

# Analyzing How Women in Parliament of Ghana Overcome Barriers that Affect their Participation in Political Leadership

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## Abstract

*The representation of women in political leadership in parliament is appalling and has become a matter of concern to the global world. According to Kasomo, 19.6% was recorded as women representation in parliament in the world, as a result of the effect of power disparity between men and women. Women in political leadership face challenges which originate from the system of politics set up or dominated by men and women are expected to fulfill certain expectations and roles outlined by previous male leaders. The task and duty of women even when assigned a political leadership position indicates that women should emphasize less on socioeconomic development, but rather on survival issues. The structure of politics in the contemporary era back to the ancient Greece period has developed the notion of excluding women from politics and leadership positions, as some scholars like Locke and Rousseau indicated that women have no place in politics and leadership, but rather engage in domestic roles like to nurture and be mothers and wives. Historically, the systems of democracy favor men more than women. This is as a result of the liberal democracy and the political system in relation to women's political leadership. Internationally, women have been involved in issues concerning women and political leadership, but are underrepresented politically in the process of making decision. The subordination of women in the society is the brain behind the low representation of women in parliament or the exemption of women in political leadership and decision making, as women are portrayed to be naïve, unintelligent, displeasing and untrustworthy. According to Adu responsibilities at home such as childcare, serve as a major obstacle to women in political leadership and public office. Women may face challenges when they concentrate less on domestic issues and pay more attention to their political career. Similarly, women may encounter problems like stress and conflict, when more attention is paid to their political career instead of their domestic issues. This therefore cause fear in most women to involve themselves in political leadership whilst those who are already involved in political leadership encounter difficulty to continue to occupy such positions. With regards to this, the study sought to assess the state of women in political leadership in the 4th republican parliament of Ghana.*

*Keywords: Women in Politics, Parliament of Ghana, Political Leadership Position, Political Barriers*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The significance of this study is to ascertain the state of women in political leadership as well as to discover the echelon of women participation. The data on the factors on state of women's political leadership is inadequate due to the fact that literature on women in political leadership in Ghana is not enough. However, this study sought to analyze the state of women in political leadership in the 4th Republican Parliament of Ghana, which will bring transformation in the electoral system, especially, in the elections of parliamentarians to come. It will also encourage the emphasis on policies on affirmative action which will bring gender inequities and factors that impede women participation to the minimum. The data will help increase or add up to the insufficient literature on women political leadership and representation in parliament as well as serve as reference to researchers and those who make policies in Africa, especially Ghana. Students in tertiary institutions, gender activists and other institutions undertaking a similar research will consider this study as beneficial.

The range of this study was from 1992 to 2012, although some comparisons have been made with earlier studies in the introductory or literature review section or in the major work. The institution involved in this study was the Republican Parliament of Ghana, which is a public institution and a legal law making body. Some departments in the Parliament of Ghana engaged were the Clerk's Secretariat, the Research

department, as well as the offices of the women Members of parliament. The Parliament of Ghana was selected in order to have the right response to the needs of the study. Despite the challenges involved, great effort was put in the collection of the data, in order to fulfill the requirement of this study, by achieving the objectives and purposes outlined. The composition of women in politics and political leadership positions continue to be low as compared to the men, upon the efforts women have put in the development of politics in Ghana. This chapter explains the state of women in political leadership in the fourth republican parliament of Ghana in relation to relevant literature and theories. This study considered some specific theories that are really connected to the state of women in political leadership such as the feminist theory together with the liberal feminist theory and the social role theory that is essential from a viewpoint of a political engineering. The last aspect will be on discussion and examination of some studies or literature which are applicable to the area of study.

## 2.0 THEORETICAL LITERATURE

According to the Feminist Political theory, the word “feminist” which evolved from English usage in the 1880s with its meaning still debated upon, signifies support for women in terms of the same political and lawful rights with men. In this theory, the term “feminist” generally means the disparity, subjugation or subordination that exists in the relationship between men and women (Childs & Krook, 2006). From the feminist point of view, gender can be described as manner, responsibility, morals and conduct that is assigned to female or male in the society. However, gender relation is considered as an issue of inequity and subordination, as indicated by most feminist (Waylen, 1996). According to Walker (1995) the benefits of the society will depend on whether you are born a male or female and this is the perception that all feminist hold. What concern feminist is the fact that men seem to have extra advantage and power than women and how this situation can be changed, as well as the perception of the state of affairs of female is the focal point of feminist political theory (Childs & Krook, 2006). Another concern is the dissimilarities among females in terms of race, traditions, rank and age group which have an effect on their interest and preference (Lovenduski, 2005; Dahlerup, 1998).

There are two outlooks for gender in politics: Representation of women, and the concern for affairs of women. Although the representation of female cannot assure the needed result, but it will help amplify the possibility of considering the affairs of women (Allah-Mensah, 2001). The distinction between males and females is significant in the politics of representation. Longwe and Clark (1999) elaborated some theories of low representation of women within feminist theory. Thus, sex role-socialization, which indicates that in terms of responsibilities, the females and males are trained in different ways, where public life and political leadership is dedicated to the male whilst the home is dedicated to the female. And the Male Conspiracy theory also concerns the fact that there is low representation of female in public political leadership, as a result of men showing favoritism and this theory is developed from feminist ideology. Other factors like status, power, the aspiration to compete for political office, determine the rate of female's representation in legislation and political leadership, as men are domineering in terms of these factors, therefore the females encounter difficulty in challenging with the males (Longwe & Clark, 1999). Childs and Krook (2006) stated that when there are more females in political leadership, it will lead to an enhancement in the representation of females and therefore lead to decline in female stereotyping. The problem of low representation of female in political leadership can be tackled in two different ways.

Through the critical mass, where it is necessary to have a certain number of female representatives (descriptive representation), as argued by some school of thought. And through Substantive representative, where the number of females in political leadership will be of minority but dynamic in pushing the affairs of gender equity (Lovenduski, 2005).

### 2.1 Liberal Feminist Theory

The Liberal feminists posited that a fair state guarantees the freedom of its citizens since freedom is a basic right and therefore women should have freedom. Liberal feminism is in different categories and liberals disagree among themselves on the meaning of freedom. This study considered freedom as

personal independence whilst political freedom is the state of the life of an individual. Classical – liberal or libertarian feminism literature consider freedom as freedom from coercive interfering (Tong, 2007). According to Liberal feminist, there should be the presence of enabling conditions in the lives of women, in order for them to exercise their personal independence.

They added that the necessities and interest of women are inadequately mirrored in their living conditions and such conditions are not legal since women's representation in political leadership is inadequate (Okin, 1989). In addition, that women should live their lives the way they like it, thus personal autonomy should be enjoyed by women. The practical version of personal autonomy offered indicated that women are permitted to have different kinds of autonomy and therefore Women Movement should try to discover the conditions that will lead to the realization of such autonomies (MacKenzie & Stoljar, 2000). Some of the enabling conditions are: Freedom of women from threat of violence or violence should be discouraged because it is an infringement on their dignity, since it causes women to dance to the tune of others instead of their own. Violence also infringes on the self-respect of women (Briston, 26). Also, violence against women and threat of violence, as documented in the liberal feminist literature indicated that it is limiting and disempowering women unfairly (Cudd, 2006).

Second, women should be free from restrictions put by patriarchal paternalistic and moralistic rule. Thus, the rules set by the Patriarchal paternalistic, limit the choice of women based on the fact that such limitations are in the interest of women. A typical instance is the rule that restricts women on their choice of employment, simply because, women are not interested in certain jobs (Smith, 2004). Similarly, the rule set by the patriarchal moralistic is the limitation of women on their option of jobs, since women are morally forbidden to choose certain jobs (Cornell, 1998; Brake, 2004). The liberal feminist considered such limitations on women options as unfair since the options of women should be determined by themselves and in their own interest and values (Chambers & Clare, 2008).

Third, the liberal feminists held that women were allowed to have alternatives in their lives (Alstott, 2005). Another aspect where women were unfairly restricted in choice was in terms of sex discrimination in education, prejudice and employment (Smith, 2004). According to the Liberal feminist, there had been various attempts to increase the involvement of women in political leadership and public deliberations although, there had been some instances where women were exempted. This was as a result of the gender system which caused women to be less represented in political leadership and legislation. For instance, as a result of the dual role of unpaid and paid work of women, the free time available to women to engage in political leadership become less and therefore this is attributed to the incapability of women to occupy political leadership position as compared to men; the participation in political leadership and legislation is considered to be masculine, as issues of women interest are considered not political but personal, since women do not have power in major institutions to manipulate political affairs. However, when women are underrepresented in legislation and political leadership, it leads to dislocation of the objective of the action of the legislature or it becomes the subject of public discussion (Tong, 2007).

Meanwhile, some liberal feminist realized that because women are exempted from political leadership and public deliberations in cumbersome ways, there is the need to discover remedies and means of escape from the inhuman loop. To enable women, get involved in political leadership and legislation in equal terms with men, then Justice for all members of the society should be considered (Okin, 1989). According to Linda McClain, children should be given civic education to enable them be equipped democratic citizens, as well as to educate them on women's political leadership and equality. Also, she held that exempted traditional matters like dual role of work and family as well as abuse of women should be put in the public domain by the state for consideration (McClain, 2006).

Moreover, there have been recommendations that the state should employ legal mechanisms to do away with the exemption of women in political leadership and legislation (Peter, 2006; Rhode, 1999). Thus, using the legal mechanism to include those who have been exempted is a justification for the unjust underrepresentation of women in political leadership as enjoyed by others (Phillips, 1998). Some mechanisms suggested include having quota or target on the slates of political parties for equal

representation of women in legislation and political leadership (Tong, 2007). For instance, Karen Green argued for assured equivalent representation of men and women in parliament (Green & Karen, 2006). However, liberal feminists have divergent views on the effectiveness and justice for such mechanisms (Peters, 2006; Rhode, 1999).

## 2.2 The Social Role Theory

Social role was defined by Eagly (1987), as expectations which are shared socially by people who are the occupants of some particular social positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Two types of gender roles are found under this theory. These are the Injunctive norms which entails the expectations of people with regards to what they should do. The second role which is the descriptive norm, explains the reason why roles performed by gender influence behavior through the exhibition of power. This explains why the leadership of women are looked down upon and frowned by the society. Some societal attributes like being kind, sensitive, loving, compassionate and gentle are associated with women whilst men are associated with some characteristics as freedom, domineering, self-confidence and liable to become leaders (Carpenter, 2001).

The theory posited that the observation of the role being performed by a particular sex make people believe in that sex. This means the difference in the distribution of social role is the cause of the differences seen in the behavior of men and women. Thus, men and women are associated with certain social and gender roles which determine their beliefs and behavior in terms of the stereotypes attached to these roles (Wood & Lindorf, 2001).

In military, political, corporate and some part of the society, political leadership has been primarily a male right. The number of women in political leadership is insignificant, even though the admittance of women into political position has increased. The "glass ceiling" is a theory, which explains the bias and barricade that exempt women from superior political leadership positions (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission Report, 1995). The glass ceiling concept became popular when women were uncommon in key leadership positions upon the existence of equality of sexes based on various indicators. Inadequate women were identified as the main brain behind the meager representation of women in political leadership. The scarcity of women is attributed to different causes such as responsibilities of the family (Oakley, 2000).

An attempt has been made to effect some of the theories mentioned above to the outcome of the research. The purpose of this review is to compare the various theories, analyze them and use the relevant theory that match the results best. For instance, theories like the feminist theory and the liberal feminist theory were considered, because, they fit into the topic of the study and will provide relevant information to the success of the research. In relation to the explanation elaborated and based on the union of sexes on variables related to human capital, there is the need, to also consider Eagly's (1987) social role theory of sex difference and similarities.

## 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the in depth account of the methodology of this study and it entails the location where the study was conducted or organized, the sample size and its features, the technique used in sampling, the design of the research as well as the resources used in the study. The process of collection of data in connection with ethical guidelines, real challenges, data management and analysis will also be dealt with in this chapter.

### 3.1 Research Design

The research method used in this study was qualitative method and phenomenological approach. Qualitative research entails the use of individual knowledge, introspective, interview based on existing account, observation, interaction based on history, interview, tests which give description and meaning of the usual problems in the life of the individual. Therefore, qualitative researchers embark on studies in the natural setting, to understand and interpret the observable fact to suit the sense of the people (Cassell

& Symon, 1994). Therefore, it is impossible to give the causal explanation of human behavior without understanding the subjective state of the individuals involved (Dodd, 2002).

The major method of data collection was interview. Qualitative design permits an in-depth study of the respondent's personal view or experience (Cassell & Symon, 1994). Therefore, the use of qualitative design for this study was convenient since it aided to achieving the aim of the study as well as its understanding, through the provision of detailed explanation of their experiences which was significant to the topic under study, "The state of women in political leadership in the from 4<sup>th</sup> the republican parliament of Ghana." Qualitative research method also emphasizes more on the context of the study, specifically, where cultural diversity plays a significant function, where by hidden tones and details are well captured if not properly done in other studies. Therefore, since the context of this study considers Ghana as the center of attention, the research design was suitable to unveil any diversity in culture that was not captured in other studies (Evans, 2010).

### 3.2 Instrumentation

The researcher mainly used interviews in data collection by using Samsung galaxy S4 mobile phone with the model number GT - 19500 to record respondents' interviews for transcription and analysis to be carried on later. For the interview guide, a semi structured plan was pursued, with a degree of reliability and flexibility; the respondents were permitted to bring significant update which could show the way to new areas. The questions which were later posed on respondents were on demographic features like, status in marriage, academic qualification, length of period in politics, and other questions.

This was as a result of the busy schedules of the Members of Parliament. Some interview questions such as the following were asked, "Are you married?", "For how long have you been into politics?" "For how long have you served in the parliament of Ghana?" among others. Other questions asked in the interview include; "in your own view, what are the factors that motivate women to seek political leadership position in the parliament of Ghana?" "What are the barriers that affect women's participation in politics?" and others questions. Although, most of the participants complained that they disliked granting interviews where they would be recorded as a result of political reasons, but later admitted that their interviews be recorded. In addition to this, the researcher had in her possession a pen and note book in which to write all observations and other interesting ideas.

### 3.3 Population

The population of this study consisted of 30 people who had been or are actively engaged in electoral politics and are qualify to occupy or had occupied political leadership positions in Ghana. The target population was the women in the 4<sup>th</sup> Republican Parliament of Ghana. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 10 women for the study. Purposive sampling technique is the choosing of elements such as institutions and individuals which depends on the precise rationale related to response of research work questions (Teddie & Yu, 2007). Strauss and Corbin (1998) indicated that there will always be the tendency for new ideas to emerge, as long as the researcher is familiar with, observe and analyze the data. Therefore, saturation should be considered at a point where new discoveries does not necessarily add any significance to the overall data and in line with this assertion, the sample size can be determined. Therefore, Mason (2010) indicated that sample size of 10 is acceptable in qualitative research.

Also, purposive sampling technique provides a vital basis for acquiring important information from specific people and therefore is suitable for precise events, locations or people. With this sampling technique, exact answers are demanded for the research questions and therefore suitable for the study. Also, this sampling technique was vital for this study because, significant information can be retrieved from some people but not others and therefore it is good for particular people, locations or incidents (Maxwell, 2008).

Considering the scanty number of women in politics and political leadership positions, purposive technique provided a critical benefit as compared to other techniques; hence information associated with women in political leadership was established. This is due to the fact that, the researcher had absolute concentration mainly on women in politics and political leadership, to recognize and deal with issues

concerning them. The criterion used in the choice of respondents was based on women who have served as Members of parliament for three (3) years and above as of the time of conducting this research. The Members of Parliament excluded were those who had served in the house of parliament for less than three years. The reason for this selection is that Members who have served in the house of parliament for three (3) years and above might have more insight or knowledge on 'inside, out' of what goes on in the house of parliament and some might be occupying political leadership positions as compared to those who have served for less than three years. The researcher therefore had chosen the female Members of Parliament who have served for the period of three years and above in the house of parliament, either as current or past Members of Parliament. The respondents were chosen based on their experience as Members of Parliament and the number of years served in parliament house.

The respondents were selected from the ten regions of Ghana, namely: Greater Accra Region, Ashanti, Brong Ahafo Region, Northern Region, Upper West Region, Upper East Region, Western region, Central Region, Eastern Region and Volta Region. From the House of Parliament, ten female Members of Parliament were sampled for interview. Seven out of the ten female Members of Parliament from the republican parliament of Ghana were interviewed for the study. Out of this total number, one had been a Member of Parliament for nineteen years six months, two had been Members of Parliament for thirteen years six months, one had been in parliament for four years and three had been in parliament for three years six months, as of the time of collecting this data.

Generally, all the respondents interviewed had experience in leadership or political leadership with good educational background. Some of those interviewed pointed out that they possess Master's degree or qualified certificates from accredited institutions. However, three of the Members of Parliament were hoping to acquire a Master's degree whilst two had a Bachelor's degree and were also hoping to do their Master's degree. Also, with the number of women Members of Parliament interviewed, four were in their matrimonial homes, one was divorced and two were widows. All the seven women interviewed had children. Averagely, each of them had at least two children with the youngest child been ten years.

### 3.4 Data Collection

The researcher contacted some of the respondents on their mobile phones and was also led by some officers of the research department in Parliament House to meet some of the respondents in their offices, as well as at the tea shop in the Chamber block, in the House of Parliament. The researcher personally also made a follow up to the offices of some of the respondents. Individual or one-on-one interview was the major source of data collection. The researcher introduced herself and explained the general and specific objectives of the study at the beginning of the interview. This was done to build a cordial relationship between the researcher and the respondents. The researcher officially got in touch with the department of research in parliament to enquire if there were women who served in the house of parliament for three years or more and if they satisfy the inclusion criterion, in order to begin the sample selection process. A letter of introduction from the Department of Management (UPSA), introducing the researcher was attained after confirmation was received from parliament house.

The researcher on several occasions called and visited the House of Parliament to aid the process whilst waiting for response which took about two to three weeks to go through the bureaucratic process of Parliament, to get in touch with the suitable people involved. The visit to the parliament house in most of the time was helpful, since an opportunity was created to meet some of the women parliamentarians in question, to communicate with them and many of them were pleased to be included in the research. I was also aided by the staff of the research department at the Parliament House on information related to the area of study and how to get in touch with the respondents. However, it was very difficult to meet the female Members of Parliament even after booking an appointment with them. On the first day of appointment, the researcher spent so many hours at the parliament house, without being able to speak to any of my respondents even after parliamentary sitting.

This therefore frustrated the researcher as she left the house of parliament to the office of another Member of Parliament who was a deputy Minister on the following day, but was turned down by

the secretary after several visits to that office. On one of the visits to the office of the said Member of Parliament who was also a deputy Minister, I was told by the secretary that the Member of Parliament (Deputy Minister), had not been to office for one week, but on the contrary, the said Member of Parliament was in the office because, I saw her in her car, parked at the car park. Also, on my subsequent visits to the house of parliament, I was kept waiting for hours before I could speak to any of my respondents.

A pilot study was initially conducted on two female Members of Parliament to ascertain the validity of the questions before the main study. Some demographic questions were added to the original interview questions, such questions as "are you married?" "How many children do you have?" And other questions were modified or retained. The interview of Members of Parliament was in different segments. This is because; the busy schedules of the Members of Parliament had caused the interview to be held at any time or place convenient to the Members of Parliament. Whilst the second segment commenced in a week after the first interview which was used as a stage for verification, the former segment comprised of responses of respondents related to the semi-structured interview guide. During the second segment, the researcher returned to ascertain if there was a link between the first and the second interview conducted, especially in relation to the data and conclusion of respondents. The first segment of the interview began with the explanation of the state of women in political leadership in addition to the objectives and aims of the study, after the establishment of a cordial relationship with the respondents. The interviews were conducted in the offices of some of the respondents which were enclosed almost all the time.

However, some respondents were interviewed at the tea shop in the Chamber block, in the House of Parliament, where Members of Parliament take a rest before the commencement and after parliamentary session. In another office, the frequent mobile calls with the interference of the secretary and other people who kept walking in and out to deliver message to the respondent caused obstruction, which could not be avoided. Even though the interview which took about twenty minutes less each was for confirmation and validation was successful, but the noise from the environment and interruption of people sometimes caused responses to be unclear unless repeated.

### 3.5 Reliability and Validity

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the instrument (Patton, 2002) and therefore the effort and the capability of the researcher determines the reliability of the research (Golafshani, 2003). To determine if data is consistent or valid in qualitative research, it will depend on the effort applied by the researcher (Golafshani, 2003). Also, in qualitative research, consistency involves documenting and reporting incidents properly but not the assertion of arriving at the same outcome (Opore, 2006). For this current research to be reliable incidents were sufficiently documented, data was confirmed and examined which guaranteed that it was precise, consistent, replicated and verified.

The concept of validity has been developed and explained to mean honesty, firmness and quality by some qualitative researchers (Davies & Dodd, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mishler, 2000; Seale, 1999; Stenbacka, 2001). Unlike Silverman (2013) who related validity to fact and it entails the correctness and clearness of events that come first before data is created, Davies and Dodd (2002) clarifies rigor as common communications in interviews, reflexivity and subjectivity. According to Patton (2002) dependability is the outcome of validity, together with the talent and capability of a researcher in a study. As a result of the concept termed validity, a semi-structured interview guide was used in this study in an explicit manner to gather data for consistency. It entails making questions uncomplicated as well as repeating the same questions to allow respondents sufficient time and for new ideas to emerge. For this reason, this research was valid and dependable since precision and clarity was established.

Interviews interpretation and transcription forms the main approaches to interviews data analysis, for the objectives stated to be held to. Through transcription, data in visual or audio form are converted or interpreted into a form of writing (Atkinson, 1998). It is a necessity that information required is captured on every transcript concurrently in honesty and validity during transcription process, even though it is a strenuous job but the rationale behind the research analysis should be considered (Edwards,

1993). Therefore, in connection with this study, there was a verbatim transcription of the audio recorded interview data, as the genuine account of the respondents' idea.

### 3.6 Data Analysis Technique: Content Analysis.

There are three phases involved in data analysis, namely, reduction of data, display of data, and the stage of verification or drawing conclusion. These phases are autonomous and simultaneous, since they are entwined. This approach indicates that content analysis was employed for the thorough examination of the data of interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The phase of reduction of data entails classification, organization and editing of data gathered. This is undertaken by dividing, grouping, teasing out themes, summarizing, coding and memo writing which are integral of the data (Punch, 2013). The next phase, the display of data, involved the exhibition of data in the form of matrices, charts, graphs, tables, networks and relational models. The final phase is the stage of verification and drawing of conclusion. Conclusion is therefore allowed to be figured out from the data after it has been compacted or put in an organized assembly of information. The conclusion entails the analysis of what the researcher had gathered from the data in the study.

The researcher on several occasions re-examined the audio recording together with the transcriptions written, to ensure precision. This was done after the data was decreased and all audio interviews transcribed into writing in order to follow the process indicated above. As a result of this, the researcher was able to correct discrepancies to ensure that the script reflected the real audio recorded. This enabled the researcher to read the scripts of the interview repetitively and got familiarized with the data. Coding, which was the next phase entailed underlining some supporting data in connection with certain likely design in the data. There was a collation of each code with the data which supported it. The purpose of this was to prevent the loss of the original context of the data as it was offered and each script was involved. The search of themes which entailed grouping, comparing and categorizing of codes in terms of monitored design or resemblance was the next stage. The themes which resembled were grouped together and as a result, correlations were recognized and distinguished sub-themes from themes.

At the end, the analysis of data was done to determine if the data was associated with the factors identified to be the state of women in the parliament of Ghana. To guarantee unbiased involvement, each participant was represented by at least an interview extract, which had the purpose of indicating and validating the presence of sub-theme and theme. Then, the interpretation of the outcome was done with reference to literature and theory.

### 3.7 Ethical Consideration

In the midst of ethical considerations, the knowledgeable consent of the participants, which is very important, involves that participants in the research work are offered detailed updates to provide them with reasonable ideas on the aims and objectives of the study (Silverman, 2013). Sticking to moral requirement helps encourage the creation of actual knowledge instead of falsehood and wrong ideas in relation to the aim of the study (Quarshie, 2011). This means, the researcher ensured that explanations in relation to general over view of the state of women in political leadership, as well as the purpose and objectives of the study was offered at all times before the start of the interview. Also, participants were guaranteed that information gathered was to be utilized for educational purposes only, since the code of secrecy was firmly stuck to. In order for the researcher to restore confidence in the participants and maintain confidentiality, the complementary cards and names of the participants were collected not prior to the interview but afterwards. Aside that fake names were made use of in order to recognize the participants. The researcher employed this technique, in order to set the minds of the participants at rest or restore their confidence of anonymity throughout the process of the interview.

## 4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Description of Results



This study discovered the feminist theory, the liberal feminist theory and the social role theory, in relation to the state of women in political leadership in the 4<sup>th</sup> Republican Parliament of Ghana. The study particularly aimed to examine the political leadership positions women occupy in the parliament of Ghana, explore the factors that encourage women to seek political leadership positions in parliament and to identify the barriers that affect women's participation in political leadership. Various themes related to the objective of the study surfaced from the data. By the use of relational models, patterns which were related were put into sub - themes. These were coded under six sub themes, which are; women representation, representing theme 1: motivation, representing theme 2; barriers, representing theme 3; to overcome barriers, representing theme 4; lack of interest representing theme 5; and enhance participation representing theme 6.

## 2.2 How equal is the representation of women to men in political leadership in the parliament of Ghana?

### 2.2.1 Women representation

The representation of women in political leadership in the parliament of Ghana is an integral part of democracy in Ghana. Considering the population of women in Ghana which is more than that of men requires a large number of women in parliament to occupy political leadership positions. According to Rai (1994) the representation of women in political leadership is woefully inadequate, as well as in decision making even at the basic level like home. This is attributed to some obstacles like fewer resources, time and other factors which serve as a hindrance to women. Women in political leadership were sampled for this study and they gave different views on the representation of women in political leadership in the 4<sup>th</sup> republican parliament of Ghana. Most respondents indicated that the representation of women in the parliament of Ghana was discouraging.

A female Member of Parliament had this to say: Comparatively the representation of women against men in parliament is nothing to write home about, considering the fact that we have 275 seats in parliament and only 30 are occupied by women. The number of women in parliament is very small. We have 16 on the part of the majority and 14 on the part of the minority.

Another female Member of Parliament confirmed this and said; It is not equal at all. If you have 275 people in Parliament and you have 30 women, it is not equal, the ratio is not good at all." A female Member of Parliament added this; It is very unequal. If you take the fact that women are 10.9 % of the total population in Parliament, there are only 30 women against the total of 275 in parliament. If you take the fact that women form about 51 % of our population and yet in parliament, where they are representing the people, it is only 10.9 %, it is very unequal.

## 2.3 What are the barriers that affect women's participation in political leadership?

### 2.3.1 Barriers

Most of the respondents expressed their displeasure on so many factors that serve as barriers to them as women in political leadership. They mentioned some barriers like intimidation, socio cultural challenges like the dual role of women, lack of logistic to equip women in political leadership, the absence of some mechanisms like the quota system to boost women participation in political leadership and other challenges. They indicated that these factors dampened the spirit of women and discouraged most women from engaging in politics. Schayan (2002) asserted that for Ghana to promote gender equality and reduce poverty there should be mechanisms to encourage equal opportunities for both men and women, as well as to break down the pattern of traditional role. The female political leaders expressed their views in the following ways:

### 2.3.2 Socio Cultural Beliefs

Most respondents indicated that socio cultural issues in Ghana serve as a hindrance to women in political leadership. This is for the fact that women are perceived not to engage in certain jobs, as they are considered as care takers of home and mostly don't get the support of their husbands or family and

failure to do what the society perceive to be the role of women, becomes a problem. This is in line with the assertion of Longwe and Clark, which posited that unlike customary law which show favoritism and consider the women as minors in legal terms, who are controlled and possessed by the men, statutory law is concern with offering equality in legal terms (Longwe & Clark, 1999). In line with this, McEwan (2002) indicated that women in Sub Sahara Africa had less support although they were active in formal or informal sector, which had resulted to marginalizing women in political leadership as well as rendering most of the women unemployed as compared to the men.

The women indicated that, customary law was unfavorable to them, particularly in political leadership. They observed that women in political leadership had to perform both domestic and political activities simultaneously. Failure to do this means going against the norms of the society, which could lead to consequences like divorce for married women or deny others the opportunity to become political leaders. This is in line with the study of Burns et al., (1997) which indicated that there was the likelihood that women will be loaded with domestic work which will affect their participation in political leadership, due to the demand on their time and resources. Therefore, the issue of women managing home, education, employment, marriage and performing parental role is identified to interfere with the participation of women and widen gender gap in participation (Burns, 2007).

The following were the views expressed by the women political leaders;

A female Member of Parliament had this to say;

In political leadership, as women, it is a bit difficult; we have the issue of socio cultural problems, sometimes it frowns on the leadership of the women. We are seen to belong to the kitchen, rather than to be outside working, to be those who are the child bearers rather than those who are to be supporting in other things. Culturally, in some societies or communities, you will realize that women are not even allowed to talk when men are talking; women are not allowed at all to even come out.

She added;

... If you are not careful and you are married and you go into politics, your marriage will surely break because, you won't have time for your children, you won't have time for your husband. The unfortunate thing is that in Africa, we tend to take care of our husbands and not our husbands supporting.

Consider the account of another female Member of Parliament;

.... Women naturally are born to have children and family, that is a big barrier. To enter politics, you need the support of family and most women don't get the support of their husbands or their parents or their children, it's very difficult for them. A lot of the barriers come with having to manage the family, working, having to chase for statistics, funds ...

Another Member of Parliament said this;

... And some cultures too cannot be ignored. In some countries, they don't want women to lead them. And even in Ghana here, we face the same problem, as the society, particularly the men; frown upon the leadership of women. This makes it difficult for we the women, as we have to force ourselves into political leadership at the same time obey the societal norm of being care takers of home.

Consider the comment of another Member of Parliament;

... Because most of the time we have the men in parliament and because of the type of society we have, they look down upon women and feel that women shouldn't do certain jobs, they should be at home, they should take care of the children and do the house work.

### 2.3.3 Intimidation

Respondents registered their displeasure on the manner in which some people in the society negatively perceive women in political leadership. They indicated that women in political leadership were verbally abused and in some cases physically abused. This they said was creating difficulties for them in their political career, as most women were affected in terms of their personalities, marital life and other aspects of their lives, as much harm was done to them by the society. Some of the respondents indicated that they received divorce threats from their husbands should they engaged in politics and become

political leaders. In relation to this, the study of Ferguson & Katundu (1994) indicated that women who attempted to engage in political leadership were tagged negatively, as recorded on women in Zambia. It was revealed by Ferguson and Katundu (1994) that some women in Zambia were prohibited and threatened with divorce by their husbands should they involve themselves in becoming political leaders.

A female Member of Parliament talking about her experience said;

The insults, name calling and all that, it is as if you are moving from a terrain that is not for women to the men's world. When I joined politics and decided to contest as an MP in my constituency, people said so many unpleasant things about me which was not true. They insulted me; they call me names and many other things. So a lot of the agitations and resistance comes from the men dominated environment, a lot of women cannot stand that pressure and it push them away. This is how another female Member of Parliament expressed her views;

...And if you are a woman and you become a parliamentarian, they say so many things about you, especially, some of our men. They even term us to be prostitutes and there are many insults going on against women in politics. So some of the men, the husbands even, will not allow their wives to become Members of parliament, if people will go about insulting them.

This is the view of another Member of Parliament;

When you look at the West Africa Sub region, particularly Ghana, women are suffering the most. ... It is very difficult to get more women because of the humiliation and intimidation that women get from their fellow men. So it is very difficult for women to come out and give their best in parliament.

#### 2.3.4 Financial Constraints

Most of the women leaders spoke about financial constraints as a barrier to women in political leadership. They mentioned that women suffered financial constraints, since poverty was associated with feminism, as women suffered cultural inhibition in relation to inheritance. As a result of this, women were affected in terms of their access to control of resources in the past years. Therefore, issues regarding financial commitment, pose a great challenge to women in political leadership, as the men politicians stand the chance of being sponsored than the women politicians. Respondents added that, the people developed negative perception about women in political leadership when they make attempted to seek financial support from men.

Therefore, some women sold their properties just to enable them part take in political leadership, which was very difficult. According to the study of Cheng and Tavits (2011) there were informal pathways through which women could be persuaded or discouraged from involving in politics. According to the research, because men had been in political leadership for the past years, people don't entertain fear to give them sponsorship unlike the women and this had given them the lead as compared to the women. Commenting on the challenges confronting women in political leadership, this was what a Member of Parliament said; "...Again, financial constraint is also one of them, a lot of women do not get the necessary resources to embark on a campaign. And this is really affecting the chances of women to emerge as political leaders."

This was added by a female Member of Parliament; ...Another thing that is a barrier is finance. We come against financial problems. We are not like the men who have access to funding. It is very difficult for a woman to go out there to solicit for fund for politics. Some women sell their properties to campaign in order to come to parliament. To indicate how difficult, it is for women in terms of finance, another female Member of Parliament mentioned this; Lack of funding is very difficult for women. Most of the men are rich and some of us here are from the down trodden, so it is actually difficult to achieve this aim by just coming from the back door. You have to get somebody to sponsor, to fund you and to do everything, but most of us, the women in parliament are finding it very difficult. ...All those who made it to parliament today came in through their own sweat,

#### 2.4 How do women in the parliament of Ghana overcome the barriers that affect them in political leadership?

#### 2.4.1 To Overcome Barriers

Respondents indicated that although women in political leadership encountered challenges such as intimidation, socio cultural problems, financial problems and other problems, but there should be a solution. Some mentioned unity among women in political leadership, the need for research departments, the need for competence of women, the need to sensitize sensitive women on the need to part take in political leadership and the need to ignore the abusive language and ill- perception of people on women in political leadership, as well as the need to have a plan as a means of overcoming the barriers. In line with this assertion, the US research indicated that lack of information on politics, efficiency and interest on the part of women in political leadership was a contributing factor to gender gap and independence of women in political leadership (Burns, Schlozman & Verba, 1997). The views of the respondents are as follows:

#### 2.4.2 Unity

Commenting on this, a female Member of Parliament said; A lot of barriers are common to women, that is why in parliament we have the women caucus. So all women whether minority or majority, we have a group. We sit, talk, we share our experience, our problems and together we are able to focus on how to deal with that. If we are to deal with it individually, it won't work. So I think our focus need to be strengthened. So that we women will not only be looking at women in political life, but women for the general good of Ghana, NPP, NDC, how can we come together so that we can overcome?

#### 2.4.3 The Need for Research

Respondents indicated that for women to be competent, vibrant, and active and be able to engage in debatable issues as well as contribute to the welfare of the parliament of Ghana there was the need for research departments for female Members of Parliament. This will equip them to boost the confidence in them. In relation to this, a female Member of Parliament had this to say; We need resource persons to do research, to brief us properly, so that when issues come on the floor of parliament, it is not as if we only stick to the soft issues but also the hard issues. When it comes to economics, when it comes to law making, drafting, technical things, then you will see the women probably not contributing much. So we need to build our research departments for the women, once we have a research department, it can brief us... She continued; We also have to do a lot capacity building, training here and there, build our capacity in the field of law making, since we have chosen to represent the people. We need to also equip ourselves and it will also help us overcome our barriers.

Another female Member of Parliament mentioned this; The "know how", many a times, I use the "know how" for competence. You see, organizational work is very paramount when it comes to politics. How many of us have gotten the organizational skills? How many of us have gotten the competence to talk? How many of us have the skill in bringing people together, especially when it comes to women? So women should be equipped with these skills through research and training to enable us lead with competence.

#### 2.4.5 Sensitizing Women

The women in political leadership mentioned that women should psyche themselves and ignore the insults and abusive language used on them in order to achieve their aim. They should also be strong in their dealings to be able to succeed. This is the comment of a respondent; You don't listen to what goes on. You have to fight hard to get money to finance yourself. But if you listen to any comment people make against you, you won't do politics. I think we all have to stand up to take care of ourselves and do everything by ourselves and make sure we don't depend on any man before we can do it. Otherwise, we are going to be like children and the men will always be on top.

This is the view of another female Member of Parliament; We need to change, conscientise the people, especially the women, change the psyche of the people in relation to how they think, in order for them to accept that a woman will lead them or represent them in parliament. In some regions or ethnic

groups, it is very difficult for a woman to be accepted to represent people when it comes to parliament or governance. In response to this question, some of the MPs indicated that women should learn to nurture themselves for leadership, be helpful to their communities and the society should value the girl child. However, the quota system and support of government was necessary to boost the participation of women in political leadership.

To express their views, a female Member of Parliament had this to say; Some of us, we actually nurtured ourselves... Also, because of the role some of us played in our various constituencies, it actually gave us the opportunity to get to this level. So we have to encourage ourselves and change our mind set. This was mentioned by another female Member of Parliament; "... Socially, let your community understand that look, what the boy is doing I can equally do it, show it, let it be seen that you are able to do it."

She continued; Financially, there should be NGOs and others to support, even the government should support the women. ...if the quota system is not practiced in Ghana it's going to be difficult.... So look at the three northern regions, look at the number of MPs we have. We don't have less than fifteen MPs in parliament and yet we have only three women out of the northern Members of Parliament. So how are we going to encourage others? How are we going to serve as role models? So we need the quota system. So women should build their competence.

Another Member of Parliament said this; In leadership, I will say that much depends upon you yourself if you are able to have rapport with your people and if you are able to satisfy them. ...that is why some of us call on the National Commission for Civic Education to come and educate the people from time to time and tell them the role of the Member of Parliament, the role of the Municipal Chief Executive and the role of the Assembly, so as to overcome these problems. Consider another account of a respondent; I think you have to be courageous; you have to take the bull by the horn and say that no matter all these obstacles, if I feel that I should help my people, I should find ways and means of coming to parliament. So you have to seek assistance from some people, you can go to some business men, ask them to assist you financially. She continued: Also, we the women have problems in the house. You have to do the work in the house and at the same time take part in these political activities. So what you need to do is that you have to apportion your time and also make a plan and get somebody to assist you. And through this planning, I think we can overcome some of these barriers.

## 5.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study indicated that women do encounter challenges that hinder their progress in political leadership. These challenges unveiled have contributed to new understanding of the state of women in political leadership. These findings are of great importance in this political era, since most women intending to involve in politics or already involved in political leadership would nurture their ambitions and psyche themselves as they engage in politics or political leadership. Therefore, the society should create an environment that is politically friendly to women, in order to promote the participation of women in political leadership and legislation. Tsikata (2001) observed that culture and tradition are seen by people just like the institutions, ideologies and practices which determine how social interactions, social relations and identities are established in the society. Women do not also get access to information and its utilization as well as opportunities, due to certain difficulties like limited literacy. Therefore, such things should not serve as a barrier to women's participation in politics. She indicated that women should identify mechanisms to overcome such challenges.

In relation to this study, a number of recommendations are made to help improve the state of women in political leadership. The public should be educated on attitudinal change towards women in political leadership. The public should do away with negative perceptions and abuse of women in political leadership. In the studies of Schayan (2002), it was found that there is the need for change of attitude towards women in relation to gender mainstreaming. Advocacy strategy in connection to gender equality should be considered. Young girls should be mentored and trained for political leadership. They should be encouraged and be educated to engage in politics at the early stages of their lives through nationwide mentoring programs. Allah – Mensah (2001) also indicated that educational institutions should address

the issue of gender disparity in enrolment and the availability of special opportunities like scholarships, admissions, training in the MDA's, etc. for girls.

Women in political leadership should encourage and psyche themselves to do away with verbal abuse and negative perceptions about themselves by the society, to ensure the active participation of women in political leadership. This is in line with Allah – Mensah (2001) findings which indicated that immediate attention should be on Ghana's politics on the use of abusive language, to make politics attractive to women and for development of politics in the country. Women should nurture their political ambitions from the onset to be able to engage in political leadership. The government should provide research departments and other logistics for female Members of Parliament, in order to equip them and to ensure their competency in the House of Parliament. Similarly, it was found in the work of Allah-Mensah (2001) that the government and its institutions should be committed on women issues by creating opportunities and provide assistance to upgrade women in numbers and position in politics.

The society particularly religious leaders and opinion leaders should be interested in gender affairs especially, by educating people on the need for equal opportunities in political leadership. There is the need to discard some cultural practices and review customary laws regarding marriage to reflect the current generation. Tsikata (2001) indicated that culture and tradition is key in society and determine the interactions, relationship and ideas in society and therefore women should find a strategy to overcome it. Women should involve in planning to be able to combine domestic role and political activities, in order to help achieve their political ambitions.

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