies conducted in Wa and Tamale of Northern Ghana respectively. For instance, Essien et al. (2014) asserted that women politicians in the Wa Municipality were accused by their husbands and sections of the populace for having extra-marital affairs with other men for financial support and political endorsement.

Hon. A.G disclosed that young female graduates who do not want to be called prostitutes or by any derogatory words do stay out of politics in the Yendi Municipality. He added that the new attitude in town was that, majority of the women who enter into politics or win an election break up with their husbands. The rest who are also into active politics are mostly not married.

A former women's organizer at Gontegele, as well as the spokesman at Kpatu-Ya revealed that early marriages and teenage pregnancies have muted the leadership dreams of some young girls in basic and Senior High Schools. They added that by the age of thirteen, some parents in the Yendi Municipality would have betrothed their young girls to older men for marriages due to economic hardships faced by their families. This is done with the hope that their daughters would send home remittances in the form of food and money to support their household income.

Insults and intimidation

The research indicates that intimidation which comes in the form of insults, heckling, and shouting at women during gatherings was one of the crucial problems faced by women leaders in the study area. This constitutes 16.7% of the challenges confronting elite women and other women leaders in the area.

Citizenship was another impediment against women aspirants in the Yendi Municipality. It was mentioned that deliberate attempts are being made by some men to frustrate women when it comes to holding of community positions. They accused the women of being strangers and therefore not qualified to hold any leadership position in the Yendi town.

The few elite women who were active in politics in the Yendi Municipality revealed that their images were tarnished just to discourage them from pursuing their political careers. This example was shared by an elite woman from one of the political parties who suffered similar discrimination in the Municipality and decided to share her own experiences;

...The moment they hear that you are vying for a particular position, you will hear things for yourself. They will insult you and your families till you resign. The day you declare your intentions to contest in an election is

when you will actually know exactly where your great grandparents came from. They will reveal to you all secrets about your background just to tell everybody that you are not from Yendi so they should not vote for you.

This experience was also shared by Hon. A.A who lost an assembly election few months ago;

...Yendi people do not like people coming from other villages to contest for leadership positions. They only want those who actually live or come from the Yendi town, so we those living outside Yendi are not having things easy at all. They will do everything to frustrate you from contesting. If you succeed to contest, they would not vote for you even if you are the best candidate.

It has been argued that although men and women in parts of Nigeria struggle to prove to delegates they are natives of their communities; however, the challenges women go through under such battles mostly differ for women as compared to men (Pereira, 2004).

Pereira says for example that women who contest primaries and win genuinely to contest in the main elections in some parts of Nigeria face deliberate public denial to contest those positions.

According to Pereira, most women who suffer this kind of bias are those who contest in their husband's hometowns than it has been applied to women who contest in their fathers' localities.

The study also disclosed that sometimes when men feel they are likely to lose an election to a woman, they adopt some diversionary tactics to frustrate the women to either step down, or stop campaigning so that they can go ahead to win.

The findings revealed that there have been cases where sorcery (juju) was used to scare some women from competing their male counterparts for political positions in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana.

High Illiteracy/Low Level of education

The study discovered there is low level of education among women in the Yendi Municipality. Low level of education constitutes 14.6% of all the challenges impeding women's participation in decision-making in the Yendi Municipality.

At the beginning of this chapter, it was shown in table 4.2 that the educational level for male respondents was higher than females. For instance, the table shared that 17 male respondents had tertiary education as against 10 female respondents, with a difference of 7 educated males over females.

Education is an essential component for enhancing one's capacity to participate effectively in the development discourse of any society. There is enough evidence from the educational status of the respondents to show that the level of education among elite women in the Municipality is generally low.

A 25-year-old female provisions store operator asserted that there is lack of political education on the part of most elite women in the study area. She argued that most women in the Municipality do not understand politics, so they are deterred from going into it.

It is very obvious that the level of education of a given society, and for that matter a nation determines to a large extent, the quality and quantity of its human resource that is needed to craft good policies which will inure to the benefit of its citizens. It is for this reason that illiteracy became one of the major problems confronting majority of the women in the Yendi Municipality.

Women's education could boost their confidence levels, increase their ability to mobilize funds, access the right information, and understand the political cultures and electoral processes that characterize democratic governance systems in Yendi and Ghana at large.

Dawda (2013) discloses that majority of Assembly women interviewed in the Upper East, Upper West, and Northern region of Ghana could not speak English which was the main medium of communication during assembly meetings. This affected their participation during assembly proceedings because they did not understand whatever was taking place, let alone to ask relevance questions.

Essien et al. (2014) assert that low levels of education make it difficult for society to repose its confidence in women since they are perceived to be lacking the needed social capital in the form of networking, information, resources, and clear policies to impact positively on societal development.

Lack of confidence

The study disclosed that lack of confidence among elite women also contributes to the low participation and involvement of women in decision-making in the Yendi Municipality. From table 4.8, lack of confidence accounted for 10.4% of the entire challenges inhibiting women's decision-making processes in the study area.

It was discovered that sociocultural beliefs, male dominance, and low levels of education among women reduce their confidence levels and make it difficult for them to stand in front of electorates, and articulate effectively programmes and policies which they would like to execute when given the opportunity to hold political offices.

Moreover, it was asserted that women lack confidence and courage to speak in the midst of men due to cultural and religious barriers. This finding supports the idea of Dawda (2013) who argues that women's potentials in leadership have been muted by sociocultural beliefs despite governments' continued support and directives.

Hon. S.A shares her views on how individuals try to demoralized women from leadership;

...No matter what you do for them, they will still find faults with you and insult you. If they see a woman contesting for any position, they will say all kinds of things against her, but when she wins, they will be the first to come to her for all sort of help, such as school fees, hospital bills, and loans.

4.6 Opportunities for women's involvement in leadership

Notwithstanding the challenges that women go through at all leadership positions in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana, those who survive benefit a lot at the end of it all. The study reveals a number of benefits that women enjoy during and after holding a leadership position.

The benefits range from psychological, social, political, economic, and personal ones as well. The findings under this sub-section are grouped into personal benefits, community benefits, and national benefits.

4.6.1 Benefits of politics/leadership to women themselves

One major benefit that women enjoy in decision-making and politics according to the study was empowerment. This constitutes over 70% of all the benefits enjoyed by elite women while they hold political office and perform their leadership responsibilities.

The study gathered that women get empowered in the sense that they become exposed to many platforms and opportunities which raise their confidence levels. The women who are leaders

become self-reliant because that the ideas, skills, and knowledge gained on the job increase their opportunities in accessing resources and taking part in decision-making processes in their localities.

Honorable A.G asserted that it is not enough to give women resources, but the creation of these resources and how they are utilized and sustained are essential to their personal development. He believes that the sharing of ideas and information create bigger social platforms and networks for women to learn about decision-making processes which will make them self-reliant.

Also, the study indicated that women access to education is enhanced through their engagement in politics, decision-making, and leadership. Hon. S.A shared that her involvement in politics has given her the opportunity to pursue a distance programme at the University of Cape Coast.

She added that she has been employed as an administrator in a private mission hospital in the Yendi Municipality after completing her distance education programme due her further studies.

Honorable S.A further disclosed that the NCCE and NGOs do organize leadership training workshops and seminars for them to improve upon their skills in decision-making and leadership processes. This has offered them higher paid jobs which could help them access loans from financial institutions to support their businesses and projects in their localities.

For instance, Hon. A.J.A asserted that women's involvement in decision-making builds their confidence levels and opens them to opportunities such as jobs, education, and financial resources from Banks and NGOs.

Hon. F.A also shared that she got the opportunity to become NDC women's organizer because of her work as a Magajia in the Gontegele electoral area. She mentioned that, she has been able

to secure loans from Bonzali and Bahoba financial institutions due to her jobs as a Magajia and NDC women's organizer in the Yendi Municipality.

Competence and exposure were mentioned as essential ingredients to women's effective political participation. The study disclosed that politics give women a lot of confidence and exposure to influence proper decisions and ideas that would lead to societal development.

The skill training workshops, conferences, career development programmes, seminars, and meetings organized for elite women boost their skills in decision-making and leadership processes.

The study discovered that most elite women were criticized by community members, especially their male's contestants for lacking confidence, proper prioritization of programmes, and focus which are required to bring development to their communities. The leadership training platforms therefore serve as good avenues to repose confidence back into the women leaders.

The findings showed that women in leadership positions gain power, dignity, and prestige within society. The NDC woman's organizer at the Yendi Municipality of Ghana asserted that it is prestigious and respect commanding for women to stand on bigger platforms as leaders to address problems confronting society.

This is what the women's organizer for the NDC in Yendi shared with regards to the benefits that accompany women leadership;

...My position as a Magajia and women's organizer gives me respect, I can enter 'big' places. My friends, family members, and people in Yendi love me. They always wave at me when I am passing. The position has given me a job and money

through loans from financial institutions. I get the chance to receive periodic training, while other women leaders are also privileged to further their education.

4.6.2. Benefits of politics and leadership to communities

Respondent were asked to share their views on the benefits of women's leadership to the people of Yendi in Northern Ghana. The following are the salient ones which were mentioned;

The first benefit is that, women's leadership creates role models for women and young girls which serve as source of inspiration and motivation for these young ones to study hard in school and aspire to follow the examples of those women who occupy various positions in their localities.

Similarly, the women leaders encourage parents to enroll their children in school. This particular point, according to the study contributes to over 50% of all the benefits derived from women's leadership by the people in the Yendi Municipality.

Also, it was pointed out that elite women provide advisory services to individuals who want to be like them in future to work hard and take their education seriously. In some cases, they fight for scholarships for girls in their communities, and even pay fees for needy children.

Additionally, it was explained that elite women fight for the rights of women and girls in their communities. They use their positions, exposure, and influences to advocate for changes in some of the negative cultural beliefs held by people in their societies. A staff member at the NCCE mentioned that some workshops are sometimes organized for elite women to achieve this kind of objective.

Furthermore, the study disclosed that elite women do lobby for social amenities such as water, toilets, lights, hospitals, schools, as well as loans from credit institutions for people in their

communities. During festivals, funerals, naming ceremonies, fasting, durbars, etc. elite women do invite companies, organizations, and individuals to come and support their communities in order to raise funds for developmental projects.

Finally, elite women have always organized skills training workshops and business seminars for women in their constituencies to acquire employable skills. Hon. S.A shared that she occasionally organized some skills training workshops for women in rural areas to learn how to make liquid soaps, tie and dye, foot-wear, and pomades to enable them get jobs and sustainable livelihoods.

Her challenge was that, after bearing the full cost of the training, some of the trainees do request for money from her after they have been provided with free skills.

4.6.3. Benefits of women's leadership to their countries

The study indicated that women leaders in the Yendi Municipality contribute their quota through decision-making and governance towards national development. Hajias, Magajias, female chiefs, and women's organizers for political parties were noted for their mobilization roles in their respective communities, and the Yendi Municipality as a whole. They also lobby for jobs at the regional and national levels for the youth in their communities to help reduce unemployment in the area.

Also, elite women sensitize young girls and other women to take part in decision-making processes in Ghana. The study gathered that individual elite women do report negative cultural practices in their areas to authorities for appropriate measures to be put in place to curb them.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, the study maintained that elite women in the study area have become role models to other women and young girls. They motivate young girls to work hard to become responsible leaders in future.

The Kpatu-Ya Na, in her conclusion remarks advised that, older women should mentor younger girls and encourage them to take their studies seriously. According to her, mentor-ship is the surest way to produce responsible women leaders for the Yendi Municipality in the near future.

4.6.4 Opportunities for elite women in the Yendi Municipality

Despite the numerous challenges faced by women leaders in the Yendi Municipality, the study identified some existing opportunities which could be utilized to enhance the position and operations of elite women in the Yendi Municipality.

Firstly, all the focused group discussions and interviews conducted mentioned the free Senior High School (SHS) policy, school feeding programme, and the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP) as the immediate accessible opportunities which could be utilized by women to uplift the state of their leadership positions. The respondents felt that those policies are capable of bridging some of the inequality gaps between men and women in the Municipality.

Secondly, some two women organizers (Honorable F.W & Z.A) admitted that they sometimes receive financial and technical support from Bonzali and Bahoba financial institutions, NGOs, NCCE, political parties, Christians and Muslim groupings, and family members. The findings revealed that, even though these resources are inadequate, they have been able to enhance the work of elite women in diverse ways towards the performance of their duties.

Thirdly, the 1/3 government appointees in the local government system of Ghana and the creation of women's wings among political parties in the Municipality were noted by the study as greater opportunities for all women in the Municipality. These give women the privilege to hold positions which they could not have won if they had contested for them. The study also advocated for the creation of some positions in the female chief ship system to engage more women to show interest in those traditional political systems.

Furthermore, Hon. I.A indicated that women are opened to all political, community, and religious leadership positions in the Yendi Municipality. According to him, there were no physical restrictions on women's leadership in Yendi, so any woman who qualifies and presents herself for any political position would be taken through the processes to become a leader.

Finally, the intermittent leadership seminars and training workshops that are organized by the NCCE, NGOs, and political parties for women were noted as essential ingredients for harnessing women's confidence and skills to actively take part in decision-making in all matters in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

A careful examination of the contributions and challenges of elite women in the field showed that different kinds of elite women face different challenges and dissimilar roles. Some of the challenges they face emanate from marriage, age, religion, educational, and economic statuses.

The study disclosed that there is a high level of participation in decision-making among female chiefs, wives of chiefs, and *Magajias*, in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana. However, there is a low representation among women in terms of the actual number of women who are found on decision-making bodies and structures of authority. For instance, during the study, there were only three women among the 45 assembly members in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

The findings revealed male dominance results in low participation and representation of women in decision-making. Sociocultural factors and religious beliefs were noted as the main barriers to women's decision-making and participation in leadership in the Yendi Municipality. It was shared that male dominance makes women feel sad, timid, useless, dependent, and rebellious.

The major challenges of all the elite women gathered in the field included; low levels of education, financial constraints, sociocultural and religious beliefs, lack of confidence, marital constraints, intimidation, and lack of appreciation. However, the greatest challenge of the female chiefs was high illiteracy rate.

5. 2 Major Findings

The study discovered that no woman has ever contested and won an assembly woman position in Yendi, unless those appointed by government as part of the 1/3 government appointees. There has never been a female Member of Parliament (MP), District Chief Executive (DCE) or a Municipal Chief Executive (MCE) in the history of the Yendi Municipality.

The research uncovered that most women who express interest in political activities sometimes divorce their husbands because their involvement in politics is likely to affect the stability of their marriages. They also do that to avoid accusations of infidelity and being tagged as prostitutes.

It came to light that the female chiefs and women in general did not go to war in the history of the Dagbon kingdom. It was indicated that if a woman saw warriors preparing to go for war in the past, it was interpreted as a sign of defeat for the chief and his warriors in the kingdom.

An interesting finding was also disclosed with regards to the wives of the Ya-Na and the number of chambers found in the palace. It was revealed every chamber in the Ya Na's palace has a specific function and a wife who occupies it and makes sure that role is executed.

For instance, the oldest or first wife (Gbanzaling) controls the internal affairs of the palace, the second wife (Katini) controls the room where enskinment takes place. The 3rd wife (Na-Paga) also looks after the purification room, while the fourth wife (Koyiba) occupies the fourth room which is closest to the Ya-Na and prepares him special food anytime he requests for it.

In-depth interviews showed that the involvement of elite women in decision-making builds their confidence levels, opens them to opportunities such as jobs, education, training workshops, and financial resources from Banks and NGOs.

In addition, it was explained that elite women, especially Magajias and Hajias who perform creditably in their respective women's associations get the opportunity to be elected as women organizers for political parties to mobilize women, funds, and supporters on behalf of those parties.

Furthermore, it was discovered that there is no queen mother in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana, especially among the Dagombas. The use of the concept "queen mother" for female chiefs in Northern Ghana is something that was found to have been copied from the cultures of the Akans and other ethnic groups in Southern Ghana.

It was gathered that no female Tindanas exist in Yendi, but a few of them are found in some rural areas who work under chiefs as priestesses. Their duty is to perform sacrifices for the chiefs.

It was disclosed that the positions of the female chief (Kpatu-Ya Na & Gundo-Na) are solely reserved for the older daughters (Princesses) of the Ya-Na. Additionally, it was mentioned that the Kpatu-Ya Na succeeds the Gundo-Na in the event that she passes on. In the same vein, the Kugulogu Na succeeds the Kpatu-Ya Na in case she also dies.

The study revealed that education, globalization, religion and technological advancement have caused massive changes in the roles of elite women in Yendi. These factors have made it possible to have women politicians, bankers, teachers, preachers, security personnel, administrators, nurses, journalists, seamstresses, restaurant operators, and traders in the area.

5.3 Conclusion

In a nutshell, the findings indicate that elite women such as the female chiefs and wives of chiefs have much more influence in decision-making in the Yendi Municipality than Magajias (for parties or women groups), Hajias, and Assembly women due to religious and cultural barriers.

The study discovered a low level of representation (actual number of women who occupy strategic leadership positions) among women in the Yendi Municipality. However, the number of women who participate in political activities such as rallies, party elections, assembly elections, and national elections was found to be high, but with little or no representation in most of these political processes where key decisions could be influenced.

Over 70% of responses from interviews indicated that the levels of women's participation in decision-making and politics are low in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana but women in the study area showed high enthusiasm towards political activities in general.

It was obvious that the contributions and challenges of elite women in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana, particularly those outside modern politics have not been given enough attention and seemed to be relegated to the background despite their multifaceted roles in the social and economic lives of their people.

Nonetheless, the following were gathered as some of the key contributions of elite women in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana; mobilizing women for community and party work, acting as role models, key advisers and agents of socialization for women and girls, lobbying for funds for market women, settlement of religious and marital disputes, pouring of libation and

performing of sacrifices, organizing skills training workshops for women, and contributing to funeral arrangements and planning of marriages in the mosque.

The study also identified a number of opportunities in the Yendi Municipality which have the potential of enhancing women's leadership in the Municipality. A few of these include the free Senior High School (SHS) policy, the national youth employment programme, women's quota systems in the district assembly system (1/3 government appointees), training workshops by NGOs and NCCE, financial support from Bonzali, and Bahoba financial institution.

Notwithstanding the above, women are generally subordinated by socio-cultural and religious beliefs such as male dominance, patriarchal systems, inheritance, juju, and so forth. These challenges cut across all decision-making processes of women, hence, the involvement of young women in community leadership, traditional governance, and politics has been quite low in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana.

Women empowerment was seen as an impetus to increasing their levels of equality, equity, welfare, access to resources, control, and power to effectively engage themselves in policy and major decision-making processes. By this, they would be able to shirk most of the negative socio-cultural and religious beliefs which affect them in many ways.

The study revealed that women's access to education could also be enhanced through their engagement in politics, decision-making and leadership. They get empowered through the creation of networks, platforms, and exposure to people and other training opportunities.

Finally, this research is not just an effort to add to the existing pool of scholarly works, but to serve as a reminder to writers that much is expected of them to investigate further and bring to

light the colossal contributions of less recognized women leaders who are outside formal leadership cycles. This will help channel their energies and consolidate them for national development.

5.4 Recommendations

It was recommended that government should make laws to protect the rights of all women and girls against negative socio-cultural and religious practices such as child marriages, male dominance, and patriarchy to increase women's access to information and empower them to actively take part in decision-making and other political processes.

Additionally, it was suggested that families, religious bodies, NGOs, political parties, and government should pool resources together earmarked to support all women leaders in the Municipality to strengthen them financially to be able to effectively perform their leadership responsibilities.

Also, parents are encouraged to send their girl child to school and make sure they are supervised and monitored to remain in school to complete a full course of study. Scholarship packages and mentor-ship systems must be provided for the needy, but brilliant girls to pursue higher education and to acquire knowledge and skills needed to fulfill their leadership potentials.

Moreover, it was recommended that training workshops and seminars should be organized periodically to educate, train, empower, encourage, and boost confidence levels of women to accept and offer themselves for leadership positions in the Yendi Municipality of Ghana.

Women are advised to accept leadership positions in schools, churches, and mosques in order to get the exposure, sharpen their skills, and prepare them for higher leadership opportunities in the future.

Finally, the study advises that women must be allowed by their husbands and family members to attend public fora and lead during public meetings in order to be encouraged to speak their minds on issues they deem inimical to their progress and development. Government, political parties and traditional authorities are also encouraged to reserve adequate slots in their administrative structures to be occupied by women.

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UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

MPHIL AFRICAN STUDIES

APPENDIX-A: QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is used to access information on the role of elite women in the Yendi Municipality. You are kindly required to answer the questions honestly as possible. You are assured of anonymity. Also, the information provided would only be used for academic purposes and would be treated with the greatest confidentiality.

Profile of respondents

1. Age:18-24 [] 25-34 [] 35-44 [] 45-54 [] 55-60+ []
2. Sex: Male [] Female []
3. Educational Status: Primary [] JHS [] SHS [] Tertiary [] None []
4. Religious Affiliation:
Christian [] Islam [] Traditionalist [] Others []
5. Marital Status: Single [] Married []

Category of respondents:

6. Which of the following positions do you hold?
Unit committee member [] Assembly member [] Traditional leader []
Political Party Executive member [] others [] specify.....

Assessment of people's knowledge and experiences about the level of women's representation/participation in community leadership

7. Do you have any knowledge about any women leaders who are not into modern politics, eg, *Magajias, Paunabas, Tindanas, Hajia*? Yes [] No []
8. When are women seen being active and taking part in political activities?
During Assembly elections [] National election [] Party Elections []
Others [] Specify.....
9. What is the current state of the participation of *Tindanas, Paunabas, Hajias, and Magajias* in traditional and local decision-making processes in the Yendi Municipality?

Very bad [] Bad [] Good [] Very Good []

10. What is the general level of women participation in politics in the Yendi Municipality?

Very low [] Low [] High [] Very high []

Contributions of women leaders in the past and present

11. Please mention some of the duties performed by each of the following women leaders in the past?

a. Gundo Na/Tindana (Female chief):

.....
.....
.....

b. Kpatu Ya Na /*Paunabas* (Female chief):

.....
.....
.....

c. Magajia:

.....
.....
.....

d. *Hajia*:

.....
.....
.....

e. Wives of chiefs

.....
.....
.....

12. Have you observed any new roles/duties that are performed by women these days?

Yes [] No []

13. If yes, what are some of the current duties/roles of women leaders in this Municipality (PROBE)?

.....
.....
.....

14. What do you think are some of the causes of the changes in the leadership roles of women currently experienced in the Municipality (PROBE)?

.....
.....
.....

Challenges of women involvement in decision-making/leadership/politics.

15. Who dominates most of the decisions that are taken at the household and community levels in this Municipality?

Males [] Females []

16. Under which cases/matters are women voices heard mostly in this community (PROBE)?

.....
.....
.....

17. Which factors determine what decisions that could be taken only by women in this Municipality?

.....
.....
.....

18. How does male dominance in decision-making affect women in sharing their concerns and opinions in this Municipality (PROBE)?

.....
.....
.....

19. What are some of the problems/challenges that prevent women from participating in decision-making and politics in this Municipality?

.....
.....
.....

Opportunities for women involvement in leadership positions

20. What benefits would women participation in politics and decision-making bring?

a. To themselves.....
.....
.....

b. To the communities.....
.....
.....

c. To the Nation.....
.....
.....

21. What opportunities exist for women to take part in politics in this Municipality?

.....
.....
.....

22. What are some of the ways that can be used to encourage women to participate actively in all forms of decision-making and politics in this Municipality (PROBE)?

.....
.....
.....

THANK YOU.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Which processes and factors are considered for a woman to qualify as the following:

- a. Gundo Na
- b. Kpatu-Ya Na
- c. Magajia
- d. Hajia
- e. Wife of a chief

2. Please give a brief history of each of the above positions?

- a. Gundo Na
- b. *Kpatu-Ya Na*
- c. *Magajia*
- d. *Hajia*
- e. *Wife of a chief*

3. How will you describe the relationship between women leaders and community members in this Municipality?

4. If a woman wants to vie or contest for any political position in this Municipality, what comments will you give about it?

5. What are some of the ways by which women could be encouraged to take part in politics in this Municipality?

APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Which roles/duties are performed by wives of chiefs in this Municipality?
2. Where exactly are they selected from?
3. Could you share your knowledge about anything you know concerning queen mothers in this community?
4. Are there any disagreements/conflicts among women leaders and community members as they perform their duties in this Municipality?
5. In your opinion, what are some of the roles of women leaders in the various political parties in this community?
6. What support do market women give to candidates and political parties during an election?
7. What are some of the factors that prevent women from taking part in politics and decision-making processes in this Municipality?
8. How should women be encouraged to accept leadership positions and take part in all political activities in the municipality?