

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

**ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE OF INCUMBENT GOVERNMENTS IN
GHANA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC**

By

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DECLARATION

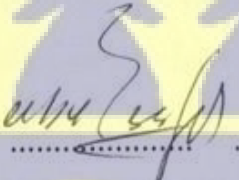
I thus declare that this thesis is the outcome of an original study that I carried out under the guidance of **Professor Abeeku Esuman-Johnson** with additional guidance from **Professor Isaac Owusu-Mensah**, whose insights and support have been invaluable. All citations and references to the works of others have been properly recognized. This dissertation has never been submitted, in whole or in part, for consideration for a degree at any other academic institution.

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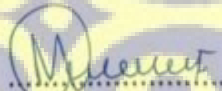
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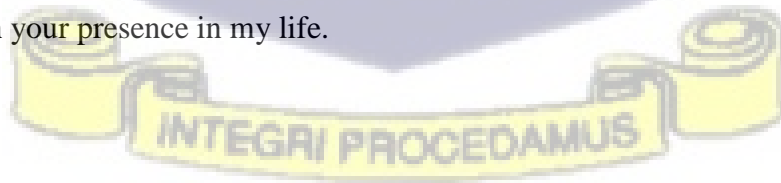
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ACEP	African Center for Economic Policy and Development
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
CEC	Central Polls Commission
CPP	Convention People's Party
FSHS	Free Senior High School
IDED	Institute for Democratic Development
IEA	Institute of Economic Affairs
LDPR	Liberal Democratic Party of Russia
NCD	National Commission on Democracy
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
NLM	National Liberation Movement
N.P.P	New Patriotic Party
NPP	Northern Peoples Party
PNDC	Provisional National Defense Council
PNP	People's National Party
PPP	Progressive People's Party
UGCC	United Gold Coast Convention



ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the electoral performance of incumbent governments in Ghana's Fourth Republic. Using a combination of survey data, qualitative data collection technique analyzed through content, the study investigates the key factors that influenced voters' decisions to either re-elect or reject the incumbent government. The analysis of voter decision factors across the 1996, 2004, 2012, and 2020 elections highlights evolving priorities in electoral outcomes. In 1996, economic management was the primary factor, followed by education, healthcare, infrastructure, and social welfare. In the 2004, healthcare, particularly the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), became a central issue, alongside education and economic management. In 2012, education, healthcare, and economic management remained key, with infrastructure development gaining importance. By 2020, education (notably the Free Senior High School initiative), economic management, healthcare, and infrastructure were crucial, reflecting the electorate's priorities in a post-pandemic context. The findings also indicate that voting behavior reveals strong but divided support for the incumbent government before the 2020 elections, with a majority supporting the government, a significant portion opposing it, and a notable number of undecided voters. Voter performance played a significant role, with most prioritizing the government's track record in their decisions. Voter sentiment showed a mix of support and calls for change, with economic issues, corruption, and governance concerns driving dissatisfaction and influencing the demand for effective leadership. Additionally, in the 2016 elections, poor economic performance, ineffective educational policies, inadequate infrastructure development, and corruption were primary factors in voters' decisions to vote out incumbent governments.

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Since the 1992 election that saw the establishment of the fourth republic in Ghana, the country has witnessed eight consecutive presidential and parliamentary elections that have helped to build its status as one of the most stable democracies of Africa. The political environment in Ghana is a stable two-party system that is still competitive as it is dominated by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The idea that the hegemony of these two parties can be attributed to the deep institutionalization, of the organization, and voter alignment trends, which developed during the last thirty years, has been long advocated by scholars like Ninsin (2006), Daddieh and Bob-Milliar (2012), and others. Although Ghana has a multiparty constitutional system, electoral politics always boil down to these two key parties, which defines the pattern of the incumbence performance and reelection.

The democratic reborn of Ghana was after a lengthy period of political unrest characterized by coups, dictatorship and the interim civilian government. This went on to initiate the revival of the multiparty politics in 1992 strongly affected by the internal mobilization of pro-democracy forces and the international call to democratize the African continent (Crawford, 2008). Rawlings who ruled Ghana since 1981 as a military leader under the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) finally transformed Ghana to a constitutional government in 1992, won the 1992 presidential elections, and later prepared as an incumbent in 1996. According to the literature on transitional democracies, incumbent control over state resources and electoral institutions frequently affects the creation of elections (Posner & Young, 2007) (Gyimah-Boadi, 2001; Posner and Young, 2007), and the same was the case with Ghana early elections.

This was further evidenced in the 1996 elections where incumbency advantage was very strong in Ghana. Although the opposition coordination was stronger and the electoral environment had improved, Rawlings still won with 57.4% of the valid votes and this was aided by the economic stabilization policies and the extended social programs. The credibility of the electoral process was boosted by the international donors putting in place large amount of electoral logistics like ballot boxes, communication network, and voter registration technology (Jefferies, 1993). Such investments are associated with a more open process but by no means even compensated structural benefits of incumbency, and the trend is similar to the larger studies of African democratization (Bleck and van de Walle, 2012; Lindberg and Morrison, 2008).

The 2000 elections were a historic achievement in democratization in Ghana as it was the first peaceful change of power between the NDC and the NPP. This was more or less in accordance with the theories of democratic consolidation which emphasise on alternation of executive power as one of the characteristic of democratic maturity (Gyimah-Boadi, 2001). With his victory, Kufuor brought on economic reforms, decentralization initiatives as well as social intervention programs that saw him reelected as an incumbent president in 2004. The 2004 elections, which were conducted with the help of a new voter register and a better electoral administration, also demonstrated the inclination of the voters to reward the incumbents in case the level of economic satisfaction and policy approval are relatively high (Lewis-Beck and Paldam, 2000; Harding, 2015).

In 2008, Ghana had the second alternation of power as Professor John Evans Atta Mills of the NDC won a close call over Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo of the NPP. This was a very competitive runoff election that followed the international trends where voters cast their ballot against an incumbent leader who is perceived to have no economic growth, increasing prices, or issues with his/her governance (Kiewiet & Rivers, 2013). The sudden death of Mills in 2012 led to constitutional succession of the Vice President John Dramani Mahama who went on to win

the 2012 presidential elections as an incumbent. Researchers observe that mid-term successions tend to produce a sense of incumbency advantage by fostering national sympathy, political continuity, and administrative control (Resnick and van de Walle, 2013) and these are the factors that played out in the 2012 race.

This changed in 2016 when the NPP became the winner over the NDC and it came back to power. Economic grievances, unemployment and perceptions of corruption became prominent determinants of voter behavior patterns, which agrees with economic theories of voting, that suggest that electorates are retrospective in their evaluation of incumbent on economic performance (Harding, 2015). The NPP government under president Nana Akufo-Addo came with some of the most significant social intervention programs including the Free Senior High School (FSHS) policy, One District One Factory (1D1F), and Planting for Food and Jobs. These policies played a significant role in influencing the electoral attitudes before the elections in 2020.

The elections in 2020 however unveiled a more polarizing electorate with more competition in the political arena and more voter suspicion on governance, public spending and the state of the economy. The incumbent NPP still won power, but the close calls and challenges in the Supreme Court denoted the changing nature of voter demands and the empowerment of the institutions, like the judiciary and Electoral Commission (Gyampo and Debrah, 2020). The last 2024 elections once again highlighted the importance of the socioeconomic performance, the trust of the people, and the credibility of the policy in shaping the future of the incumbent governments. The defeat of NPP and the revival of NDC under the leadership of John Dramani Mahama supported the decades-old academic findings that incumbents tend to be weak when people feel that their expectations or living standards are not met (Weghorst and Lindberg, 2013).

On the whole, the existing sources on elections in Ghana indicate that incumbency performance is determined by a mix of the economic performance, policy intervention, quality of governance,

and institutional credibility and expectations of voters. This paper thus seeks to discuss the political, economic, and social trends that have had historical influences on the electoral performance of the incumbent governments that have been in power in the course of the fourth republic. The research aims to enhance the insights of what makes incumbents either win or lose election in Ghana in the changing democracy by placing the electoral history of Ghana in wider comparative and theoretical contexts that rely on the works of the retrospective voting, public opinion, democratic consolidation and African political behavior.

1.2 Problem Statement

The central question of the study examines how Ghana, as an independent sovereign state has successfully supported three incumbent governments in maintaining office through two consecutive electoral cycles. Since the advent of Ghana's Fourth Republic in 1992, there have been three sitting presidents who have succeeded in winning two consecutive terms in power: Jerry Rawlings (1992– 2000), John Kufuor (2000–2008), and Nana Akufo-Addo (2016–2024). This trend becomes a troubling question of the dynamics upon which some incumbents are successful in holding power for two full terms and some are not.

It is worth getting to comprehend this phenomenon for many different reasons. First and foremost, there has been extensive documentation on the structural and resource-based incumbency benefits that accrue to ruling governments. In Ghana, domination of state media, access to public resources, and certain institutional privileges have rather been utilized in augmenting electoral success (Briggs, 2012). Yet research indicates that the advantage is not absolute; on other occasions, democratic resilience, rising opposition strength, and institutional protection reduced its impact (Cheeseman, Lynch, & Willis, 2017).

Second, economic performance is a strong determinant of the outcome of incumbent elections. Economic voting theory asserts that citizens tend to prefer governments that bring

economic growth, stability, and increasing living standards (Bratton, Bhavnani, & Chen, 2012). The trend is highly relevant in Ghana, where economic performance has been the key campaign agenda for decades and has the potential to break or make voters' decisions.

Third, clientelism and patronage remain a significant part of politics in Ghana. Politically loyal constituencies may be solidified by allocatively providing goods, services, or opportunities (Gyimah-Boadi & Prempeh, 2012; Ichino & Nathan, 2013). These tactics are not always decisive, however, particularly if public dissatisfaction with performance at the governance level is accorded priority over the worth of patronage. Besides, voting behaviour has fundamentally altered in the Fourth Republic. Even though ethnic and geographical loyalties still count, particularly in the rural constituencies, political allegiances of voters in the urban areas, especially the Greater Accra area, are more transactional in nature (Gyampo, 2018). Increasing independence in voting and more effective opposition campaign strategies could reduce the power of incumbency as the only determinant of election outcomes.

Despite these accounts, the precise combination of factors that enabled Rawlings, Kufuor, and Akufo-Addo to get two terms in office whereas others did not—remains under-explored. It remains indeterminate as to whether it was economic management, institutions, political strategy, or opposition weakness that ultimately determined the outcome of these elections. In light of the significance of comprehending the above factors, limited studies have comprehensively explored incumbent governments' electoral performance in Ghana. Available scholarship often centers on areas such as party politics, voter behavior, or election outcomes in general, without adequately uncovering the complex relationship involving incumbent's governance, political setting, and electoral success. Therefore, the problem the study addresses is the absence of a comprehensive explanation that is informed by empirical evidence for the conditions that allow some incumbent governments to achieve two-term electoral success in Ghana's Fourth Republic. In fact, filling this gap is important to make sense of the evolution of

Ghana's democracy, investigate the factors that tend to strengthen and weaken the competitiveness of elections, and meaningfully contribute to wider debates on democratic consolidation in emerging democracies.

In this regard the following vital questions will be considered:

1. What are the factors that influenced electoral victories of the individual incumbent governments in the 1996, 2004, 2012 and 2020 General Elections?
2. To what extent do voters act rationally based on perceived economic and social performance of incumbent governments?

1.3 Objective of the study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To identify the various factors that influenced the electoral victories of incumbent governments in Ghana since 1992.
2. Examine how political, social and economic performance has impacted the re-election of incumbent governments.
3. Analyze the theories about what incumbent regimes ought to do in order to retain power.

1.4 Rationale of the study

The systematic study of the electoral performance of incumbent governments in the fourth republic of Ghana is very essential because of the lack of scholarly interest on the topic of why only a few presidents have been able to attain two terms in their leadership as opposed to many others. Even though the current literature analyzes individual factors which affect economic voting, incumbency advantage, clientelism, and institutional considerations, the literature seldom combines these factors to attribute the actual tendencies of electoral resilience among Ghanaian incumbents. The rationale behind this study is hence due to closure of an important empirical and theoretical gap; it is the dynamics between political strategy, the governance performance, and

voter behaviour, the strength of opposition and the nature of the institutional processes in influencing the electoral outcomes of sitting governments. The Ghanaian example is one of the most interesting since it is a very stable democratic country in Africa, but there is a continuity and volatility in its electoral politics. The change of success of incumbents implies that it is not automatic or entirely reliant on the incumbency advantages or the macroeconomic indicators, to win the second term. An integrated study is needed to identify whether the two-term winning presidents had any special formula of economic management and political presentation, institutional advantage, coalition creation, or opposition drawbacks their respective counterparts did not have. Another reason why this study should be justified is to create knowledge that will support democratic governance, policy making and party strategy in Ghana. The research states the conditions that promote or deter electoral durability contributing to the scholarly discussion of democratic consolidation and at the same time to the practical knowledge of how incumbents can be able to stay legit, accountable and effective within competitive electoral settings.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study of the electoral performance of incumbent governments in Ghana's Fourth Republic is crucial for understanding the dynamics of political power and governance in the country. Ghana has maintained a relatively stable multi-party democracy since the advent of the Fourth Republic in 1992, with regular elections that have seen both incumbent governments and opposition parties vying for control. Analyzing the electoral performance of incumbent governments helps to understand how political incumbency influences the chances of re-election, the factors that contribute to electoral success or failure, and how incumbents use their tenure to either strengthen or weaken their electoral prospects.

Despite several studies conducted on Ghana's democratic development, there is limited empirical research focused particularly on the electoral performance of incumbent governments. Most existing studies centers on the broader dynamics of political parties or electoral systems in Ghana. However, the specific factors that influence an incumbent's electoral success or failure such as governance quality, economic performance, corruption, public service delivery, and political strategies remain underexplored. This study seeks to fill this gap by providing a focused analysis of how incumbent governments perform electorally across successive elections in Ghana's Fourth Republic.

One key significance of this study is its potential to contribute to the broader understanding of democratic consolidation in Ghana. By examining how incumbent governments perform in subsequent elections, researchers can identify the political, economic, and social factors that influence voter behavior and election outcomes. This is particularly relevant for assessing the health of Ghana's democracy and whether incumbent governments are effectively addressing the needs and expectations of the electorate. The study could also highlight patterns of political participation, voter loyalty, and the role of opposition parties in shaping electoral outcomes.

Furthermore, this research has implications for the effective management of electoral campaigns. Understanding the factors that determine the re-election of incumbents can guide political parties, candidates, and policymakers in designing more targeted and strategic electoral strategies. For example, the study could explore how economic performance, governance, and public policy decisions impact the electoral fortunes of incumbent governments. In a country like Ghana, socio-economic issues such as unemployment, poverty, and inflation play a critical role in election outcomes. By identifying the key determinants of electoral success for incumbent governments, the study will inform strategies for political campaigns and governance. Political

parties may use the insights to better understand voter expectations, the strengths and weaknesses of incumbent governments, and how to frame their policies to win electoral support.

Another important aspect of this research is its potential contribution to the understanding of political accountability in Ghana. If incumbents perform poorly in elections, it may signal a breakdown in the relationship between the government and the electorate, pointing to issues such as corruption, mismanagement, or a failure to meet citizens' expectations. It will explore the extent to which voters base their decisions on the accomplishments or failures of the sitting government. The study could therefore serve as a valuable tool for assessing how well incumbent governments are held accountable for their actions and the degree to which voters' perceptions of governance translate into electoral outcomes. It could also examine the impact of incumbency advantages, such as access to state resources, on electoral performance, contributing to debates on fairness and equity in Ghana's electoral system. The research will provide crucial insights into what factors most influence the electorate's judgment of the incumbent, whether it is economic growth, social development, political stability, or corruption scandals.

The electoral performance of incumbent governments is often a reflection of public confidence in governance institutions and public policy outcomes. This study could help policy makers and political analysts to better understand how governmental performance in areas like economic management, health, education, infrastructure, and the rule of law impact electoral outcomes. Ghana is considered one of the most stable democracies in West Africa, but the issue of electoral performance and incumbent legitimacy remains crucial in ensuring the continued growth of democracy. By studying the electoral performance of incumbent governments, this research could help reinforce the democratic process in Ghana. It will provide an analysis of how political transitions occur, whether through peaceful means or contested elections, and the role of incumbent governments in maintaining political stability

Moreover, this study could be instrumental in promoting good governance by highlighting areas where incumbent governments may be underperforming and providing actionable recommendations for improvement. The study could also contribute to the institutionalization of democracy in Ghana by emphasizing the importance of electoral accountability and the role of incumbent governments in fostering stable political transitions.

Lastly, this study can offer crucial inputs into the role of political institutions, such as the Electoral Commission and political parties, in shaping the electoral process. The study could reveal the extent to which institutional factors, such as electoral laws, party systems, and electoral management bodies, impact the success or failure of incumbent governments. This will not only contribute to the academic literature on political science and electoral studies but also offer practical recommendations for improving Ghana's electoral system and ensuring free, fair, and credible elections in the future.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study will focus on the electoral performance of incumbent governments in Ghana's Fourth Republic, specifically analyzing the 1996, 2004, 2012, and 2020 general elections. These elections serve as pivotal events in Ghana's democratic journey, offering valuable inputs into how incumbents perform under varying political, economic, and social conditions. The 1996 election, marking the first re-election attempt of a sitting president, will help establish the early patterns of incumbency in Ghana's democratic system. The 2004 election, where President John Kufuor successfully secured a second term, offers a significant case for understanding how incumbents consolidate power and gain voter trust.

The 2012 and 2020 elections will also provide depth by examining periods of transition of power and intense competition. The 2012 election, which saw President John Mahama secure

victory after the death of his predecessor, John Evans Atta Mills, and the 2020 election, a highly contested race between President Akufo-Addo and former President Mahama, will illustrate the challenges faced by incumbents in times of leadership change and heightened opposition. This study, therefore, will analyze how incumbents navigate political dynamics, the impact of governance on electoral outcomes, and the evolving relationship between the government and electorate in Ghana's Fourth Republic.

Additionally, this study will analyze the reasons behind the loss of the incumbent government in the 2016 Ghanaian general elections, exploring how political, economic, and social factors contributed to this outcome. The 2016 election, where President John Dramani Mahama lost to Nana Akufo-Addo, will be examined for its unique circumstances, including the economic difficulties faced by the Mahama administration, such as energy crises, high unemployment, and widespread public dissatisfaction with governance. The study will also explore the factors that contributed to Mahama's loss, as well as the shifting voter loyalty toward Akufo-Addo and the NPP. The study will also focus on the importance of the incumbent government to Ghanaian voters, examining how voters perceive the performance of the sitting government and how this perception shapes their voting decisions.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This section provides an understanding of how the thesis will be structured. The study is organized as follows:

Chapter One (1): Introduction

This chapter of this study is the general introduction and background to the study. It provides the background of the political economy of elections in addition to putting the entire study into context.

Chapter Two (2): Literature Review

Chapter 2 presents a review of relevant literature, focusing on existing studies about electoral performance, incumbency, and factors influencing voter behavior, both in Ghana and in broader global contexts. It will provide an examination of previous research, highlighting the theoretical and empirical findings on what drives voter decisions and the electoral success or failure of incumbents.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical underpinnings which form the basis for conducting this study and interpreting the research findings. This chapter highlights a variety of theoretical approaches used to gain a better understanding of a topic of research. Furthermore, this chapter demonstrates how theories have been used in this research.

Chapter Three (3): Methodology

This is the profile of the study area, study philosophy and research methodology adopted for this study as well as description of the entire research process. It describes the kind and nature of data collected at various stages of the research. The techniques of data analysis and model specification adopted are then discussed and justified as well as the procedures involved in the collection and analysis of the data.

Chapter Four (4): Presentation of Data

This chapter uses the raw data collected in the field in a systematic descriptive format. It begins with a biographical outline of the respondents: age, gender, education, occupation, and political party to situate the primary data. The organization follows the research questions or the emerging themes from the instrument employed. There is no interpretation here; rather, attention is given to clearly presenting the data gathered via questionnaire and survey.

Chapter Five (5): Analysis of the Findings

The information presented in Chapter 4 is in this chapter analyzed and interpreted critically against the theoretical and conceptual lenses presented in Chapter 2. Patterns, relationships, and trends in the data are addressed in light of the research questions. Implications of the findings are addressed in this chapter, as well as a contextualization of the findings in light of previous literature, highlighting areas of convergence and divergence. The analysis attempts to present a multifaceted view of voter trends, incumbency impact, and electoral results based on empirical evidence.

Chapter Six (6): Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter summarizes the findings presented in Chapter 4, draw conclusions based on the data analysis, and offer recommendations based on the study's outcomes.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter of the study included all pertinent and related written works by different scholars.

The section perused the literature on the electoral performance of incumbent governments. There are four sections to it. The first section commences with discussions of the conceptual framework that underpins this study. The subsequent section focuses on the discussion in the empirical literature by emphasizing on cases of incumbent advantages internationally especially in Europe, and America. The next section centers on Africa. The last section of the literature draws on the historical evolution of Ghana and the incumbent governments since the beginning of the Fourth Republic.

2.2 Global Electoral Performance and Challenges of Incumbent Governments

The majority of the literature has been on well-established democracies with frequent transfers of power. In contrast, the research on this relationship is scarce in nations with dominant-party systems, where a single political party consistently wins the majority of seats and frequent changes in power (Ng, Vaithilingam, Lee, & Rangel, 2022). In a democratic system of government, there must be active political parties and legitimate elections and both are necessary for a representative democracy to function (Addae & Meissner, 2021). Democracy is strengthened and promoted when elections within a political party are conducted well. Elections have become a common feature of many governments worldwide in the past few years (Roussias & Ruiz-Rufino, 2018). These elections give regular people the chance to influence decisions that impact their lives and hold elected officials accountable for the outcomes in democracies across the globe (Allan & Rieu-Clarke, 2010). This is the case because the people who live in a

democracy that is in operation give the government its authority and legitimacy since they have the sovereign right to choose representatives who will answer to them.

It is commonly acknowledged that governments in power may employ several strategies, such as discretionary expenditure, to improve their prospects of winning re-election in democracies (Lami, Imami, Pugh, & Hashi, 2021). The incumbent may take other options into consideration in light of any financial constraints (such as a high debt load). One such method that is vulnerable to manipulation by incumbents during elections is tax collection performance, especially in transitional nations with weak institutional frameworks. According to Harold Wilson, former British Prime Minister, "All political history shows that the standing of a Government and its ability to hold the confidence of the electorate at a General election depend on the success of its economic policy" (Dalton, 2004).

Elections are understood by politicians, political analysts, and social scientists alike to be referendums on the state of the economy. It is believed that during times of economic growth, voters will praise the government while during recessions they will penalize it. Numerous empirical studies have been conducted on this more or less universal "truth," with students attempting to identify the variables that are most pertinent to the economic vote. Furthermore, economic considerations are not the only ones that affect incumbent parties' electoral chances. Election performance varies depending on system-specific factors like the kind of administration, significant occurrences, and shifts in the political landscape of political parties, according to systematic research conducted across national boundaries (Narud & Valen, 2008). The key question is what political and economic environments are most likely to influence the outcome of the economic vote.

According to the theory underlying the "negative incumbency effect" concept, voters evaluate ruling parties based on their past performance (Fiorina, 1981). When it comes to keeping

promises and delivering on them, ruling parties can be held to higher standards than opposition ones. Therefore, holding office could be detrimental to getting votes. In fact, this presumption contradicts the effect of incumbency that has been postulated in the United States, where it would be more likely that someone would exploit his or her position (Cronin, 1980).

On the other hand, elections may not always result in changes to the government, but they can easily lead to the expulsion of the incumbent from cabinet if their internal support declines. Voters are paying attention to how well their government is performing when incumbents win or lose (Barreiro, 2004). The evidence on the accountability of democracies is inconclusive. Many empirical studies have looked into whether or not government's party faces consequences when things go wrong, but the results are not entirely clear. The majority of study focuses on how the economy affects electoral support and demonstrates that as economic indicators worsen, voters punish the incumbent. Usually, incumbents have an electoral edge in elections. It might be challenging to try to unseat an incumbent or change the party in control of a seat. Typically, incumbents have an advantage when it comes to funding, brand awareness, and prior policy work, to mention a few (Reynolds, 2022).

One's chances are much enhanced if he or she is an elected incumbent seeking reelection. In the United States, of the fourteen presidents running for re-election to the White House between 1936 and 2012, eleven were re-elected (Drutman, 2023). Also, there have been twenty-two U.S. presidents have been elected to two terms in office and this comprised of four men who succeeded the outgoing president after his death and went on to win independent elections. Additionally, thirteen U.S presidents have served two full terms, including Franklin D. Roosevelt, who served four terms. Other notable presidents include George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Grover Cleveland, James Madison, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, Ulysses S. Grant, Woodrow Wilson, Dwight Eisenhower, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush (Stark, 2012). Barack Obama was the recent president of the U.S who served two terms. In the six U.S

Statehouse election campaigns that ran from 2012 to 2022, incumbents have prevailed in almost 97% of the cases in which they have been listed on the ballots for primary and general elections (Smith, 2023). According to Morison & Browne (2023), in the last three federal elections in the United States, an average of 90% of incumbent MPs have retained their seats, with only eleven losing to independent or minor party challengers, out of 398 who contested their seats.

Also in the United States, 95% of the Senate and House of Representatives incumbents who ran for re-election in 2018 came out successful in their bid which was similar to the 2020 elections, where a large number of incumbents comfortably won reelection, frequently with larger percentages than the presidential candidate of their party. For example, longtime Republican senator Susan Collins easily won re-election in Maine even though Trump lost to Biden in the state poll. The perks of being in office are numerous. In the Kremlin, Vladimir Putin has held power for twenty-four years either as President or Prime Minister in Russia, beginning in 1999 after succeeding Boris Yeltsin, who resigned (The Associated Press, 2024). He ruled the country for eight years (two terms) before he was appointed prime minister by Dmitry Medvedev after he was barred from running for a third consecutive term by the constitution. In 2012, Putin was elected for a new six-year term, governed by constitutional changes he engineered. Putin remains Russia's political leader.

However, many incumbent governments have lost incumbency through elections in the United States of America. Ten of the forty-five presidents who predated Biden, according to The Washington Post, did not succeed in their bids for re-election, and three others decided to serve just one term (Alpert, Clemon, & Schmitt, 2024). John Adams, the 2nd president of the United States, was the first incumbent president to lose re-election. Adams was chosen to succeed George Washington as a result of his distinguished career as a lawyer and diplomat. However, a slew of scandals, like his endorsement of the Sedition and Alien Acts, which was most viewed as violating the First Amendment, damaged his reputation, and in 1800 he lost to Thomas

Jefferson in a particularly heated contest (The White House, 2022). The late George Herbert Walker Bush, former U.S. President, lost the race for re-election to retain his position as incumbent despite having just served one term (Kelly, 2018). Donald Trump, the 45th United States President, was elected into office, serving from 2017 to 2021. He lost to Joe Biden of the Democratic Party, who was Vice President to Barack Obama from 2009 to 2017. Despite having power and state resources at his disposal, he managed 47% of the popular votes cast and lost his incumbency to Joe Biden, who took over as the 46th United States President. Trump stated that widespread corruption was the reason for Biden's victory, but numerous unsuccessful lawsuits challenging the election results and later state audits disprove his claim (Feldman, 2020).

The then incumbent Governor of Irkutsk Oblast' United Russia party, Sergey Eroshchenko, was defeated in a run-off election by Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) member Sergey Levchenko on September 27, 2015. Levchenko was an experienced politician who had previously run for Governor and won. Because of infighting within the ruling class, the race for Governor has tightened (Kynev, 2020). In addition, the growing participation in the second round was seen as a contributing factor to the incumbent's loss since it was believed that the incumbent's team had not campaigned actively enough or successfully accounted for the electoral dynamics. Therefore, Sergey Eroshchenko, the sitting Governor, received 41.46 percent of the vote while Sergey Levchenko, the challenger, received 56.39 percent of the vote ("Dosrochnyye Vybory..." 2015).

2.3 Electoral Outcomes and Performance of Incumbent Governments in Africa

The most visible feature of democratic institutions is elections. These days, almost all of Africa's nations hold regular elections, and several agreements, like the African Union's African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance; ostensibly bind the continent's nations to

electoral democracy (Ronceray & Byiers, 2019). Africa since the mid to the late 19th century has experienced European takeover and rule. Various European countries, such as the Netherlands, Portugal, Great Britain and France have all had colonies in Africa, with the French and British having the most colonies. Great Britain colonized countries such as Egypt, Zambia, Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone, among others. The French also had Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Ivory Coast among others under their rule and control. African countries started seeking liberation and independence in the late 1950s, with Ghana and Nigeria among the early independence-gaining countries.

Although after independence in almost all the African countries, there have been several military coups overthrowing civilian governments; democracy has been a common practice that cuts across most of the countries. This means that the majority of the countries wanted freedom from colonial oppression and a system of rule where the people could elect their own leaders who would govern them and also participate in governance and decision-making. The process of electing their leaders mainly consisted of general elections and elections through the Electoral College. These elections have had various impacts on various governments in power, either to continue ruling or leave office.

Depending on the constitutional provisions that exist in a country, a president may govern for a stipulated number of terms and years. In Ghana, for instance, a president is constitutionally permitted to rule for two terms consisting; four years under each term. The prevalent depiction of African politics as "semi-authoritarian" and "neo-patrimonial" suggests that those in power have the ability to consistently influence the political system for their personal gain. Africa, just like on the global front, has had its rollercoaster of electoral output. There is countless evidence backing the fact that incumbent governments have failed and others have succeeded in maintaining incumbency. The performance of incumbent governments has seen

victories and defeats; that is to say, it is not automatic for an incumbent government with all state assets and finances to win elections.

According to Awojobi (2016), in Nigeria's presidential election history, the issue of incumbency is not alien, as it has demonstrated that sitting presidents are capable of winning re-election. Tafawa Balewa for instance, served as head of government of the Nigerian government in 1960 and was re-elected in 1964, Shehu Shagari became the first executive president in 1979 and was re-elected in 1983, and Olusegun Obasanjo of the People's Democratic Party, served as president in 1999, stood again as incumbent president in 2003, won the elections, retained incumbency, ruled for a second term, and ended his tenure in 2007 (Awojobi, 2016). In the same vein, Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressive Congress was first elected democratically as President of Nigeria in the 2015 general elections and stood for a second term in 2019 in his bid to retain incumbency, which was successful. It is important to note that Buhari, then president of the Supreme Military Council, was president of Nigeria for less than two years through a military coup on December 31, 1983. His election as President of Nigeria in 2015 and 2019 were through democratic general elections.

Liberia is the most recent example of an incumbent president in Africa whose performance has been assessed by citizens via General Elections. Per the Liberian constitution, a president is eligible to serve two terms consisting six years each. Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf served two terms before handing over to George Opong Weah who served as the 25th President of Liberia and contested for a second term as incumbent in the November 2023 General Elections and lost to opposition leader Joseph Boakai who is now the newly Elected President of Liberia. In this regard, the incumbent President lost incumbency after losing a re-election bid.

In South Africa, Thabo Mbeki who was the second post-apartheid President of South Africa after Nelson Mandela was elected into office on 14th June 1999 and finished his first tenure

in 2004 and was re-elected for a second term and resigned on 24th September 2008. He was previously the Vice President under President Nelson Mandela from 1994 to 1999. Once again, incumbent victory comes to play, as he was able to retain his political power as President of South Africa. Jacob Zuma, the fourth President of South Africa also was able to retain incumbency just as former President Mbeki did. President Jacob Zuma was elected President on 9th May 2009 and finished his first term and stood again for re-election in 2014 and he resigned in February 2018 following allegations of corruption. He was also successful in retaining incumbency just as Thabo Mbeki did.

According to Gyekye-Jandoh (2014), since 1991, the quality of multiparty elections in certain African nations has substantially improved, especially within the scope of free and fair elections, with the most recent exceptions being Kenya and Zimbabwe. The key evidence has been a decline in government attempts to stifle and penalize political opponents. The opposition's leaders, parties, and supporters now have more leeway to organize for the next elections and mount successful campaigns. Election observers, both domestic and international are now according to Barkan (2003), a crucial element of the process. Voter turnout in the third category has been very high, according to Bratton (1998), reaching as high as two-thirds of registered voters and even more in exceptional cases. Most Africans now agree that authoritarian rule and military rule are things of the past, and there is broad support for democracy and elections throughout the continent as a result (Gyekye-Jandoh, 2014). The vast majority of Africans (69%) agree that democracy is "preferable to any other kind of government," while only 13% agree, "in certain situations, a non-democratic government can be preferable" (Afrobarometer 2001; Barkan 2003). This survey was conducted between 1999 and 2001 and included responses from citizens of 12 African countries.

In Kenya, Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta son of the first Kenyan President Jomo Kenyatta served as the Fourth President from 2013 to 2022. After his victory in 2013, he was re-elected

for a second and final term in August 2017 winning 54% of the popular votes cast. However after his victory was formally declared by on national television by the Chairperson (Wafula Chebukati) of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IBEC), the results were challenged in the Supreme Court of the land by Opposition Raila Odinga and the court ruled the results be annulled and elections re-taken within 60 days which he won with 39% of electoral voter participation. He successfully retained incumbency although his initial victory was declared “null and void”, he won the newly held elections with a relatively lower win percentage.

Some scholars disagree with the hopeful forecasts made by records of multiparty elections in Africa (Herbst 2001; Levitsky and Way 2001; 2002; Ottaway 1997). According to Herbst (2001: p. 363), the degree to which elections are held or the number of times a political party has taken power in a given African country may be used to classify the continent's democracy into one of three phases. That is; there are governments that don't have elections, governments with just one party in control, and multiparty democracies that have two power transfers. According to his findings, twenty-two out of forty-eight African countries have "multiparty elections but no transfer of power."

While countries like Uganda, Eritrea, and Somalia had never had multiparty elections before 2005 (Herbst 2001: p. 366), countries like Benin, Madagascar, Mali, and Mauritius have all witnessed two power transitions (in which incumbents were ousted) via multiparty elections (Gyekye-Jandoh, 2006; 2014). However, Comoros fell into decline after holding a single massive election in April 1999 and then experiencing a coup a month later (Herbst 2001: p. When Robert Guei successfully staged a coup in Ivory Coast in 1999, a similar argument might be made.

According to Herbst (2001), many Liberians supported Charles Taylor in 1997 because they were afraid he would spark civil war if he lost. Gyekye-Jandoh (2014) rebuts this pessimism by claiming that the relatively peaceful and transparent elections that led to Ellen Johnson-

Sirleaf's victory as president in November 2005 had restored faith in the electoral process. Because voting without selecting has resulted in "choice-less democracies" (Mkandawire 1999), a renaissance of "illiberalism" (Zakaria 1997; Gyimah-Boadi 2001), or "Free and fair competitive electorates," some academics have used the opportunity presented by the disputed Kenyan elections in December 2007 and the Zimbabwean catastrophe that began with the general election that took place on March 29, 2008 to assume pessimistic appraisal.

2.4 Changes in African Democracy between 1991 and 2021

In Africa's multi-party democracies, defeating incumbent presidents was relatively common in the 1990s but became uncommon in the 2000s as incumbents, who had a larger advantage over their rivals, frequently achieved re-election (Bleck & van de Walle, 2018). This seemingly unbreakable power of incumbents led African political scientists to refocus their research from party turnover to the relationship between democratization and elections. A large body of research on this "second wave" of turnovers contends that elections in which the incumbent, limited by term limitations, is not running for re-election are more likely to result in political upheaval (Beardsworth, Siachiwenab, & Sishuwa, 2022). The most notable expression of this viewpoint came from Cheeseman (2010), who contended that given that open-seat elections are frequently more democratic and equitable and because they provide threats to ruling parties, they are more inclined to produce opposition triumphs in sub-Saharan Africa.

Since the 1990s, African incumbents have used international alliances and law enforcement to thwart further democratization, resulting in what they refer to as anaemic or static democratization on the continent (Arriola, Rakner, & van de Walle, 2023). However, their research of the entire continent using V-Dem data hides a wide range of democratic backsliding including autocratization and coups as well as surprising democratic victories at the polls in

places like The Gambia (Beardsworth, Siachiwenab, & Sishuwa, 2022). They describe the methods by which incumbent advantage prevents more democratization but they fail to provide theories on how to get beyond these advantages.

Therefore, it may be time to think more thoughtfully about the probable restrictions on incumbent status or under what circumstances incumbents are not as likely to be successful at the polls, in light of the unanticipated triumphs by candidates from the opposition against incumbents in presidential elections in Cote d'Ivoire (2010), Zambia (2011), Senegal (2012), Nigeria (2015), Ghana (2016), The Gambia (2016), Sierra Leone (2018), and, in recent years, in Malawi (2020), Seychelles (2020), Zambia (2021), and Liberia (2023).

There has been ample evidence over the past four years of an overall downturn in African democracy. The Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia, Sao Tome and Principe, and Sudan have all seen coup attempts since 2020, and there have been two successful coups in Mali and Burkina Faso, as well as one in Guinea and Sudan (Beardsworth, Siachiwenab, & Sishuwa, 2022). Concurrently, during the COVID-19 epidemic, leaders in Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire were elected to third mandates that were not legitimate. Elections were held during this time in Malawi, the Seychelles, and Zambia, where an incumbent was defeated.

According to Beardsworth et al. (2022), the most notable thing about the most recent revolutions in Africa is that they happened in elections where the party in power fielded an incumbent candidate and in highly unfavorable authoritarian settings, made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, for the opposition. In the years preceding their most recent national elections, Malawi and Zambia, like other nations on the continent, faced a fair share of democratic obstacles.

Beardsworth et al (2022) reports that between 1991 and 2021, twenty-five out of forty-six Sub-Saharan African countries experienced fifty power turnovers, indicating that twenty-one

countries have not experienced a peaceful transition from the ruling party to the opposition. Of all the turnovers that took place between 2000 and 2021, 64% (23) happened in nations that had previously undergone a transfer of power, whereas 36% (13) happened for the very first time during the 21st century. Between 2010 and 2021, twenty-two power transfers occurred in declining democracies, with only 27% occurring in countries with no previous turnover. Only Guinea, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Nigeria, Comoros, The Gambia, and Seychelles experienced their first democratic transition via the ballot box, after opposition candidate defeated incumbent presidents (Beardsworth, Siachiwenab, & Sishuwa, 2022). In eleven transition countries, sixteen elections resulted in turnovers. Incumbents were defeated eight times in these elections with eight of them being open-seat elections.

2.5 The Waning Influence of the Incumbent's Advantage in Africa

Since the early 1990s, the idea that regular multiparty elections would lead to democratization has not been proven true. Incumbents still benefit from disparities in access to financial resources, media, and state institutions, disadvantaging opposition parties. This demonstrates that incumbency has its limits and that more countries have experienced turnovers since 2010, despite the recent decline in democracy.

The party system growth in Africa during the multiparty era took off in several countries nearly a decade and a half after transitions to democracy. The alliances formed to topple one-party regimes led to opposition to new parties in power being concentrated within dominant parties rather than outside them, following the transitions to multiparty politics in the 1990s (Beardsworth, Siachiwenab, & Sishuwa, 2022). The realization that the incumbents, the majority of whom were chosen by popular vote, participated in the subsequent round of democratic elections in the middle of the 1990s indicated that potential successors decided to postpone their

goals and stick with the ruling party in an effort to gain more influence. Competitive politics did not resurface across multiple African nations until the beginning of the twenty-first century. The political landscape has shifted due to poorly managed successions, resulting in the exodus of political elites from ruling parties. These elites formed opposition parties, but it was not until the 2010s that they could pose a significant threat or even win power from incumbents, influenced by both internal and external factors (Beardsworth, Siachiwenab, & Sishuwa, 2022).

Beardsworth et al (2022) further highlight that the economic instability of African nations due to their one-party state system, which had previously been in place, was a significant threat to alternation and competitive politics before the 2010s, as their economies were in unstable conditions. The transition from a government-run to a free-market economy, coupled with the ruling class's calls for tolerance, led to the decline of organized labor and the loss of tens of thousands of civil service jobs in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Fraser & Larmer, 2010). Large numbers of urbanites with similar social demands arose as a result of this shifting economic landscape, and these individuals eventually formed the political foundation of populist politicians many of whom had ties to the ruling parties who were looking to unseat incumbents (Resnick, 2013).

According to Beardsworth et al (2022), the media landscape has changed over the years, with the state's monopoly on media ownership and control being challenged by new political leaders who opened the industry to private players as part of their commitment to democratic reforms. Independent newspapers and community radio stations collapsed, and by the early 2000s, the media landscape in Africa was dominated by state-run publications and broadcasting stations. However, the late 2000s saw the rise of social media, complementing private media, changing the landscape. Both of these platforms have played a crucial role in promoting opposition voices, increasing alternative information consumption, and challenging the power of incumbent parties in electoral contests (Lynch & Gadjanova, 2023).

Civil society's role in Africa's second decade of multiparty democracy was primarily focused on holding the executive branch accountable, focusing on public accountability, constitutional reform, and respecting presidential term limits (Sishuwa S., 2020). In the 2000s, civil society collaborated with electoral bodies to build trust in the electoral process, raise voter awareness, and implement robust measures to monitor competitive elections and prevent election rigging or manipulation (Beardsworth, Siachiwenab, & Sishuwa, 2022). Civil society's role in alternation was evident in recent elections in Malawi and Zambia, where non-state actors prioritized vote protection through parallel vote tabulation, ensuring transparency and exposing any manipulation at polling station level (Sishuwa & Cheeseman, 2021). Per Beardsworth et al (2022), civil groups in Kenya, Malawi, and Zambia have initiated court cases against state power abuse, rule of law erosion, and human rights violations. These cases not only raise voter awareness but also highlight the erosion of democracy and delegitimize authoritarian ruling parties.

2.6 Historical Analysis of Incumbent Governments in Ghana's Fourth Republic

Most third wave democratic nations around the world have found the transition to democracy to be an intricate and challenging process. Ghana, one of Africa's more recent and prospective democracies, has garnered praise for its democratic practices and ability to hold well-run elections (Arah, 2023). Before that, in 1957, Ghana emerged as the inaugural African nation south of the Sahara to attain independence and self-governance from the British colonial administration. Ghana's Fourth Republic, which began in January 1993, has witnessed and prides itself with nine (9) successful, peaceful, free, fair, and transparent Presidential elections, with three incumbent governments successfully winning re-election and one being defeated. Ghana has become an outstanding representation of democracy in West Africa as a result of these successful presidential and national elections, as well as the changes in governments that occurred between 1992 and 2020 (Idun, 2021).

2.7 Historical Evolution of Ghana before the Fourth Republic

Ghana is a state in sub-Saharan Africa that has abundant natural resources. Ghana uses a "constitutional-democracy" that combines elements of British parliamentary history with the American presidential system. The 1992 Constitution of the nation created the Judiciary, Legislature, and Executive following the idea of separation of powers, although Ghana functions under a unitary government, unlike the United States of America (Miller, Vandome, & McBrewster, 2009). While the President of the country has actual Executive powers, the Judiciary is granted judicial powers under the constitution, with the Chief Justice serving as its head. When making a crucial decision, the President seeks input from the Council of State in a number of ways.

Perpetual incumbency in leadership has been a defining feature of African politics. This was true during the decades leading to independence, when a number of presidents enjoyed unchecked power. Ghana's democratic history has seen several highly intriguing dynamics and conundrums as a result of incumbency. As Ghana moved from colonial power to independence as a sovereign nation-state in the 1950s, political parties played a crucial role in the democratic politics of the country. Eight political parties were formed at the time to run in the pre-independence elections from 1954 to 1957 (Yobo & Gyampo, 2015).

The political parties at that time that were active and engaged in vibrant struggle with the British colonial power for independence included the Convention People's Party (C.P.P) led by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and the United Gold Coast Convention (U.G.C.C) led by prominent lawyers and businessmen in the persons of J.B. Danquah, Edward Akuffo-Addo, Obetsebi-Lamprey, Ako-Adjei, and William Ofori Atta who later became the big six including Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. Other vibrant political parties were the National Liberation Movement (N.L.M) and the Northern People's Party (N.P.P). The identities and ideas that characterize these political parties differ. Some of the parties retained their religious or supranational identities, while others

were established to convey sub-national, ethnic, or geographical identities (Nam-Katoti, Doku, Abor, & Quartey, 2011).

Ghana declared a Republic on July 1, 1960, under Dr. Nkrumah's first presidency. However, after nearly a decade of one-party rule, the C.P.P government was overthrown in a military coup on February 24, 1966 led by Kotoka (Yobo & Gyampo, 2015). There have been several political developments and changes in the country ever since the first coup in 1966. Between 1966 and 1992, Ghana experienced five military regimes and two short civilian periods, with multiparty elections held in 1969 and 1979. Following these elections, the People National Party (.PN.P) led by Dr. Hilla Limann was in power from 1979 to 1981, while Prime Minister K. A. Busia and President Edward Akuffo Addo led the Progress Party administration from 1969 to 1972. The PNP's 23-month dominance came to a sudden end on December 31, 1981, when Flt Lt. John Rawlings assumed command (Yobo & Gyampo, 2015). Before the 1992 Constitution was enacted, Rawlings and his Provisional National Defense Council (P.N.D.C) dominated Ghana for the next ten years, until political diversity was once again allowed (Yakohene, 2009).

2.8 Political History of Ghana's Fourth Republic

Several political experts due to its democratically elected government and successful national elections have dubbed Ghana a model of democratic governance in West Africa. Following its restoration to constitutional rule in 1992, Ghana's democratic governance has improved somewhat, which has helped the nation's standing as a democratic nation flourish (Salihu, 2019). The incumbency situation has had a worldwide reception and Ghana is indifferent. In Ghana, under the Fourth Republic, incumbent re-election has been more common than not. All incumbent governments have retained incumbency, but not all incumbent presidents have retained incumbency.

In 1992, a decision was made to return Ghana to multi-party constitutional governance following over ten years of military dictatorship. The National Democratic Congress (N.D.C), led by military veteran turned civilian leader Rawlings, replaced the military-run Provisional National Defense Council (P.N.D.C) administration in the same year in order to run in the 1992 national general elections. Three main actions were taken in 1992, according to Frempong (2017), to put Ghana back under constitutional governance. The first was the adoption of a new constitution through a referendum in April of that year. The 1992 constitution established a presidential form of government in Ghana, with the president serving as both the head of state and the head of government and the parliament as the body in charge of the legislation. According to available records, the P.N.D.C assigned the National Commission on Democracy (N.C.D) to gather public opinion in each of Ghana's ten regions. These opinions were brought before the Consultative Assembly, which affirmed them in order to remove the prohibition on political party creation and make way for the November 1992 presidential and December 1992 legislative elections, respectively.

In spite of numerous agitations by the opposition parties, the N.D.C led by J.J. Rawlings, is known to have won the 1992 general elections with a massive proportion of (58.3%) to form government (Prempeh, 2018). The main opposition at the time, the New Patriotic Party, claimed that the P.N.D.C, which subsequently changed its name to the N.D.C, had deliberately rigged the election results. In 1996, the N.D.C, led by Rawlings again, solidified its win to hold onto the position of government by being re-elected with 57% of the popular vote, winning 133 out of 200 seats in Parliament (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 1997). Several factors influenced the choices of voting for his re-election into office.

Ghana experienced an inaugural change of administration in 2000 when John Agyekum Kuffour, the N.P.P's 1996 election loser, defeated the incumbent N.D.C led by vice president John Evans Atta Mills, in the second round of voting, taking 56.9% of the vote against 43.1%

(Prempeh, 2018). When the incumbent president, John Agyekum Kuffour, won the 2004 general elections, the N.P.P also kept the seat and retained incumbency. When the two main parties, the N.D.C and the N.P.P, peacefully switched places in 2008, Ghana achieved what Huntington has referred to as the "Two-turn-over-Test" (Prempeh, 2018). With a narrow margin of 50.2%, the N.D.C, led by the same candidate in the 2000 and 2004 elections, defeated the incumbent N.P.P government who had a new flag-bearer (49.8%) in the run-off in the 2008 elections. The new flag-bearer, Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo Addo, was the Attorney General and Minister of Foreign Affairs during the John Agyekum-led administration from 2000 to 2008.

The first episode that altered Ghana's electoral dynamics happened in July 2012 when the country's president, John Evan Atta Mills, passed away five months to the December polls after a short illness. John Dramani Mahama, the vice president in office, was then sworn in as the country's substantive president in accordance with the provisions of Ghana's 1992 constitution. Prior to the 2012 general election, the N.D.C kept John Mahama in order to challenge seasoned N.P.P flag-bearer Nana Akuffo Addo, who was making his second trip to "the shrine." The election was won by the N.D.C by a narrow margin of 50.7%. The outcome was eventually put to the test at the Ghanaian Supreme Court when the embittered N.P.P filed the well-known 2012 election petition seeking justice. The court's decision upheld the earlier declaration by the Electoral Commission of Ghana that Candidate John Dramani Mahama had won the election.

This action taken by the N.P.P to channel their grievances on the electoral action to the court was a significant step toward Ghana's democratic consolidation, according to some political analysts, mainly because the party that had been wronged chose to use the legal system rather than resorting to violence. Both domestic and foreign actors and organizations praised Nana Akuffo Addo and the New Patriotic Party for this significant action, calling it a great one. According to Prempeh (2018), the N.P.P declared that although it was a defeat, there was a

glimmer of hope since the court's decision exposed several voting irregularities and demanded significant electoral changes.

The political capital the N.P.P amassed from the historic election petition case is thought to have helped the party win the 2016 General elections. With the N.P.P winning with a whopping percentage of 53.9%, some political pundits claimed that this was the biggest political defeat the N.D.C had ever suffered, with a loss margin of more than a million votes.

2.9 Ethnicity, Clientelism, and Voting Patterns in Ghanaian Elections

Several academics have argued that ethnicity, personal linkages, and clientelism are crucial in understanding the voting pattern in Ghana and Africa as a whole (Barkan 1979; Bratton & Van de Walle 1997; Erdmann 2004; 2007; Fridy 2007; Hyden & Leys 1972; Mozzafar et al. 2003; 2005; Posner 2005; Scarritt & Mozzafar 1999; Van de Walle 2003). Putting things in a much clearer perspective, Berman et al. (2004) have argued that ethnicity (a form of social cleavage) is the single and most protruding and noticeable factor that influences and shapes the conceptualization of politics on the African front and that ethnicity persists as the chief principal factor that characterizes politics in Africa. According to Arthur (2009), a new phenomenon that may be regarded as a reaction to capitalist globalization is the establishment of an African identity and the politics of that identity.

Berman (1998) argues that the forces of modernity fanned the fires of ethnic nationalism in Europe at the turn of the century. Northern People's Party, Ga Stand-Fast Party, Ewe Irredentist Group, and National Liberation Movement are only a few of the political parties that emerged in the early years of Ghana's independence (Gyimah-Boadi and Debrah, 2008). It's possible that this is the major cause of the inflated feeling of accomplishment shared by so many people in the contemporary society. In a divided society, ethnic ties give a sense of safety, stability, certainty,

mutual support, and trust, and they also operate as a barrier against the neglect of one's interests by persons who are regarded strangers and outsiders, as pointed out by Kohli (1993).

While members of a particular racial group are likely to display and share similar racial traits, Beissinger and Young (2002) argue that economic and rent-seeking motivations lie at the core of their economic harmony. Arthur (2009, p.53) is in fact arguing, "ethnicity becomes the means by which people try to influence the state and gain access to state resources" because "this rather circumscribed identification process is shaped by the fear of inequitable distribution of resources among various social groups." Consequently, it seems reasonable to conclude that the primary goal of ethnic groups when they band together is to put pressure on political leaders to ensure that resources and power are distributed in a way that benefits the group as a whole (Beissinger & Young, 2002).

According to Norris and Mattes (2003, p. 4), "structural theories predict that the cues of social identity, particularly ethnicity, should exert a strong influence upon voting choices and party support." This is especially true in traditionally agricultural communities, which are characterized by low levels of education and political participation. They believe this event is significant because of the influence it may have on the democratic process as a whole, and also because it contributes to their knowledge of the theoretical foundations of voting behavior. It's possible that party structures approaching rigid group borders will arise as a result of the intensity of the ascribed ethnic allegiances. Norris and Mattes (2003) state that few scholars contest the claim that ethnicity plays a role in Ghana's multiparty politics. Horowitz (1985) offers a similar point, noting that "societies that are deeply driven along a preponderant ethnic cleavage - as in many Asian and African states" tend to "throw up party systems that exacerbate ethnic conflict." The most significant issue, they propose, is "how much?"

According to Chabal and Daloz (1999, pp. 17-30), the rise of identity politics and ethnic nationalism makes it only natural to conclude that ethnicity is the defining feature of African politics. According to Horowitz (1985, pp. 319-324), many Africans believe that elections in their countries amount to little more than ethnic "consensus," with voters picking candidates based primarily on ethnic appeals rather than policy preferences. According to Arthur (2009, p. 56), "it is unsurprising that the issue of ethnicity has dominated the politics of democratization and nation building in many African countries."

Horowitz (1985) argues that these linkages have a significant impact on party politics and aid in the consolidation of party control. Even though Fitch and Oppenheimer (1996) argue that the ethnic phenomenon cannot be ignored or overlooked, Chazan (1982) argues "ethnicity has been put to manifold uses (and misuses) in the Ghanaian political context." This is because the conceptualization of ethnicity generates certain unique features that can be acknowledged as the essential rule of the Ghanaian collective life. This is evident when one examines the country's largest ethnic groupings, such as the Akan (consisting of the Asante, Fante, Akim, Brong, Kwahu, Nzima, and other smaller tribes), who make up 44.1% of the population. There are 15.9% MoleDagbani, 13.1% Ewe, 8.3% Ga-Adangbe, 3.7% Guan, 3.5% Gurma, and 11.4% from other, smaller tribes.

According to Oelbaum (2004), the administrative divisions of Ghana are often misunderstood as representing the country's various ethnic groups when, in fact, they reflect the dominance of certain groups and reveal differences within them. Some of the most powerful people in Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Eastern, Western, and Central Ghana include the Denkyira and the Nzema. Parts of the Volta and Central regions are included. Mole-Dagbani (composed of the Dagomba, Dagarti, Frafra, Mamprusi, and Nanumba) are most densely concentrated in the Northern, Upper West, and Upper East areas of Ghana, while the Ewe are most numerous in the Volta Region (Frempong, 2001; Arthur, 2009).

Since Ghana's independence, some academics have maintained the view that "it would be disingenuous to ignore the ethnic undercurrents in the electoral politics of Ghana's Fourth Republic" (Arthur, 2009). Lentz and Nugent (2000) note that "certain times ethnic tensions have manifested themselves overtly, only to be followed by long periods when the importance of ethnicity is denied by virtually all sides." Gyimah-Boadi and Asante (2006: p. 248) state that the two major political parties are seen as Asante/Akan and Ewe-based respectively; furthermore, Arthur (2009) argues that it is often implied that the dread that the Asante have about the political control of Ewe justifies the support that the Asante confer to the Danquah-Bukulosi coalition. Fear of a single ethnic group's political dominance is a plausible explanation for the prevalence of alliance voting.

According to Awoonor (1984, p. 57), "Ewes see themselves in opposition to all governments in Ghana, which inevitably became Akan (Asante) dominated." As a result, the struggle for power in Ghana has been reduced to a bitter contest between the Akan (Asante) and the Ewe. As a result, Arthur (2009) hypothesizes, "It is in this vein that ethnicity is sometimes both overtly and covertly invoked during elections." Awoonor (1984, p.57) adds, "The large Ewe presence in the civil service, military, and institutions of learning is seen as an effective check on Asante's efforts at hegemony." It explains the occasional use of ethnic propaganda, especially between the Asantes and the Ewes.' He then argues that, despite provisions in the Ghanaian constitution meant to undermine the ethnic undercurrents at the heart of electoral activities, ethnicity continues to play a central role in Ghanaian politics.

Despite the fact that political parties in Ghana strongly put thoughts in regional and ethnic balance and the adoption of certain collective programs in the selection of presidential and parliamentary candidates, Arthur (2009, p. 49) and Debrah (2005) claim "Ghanaian voters are ethnically cleaved along lines represented by the major political parties." Academics are divided on whether or not ethnicity plays a role in voting patterns in Ghana, with authors like Lindberg

and Morrison (2007) arguing that the demonization of several African political figures is the result of studies being conducted during the immediate postindependence period, when authoritarian governments were prominent. Phrases that are no longer often used, such as "clientelism," "personalism," "prebendalism," and others of its ilk. The fact that "many lessons on voters' behavior and alignments were produced under conditions of limited competition in one-party systems" where people were denied the ability to vote for their leader and had no say in national policy only aggravated the situation.

A distinct image of Ghanaian voters emerges from the work of Lindberg and Morrison (2007), who showed that although 10% of voters are regularly affected by ethnic or familial connections when casting votes, the remaining 85% to 90% of electorates act as "mature" democratic citizens. While these are true, Arthur (2009) contends that "the assertion that voting along ethnic lines or ethnic considerations directly influences electoral decisions in Ghanaian politics finds support in the presidential electoral results from 1992 to 2008, which document that the N.P.P does exceptionally well in the Ashanti Region, and the N.D.C does exceptionally well in the Volta Region." Even though the N.P.P ran a different presidential candidate (John Kufuor) than it had in 1992 (Adu Boahen), Arthur (2009) claims that the voting pattern did not change much from the 1992 elections, with Kufuor, who is from the Ashanti Region, receiving 65.8% of the vote and Rawlings, who is from the Volta Region, receiving 32.8%.

Prof. Evans Atta Mills gained 86.81% of the vote to Kufuor's 6.64% in the Volta Region, while Atta Mills garnered just 22.73% of the vote to Kufuor's 75.56% in the Ashanti Region. For example, Frempong (2001 p. 149) notes that during the 2000 elections, billboards and posters featuring images of Atta Mills in the Central Region included slogans like "Adze wo fie a oye", a Fanti phrase that meant "It is better to have your own."

In addition, after the N.D.C lost the first round of the 2000 elections, Arthur (2009) notes that vehicles bearing N.D.C symbols were discovered in areas thought to be dominated by Accra indigenes, warning them that voting for the N.P.P would open the door for the Asante and other non-indigenous groups to come and take over Accra lands. One might make a case to underline that despite of the threatening and manipulative techniques utilized by the N.D.C, they could not gain the majority of votes in these two areas (Central and Greater Accra areas). In spite of this, Arthur (2009) details how the N.D.C "won the Volta, Upper East, Upper West, and Northern regions" in that election, and he goes on to argue that the voting trends in the three northern regions, in addition to that of the Volta Region, could be inferred as having to present as deliberate vote against Akan domination.

Lindberg and Morrison (2008) argue that the traditional Ashanti-Ewe cleavage fails to adequately explain voting behavior and the impact of the election as a whole, but Arthur's (2009) viewpoint stands in stark contrast to theirs, arguing that "it is also corroborated by the fact that the flag bearer of the alleged Ewe-party N.D.C in 2000 professor John A. Mills, is an ethnic." Despite this, Arthur (2009) argues that it is not surprising that "the 2004 results of the presidential election in the Volta, Ashanti, and the three northern regions did not deviate from previous patterns. While Kuffuor won 74.6% of the vote in the Ashanti Region and Atta Mills won 24.6 percent, in the Volta Region Kuffuor only won 14.2% of the vote and Atta Mills won 83.3%.

Since Nana Akufo-Addo, the N.P.P's current presidential candidate, got barely 14.8% of the vote in the Volta Region compared to Atta Mills' 82.88%, it is evident that voter sentiment in 2008 followed the same trajectory. While Atta Mills received 26.1% of the vote in the Ashanti Region, Akufo-Addo received 72.4% (Arthur, 2009). The following should be taken into account if you find Arthur's (2009) statements about ethnic voting convincing. Akufo-Addo won the presidency with 57.14% of the vote (see table 2.7 for details). He is a native of the Eastern Region.

This makes sense, unless you consider the N.P.P's results in the 2000 and 2004 elections, when Kufuor was party leader and the N.P.P had more popular support.

Although the N.P.P did not do as well in the Eastern Region in the 2008 elections as it had in 2000 and 2004, it did much better than it had in the previous two elections. One might reasonably argue that voters' ethnicity had a part in this outcome. Voting patterns in the presidential run-off were very identical to those in the first election. In the Ashanti Region, Akufo-Addo received 75% of the vote and Atta Mills received 25%; in the Volta Region, Akufo-Addo received 13.9% of the vote and Atta Mills received 86.12% of the vote.

Recent elections may have seen a reduction in ethnic votes because of the N.D.C's founder, Rawlings, who has fallen out of favor. It has been suggested that the Ewe support the N.D.C due to Rawlings' Volta Region roots by many authors, including Frempong (2001), Gyimah-Boadi and Asante (2006), and Arthur (2009). The N.D.C has chosen two presidential candidates (Atta Mills and John Mahama) who are not from the Volta Region since Rawlings stood down and essentially disappeared from public eye eight years ago. Both proponents and detractors of the N.P.P have valid points to make in the Ashanti Region. After Kufuor (from the Ashanti Region) served his full constitutional term as president in 2008, he was succeeded by Nana Akufo-Addo (from the Eastern Region) in the 2012 and 2016 elections. These statistics suggest that inhabitants of these two regions are more likely to let their ethnicity affect how they vote. Increases in interracial marriages (Lindberg and Morrison, 2007) and the movement of individuals from rural to urban regions may have helped voters develop the capacity to perceive things from many angles and generate nuanced opinions when choosing representatives. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have made important contributions, which should be recognized.

There has been a proliferation of successful civil society groups in Ghana in recent years. These include the Institute of Economic Affairs (I.E.A), the International Movement for African Unity and Development (IMANI Africa), the African Center for Economic Policy and Development (A.C.E.P), and the Institute for Democratic Development (I.D.E.D), among others. For example, the I.E.A has hosted presidential debates in the past to help Ghanaian voters make more informed choices by bringing together the candidates representing competing political parties to discuss how their platforms would address the country's developmental challenges. Political tolerance among opposition parties, a flourishing civil society, and regular free and fair elections are only a few of the reasons why Ghana is held up as a model of democracy in Africa by Gyimah-Boadi (2008).

According to the aforementioned studies, the nature and dynamics of voter decision and choice seem to be getting increasingly complex as democratic consolidation in Ghana advances, particularly via the conducting of recurring periodic elections. Things were quite different in 1992, when the Fourth Republic was established. Historical election results, particularly from 1996 to 2008, reveal that the N.D.C has been gaining ground in the Ashanti Region at the cost of the N.P.P. People in the Volta Region are profoundly affected by the N.D.C.

2.10 Advantages of Incumbency in Presidential and Parliamentary Elections

Incumbents benefit from a number of advantages. Political scientists argue that presidential incumbency advantage stems from factors such as political inertia, experience in campaigning, power to influence events, proven leadership, commanding media attention in a constant campaign environment, and a united party with no bruising primary challenges (Drutman, 2023). Most people will support incumbents they voted for the last time.

Marland (1998) asserts that the first source of an incumbent's electoral advantage is their tenure in office. These incumbents are more recognizable to the electorates by name. This grants them the chance to actively campaign unofficially by receiving regular publicity from contributions made by constituents to press releases and newsletters (Marland, 1998). In the course of being in power, incumbents can learn about riding issues and concerns, gauge interest group viewpoints more accurately, and get briefings from knowledgeable office staff. They have the ability to build relationships with people, organizations, media, and other politicians even the inclusion of possible rivals. They can also make more frequent contact with their constituents by using free phone and mailing services, compensated employees, and free transportation.

According to Bleck & van de Walle (2018), presidential candidates and incumbent parties possess significant political advantages, ranging from their control over resources and institutional powers to their ability to offer, withhold, or assert security and progress. The greatest advantage of incumbents is that they have easier access to funds and are better at fundraising than any other advantage (Marland, 1998). These resources and funds of incumbents provide them with mobility and stability in their finances, enhancing their advantages over others (Morison & Browne, 2023). It is more challenging for competitors compared to incumbents to mount an effective campaign for office when these funds and benefits are together.

During each election period, each senator and Member of Parliament is entitled to a minimum of \$2.6 million and \$2.9 million, respectively, for staff, office and travel expenses, and salaries (Morison & Browne, 2023). They asserted that these resources may be put to use in re-election elections, putting up obstacles for opponents and contributing to the explanation of why 90% of incumbents win re-election. Furthermore, they reap the advantages of an already-established campaign infrastructure and donor backing, frequently accumulating large campaign finances to ward off possible rivals.

Gaining an advantage over rivals in presidential elections depended on presidents being able to maintain some of the cross-partisan support that was freely available to them for the better part of the 20th century, when voters were more inclined to evaluate presidents based on their personal qualities rather than just their party affiliation. Holding office is linked to a higher likelihood of being re-elected in the legislatures of developed nations with single member districts (Lee A. , 2016). This is typically advantageous because it increases one's visibility and allows one to win policies that constituents want, provide services to the public, and establish clear policy positions.

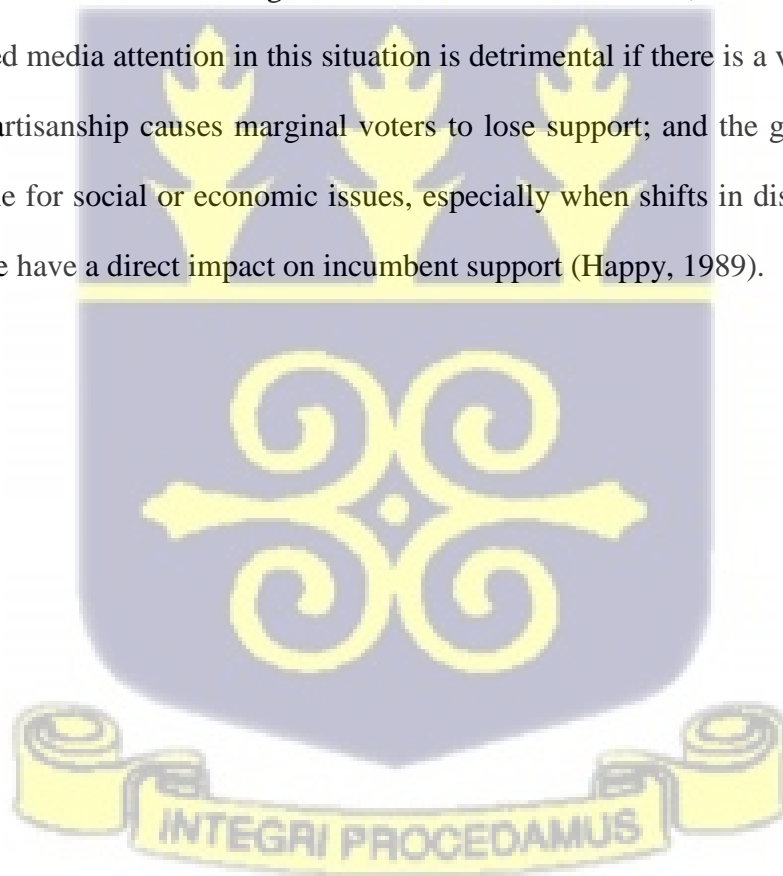
Moreover, benefits of incumbency become apparent in re-election campaigns. Incumbents during campaign period can contend that they “are more qualified for the position, and claim credit for riding projects” (Marland, 1998, p. 34). As incumbents with prior electoral victories under their belts, they are seasoned campaigners with teams conversant with problems and past gaffes. They are able to depend on tried-and-true methods that make even the most basic decisions including which particular event to attend without ease. In general, these incumbents can depend on a “learning advantage,” where the experiences of winning an election aids in re-election.” (Hershey, 1984). Incumbent candidates also have a high electoral success rate, with an 80% chance of running for reelection and winning (Lee D. S., 2001). The probability of winning depends on running for election, with a 90% chance of winning. The runner-up candidate has a 3 percent chance of becoming a candidate and winning the next election.

2.11 Challenges of Incumbency

Despite the advantages of incumbency, numerous lines of empirical research have demonstrated that while an incumbent government may have certain electoral advantages, there are also drawbacks that may force a ruling party into opposition. And this is one of the reasons the National Democratic Congress did not win the Ghanaian elections in 2016. The main reason why a large number of the supporters abstained from voting was that they saw no benefits from their

government. In 2016, one million people who voted for Mahama in 2012 did not vote for him in 2016. An N.D.C activist in Kade stopped his children from voting during the 2016 elections, despite their desire to participate (Afrane, 2018). The children, who had traveled to the constituency for the elections, were denied due to their university completion and unemployment, despite the party's power.

With the exception of one, incumbent advantages vastly exceed disadvantages: being associated with a government that is no longer popular with voters. Should voters decide to “throw the rascals out,” the advantages that come with a government incumbent are virtually eliminated (Marland, 1998). The case of Canada’s Progressive Conservative incumbents from 1993, all but one of who was running for re-election lost the election, is the clearest illustration of this. Increased media attention in this situation is detrimental if there is a viewed government error; fragile partisanship causes marginal voters to lose support; and the government may be held accountable for social or economic issues, especially when shifts in disposable income or personal income have a direct impact on incumbent support (Happy, 1989).



CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework guiding this research, the prism through which the research issue is understood and examined. The chapter begins with outlining the pivotal position theories take in building scholarly research, referencing how they structure variables in relations to explain social phenomena. In this chapter, the authors concentrate on two fundamental theories, which include incumbent advantage and rational choice theory. The frameworks are essential in unpacking the electoral dominance of incumbent governments in the Fourth Republic of Ghana and determining the behavior of voters. It is on this basis that the chapter adopts these theories (by combining them), which forms an effective conceptual frame on how to study the determinant impact of incumbency and rational electoral choices on the democratic performance in Ghana.

3.2 Theory

A theory is often presented as “a set of interrelated constructs, (variables) definitions, and prepositions, which presents a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables with the purpose of explaining natural phenomena” (Kirlinger, 1979, p. 64). Additionally, theories are the core ideas and principles that define the occurrences and actions that occur among individuals in society. Theories are mostly employed by both physical and social scientists to determine or uncover the underlying the actions of humans and future implications of these actions. According to Theodoulou and O'Brien (1999), it is vital that they should be given adequate consideration and not underestimated to the level that “the research project would be meaningless” without these theories. In view of the above, the theoretical framework underpinning this study is incumbent advantage and rational choice theory. Both

theories provide essential insightful observations into the electoral performance of incumbent governments in Ghana's Fourth Republic and the voting behavior of Ghanaian voters.

3.2.1 The Concept of Incumbent Advantage

Incumbent advantage is the concept that underpins the study. A concern among political experts has been the nature of the incumbency power (Awojobi, 2016). Both academics and scholars to explain the phenomena of incumbency advantage have offered numerous explanations. In political parlance, the term "incumbent" designates the person holding a political office. Incumbent is "used in reference to elections in which races can often be defined as being between an incumbent and non-incumbent" (Nwanegbo & Ikenna, 2011, p. 125).

According to Bonneau, "the nature of the incumbency advantage has been the source of much debate in the political literature" (Bonneau, 2005). Owing to their position and standing, incumbents have access to benefits (including more media attention) that the other candidates in the election do not (Nwanegbo & Ikenna, 2011). These privileges, which provide some "electoral margin a candidate enjoys on account of her status as an incumbent running for re-election" (Gordon & Landa, 2009) constitute of what is regarded as an incumbent advantage. There is evidence to suggest that incumbents have an electoral edge over potential challengers or non-incumbents (Nwanegbo & Ikenna, 2011). This literature on incumbent advantage in developed democratic countries including the United States is one of the features of elections that have been extensively studied and documented (Ansolabehere, Snowberg, & Snyder Jr, 2006).

There are several attributes with regard to the advantage that incumbents enjoy in winning elections. Incumbents in this situation are referred to presidents, prime ministers, and parliamentarians. It is commonly acknowledged and backed by significant evidence that incumbent politicians, notably presidents in presidential or semi-presidential systems and incumbent parties or coalitions in parliamentary systems, have an edge when seeking for

reelection for a number of factors (Maltz, 2007). In examining the theoretical and empirical research on incumbency effects, there are four main approaches to this concept.

As stated by Ashworth and Bueno De Mesquita (2008), incumbents typically prevail over challengers for the same reason that made them successful in the past: having high quality (Ashworth & De Mesquita, 2008). Erikson (1971) highlighted the startlingly high rates at which incumbents gain re-election. There was apprehension that the re-election percentages could represent an indication that incumbents use the privileges and advantages of office, including greater accessibility to funds for campaigns, gerrymandering, intimidating potential rivals, etc., in order to shield themselves and their positions from electoral danger (Ashworth, de Mesquita, & Friedenber, 2017).

Furthermore, another advantage that incumbents enjoy according to a proincumbency perspective, incumbents succeed because they are, quite simply, skilled at what they do, which is campaign, govern, and/or represent the needs of the electorate. According to this perspective, being incumbent signifies that a candidate is a strong contender or, as Zaller (1998) put it, a "prize fighter." This data implies that the benefit of tenure is a result of selection effect: incumbents and challengers are not the same kinds of candidates, and there is no causal relationship between the two. Some contend that the way in which incumbents behave while in office strengthens their advantage over rivals. After winning office, incumbents have the chance to develop their backgrounds, offer services, and make choices that will benefit their constituency. In the legislatures of developed countries, holding office is associated with an increasing chance of subsequent re-election, an advantage usually attributed to the ability to provide popular constituency services, implement policies desired by constituents, and stake out visible policy positions. Despite the advantages incumbents generally have during elections, it is evident that incumbent legislators in some developing countries are often thought to face an electoral disadvantage relative to challengers (Lee A., 2016).

The incumbency advantage theory is applicable to this study as it offers an organized approach to the analysis of the reasons why some Ghanaian presidents managed to get two consecutive terms and some failed to do so. The above mechanisms can be seen in the politics of Ghana as the country has most of these factors influencing the way it allocates state resources as well as have access to public media, patronage networks, and performance evaluation by voters and having an increasingly competent opposition party. Applying this theory enables the research to question the way these factors are functioning, interacting and influencing the electoral results. In this study, the theory will be employed to investigate how exactly Rawlings, Kufuor and Akufo-Addo were or were not able to exploit incumbency advantages. It allows a relative evaluation of the structural, institutional, and performance-based variables that affected their re-election. Further, the theory assists in establishing the cases in which the incumbent benefits proved to be inadequate, which indicates the constraints of incumbency in the situations of Ghana changing democracy.

3.2.2 Rational Choice Theory

Despite its rather hazy beginnings, rational choice theory has its roots in the age of reason. The central intellectual viewpoint was established in *Leviathan* (1651) by an ancient scholar called Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes attempted to use people's decisions to explain the fundamental workings of political institutions (Oppenheimer, 2008). He conjectured that generally accepted “aversions” and “appetites” affected choices they made. Important figures including Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Adam Smith, and subsequent utilitarian like Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill continued with this effort. Several others, particularly those in economics, followed. These pieces of scholarship contributed to the development to the concept that is currently referred to classical rational choice theory.

It has been suggested that the development of the rational choice was an outcome or byproduct on the behavioral revolution that occurred in American political science throughout the decades between the 1950s and 1960s, which utilized empirical or scientific techniques to investigate the way individuals behaved (Ogu, 2013). The approach has seen extensive use in Political Science, particularly in the United States of America, where it has become particularly prominent. Anthony Downs first implemented the practical application to rational choice theory to the electoral processes or electoral behavior and rivalries between parties in 1957 in his book "An Economic Theory of Democracy." The rational choice theory occasionally referred to as the rational action theory or choice theory (Ogu, 2013).

In the beginning, the rational choice theory commences from the point of view of the individual as opposed to experiencing an ensemble of people communicating or several individuals observing social conditions. The foundation of the theory continues to be centered on the interest of the individual. Each rational choice theorist begins by establishing the individual as the core component of the theory, despite knowing that a number of these scholars proceed to a broader social network and institutions that incorporate various assumptions regarding the individual (Ogu, 2013).

According to Abell (2000), "it is only individuals who ultimately take actions and social actions ... individual actions and social actions are optimally chosen" and engage in "individuals' actions and social actions are entirely concerned with their own welfare." The theory's methodological individualism is portrayed by these fundamental presumptions, which see the person as an actor who is initially primarily concerned with him and their welfare. Building upon the tenets of individualism, rational choice theory can also illustrate the emergence of norms, sharing, and collaboration, as well as their function in the process of making decisions.

According to the Rational Choice Model, voters are people who base their choices on how to vote on information gathered via careful consideration of the numerous problems at hand (Catt, 1996). In line with this paradigm, the “rationality of electors is also a central assumption of the traditional justification of representative institutions” (Elcock, 1976, p. 217). According to this paradigm, voters should make logical decisions about how to cast their ballots based on the platforms and records of the parties and candidates (Ball & Peters, 2005). As a result, this theory places more emphasis on the individual than on socialization and the behaviors of the larger social group (Heywood, 2002). This theory, which creates a comparison to a marketplace, maintains that voters will select the political party that best serves their interests in the marketplace. It also highlights the significance of issues, interests, and concerns in elections (Ball & Peters, 2005). Voting is therefore viewed as a logical act in which voters are said to choose their preferred party based solely on their own self-interest (Heywood, 2002). Voting is sometimes viewed as a retrospective assessment of the ruling party and how its actions have shaped the choices of the populace.

In the Rational Choice Model, according to Aldrich (1993), voter participation takes on a unique role when the degree to which a citizen favors one outcome over another counts and their preferences are converted into "utilities for outcomes." It is crucial for voters, or individuals, to select or favor outcomes with greater utility over those with lower utility and to make decisions based on activities that will lead to more highly valued outcomes in the Rational Choice Model (Aldrich, 1993). It is occasionally thought civilian voters hold political leaders accountable through altering the manner in which they vote.

The Rational Choice Theory, more commonly referred to as the School of Rochester, is predicated on three fundamental premises. The reasoning that has been presented implies that all decisions, including those made by voters and political parties, are impacted by rationality, with self-interest serving as the primary motivating factor and a dedication to

maximizing utility serving as the guiding principle for activities. In addition, it proposes that democratic political systems exhibit some degree of dependability, which makes it possible to anticipate the outcomes of elections. In conclusion, this highlights the need of adhering to the maximization of utility concept while going through the decisionmaking process. In the sphere of democratic systems, it is possible to identify two primary components. These components are the people and the government. According to Antunes (2010), the democratic system is built on the idea that there is some degree of indeterminacy in the world, which makes it easier to investigate a wide variety of different potential outcomes.

In addition, the participants in this system, including voters, political parties, and the government, are viewed as trustworthy by most people, which makes it easier to forecast the potential outcomes that may result from a variety of actions. It is essential to emphasize how significant it is to highlight the fact that rationality, as defined within Downs' economic theory, asserts that voters and political parties demonstrate similar behavior with regards to their preferences, values, and interests. This helps to enhance our understanding of the rational choice theory. The concept of rationality is used in order to define the appropriateness of certain methods or media in relation to the purposes that are intended. As a result, elections serve as a mechanism for the designation of a governing body, and strategic conduct throughout the process of electing officials is solely directed towards achieving this objective.

The most fundamental assumption of rational choice theory, says that voters possess accurate and comprehensive knowledge about their values or interests, as well as the policy proposals provided by political parties, is also the theory's most noteworthy flaw. Voting is viewed in this model as a rationale act since voters are thought to base their party preference on individual interests (Gyampo & Debrah, 2013). Voting is considered as fundamentally essential, that is, as an instrument for achieving to an end, as opposed to habitual or as a representation of larger attachments and allegiances. This tenet asserts that voters are able to make informed

decisions based on the information they have. The proponents of this theoretical framework make an effort to circumvent this constraint by expanding on the procedures via which voters are still capable of making reasonable decisions despite the inherent restrictions they face when it comes to acquiring information. It is possible for people to erroneously view a candidate's stance as being either advantageous or damaging to their own personal interests if they do not actively engage in well-informed decision-making in respect to the prevalent topics and election proposals. This view is often, but not always, impacted, to varied degrees, by the information that is broadcast by the media or other recognized organizations, institutions, or public people. Voters, at their core, have a propensity to develop pragmatic evaluations based on trust rather than thorough understanding.

The paradigm emphasizes, "issue-based voting" and contends that parties may dramatically alter their electoral outcomes by modifying the ideas outlined in their manifestos (Gyampo & Debrah, 2013). It is widely acknowledged that the rise in popularity of issuebased voting is one of the effects of political and class realignment. The rational choice theory proposes that voters engage in a process of comparing ideologies by drawing upon their prior knowledge of particular indicators linked with the acts performed by political parties. This theory implies that voters participate in this process by drawing on their prior knowledge. However, if a voter's choice between political parties is limited to ideas rather than concrete previous achievements, then the voter's ideology will necessarily reflect their own values and concerns. This phenomenon persists despite the fact that voters do not accord priority to the ideologies per se, which contains the goals and philosophies that underlie these political parties. Instead, voters concentrate on the concrete acts undertaken by these parties.

In a more in-depth examination, the rational choice theory states that individuals are more inclined to participate in the act of voting when they have the concept that their electoral decision will result in a perceptible influence, and when the potential benefits are greater than the

potential downsides of voting for a certain candidate or issue. When voters are confronted with a large number of candidates who are highly qualified, they often find themselves questioning, "Which specific factors related to my personal interests might influence the success or failure of candidate A, B, or C?" According to the findings of a study that was carried out by Antunes (2010), individuals may have a lower feeling of willingness to participate in the act of voting when they anticipate minor variations in the election outcomes between candidates. In a similar vein, when individuals have the impression that their votes will not have much of an impact on the outcome of an election, they are more inclined to abstain from voting in that election.

Incorporating these theories offers a clear comprehension of why incumbents may have a sustained electoral advantage and how voter decision-making processes are influenced by their evaluation of incumbent performance. The incumbent advantage theory helps explain the structural and contextual factors that benefit incumbents, while the rational choice theory offers insights into the decision-making criteria that voters use to either support or reject incumbent governments. In combining these theoretical perspectives, the study aims to uncover how these dynamics interact to shape electoral outcomes and how the performance of incumbent governments affects voter behavior across different election cycles in Ghana's Fourth Republic.

The rational and justification for using the rational choice theory is due to the fact that it provides a perspective of a rational and logical manner of understanding electoral results and the voting behaviour of the electorate in the competitive democracies like Ghana. According to the theory, voters are viewed as utility-maximizers and they consider the parties and candidates based on the benefits anticipated, the previous performance, and the future promises of the parties and candidates that are credible. This is in line with the theme of the study, which is the reason behind the success or failure of incumbents to win re-election. Attributing focus to cost-benefit estimations, performance measurement, and the expectation of voters, RCT offers rational ground on which the electoral resilience, governmental accountability, and decision patterns can

be examined. Its relevance to both the retrospective and prospective voting renders it most appropriate in explaining the dynamics of incumbency in the fourth republic of Ghana.



CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Research is a meticulous investigation that encompasses gathering, generating, and evaluating data that must be collected to solve a particular problem or phenomenon (Mafora & Lebeloane, 2001). This study aims to explore and understand the electoral performance of incumbent governments in the Fourth Republic of Ghana. The research methodology and overall procedure that directed the research are discussed in this chapter. The methodology was meticulously established, with specifications or characteristics that considered the researcher's approach in collecting data (Gill & Johnson, 1997). Thus, the research design, types of data, population, sample size and technique, methods and data collection instruments, data presentation, and analysis employed by the researcher have all been discussed in this chapter (Dawson, 2002).

4.2 Research Design

The research design presents a structured plan and framework of how information will be collected, measured and analyzed to respond to the research questions and ensure that study goals are achieved (Creswell, *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2018). It outlines the manner in which the research is done, what kind of data is gathered, how it is measured, and how the information is analyzed to make sure that the reliability, validity, and replicability of findings are intact (Bacon-Shone, 2022). As Norris et al. (2015) explain, the selection of population, the sampling strategy, and the design of instruments are also well-articulated to guarantee that the correct and meaningful data will be received (Norris & Plonsky, 2015).

In this case study, a cross-sectional survey design was embraced. The cross-sectional designs are especially useful when it is essential to consider variables in a particular point in time, which enables the identification of patterns, relationships, and difference among different respondents (Creswell, Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches, 2014). This design made the study to collect an organized amount of quantifiable information on voter perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of the electoral performance of incumbent governments in Ghana under the Fourth Republic of Ghana. The design was representative, as it gathered information of a geographically spread population of the 16 administrative regions and it could make a substantial comparative and relational analysis (Creswell & Creswell, Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 2018).

The cross-sectional survey design also defends both primary and secondary sources of data collection in a logical and cohesive fashion, which will guarantee the triangulation of results. The structured questionnaires targeted to obtain standardized answers of respondents, and secondary sources like official electoral records and previous studies served as a source of information and verification. As Bacon-Shone (2022) states, the fact that a cross-sectional study involves the integration of multiple sources of data contributes to its increased credibility, generalizability, and empirical background of research.

Moreover, the design also allows descriptive and inferential analyses, which allows researchers to summarize patterns and test associations between variables (Norris & Plonsky, 2015). It is a clear procedural road map, which makes the study quite rigorous in terms of methodology and come up with dependable information on the determinants of the incumbent government performance in Ghana.

4.3 Sources of Data

The study used a combination of primary data collected through structured questionnaires and secondary data sources. The primary data collection involved administering structured questionnaires to participants who voted in the 1996, 2004, 2016, and 2020 elections. These questionnaires were meticulously designed to capture voters' perceptions of incumbent government performance, including their evaluations of economic management, social policies, and overall governance. This direct feedback from voters is essential for understanding how government performance influences electoral outcomes and provides valuable insights into voter attitudes and behaviors.

In addition to the primary data, secondary data sources were used to provide a comprehensive backdrop for the analysis. This included data retrieved from the Department of Political Science Library and the Balme Library, which offered historical electoral records and government reports. The study also incorporated electronic sources such as JSTOR and SAGE, which contributed relevant scholarly articles and research findings. This combination of primary and secondary data enabled a robust analysis of how incumbent government's performances impacted their electoral success, ensuring a well-rounded and empirical approach for understanding the dynamics of political performance in Ghana's Fourth Republic.

4.4 Target Population

The target population is defined as “the entire group or set of individuals, objects, or events that possess specific characteristics and are of interest to the researcher” (Thomas, 2023). In similar vein, according to Momoh, Murry, & Rathburn (2024), “population is a statistical term that designates the pool from which a sample is drawn for a study.” It is any group of individuals that have been put together in view of a common trait. This functions as a representative sample of a larger population.

The population for this study consisted of Ghanaian voters who participated in the 1996, 2004, 2016, and 2020 national elections. The sample was drawn from a diverse group of voters across different regions of Ghana to ensure a representative understanding of the electoral performance and government impact. This group was central to the study as their experiences and perceptions of the electoral process and incumbent governments provided valuable insights into how performance metrics influenced electoral outcomes.

4.5 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Unlike a population which represents an entire population or set of objects upon which a researcher intends to generalize the findings of the study, a sample, on the other hand, is classified as any the specific group from which one can obtain data (Bhandari, 2020). Sample size is defined as “the number of participants or observations included in a study” (Institute for Work & Health, 2008). The validity of the research findings and the extent to be extrapolated are both greatly affected by the sample size, which makes it a vital factor to consider. This study sampled a total of 155 respondents across all 16 regions in Ghana, who participated in an online survey. Of these, 99 participants (63.9%) identified as male and 56 participants (36.1%) identified as female. This gendered split indicates a predominance of male participants but still includes significant female representation, thus allowing for the analysis of potential gendered differences within observations of electoral success and government incumbent performance.

As for age distribution, the sample was disproportionately heavy in young adults, with 62 (40%) of the respondents falling in the 18–24 years old category and 66 (42.6%) in the 25–34 years old category, both making a total of 82.6% of the total sample. Those aged between 35–44 made up 17 participants (11%), 45–54 made up 8 participants (5.2%), and the oldest group, 55–64 years, made up 2 participants (1.3%). This spread is indicative of high participation by lower age cohorts, as one would expect, considering active political participation and social media activity by these age cohorts in Ghana. Educationally, most of the respondents were better

educated, with 100 respondents (64.5%) having an undergraduate degree and 49 respondents (31.6%) having postgraduate qualification. 1 respondent (0.6%) had attained secondary education while 5 respondents (3.3%) had "Other" form of education, presumably vocational or non-traditional training.

Geographically, the Greater Accra Region yielded the largest number of respondents, with 111 individuals (71.6%), as a testament to its being the most urbanized and politically active region of Ghana. The Ashanti Region yielded 8 respondents (5.2%), while the Western and Eastern regions yielded 4 respondents each (2.6%). The three northern regions (Northern, Upper East, and Upper West) accounted for 8 respondents (5.2%), while other regions such as Central, Western North, Bono East, Bono, and Volta accounted for lesser proportions ranging between 0.6% and 2.6%.

The profile therefore points towards the fact that the sample was highly educated and predominantly urban, and these are the dimensions most likely to influence the capacity of respondents to critically evaluate electoral performance of incumbent governments. These respondents were selected because they had first-hand experience of Ghanaian election processes since they participated in at least one of the topic general elections. Their remarks were therefore considered worth deciphering in order to understand the determinants of election victories by incumbent governments.

Given the focus of the study on the electoral victory of incumbent governments and parties since the establishment of the Fourth Republic in 1992, and its aim to identify why they were re-elected, convenience sampling and purposive sampling techniques were employed. Convenience sampling, a non-probability method under which the respondents are selected based on their availability and ease of access (Obilor, 2023), allowed the researcher to gather data efficiently from a vast geographical area through the online platform. Purposive sampling was

also employed in order to ensure that the sample included people who had voted in at least one of the 1996, 2004, 2016, or 2020 general elections, as well as scholars and observers with first-hand knowledge regarding Ghanaian electoral processes. This combination of techniques provided a diverse yet concentrated sample of respondents in a manner that the data obtained represented insights relevant to research objectives while meeting pragmatic constraints on data availability.

4.6 Data Collection Instruments

The principal data-gathering tool in this study was a well-structured questionnaire, specifically designed for web administration through a survey website. This option facilitated the study to access geographically distributed populations throughout the country across all

16 regions of Ghana in an effective and economically viable way. The questionnaire targeted Ghanaian voters aged 18 and above who had cast ballots in the 1996, 2004, 2016, and 2020 national elections. In addition, a panel of invited scholars and experts who had observed the electoral process in Ghana since 1992 closely was also included to provide expert insights into the determinants of incumbent government electoral performance.

A questionnaire was structured into thematic sections that align with the research aims of the study. It dealt with questions measuring respondents' perceptions of incumbent government performance, economic and social policy implementation, governance credibility, and electoral decision-making conducts. To enable rigorous statistical analysis, most items were closed-ended questions with Likert scales, ranking systems and multiple choices. These enabled quantification of attitudes and perceptions in a consistent manner. There were fewer open-ended questions to enable qualitative elaboration, permitting richer interpretation of quantitative findings.

The questionnaire structure ensured that simplicity, objectivity, and relevance came first to avoid the use of leading or biased words in the questions. The tool was pilot-tested on a small population to test for understanding, order of logic, and technical operability on the web platform. This assisted the ultimate instrument in being reliable and valid in collecting accurate data from a large diverse respondent pool. With the online survey method, it was possible for the study to collect responses effectively from across the country beyond geographical and logistical limitations that are typically inherent in countrywide studies.

4.7 Method of Data Collection

The study used a quantitative survey design where the researcher mainly used structured questionnaires as a main data collection method to get standardized data of the respondents. The primary instrument was the use of soft-copy questionnaires that were conducted using web-based survey sites. These tools were shared on social platforms and email, such as WhatsApp groups and one-on-one messaging, to improve the access and increase reach. The rationale behind the selection of online questionnaires was that they are easy to distribute, the respondents completed them at their own convenience, and they are automatically compiled into formats that can be analyzed and thus reduced the workload on the administration and minimized data-entry errors. This was especially applicable since the study population was spread all over and because data had to be collected and at the right time. The final sample size of 155 respondents of the study was determined by the Yamine (1967) sample size determination formula for finite population:

$$n = N/1-N(e^2)$$

Where:

n = required sample size

N = population size



E = level of margin of error (level of preciseness)

In this formula N is an approximation of the target population of the eligible voters in the selected study area, and e is the margin of error. With a population of 150 as the minimum sample size based on a population that was accessible and this was based on voter rolls by the constituency with a margin of error of 8 percent. The sample size was slightly extended to 155 to be more reliable, take into consideration possible non-responses, and be more representative. This modification enabled the research to have good analytical strength and protect against unfinished or un-usable surveys.

The questionnaires to be filled in online were made friendly and had skip-logics with easy instructions and structured response options to reduce the number of people who would not complete them. The questionnaire was available through smartphones, tablets, or computers, which facilitated the inclusion of various technological tastes and the minimization of the barrier to participation. Automatic aggregation of the responses into a digital database played a significant role in enhancing the efficiency of the data cleaning, coding and analysis process. The combination of these complementary methods therefore helped the study to acquire a complete, efficient, and credible data collection procedure which enhanced the validity of results.

4.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis can be defined as the systematic study of information that has been gathered which is aimed at identifying patterns, relationships and information that are pertinent to the research problem. It refers to the operation of converting raw data to meaningful information that can be used to answer research questions and provide a test of hypotheses (Ibrahim, 2015). According to Boateng (2017), data analysis is usually regarded as the most important or the most difficult stage of a quantitative research since it dictates the validity, reliability, and

interpretability of the study results. On the same note, Taherdoost (2020, p.1) asserts that data analysis transforms collected data into something manageable and actionable.

In the current study, the quantitative research approach and descriptive-inferential analytical methods were used to analyze data obtained on 155 respondents. The initial statistics used was the descriptive statistics which summarized characteristics of the data such as demographic profiles of the respondents, their attitudinal view and their perceptions about the electoral performance of the incumbent governments. Frequency, percentages, means, standard deviations and cross-tabulations were calculated to display the patterns, distribution and trends among the various categories, age, gender, level of education, and political affiliation. Findings were conveyed visually in the form of graphs, charts, and tables, which allowed making clear comparisons and discovering anomalies, outliers, and patterns. This preliminary descriptive phase presented an organized basis of superior analyses.

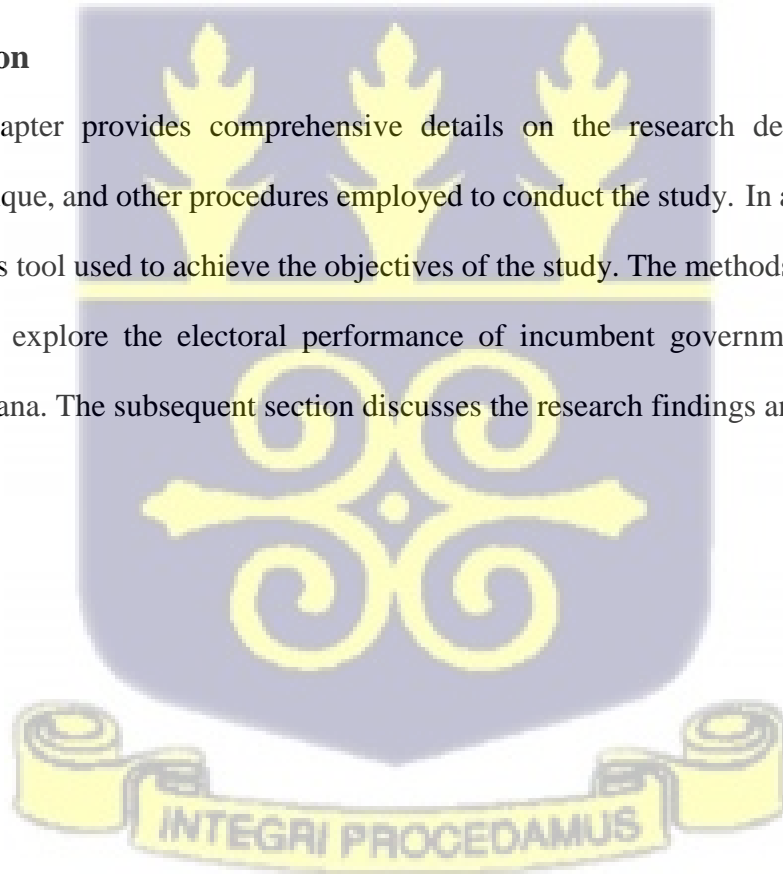
Inferential statistics were utilized in order to test the relationship between the variables rigorously and to gain a causal or predictive understanding. Particularly, simple linear regression was employed to determine the value of independent variables in the explanation of the dependent variable, which is the incumbent electoral performance, including economic performance, satisfaction with the policies, and voter perceptions. The regression was supplemented by the correlation analysis which has shown the strength and direction of relationships among important variables. The analysis and processing of data were performed with the help of SPSS that provided an opportunity to perform efficient computations, visualization, and interpretation of the results. Descriptive and inferential analysis combined gave the ability to have findings that were statistically well grounded, representations, and related to the aim of the research directly which was a credible source of inferences about the factors that contributed to the success of incumbent electors.

4.9 Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations are of considerable importance in undertaking this study. This study, like any other study, was governed by ethics. Applying this ethics in the study was to ensure the quality of the study in order to meet academic standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that they understood the study's purpose and their rights, including confidentiality and the voluntary nature of their participation. Anonymizing responses and securely storing the data maintained data privacy. The participants were assured that their feedback would be used solely for research purposes and would not influence their future interactions with political institutions. Additionally, the research adhered to ethical guidelines regarding the use of secondary data, ensuring proper citation and respect for intellectual property.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter provides comprehensive details on the research design, sample size, sampling technique, and other procedures employed to conduct the study. In addition, it presents the data analysis tool used to achieve the objectives of the study. The methods employed were to investigate and explore the electoral performance of incumbent governments in the Fourth Republic of Ghana. The subsequent section discusses the research findings and outcomes.



CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The data collected from the respondents through survey questionnaire is presented and analyzed in this chapter. The presentation is in line with the research objectives that sought to examine the performance of incumbent governments in the Fourth Republic of Ghana in their elections. The main objective of the research is to explore the electoral performance of incumbent governments in the Fourth Republic of Ghana. In simpler terms, the study examined the factors that led to the re-election and defeat of incumbent governments in Ghanaian elections since the Fourth Republic's inception (especially 1996, 2004, 2016, and 2020 elections).

The chapter is guided by two broad research questions: (i) what are the factors that influenced electoral victories of the individual incumbent governments in the 1996, 2004, 2012 and 2020 General Elections? And (ii) what extent do voters act rationally based on perceived economic and social performance of incumbent governments? Out of the varied and numerous voting populations over the stipulated four national elections, a questionnaire was administered to solicit the experiences of respondents from a sample size of 155 respondents across the sixteen (16) regions in Ghana.

5.2 Demographic Information of Respondents

This section provided a detailed overview of the biographical information about the respondents, with regards to their gender, age distribution, educational attainment, and political party affiliation. It examines the variation in these attributes to understand their influence on

the study's findings. Additionally, the section explores the frequency with which respondents have participated in elections since the inception of Ghana's Fourth Republic. It also groups the respondents according to their political party affiliation, which unveils some information on the possible influence of political involvement and party membership on their perceptions and voting pattern. The overall goal of this demographic analysis is to place the research data into context and determine whether the demographics and electoral performance assessments are correlated.

5.2.1 Gender of Respondents

The gender distribution in the sample of 155 responses shows a predominance of male participants. Out of the number, 99 respondents (63.9% males) and 56 respondents (36.1% females) were the respondents. This shows that there is higher percentage of males in the data set with males constituting almost two-thirds of the sample. The gender distribution indicates that there is some bias on the male part but still indicates that there is a large number of female respondents, which adds balance in the overall demographics.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender of Respondents	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Male	99	63.9%
Female	56	36.1%
Total	155	100%

5.2.2 Age of Respondents

The age distribution of the respondents indicates that there is a clustering of the respondents in the younger age groups with an equal balance between the 18-24 and 25-34 age brackets.

Specifically, 62 respondents (40%) fall within the 18-24 age group, while 66 respondents (42.6%) belong to the 25-34 age group. It shows that most participants are in the early to mid-adult age, which demonstrates that the research topic has certain relevance to this group.

These two groups constitute 82.6% of the entire sample, and they show that much attention was paid to younger adults. The other respondents are spread in the older age categories in lower percentages. 17 respondents (11%) are aged 35-44, while 8 respondents (5.2%) fall within the 45-54 age range. Only 2 respondents (1.3%) is in the 55-64 age group. These figures suggest a notable decrease in participation among older age groups, potentially reflecting lower engagement or relevance of the study to these age demographics.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age Distribution	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
18-24	62	40%
25-34	66	42.5%
35-44	17	11%
45-54	8	5.2%
55-64	2	1.3%

5.2.3 Education

There is a significant connection between the quality of choices made by voters in elections and their level of education (Erdmann & Basedau, 2007). This means that societies with greater levels of literacy are more inclined than those with a lower rate of literacy to meticulously assess

the implications of their reasons when selecting a candidate. Moreover, the education level of the respondents was relevant to the study because they gave the researchers the ability to determine whether the assertion was relevant or not to the populations under investigation.

The education background of the respondents indicates a highly qualified sample, with most undergoing higher education levels which is essential to getting their views of electoral performance of the ruling governments in the Fourth Republic of Ghana. Of 155 respondents, a significant percentage, 100 persons (64.5) had attained undergraduate education implying a high level of post-secondary schooling. Another 49 respondents (31.6) had gone on to complete postgraduate which is a substantial proportion in the sample with higher qualifications. The number of respondents with secondary education was only 1 (0.6 percent), and 5 respondents (3.3 percent) selected the other option in educational category, which may represent a variety of non-traditional/vocational education.

This distribution shows that the majority of the respondents are highly educated with the majority having at least undergraduate degree. The increased education can affect the capacity of such electoral performance and governmental actions. The fact that the number of people having secondary education and thus the sample is relatively small also highlights that the sample is probably made up of people who are more interested in political and societal matters and may have a better overview of the performance of government and electoral results.

Table 3: Educational Background of Respondents

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Undergraduate Education	100	64.5%
Postgraduate Education	49	31.6%
Secondary Education	1	0.6%

Others	5	3.3%
Total	155	100%

5.2.4 Region of Residence

In terms of the region of residence, most of the respondents in this study were centered in the Greater Accra region with 111 people (71.6) indicating that it was where they stayed. This disproportionate ratio indicates that Greater Accra, a capital region in Ghana, can be one of the key centers of the population that is subject to the study, probably because of urbanization, economic activities and being the center of social and political engagements in the country. A large proportion of the respondents in Greater Accra is important because it could explain the urban-rural gap in the representation of the study population where more people in urban centers like Accra will be easily available during surveys and research works. On the other hand, other areas that are represented in the data show significantly lower percentages in the number of respondents, which may reflect a lesser degree of accessibility or desire to take part among those who were not living in the capital.

The distribution of respondents in the rest of the regions is more dispersed yet it is observable that it is highly concentrated in some regions. The Ashanti region comes second with 8 respondents (5.2%), relatively high as compared to others. The participation of the regions like the Western and Eastern region is modest with 4 respondents each, or 2.6% of the total samples. The Northern regions (Northern, Upper East, and Upper West) had a combined number of 8 respondents (5.2%), which implies a more equal yet again lesser representation of the northern regions of the country. In addition, Central, West North, Bono East, Bono and Volta had extremely low numbers of respondents with the range of 0.6 and 2.6 respectively.

These statistics point to a regional imbalance in the sample, and this can be affected by population density, economic infrastructure, or a geographic accessibility, and hence affect the average representation of some regions. This is a regional representation that is relevant to be taken into consideration when analyzing data, because it may affect the extent to which the results may be applied to the rest of the national population.

Table 4: Region of Residence by Respondents

Region	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Greater Accra	111	71.6
Eastern	11	7.1
Ashanti	8	5.2
Northern	5	3.3
Western	4	2.6
Volta	4	2.6
Bono	3	1.9
Central	3	1.9
West North	2	1.3
Upper West	2	1.3
Upper East	1	0.6
Bono East	1	0.6
Total	155	100%

5.2.5 Political Party Affiliation

Based on the data in relation to the political party affiliation, the positioning to the various political parties by the respondents is not constant. The most numerous group was those who belong to the New Patriotic Party, which is 52 respondents, or 33.5% of the sample size, which suggests that this party enjoys decent support among the members of the sampled population. This could, particularly, be an indication of the overreaching appeal of the N.P.P in politics, especially in urban cities or among demographics considered as regions of political danger. By comparison, only 14 respondents, or 9%, self-identified as supporters of the National Democratic Congress (N.D.C), indicating that the N.D.C's reach within the sample population is relatively less. Further, 1 respondent each (0.6%) accepted membership in the Convention People's Party (C.P.P) and the Progressive Peoples Party (P.P.P) which shows minimal bases of support for such minor parties. These statistics emphasized the two-party dominance of Ghanaian politics and also indicate that the third parties in survey have limited support.

There are interesting facts where the respondents, including 80 individuals or 51.6% of them, stated that they do not belong to any political party at all. This means the missing political affiliation could be due to many being politically independent or have no interest in parochial party politics. Perhaps it indicates a possible increase in political resignation, a discontent emerging volatility in the political structure, or a preference towards less partisan options. Additionally, 8 respondents or 4.5% of the survey stated that they might belong to parties disengaged in a survey, indicating political diversity those potential vied parties beyond the main ones in this survey. This group comprises people who may either support emerging or lesser-known parties or those who feel that conventional parties do not adequately represent their political views. On the whole, the data indicate that although the political systems in Ghana are driven by the country's major political parties, a good number of the people do not affiliate to any particular party or hold other preferences.

Table 5: Political Party Affiliation by Respondents

Political Party Affiliation	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
New Patriotic Party (NPP)	52	33.6
National Democratic Congress (NDC)	13	8.4%
Convention People's Party (CPP)	1	0.6
Progressive People's Party (PPP)	1	0.6
No Party Affiliation	81	52.3
Other Political Parties	7	4.5
Total	155	100%



5.3 Voter participation across elections (1992–Present)

This section gives responses gathered from the participants on whether they have participated in national elections after 1992. Out of the 155 participants of the questionnaire, 82 respondents (52.9%) stated they had participated in one election. Thirty (30) respondents, representing 19.4%, indicated they had participated in two elections, and 15 respondents (9.7%) indicated they had participated in three elections. In addition, 10 respondents (6.5%) indicated that they had voted in four elections, while 18 respondents (11.6%) indicated voting in five or more elections. These are a measure of the extent of electoral participation among the population under study since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1992 to the present. In this situation, some respondents claim that they abstain from previous elections for certain reasons even though they had passed the voting age during the conduct of most elections. For instance this is supported in the 1992 elections, due to four political parties (New Patriotic Party, People's National Convention, National Independence Party, and People's Heritage Party) decided to boycott the legislative elections despite the call from Commonwealth Observer Group to persuade them otherwise (Kyeremeh, 2020).

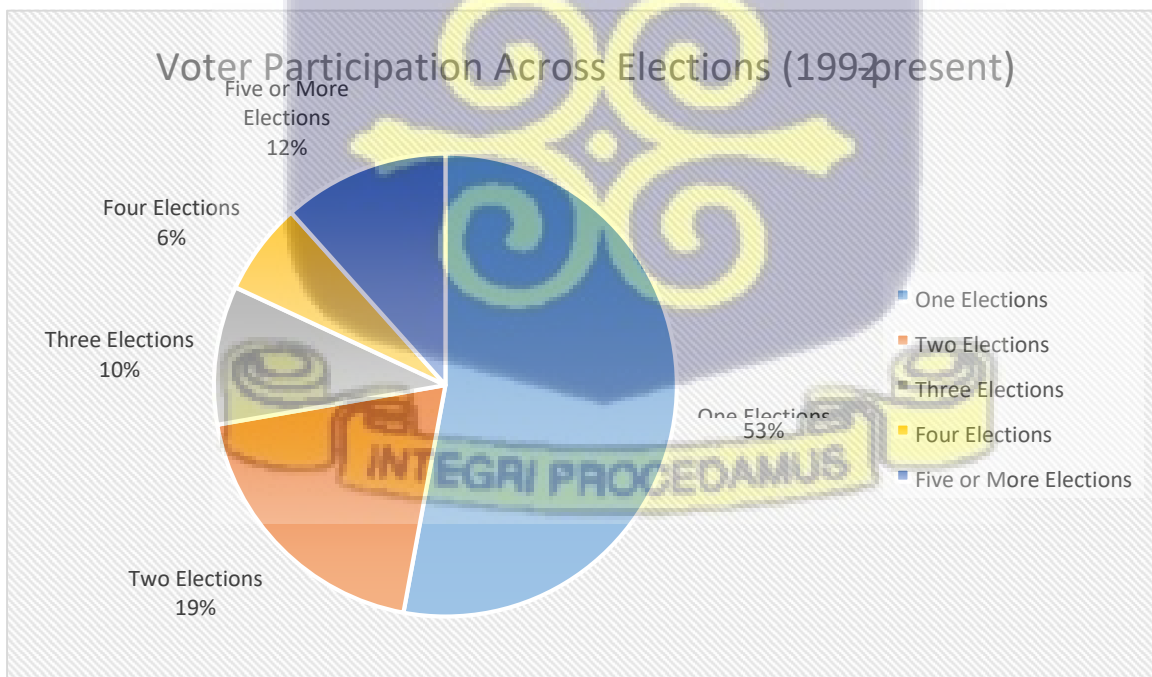


Figure 1: Voter Participation across Elections (1992 - Present)

5.4 Factors Influencing Voter Decisions in the 1996 Elections

The survey data collected from the respondents on what influenced their vote in the 1996 elections revealed a range of important considerations. Among all the respondents in the sample, 39 (25.2%) identified economic management as the major influencer of their vote. Education was second at 34 (21.9%) of the respondents identifying it as an influencer. The health sector was also significant, as 26 respondents (16.8%) cited it as the main reason for voting. Construction of infrastructure was mentioned by 24 respondents (15.5%), while social intervention schemes such as the Common Fund and the GETFund were mentioned by 21 respondents (13.5%). Notably, 11 of the respondents (7.1%) selected the "Other" category, indicating a diversity of other factors not listed as options. These were local or personal issues that were not anticipated in the questionnaire. The results exhibit a range of factors that determined voting decisions in the 1996 Ghana general elections.

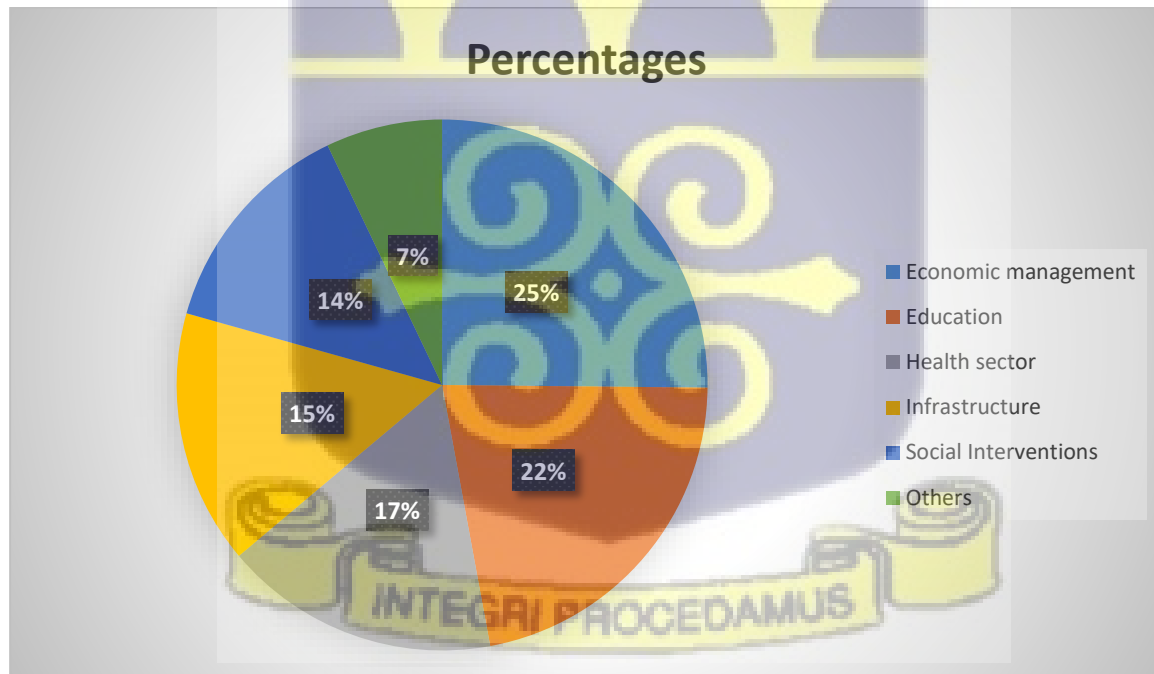


Figure 2: Factors Influencing Voter Decisions in the 1996 Elections

The 1996 general election marked the watershed in Ghana's democracy, and based on the findings, it is clear that the voting decisions during the period were strongly based on perceptions of performance and incumbency advantage. Based on the Rational Choice Theory, a significant proportion of respondents (25.2%) placed the management of the economy as the greatest vote determinant. This aligns with the theory's assumption that voters are rational decision-makers choosing based on which political actor is likely to advance their economic well-being. For this purpose, the economic stabilization and structural adjustment policies of the Rawlings administration of the NDC government were naturally appealing to voters who envisioned a better macroeconomic future.

Furthermore, education (21.9%) and health (16.8%) were also commonly brought up, which suggests the voters were attuned to social policy and blaming the incumbent for the delivery of vital public services. Such choices are proof of rational evaluation of government performance since the voters assessed how policy affected their daily life directly.

Improvements in accessibility to education and health facilities must have improved the administration's image, especially with the lower and middle classes. In terms of the

Incumbency Advantage theory, the findings also provide evidence for the argument that the NDC benefited from the power of incumbency. The advantage may have included better access to state resources, message control, and networked political connections. Infrastructure and social schemes such as the GETFund also solidified the perception that the sitting government was delivering tangible benefits, thus reinforcing support among the populace. The 45.2% of "Other" voters reveals that even if a majority of voters made performance based, rational decisions, there were certainly significant numbers who were influenced by party identification, regionalism, or leadership charisma. The aggregate 1996 outcome is thus a mix of rational calculation and structural incumbency factors in determining electoral loyalty.

5.5 Factors Influencing Voter Decisions in the 2004 Elections

The data elicited from the respondents regarding the 2004 elections showed a number of factors that contributed significantly to the determinants of voter choice. The most important factor was healthcare, and 45 respondents or 39.5% of the sample reported that healthcare affected them the most. Second to this was education, with 39 respondents or 34.2% of the sample reporting that education had an effect on their vote. Also driving hard were economic management, with 28 respondents (24.6%) stating that government economic management formed a basis for their voting decisions. Social protection interventions, such as specific government assistance programs and poverty alleviation programs, influenced 24 respondents (21.1%), an expression of interest in social protection policies. Aside from these main categories, 45 respondents (39.5%) marked the "Other" category, meaning that other personal, political, or community-based factors played a role in their choices. These can include party membership, perceptions of leadership, local development projects, or campaign promises. The manner in which this information is available represents the extent of considerations exercised by the voters during the 2004 elections and reflects the extent of priorities sustained by the Ghanaian electorate at the time.

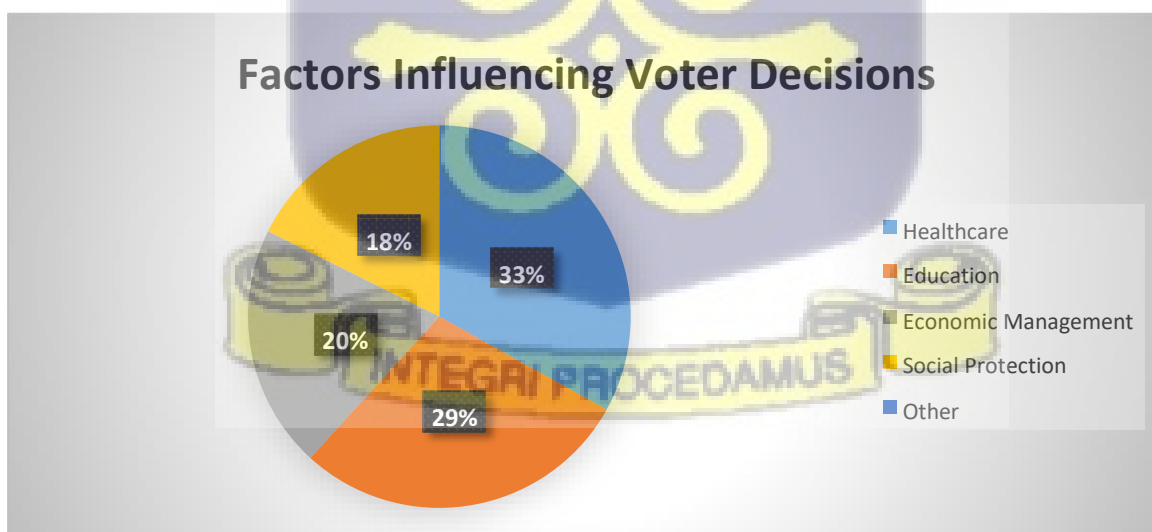


Figure 3: Factors Influencing Voter Decisions in the 2004 Elections

Ghana's general elections in 2004 were a turning point where performance on the basis of policy, and particularly social sectors, was a top voter determinant. According to Rational Choice Theory, which suggests that voters vote for their favored candidates according to how they believe their own individual and they represent collective interests, healthcare (39.5%) came out as the most critical factor according to the numbers. The inauguration of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) was especially significant. The NHIS, a flagship initiative of President Kufuor's administration, addressed an age-long missing link in affordable healthcare. Voters, especially from rural and poor constituencies, would likely have seen the scheme as a genuine solution to a pressing social issue and turned access to healthcare into a sensible reason to make an election decision. Education followed as a key driver (34.2%).

The government's attempts to upgrade access to schools, infrastructure, and teacher training were likely viewed as investments in the country's future. For voters concerned with human capital formation, these interventions equated to national dividends in the long run and economic mobility for their children. Economic management (24.6%) also performed well, with voters judging the administration's record on inflation, job creation, and macroeconomic stability. This conforms to rational choice, where electorates reward policymakers who have promise of future prosperity and prudent fiscal policy.

The Incumbency Advantage notion is also evident. The Kufuor administration, as the incumbent, had greater visibility and access to state machinery that facilitated the effective execution of infrastructure projects and welfare interventions. Infrastructure development (24.6%) and social welfare initiatives (21.1%) were notably tangible achievements that physically improved communities, which further contributed to the incumbency advantage.

The 39.5% who selected "Other" factors indicates that while most voted instrumentally on policy, party loyalty, leadership appeal, or local concerns convinced others.

Collectively, the 2004 election demonstrates how performance-based governance, underpinned by incumbency visibility, can play a very significant part in shaping voters in a competitive electoral environment. Prior to the conduct of this election, Ben Ephson, an editor of the privately-owned Dispatch Newspaper, who in the past two elections has predicted accurately, predicted a win for Kuffour in his own words that "If everything goes well, the incumbent will be able to obtain 55 percent of the vote" (The New Humanitarian, 2004)

5.6 Factors that Influenced Electoral Victories in the 2012

Data obtained from the respondents regarding their voting behavior in the 2012 elections revealed a variety of determining factors that guided support for the incumbent regime. Education stood out as the most frequent reason cited by the respondents with 65 (54.2%) of the respondents citing it as a determining factor. Healthcare was the second, with 40 (33.3%) of the respondents citing it as a significant reason. Economic management was mentioned by 41 (34.2%) of the respondents as one of their top concerns in their vote. Development of infrastructure was also mentioned by 45 (37.5%) respondents as a reason for voting for the incumbent. Social welfare interventions and measures like targeted government intervention and support programs were also mentioned, with 32 (26.7%) respondents mentioning them as a reason for their vote.

These responses represent areas of policy that the responders considered when they voted. The data indicates various spheres such as education, health, economy, infrastructure, and social protection that contributed greatly to the voter preference in the 2012 general election. This distribution is observing the diverse problems of the electorate and the areas where they felt the incumbent government performed well or specifically addressed their needs.

The responses give insight into what matters resonated most with voters for this specific electoral cycle.

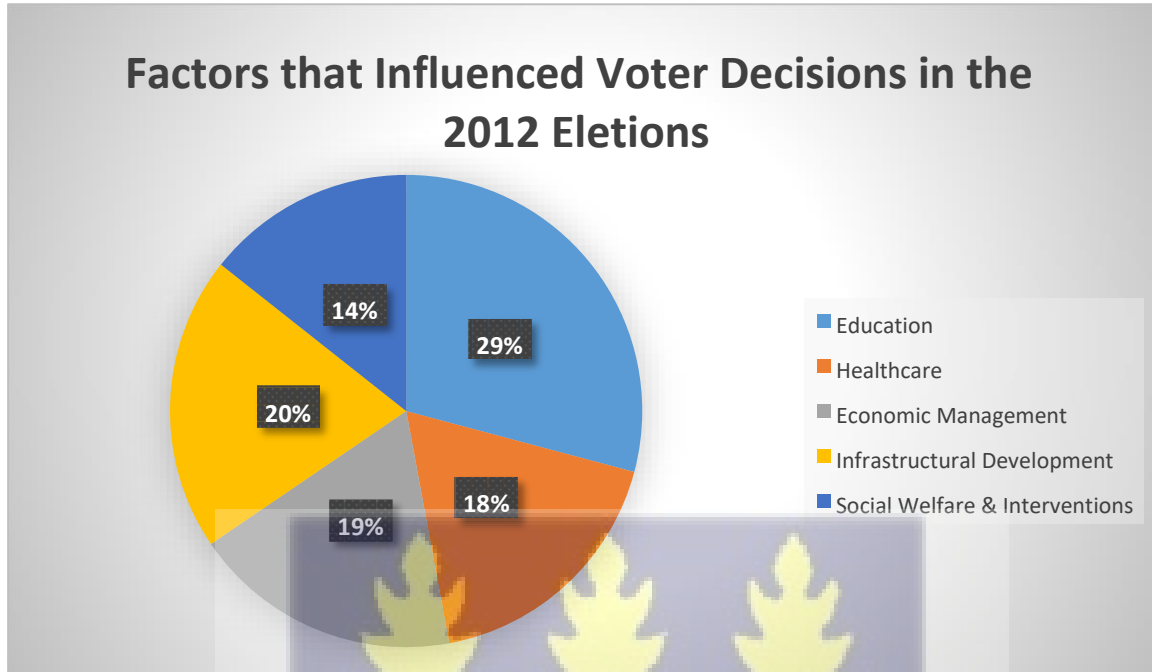


Figure 4: Factors that Influenced Voter Decisions in the 2012 Elections

The 2012 Ghana general elections exhibited a performance-based tendency in voting behavior grounded on the anticipation that voters were going to decide based on policy gain perception and incumbent utility performance. Education was the most important solitary variable mentioned by 54.2% (54%) of the respondents, indicating that voters valued real social investments, particularly those reducing household expenditure. The government's supply of free school uniforms and the expansion of access to primary and secondary education must have furnished direct and real relief to families, especially in rural and poor communities.

For voters with rational behavior, the social and economic worth of such education related policies clearly outweighed all the rest, thus shaping their support for the incumbent. Health, cited by 33.3% of the interviewees, was also a dominant driver. The incumbent government's consistent investment in the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and health infrastructure development directly impacted public welfare. The NHIS particularly affected rural and poor populations by reducing out-of-pocket expenses and improving access to basic services. These voters would have therefore calculated costs and benefits in favor of the incumbent, understanding improved health outcomes and access as critical dividends of governance. Economic management (34.2%) also imparted additional credibility to this rational calculus. The citizens valued fiscal responsibility, inflation control, and job creation, all main issues of the economic agenda of the government.

Despite economic hardship, voters perceived the government's stabilization as good in the wish for long-run security and growth. Infrastructure development (37.5%) also provided palpable and visible evidence of government commitment, enriching daily life through improved transport, energy, and public facilities. Incumbency Advantage can be seen through the findings as well. As the ruling party, the government was more public and had greater access to funds to implement and showcase developmental initiatives. Welfare schemes like LEAP, spoken of by 26.7% of the respondents, were not only relief but strategic interventions that reaffirmed opinion on a responsive and people-centric government. In sum, the findings suggest that a vast majority of the 2012 electorate acted reasonably in prioritizing policy whose short- and long-term socio-economic payoffs. It is also influenced by the salience and capacity to mobilize resources of the governing government.

5.7 Factors Influencing Voter Decisions in the 2020 Elections

The data obtained from the respondents on the 2020 elections highlights several factors that shape the voters' decisions. Education was the major factor, highlighted by 101 respondents, i.e., 65.2% of the sample. A major education policy highlighted by the voters was the Free Senior High School (FSHS) policy that eliminated the financial hurdle to the secondary school and offered other support such as free school sandals and uniforms. Economic management was the runner-up and had 46 respondents (29.7%) attribute it as their reason to vote for the incumbent.

This reveals how vital the development of employment opportunities and industrialization policies like the One District, One Factory program are. Healthcare was also essential, and 38 respondents (24.5%) attributed the vote to the government's investments in health infrastructure and services like the maintenance of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS). In the same vein, the development of infrastructure was cited by 38 (24.5%), which indicated that investments in public utilities, power, and roads directly influenced voting choice. Finally, 35 (22.6%) were impacted by social interventions such as free water and electricity, which were particularly valued under the economic hardship brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. These varied responses encompass a mix of development- and welfare-focused motivations for voting in the 2020 elections.



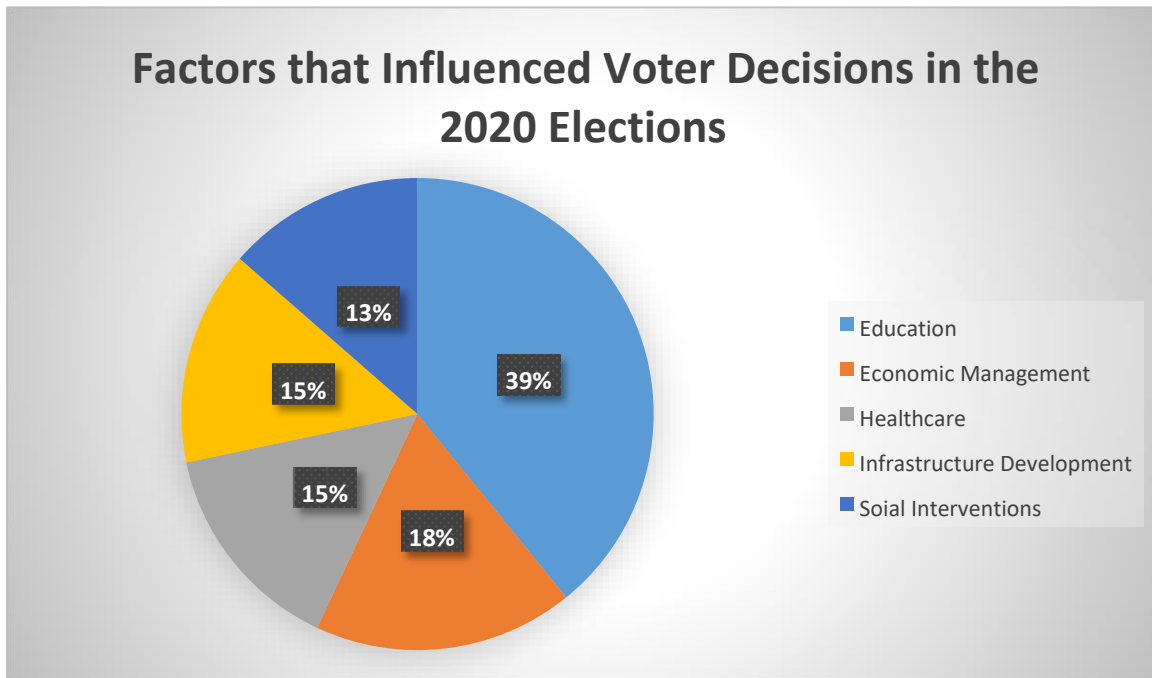


Figure 5: Factors that Influenced Voter Decisions in the 2020 Elections

The 2020 election was a watershed moment in Ghana's democratic experience, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic period. Vote behavior at this period is strongly reflective of Rational Choice Theory-derived norms, holding the position that political decisions are taken by citizens in terms of cost and benefits to ensure maximum individual or collective wellbeing. The study demonstrates that policy direction towards fulfilling immediate socioeconomic requirements perceived as essential - education, economic management, health, infrastructure, and social intervention - played an intense influence on voters. These were not abstract issues but concrete ones that affected daily life.

The F.S.H.S policy was the most definitive, and 65.2% of the respondents referenced it. This flagship policy took the cost of secondary school off countless families, particularly those on low- and middle-income levels. In opening education to more people, the policy instantly improved the economic opportunities and social mobility of families at once. In the rational choice model, the policy ensures voters enjoy direct, concrete benefits and therefore

incentivizes them to reward the in-government. The prominence of education among election-time voter choices indicates how specific policies are able to instigate high electoral loyalty. Management of the economy, mentioned by 29.7% of the interviewees, also justified rational behavior. Initiatives like One District, One Factory (1D1F) were seen as strategies for deconcentration of industrialization and triggering employment generation. Ghana may have suffered from inflation and rising liabilities during debt during this period, but voters who gained or stood to gain from or through such schemes most likely judged the incumbent better in terms of economic management.

Healthcare significance, as cited by 24.5% of respondents, was further augmented amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic response by the government especially the constant expansion of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), hospital developments, and provision of free COVID-19 treatment reflected its public health pledge. These were particularly embraced by rural and underprivileged regions where healthcare access has been previously wanting. Infrastructure development and social programs, both mentioned by 24.5% and 22.6% of respondents respectively, also greatly impacted the decisions of the voters.

Improvements to the infrastructure like road work and energy initiatives made a visible and tangible difference, particularly in rural and peri-urban communities. Free water and electricity provision during the pandemic was likely one of the most tangible illustrations of government assistance during a nationwide crisis. These steps provided relief to financially strapped families instantaneously and signified a humane and responsive government. From the point of Incumbent Advantage concept point of view, the ability of the incumbent administration to take advantage of state resources for these interventions increased its salience and popularity with the voter. Their carefully timed intervention, particularly during an election period, yielded political dividends. Generally, the voter behavior in 2020 is reflective of a

general practice of rational choice based on actual policy-focused gains augmented by the resource strength of the incumbent.

5.8 Voting for the Incumbent Government

The survey question based on the above question sought to gauge the level of support for the current administration especially with regards to the government prior to the 2020 elections among respondents. The responses were categorized into three distinct groups: "Yes," "No," and "Maybe." A total of 155 respondents participated in the questionnaire, with the majority, representing 61.3% (95 respondents), indicating that they voted for the incumbent government. However, the data also reveals a notable proportion of respondents, 27.7% (43 respondents), who answered "No," indicating that they did not vote for the incumbent government. In addition, 10.3% (16 respondents) of those surveyed chose the "Maybe" option, indicating uncertainty or indecision about their vote.

5.9 Importance of Government Performance in Voting Decisions

The survey question also aimed at assessing how voters weigh the government's performance when deciding whom to support in an election. The responses were categorized into four options: "Very important," "Important," "Neutral," and "Less important." The survey received responses from 155 individuals, and the findings provide valuable insight into how government performance influences electoral decisions among the respondents. The majority of respondents (47.7%, 74 individuals) stated that the government's performance was "very important" in influencing their voting decisions. A smaller but still significant portion of respondents (17.5%, 27 individuals) considered government performance as "important" in their decision-making process. Conversely, 22.6% (35 individuals) of respondents considered government performance to be "neutral" in their voting decision. Finally, 11.6% (18

individuals) of respondents viewed government performance as “less important” in their voting decisions.

5.10 Voting Out Incumbents: Historical Voting Behavior

The survey also sought to understand the voting behavior of respondents regarding incumbent governments, specifically whether they had voted out an incumbent in previous elections. The data reveals that a significant portion of respondents, 45.8% (71 individuals), reported that they had voted out an incumbent government in the past. In contrast, 42.6% (66 respondents) indicated that they had not voted out an incumbent government, suggesting that a substantial portion of the electorate either supported the incumbent leadership or felt that reelection was warranted based on the government's past performance. Finally, 11.6% (18 individuals) of respondents answered “Maybe,” reflecting some uncertainty or lack of clarity regarding their past voting behavior.

5.11 Reasons for Voting Out an Incumbent Government in the 2016 Elections

The survey sought to explore the factors that led respondents to choose to vote against the incumbent in elections especially in 2016. The findings, based on 155 responses, reveal a range of issues that motivated voters to reject the sitting government, with economic performance and governance-related factors emerging as the most significant reasons. Among the most cited reasons, 37.4% (58 respondents) stated that poor economic performance was a primary factor in their decision to vote out the incumbent government. The N.D.C’s loss in the 2016 elections is often cited that factors such as “economic hardship, lack of reliable electricity, corruption and rising unemployment to be the reason” (Forson, 2017).

Economic issues such as unemployment, inflation, and financial mismanagement appear to have been central to voter dissatisfaction. In addition to economic issues, 16.7% (26 respondents) indicated that poor educational policies were a key reason for voting out the incumbent government. Furthermore, 13.5% (21 respondents) cited inadequate infrastructure development as a reason for their vote. Other significant factors included inadequate health

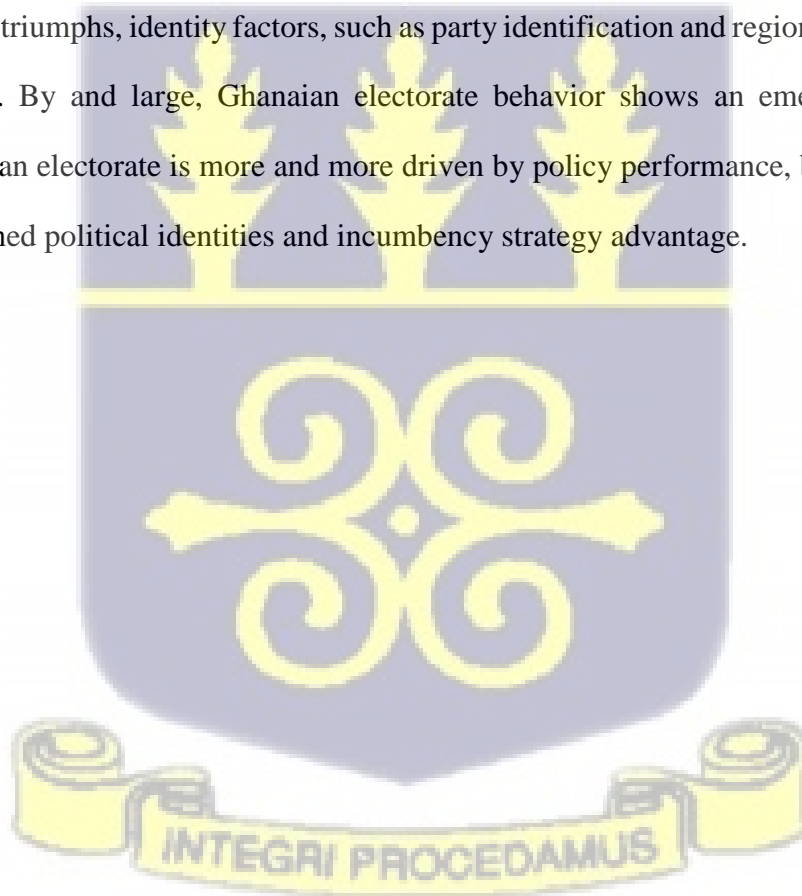
care services 12.3% (19 respondents) and weak social welfare programs 12.3% (19 respondents). There is no denying that corruption is pervasive in Ghana, with several cases developing in recent years. 31% (48 respondents) cited corruption and mismanagement as a major reason for voting out the incumbent. Finally, 23.3% (24 respondents) mentioned other factors as contributing to their decision to vote out the incumbent, though the specifics of these factors were not provided.

5.12 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the data collected from the survey responses, providing an overview of the key factors that influenced voters' decisions in Ghana's 1996, 2004, 2016, and 2020 elections. The data included detailed demographic information about the respondents, such as their gender, age, education, political affiliation, and region of residence. It also presented the factors that most significantly shaped their voting decisions, with education, economic management, healthcare, infrastructure development, and social interventions standing out as the main influences across the various elections. It also explored respondents' levels of support for the incumbent government, their views on the importance of government performance in voting decisions, and the reasons for voting out an incumbent.

The chapter further provides a clear depiction of the diversity within the sample, highlighting how these factors varied over time and how they impacted electoral outcomes. Overall, these findings illustrate the dynamic nature of voter priorities and suggest that while certain issues remain consistently important, the specific concerns of the electorate shift in response to both domestic challenges and government interventions.

The increased salience of education and healthcare as vote determinants especially in 2004, 2012, and 2020 helps illustrate how practical, need-based policies governed electoral affiliation. Concurrent with this, the concept of the incumbency advantage is experienced in how subsequent governments employed their control of state property, media attention, and programmatic execution to gain good voter reputations and outcomes. Programs like NHIS, FSHS, One District One Factory, and COVID-period social programs like free utilities not only met voter demands but enhanced the political capital of ruling parties as well. However, the fact that every election year recorded a significant percentage of respondents citing "Other" reasons means that while rationality triumphs, identity factors, such as party identification and regional belongingness, still play a role. By and large, Ghanaian electorate behavior shows an emergent democratic character where an electorate is more and more driven by policy performance, but not yet wholly driven by ingrained political identities and incumbency strategy advantage.



CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is to provide a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations based on the insights gathered from the survey questionnaire conducted. This research focused on the electoral performance of incumbent governments under the Fourth Republic. Data was used from google form questionnaire and in-depth literature search. The results of the analysis presented three themes: reasons for voting for the incumbent government in 2020, voting for the incumbent government, importance of government performance in voting decisions, and reasons for voting out an incumbent government. 155 respondents were engaged for this study and provided areas for the decision for selection of incumbent governments since the inception of the Fourth Republic of Ghana.

6.2 Summary of the Findings

The survey data on voting behavior in the 2020 elections reveals a range of factors that influenced voter decisions regarding the incumbent government. A significant portion of respondents supported the government primarily due to education policies, especially the Free Senior High School (FSHS) initiative, which alleviated the financial burden on families and became a key campaign promise. Economic management, particularly initiatives like One District, One Factory, also played a crucial role, with many voters citing it as a reason for their support. Healthcare and infrastructure development were also important factors, emphasizing on the concerns of the electorates with better healthcare access and visible improvements in public infrastructure. The government's social interventions, such as the provision of free electricity and water, influenced many voters, particularly those in lowincome households, providing immediate relief during times of economic uncertainty.

In terms of overall support for the incumbent government, the majority of respondents indicated that they voted for the incumbent in the 2020 elections, reflecting strong backing for the government. However, a considerable portion expressed opposition, and a smaller group remained undecided, signaling a divided electorate. When asked about reasons for voting out incumbents in previous elections, poor economic performance emerged as the primary factor for many respondents, followed by inadequate education policies and insufficient infrastructure development. Issues like corruption and mismanagement were also significant, with many voters citing them as key reasons for rejecting an incumbent government. Overall, the findings reflect both support for the incumbent's policies and significant concerns about economic performance, governance, and service delivery, which influenced voting behavior in both positive and negative directions.

6.3 Conclusion

The conclusions drawn in accordance with the findings in line with the objectives are as follows:

The results of the research give a full picture of the determinants of the voting process and the degree of support to the ruling party of government. In the latest election, the 2020 elections, it is evident that critical policy sectors like education, economic management, healthcare, and infrastructure development were critical factors that affected the voter-choice. On the first objective, which is to determine the range of factors, which led to electoral success of incumbent governments since 1992 in Ghana, the paper identifies policies such as the Free Senior High School (FSHS) program and economic policies like One District, One Factory to have a strong receptivity among the voters and bolstered the base of supporters of the incumbent government.

The findings however, despite the strengths, indicate some areas of concern mainly relating to issues of economic performance, governance and service delivery. With the second objective,

which is to analyze how political, social, and economic performance has influenced the re-election of incumbent governments, the paper has shown that discontentment with a poor economic management, corruption, and infrastructure or health care can have a pernicious effect on the voter perception and may damage re-election chances. This reminds us of the need to look at both the short term demands of the electorate such as financial salvation by way of social interventions, and long term governance and development issues.

The mixed opinion on the incumbent government indicate that there is a polarized or divided electorate with most people having a positive view of the government policies, yet a large proportion are unsatisfied or have their doubts. In the third objective, which considers the theories that should be applied by the incumbent regimes to ensure they remain in power, the results indicate that capacity to deliver the policies, transparency in governance, and responsive social and economic interventions are key to sustaining popular electoral votes as well as increasing the chances of securing back-to-back terms. Comprehensively, the paper shows that the elements of strategic policy execution, performance in governance and voter perception make incumbents successful in their re-elections in Ghana and this gives a very insight into the role of these factors in determining re-election results.

6.4 Recommendations Based on the Findings

The findings indicate crucial areas where the incumbent government could focus to improve its standing among voters. One of the major concerns was economic management. A significant portion of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the economy, citing issues like unemployment, inflation, and financial mismanagement. To address this, the government should prioritize economic reforms aimed at creating jobs, reducing inflation, and ensuring sustainable economic growth. Another critical area that emerged was concerns about corruption and governance. Many respondents cited corruption and mismanagement as key

reasons for not supporting the incumbent government. To mitigate this, the government must intensify efforts to combat corruption through stronger anti-corruption policies, greater transparency in government operations, and the establishment of independent oversight bodies.

Education, especially the Free Senior High School (FSHS) policy, emerged as a major factor for those who voted for the incumbent government. To maintain this support, the government should continue to invest in education, ensuring that initiatives like Free SHS are sustained and expanded. Additionally, there should be a stronger focus on vocational training and skills development, which are critical for enhancing the employability of young people. Healthcare and social welfare programs were also significant factors influencing voter decisions. The government should continue to expand healthcare access, especially in rural areas, and ensure that the healthcare system is equipped to handle future challenges. Expanding social welfare programs, such as free water and electricity, can provide much-needed relief to vulnerable populations.

Infrastructure development is another area where the government can improve. A considerable portion of respondents cited infrastructure as an important factor in their voting decisions. The government should prioritize infrastructure projects, particularly in underdeveloped regions, to improve access to essential services and boost local economies. Enhancing transportation networks, road systems, and energy infrastructure can have long-term positive effects on both economic development and voter satisfaction. Finally, addressing youth concerns and engaging with first-time voters is crucial for future elections. Developing policies to tackle youth unemployment, providing more opportunities for youth participation in governance, and ensuring that young people's voices are heard in policy discussions will be vital in securing support from this demographic. Moreover, reducing voter uncertainty by clearly communicating government policies and their impacts will help build confidence among undecided voters and reduce political apathy.

6.5 Recommendations for Future Studies

Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations for future studies can help deepen our understanding of voting behavior, political engagement, and the factors influencing electoral outcomes. These recommendations aim to address gaps in the current research and explore areas that were not fully examined.

There should be in-depth exploration of voter dissatisfaction. Future studies should explore the reasons behind the significant percentage of respondents who expressed dissatisfaction with the incumbent government, particularly in areas like economic performance, governance, and service delivery. More detailed qualitative research, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, could uncover specific grievances or perceptions that quantitative data cannot fully capture. Another recommendation for future studies is the impact of political ideology and party loyalty. The current study focused on policy-related factors but did not examine the role of political ideology or party loyalty in voting decisions.

Future research should consider how voters' political beliefs, party affiliation, and ideological preferences shape their support for the incumbent government.

Youth and First-Time Voter Behavior is another area future studies should be based on. Given the increasing importance of youth participation in elections, future studies should focus specifically on youth voter behavior and the factors that drive first-time voters. Furthermore, regional and socioeconomic variations in voting behavior is an interesting field to also consider. While the current study provides general insights, it would be valuable for future research to analyze regional variations and socioeconomic factors that influence voting patterns. For instance, examining how urban versus rural voters perceive issues like infrastructure, education, and

healthcare could uncover disparities in how different regions or income groups respond to government policies.

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APPENDIX: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE GUIDE

Thank you for participating in the survey. Your responses will be important inputs to the electoral performance of the incumbent governments in the fourth republic of Ghana. This survey concentrates on the elections in 1996, 2004, 2016 and 2020. The questionnaire used is anonymous and all the answers will remain confidential. The time to complete should be around 10 -15 minutes.

Directions: Answering the questions below, please, refer to your experiences. On question about Likert scale, respond to the questions by standardizing your degree of agreement with the statements.

Definition: To answer this questionnaire, the term incumbent government is used to mean the office-holder or ruling government during an election that is seeking re-election. The incumbent government in the case of the 2020 Ghanaian general elections is the New Patriotic Party (NPP) headed by President Nana Akuffo-Addo.

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

2. Age Group:

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64 65 and above
-

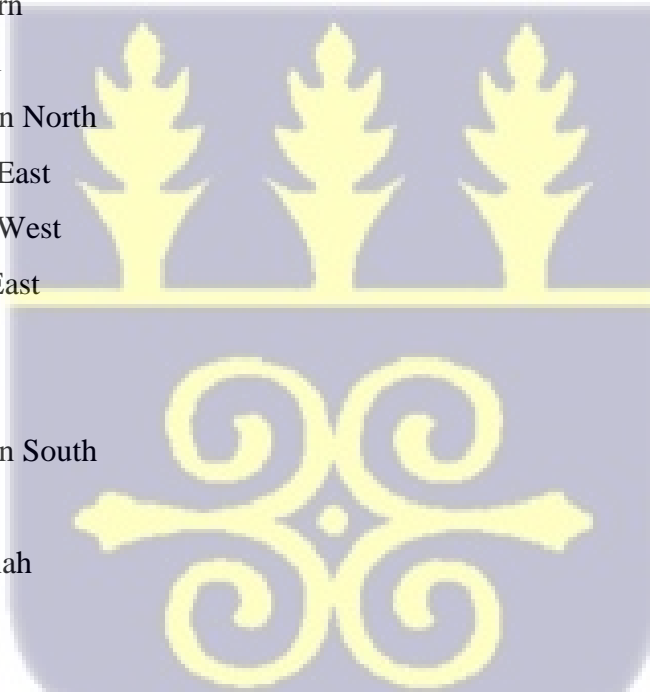
3. Educational Level:



- No formal education
- Primary education
- Secondary education
- Tertiary education (Undergraduate)
- Tertiary education (Postgraduate)
- Other (Please specify): _____

4. Region of Residence:

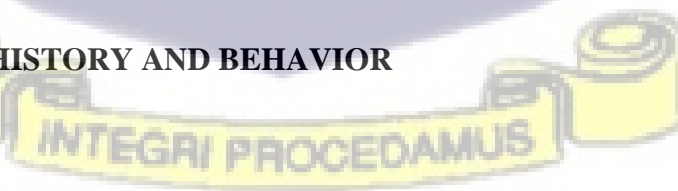
- Greater Accra
- Ashanti
- Western
- Eastern
- Northern
- Central
- Western North
- Upper East
- Upper West
- Bono East
- Bono
- Ahafo
- Western South
- Volta
- Savannah
- Oti



SECTION 2: VOTING HISTORY AND BEHAVIOR

Constituency Voted In:

- _____



6. Number of Elections Participated In Since 1992:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

7. Political Party Affiliation (if any):

- None
- National Democratic Congress (NDC)
- New Patriotic Party (NPP)
- Progressive People's Party (PPP)
- Convention People's Party (CPP)
- Other (Please specify): _____

8. Which of the following elections have you participated in? (Select all that apply)

- 1996
- 2004
- 2016
- 2020

9. Have you voted for the incumbent government in the most recent election you participated in?

Yes No

10. How important is the performance of the incumbent government in your voting decision?

- Very important
- Important Neutral
- Less important Not important at all
-

SECTION 3: PERCEPTIONS OF INCUMBENT GOVERNMENTS

11. How would you rate the overall performance of the incumbent government in the 1996 elections?

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Poor
- Very Poor

12. How would you rate the overall performance of the incumbent government in the 2004 elections?

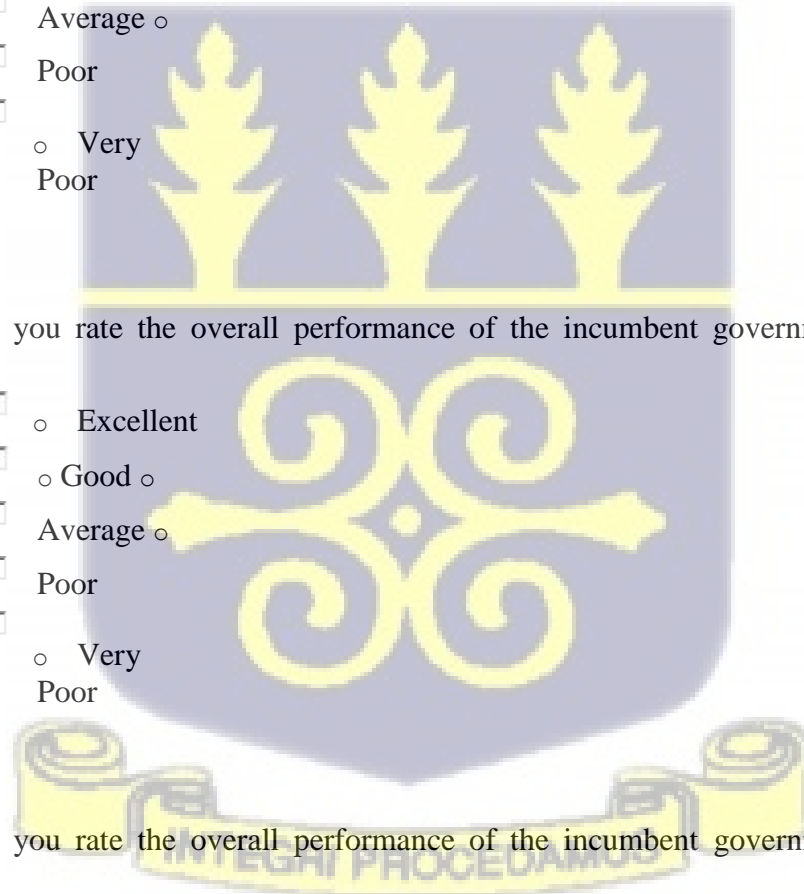
- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Poor
- Very Poor

13. How would you rate the overall performance of the incumbent government in the 2016 elections?

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Poor
- Very Poor

14. How would you rate the overall performance of the incumbent government in the 2020 elections?

- Excellent
- Good



- Average ○
- Poor
- Very
- Poor
-

15. What were the primary factors that influenced your decision to vote for the incumbent government in the 1996 elections? (Select one for each year)

- Economic management
- Healthcare
- Education
- Infrastructure
- Social interventions (e.g. District Common Fund and GETFUND)

16. What were the primary factors that influenced your decision to vote for the incumbent government in the 2004 elections? (Select one for each year)

- Economic management
- Healthcare (e.g. NHIS)
- Education
- Infrastructure
- Social interventions

17. What were the primary factors that influenced your decision to vote for the incumbent government in the 2012 elections? (Select one for each year)

- Economic management
- Healthcare
- Education
- Infrastructure development
- Social interventions

18. What were the primary factors that influenced your decision to vote for the incumbent government in the 2020 elections? (Select all that apply)

- Economic management (e.g. 1D1F)
- Healthcare
- Education (e.g. e.g. free SHS)
- Infrastructure development
- Social interventions(e.g. free water and electricity)
- Party loyalty
- Campaign promises

19. Have you ever voted out an incumbent government in any of the elections you participated in?

-
- Yes
- No

20. If you answered 'Yes' to the previous question, what were the main reasons for voting out the incumbent government in 2016? (Select all that apply)

- Poor economic performance
- Inadequate healthcare services
- Poor educational policies
- Insufficient infrastructure development
- Weak social welfare programs
-
- Corruption or mismanagement
- Other (Please specify): _____

