

UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, TAMALE

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING AT THE TOLON COMMUNITY OF
THE TOLON DISTRICT OF THE NORTHERN REGION OF GHANA

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partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a Master of Arts Degree in Development
Education Studies

April, 2017



DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this is the result of my own research study. It has not been presented by anybody for any academic award in this university or any other university. All references used in this work have been duly acknowledged.

Candidate's signature 

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I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis was supervised in accordance with the procedures and guidelines on supervision laid down by the University for Development Studies.

Supervisor's Signature.....

Date.....

Name: Madam Lydia Kwoyiga

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my Dad, Mum, my wife, Bintu and my two kids, Pagwuni and Andani.



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All praises be to Allah for granting me good health to accomplish this work. My sincere thanks go to my supervisor, Madam Lydia Kwoyiga, without whose guidance I could not have completed the study. My special thanks goes to my lovely wife and kids for all the support and encouragement I received from them in the course of the study.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

APA	American Psychological Association
AU	African Union
GDHS	Ghana Demographic and Health Survey
GDO	Gender Desk Officer
GNA	Ghana News Agency
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IIHL	International Institute of Humanitarian Law
IULA	International Union of Local Authorities
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
MA	Master of Arts
MCWA	Ministry of Children and Women Affairs
MDA	Ministry, Departments and Agencies
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PHC	Population and Housing Census



UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Aid for International Development
UWF	Ukrainian Women's Fund
WMFG	Women Manifesto for Ghana



ABSTRACT

Advocacy in promoting women participation in decision making have become key in communities. The study was conducted qualitatively with the use of an Action Research design. The sample was selected through the purposive and convenient sampling methods. About 15 women were interviewed to ascertain their opinions on the promotion of women participation in decision making at the community level. The main objective of the study was to advocate for an improvement in women participation in decision making at the community level in Tolon.

Findings were analysed through thematic content analysis using themes/categories by comparing similarities of responses. Major findings centered on the development potentials of women, the participation of women in decision making the challenges faced by women to participate in decision making and the ways by which women can be empowered to efficiently participate in decisions affecting the development of Tolon.

Trade, organisational skills and farming were some of the major developmental potentials of women discovered by the study. The study revealed a low participation of women in decision making in Tolon. Lack of formal education, religion and culture, and finance among others emerged as the challenges hampering women participation in decisions.

To enhance women participation in decision making the study recommends that advocacy and sensitization be carried out; financial institutions must reach out to women by way of small loans facilities. The study will serve as a comprehensive document for prospective research students in the area of women and decision making.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a background to the study and expatiates on the variant contributions made toward the participation of women in decision making. Taking into consideration the global view of the phenomenon. It then presents a picture of the Ghanaian context emphasizing its unique socio-cultural traits and how it could play on the study. This is followed by the Problem Statement and Rationale for the Study, the Research Questions, and Research Objectives as well as Relevance of the Study. Finally, the chapter covered the definition of key concepts in relation to the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

Women participation in decision making is a fundamental aspect of modern democratic governance and under international standards, both men and women should have equal rights and opportunities to participate fully in all aspects and at all levels of decision making (UWF, 2011).

The role of women is instrumental in the attainment of effective development outcomes, mainly at the community level given the differing views, opinions and interests from their male counterparts (Edirisuriya & Sumanadasa, 2011).

Gender equality in decision making is to be viewed in the context of whether women are in the position to make or influence public decisions on the same footing as their male counterparts. The 1995 Beijing Conference emphasised that equality in decision making is integral to the advancement of women political rights (UN, 2010).





Globally, females constitute about 50.5% of the world's population (BBC, 2013) yet they continue to be under-represented in decision making both in the traditional and formal governance settings. In the same vein, women are excluded from the sharing of benefits from development.

Women constitute one half of the world's population, they do two-thirds of the world's work, they earn one-tenth of the world's income and they own one-hundredth of the world's property including land (IPU, 2016).


As at July 14, 2013, there are only nineteen women presidents in the world. According to Inter Parliamentary Union, of 188 countries and parliaments around the world, women form only 21.4%, consisting of 9,769 while their male counterparts represent 77.6%, comprising 35 ,957. Even with developed countries, women are seriously underrepresented in parliaments; Americas (24.9%), Europe (24.0%), and so on. Sub-Saharan Africa has an average of 21.5% representation of women in parliament. Ghana, the first sub-Saharan country in Africa to gain independence, have 30 seats of the 275 seats as women parliamentarians (IPU, 2016).

Women account for less than 10% of people in public offices in Ghana (The Coalition of Women's Manifesto of Ghana, 2004). There were only 19 women in the 200-member parliament in 2001, making up of only 9%. This abysmally increased to 11% in 2004. In 2008 to 2012, women parliamentarians constituted only 8.2% of the 230-member parliament of Ghana. There is a decreasing trend of women representation which is unhealthy for the growth of democracy (GSS, 2010).

Women empowerment has been on the development agenda of most countries across the globe lately. This can be attributed to the changing perception and attitude of the role of women as mothers and wives in our societies and communities. Indeed, women must be seen as active participants in development and must, therefore, be allowed to enjoy their full rights including

their right to political leadership and participation, decent education, health, accommodation, economic and so on. Over the years, issues of women political rights have been championed by identifiable groups and organizations such as civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and other relevant agencies. Like Amartya Sen (2015) posited, in order that we can have a well-developed society, we may have to increase the freedoms of every person including women in communities (GNA, 2011).

There is no denying the fact that women have potentials which can be tapped for the development. This assertion is supported by the words of a renowned Ghanaian Educationist, Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey, that the education of the girl child can translate to the enlightenment of the entire society. These words of Dr. Aggrey emphasize the power of influence that women wield. This study focused on the participation of women in decision making for community development in Tolon community, taking into consideration how that can positively impact on societies and how they can be enhanced for the forward march of Ghanaian women in particular and women generally (Kodibisah, 2005).



Ghana and many other African countries have had very powerful women leaders who rose through the ranks of the political ladder, including presidents, presidential and vice presidential candidates, speakers of parliament, chief justices, finance ministers, foreign affairs ministers and so on. Typical examples include Justice Bamford Addo of Ghana, Indira Gandhi of India, Golda Maier of Israel and Margaret Thatcher of Great Britain and so on. But that notwithstanding, the African continent and for that matter Ghana is still faced with power imbalances as far as women are concerned. There is, therefore, an urgent need to increase the participation of women in politics and decision making in the society to ensure they contribute their quota to societal development (UN, 2016).



1.2 Statement of the Problem

Generally, women in Ghana have been relegated to the background as far as their involvement in decision making is concerned. Women in local societies are most of the time not included in taking decisions that affect their respective societies. They are completely excluded from taking part in critical decisions, such as the planning of festivals, the siting of social amenities, special community committees among others. They hardly get the opportunity to partake in decision making; a situation which has impeded the forward march of women and thereby affecting the development of societies. In the Northern Region of Ghana in the Tolon district, women are not eligible to become chiefs, religiously they are not permitted to lead prayers or make libation (Amoako, 2011).

It is in the light of these under representation of women that the Decentralisation system was introduced. The idea of decentralization was borne out of the quest to democratize the system of government to achieve a more equitable allocation of power and resources in the development process (Crawford, 2004). It was also intended to unearth and develop local talent, resources and initiatives and enhance people's participation in decision making from the local to the national levels. However, women continue to be under represented. The possible causes of the discrimination of women from taking part in decision making for community development are embedded in traditional, cultural, social and religious beliefs (UN, 2010).

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Given the vital roles played by women in society, the rationale of the study was to advocate for an increased participation of women in decision making in Tolon. Subsequent to the improvement in the participation of women in decision making in the Tolon district, the

expectation is that other communities in the District will emulate the initiative and with time the agenda of enhancing women participation in local politics and decision making would have permeated all District Assemblies in Ghana.

Almost every person has the right to participate in decision making that affects their lives. These rights must not be limited on grounds of gender. This right advocates that women know their situation best, and they should participate in decisions to get their perspectives incorporated at all levels of decision making, from private to public spheres of life, from the local to the global levels.

1.4 Research Objective

The main objective of the research was to advocate for improvement in women participation in decision making at the community level in the Tolon District.

1.4.1 Specific objectives

1. To identify the potentials that women possess which can enhance community development.
2. To find out the level of involvement of women participation in community development in Tolon.
3. To identify challenges that women face in their quest to contribute/participate meaningfully to community development in Tolon.
4. To ascertain the possible ways by which women can be empowered to participate efficiently to the development of their communities.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What potentials do women possess to contribute to the development of Tolon?



2. What is the level of participation to community development in Tolon?
3. What challenges do women face in their quest to contribute meaningfully to community development in Tolon?
4. Which possible ways can women be empowered to participate efficiently in decision making in Tolon?

1.6 Justification of the Study

Women constitute majority of the population in the country as evidenced by the Ghana Statistical Service where 51.8 and 48.2 percents stood for women and men respectively (GSS, statsghana.gov.gh, 2012). Women play indispensable roles in community development (Allah-Mensah, 2005). They play social and economic roles in their communities. They cater for kids and manage homes, engage in trade, provide health and educational needs of their families among others. Other writers have also stressed on how women are efficient organizational and managerial skills and could contribute substantially to the development of our communities (Donkor, 2008). Agriculture has become the mainstay of most communities in Ghana, and women are the main actors in the food chain which begins from production, marketing and intra household distribution of food in their communities. Women play lead roles in post-harvest activities, such as shelling, storage, processing and marketing. They therefore remain the fulcrum of food security in their communities and Ghana at large (Duncan, 2004).

This research on the low participation of women in decision making in Tolon is to augment available studies that have been carried out and to enable further research to be carried out and suggest measures to be adopted in order to enable women participate actively in the decision making in Tolon. The desire to select this topic is to assess the reality of the low participation of



women in decision making at the community level in Tolon and to come out with appropriate recommendations to various stakeholders, such as government, NGO's civil society organizations among others to remedy this social canker.

1.7 Definition of Key Concepts

The basic concepts that will be defined in this research work includes: Community, Development, Women, and Participation.

Participation: this can be explained as the complex and challenging approach to improving the lives of all people particularly the vulnerable and disadvantaged in the society. It is the involvement in shaping, implementing and evaluating programmes and sharing the benefits. The benefits of participation include increased commitment towards projects, development of technical and managerial skills which can increase opportunities for employment, and also creates partnership between the various segments of the population (professionals and non-professionals) (Rifkin & Kangere, 1996).

Women: The word "women" is a plural word, meaning more than one woman. It refers to two adult females or a group of adult females (Longman, 2007).

Community: According to the Cambridge online dictionary, a community refers to the people living in one particular area or people who are considered as a unit because of the commonality of their interests, social group or nationality.

A community can also be explained as a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives and engage in joint actions in geographical locations or settings (MaccQueen, 2001).



Development: According Amartya Sen, Development is the expansion of people's capabilities and freedoms including the freedom of participation in decision making. Sen argues that there are social, psychological, or even personal dimensions to development than just economic growth as in GDP. *'The purpose of development is to enrich human lives, not richness of economy which is only a part of it.'* (Sen, 2015). This definition puts people at the forefront of everything.

Development is also viewed as the widespread call for decentralization, participation and emancipation from abuses of people's freedoms and rights. People must not be discriminated against on the basis of their race, sex, class among others (Rapley, 2007).

1.8 Research Hypothesis

1. There is a relationship between women and their potentials in community development.
2. There is a relationship between women and their level of participation in community development in Tolon.
3. There is a relationship between women and the challenges they face in their quest to contribute meaningfully to community development in the Tolon.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of studies which are related to the current study. It discusses further some selected models and theories which serves as source of knowledge to the current study. The aim of the current study is to use advocacy to promote women participation in decision making in Tolon.

2.1 Global Overview of Women Participation in Decision Making in Public Life and Politics

Democracy is a means of governance which requires participation. Participation and empowerment are two of the fundamental concepts in the democratic discourse, which have also received wider definitional attention. Participation is one of the cornerstones of people-centered development and has gained attention as a result of the demand for development practice. The aim of participation is to minimize the top-down development strategies and to encourage the bottom-up and inclusive strategies. . In very simple terms, participation is explained to be the active engagement of citizens with public institutions (Rahnema, 1997).

There is a distinction between participation as a means and participation as an end. As a means, participation is used to accomplish the aims of a project more efficiently, effectively and at a very low cost. As an end, it has to do with a community setting up a process to control its own development. Regardless of the diversity, it implies power relations between members of a community on one hand and between them and the state and its institutions on the other hand.



Hence participation goes beyond compensatory limits if there is power shifts between people and policy makers and resource holding institutions (Claridge, 2013).

Governments perceived participation differently. For instance, they do not see it as a threat to them, participation has become an economically appealing proposition because sustainability of projects have been linked to active and informed participation by the vulnerable in society (Rahnema, 1993). 'The empowerment of women and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, whether rural or urban, are fundamental to sustainable human settlement' (IULA, 2001).

The stance of most planners and professionals vary about the participation of women in community decision making towards the improvement of the lives of the people, particularly the poor and the disadvantaged. Whilst others attach prominence to it believing that it is the 'magic bullet' that will ensure improvements especially in the context of poverty alleviation, others completely dismiss its value. In spite of the seeming disagreements between these professionals and planners, women participation in decision making is continually promoted as the key to community development (Rifkin & Kangere, 1996).

2.2 The Status of Women's Participation in Decision Making

Around the world, a lack of gender balance in decision making positions at all levels persists. Women continue to be underrepresented at local and national levels; where on the average only 17% of seats are occupied by women. The share of women among ministers also averages about 17%, only 7 of the 150 elected Heads of State in the world are women, and only 11 of the 192 Heads of Government (Skard, 2014). In the private sector, the participation of women in decision making remains all time low compared to men. Top decision making positions remain male



dominated. Among the largest corporations in the world, only 13 of them have female chief executive officers (UN, 2010).

Participation of women in public decision making is one of the areas in which tremendous progress has been made globally. For instance, in Africa, Rwanda became a shining example in achieving gender parity interpreted as 50% goal set by the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality. Rwanda also became a leading nation in terms of women representation in decision making with a 56% rate. These feats achieved by Rwanda won their president a number of awards at the International Colloquium on Women Empowerment, Leadership, Development, International peace and Security in Monrovia, Liberia in 2009. Other countries which have also made substantial progress in women representation in decision making include South Africa, Mozambique, Uganda, Burundi and so on (AU, 2012).

A number of factors accounts for the improved representation of women in decision making by these countries. These factors included Affirmative action/quotas in their respective constitutions. In Afghanistan for instance, through the National Solidarity Programme, there has been unprecedented, widespread involvement of women in community decision making apparatus, which aims to promote equal representation of women. Thus making women to participate in the development process and showing that their capabilities are equal to those of men (Crowsby, 2006). They have been given the opportunity to participate in community development councils where half of the seats are allocated to women. The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) is a flagship program of Afghanistan for rural development; it has played an effective role in empowering women and building their capacities in a country which ranks low in Human Development Index (Khairzad, 2016).



Canada has a reputation as world leader in human rights, gender equality, and models of local governance (Clement, Silver, & Trottier, 2012). However Canadian municipalities have lost ground internationally in terms of increasing women participation in local government. In March 2003, the International Union of Local Authorities launched the “Global Program on Women in Local Decision Making” with the creation of a major new global database, which provided information on the status of women in decision making at the local and national levels (Purdon, 2004).

2.3 General Situation of Women in Decision Making in Ghana

Women comprises more than half of the population of Ghana, they represent about 51% of the entire population of Ghana. Like their counterparts in most developing countries such as Ethiopia, women are challenged with a set of multiple cross-cutting and interrelated problems. These problems limit Ghanaian women access to basic health services, productive resources, educational and employment opportunities. Hence majority of them do not participate in decision making processes (GSS, 2012).

Generally, women in Ghana occupy low status in societies; they have been marginalized from taking part in decision making at all levels. Lack of access to clean energy fuels and improved stoves continue to pose as health threat to them (Mohanty, 2012).

Women are more exposed than men to smoke from burning solid fuels because they spend more time near fire while cooking and more time indoors taking care of children and household chores, thus increasing their likelihood to develop respiratory infections, pulmonary disease and lung cancer. Furthermore, several natural disasters in the less developed regions, such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, claimed more female than male lives, suggesting that more needs to be done in terms of providing equal access to information and life-skills development. They face

multiple forms of deprivation, thus Gender based discrimination, violence and non-access to education and training (Hora, 2014).

2.4 The Status of Women Participation in Decision Making in Northern Ghana

Ghanaian women, particularly in the Northern Region of Ghana continue to face persistent gender inequalities that limit their full participation in the nation's development (Tsikata, 2001). Women are disadvantaged relative to men in terms of access to and control over resources and services, such as education and training, and participation in decision making. The exclusion of women in decision making has adversely affected sustainable development processes by hindering the achievements of project objectives (Jackson & Associates, 2002).

Women in Ghana are responsible for household services; caring for children, family health, providing food and fuel for cooking and other domestic chores. They also play a major role in the productive activities of the family; income generating activities, paid domestic labour, farming and food processing. In certain regions, female-headed households have added to the women's productive activities of the family and increased their susceptibility to poverty (Allah-Mensah, 2005).

There is a wide gap between women's unrecognized economic participation and their low political and social status in Ghana. By assessing and understanding the gender roles in Ghanaian society, women's share in labour and supply of basic needs have demonstrated a much more crucial role to the maintenance of the household than men's share. Women's contribution to their communities has also been significant in responding to mobilization, education and support for communal activities (Dudte, 2008).

Women's involvement in politics and public service remains all time low, despite favouring conditions and Ghana's action plan for integrating women in development. The induction of a





new government in December 2001 has not seen a noticeable increase in the participation of women in key decision making positions. There is also an on-going process aimed at encouraging women to take up high positions at all levels with an aim of advancing gender equity efforts (Jackson & Associates, 2002).

One of the factor impeding women in occupying decision-making and professional positions is time constraint and balancing of roles. Requirements for such positions (travel, extended working hours) compete with women's reproductive role and preventing them from accessing training and promotion. A perception that women are not suitable for such positions is held by a vast majority of decision makers (mostly men) and limits the search for solutions that would widen women's professional opportunities. When faced with these obstacles and societal disapproval, women generally abandon the idea and settle for positions that do not necessarily challenge their capabilities (Amoako, 2011).

Increasing gender awareness, women's efficiency in their existing role and integrating women into development efforts as been met with resistance. However, creating an enabling environment with opportunities for inclusion, rather than exclusion is an integral part of future development efforts in Ghana (Meer & Sever, 2004).

2.5 Review of Relevant Theories of Development

2.5.1 Community Development

Community development as a concept has various theories; however this study will deal with some of these which are relevant. Hence Jack Rothman's Three Model Approach, Dependency and Under-development theory, and the Socialist Theory, will be discussed.

2.5.2 Jack Rothman's Three Model Approach

Rothman (1974), observed three models which form the empirical ways of community organization practice otherwise known as practice variables. He indicates that since these models are not necessarily theories; they are better described rather than defined. These models are the Locality Development Model, Social Planning Model, and Social Action Model among others (Rothman, 1974).

2.5.3 The Locality Development Model

This model is of the view that a community can change for the better when there is a collective participation of a wide spectrum of people at the community level in terms of determining the aims and actions of the community. It also presumes that local community people are doubtful, apathetic, and indifferent and that their attitude impedes economic progress, therefore, requires collective participation to determine the aims and actions. Such collective action then changes their apathy to activity, doubtfulness to optimism, and their indifference to involvement. This approach maintains that their continuous participation transforms their individual personalities.

This model reaffirms the belief in the concept of "Energy Displacement Theory" which holds the view that the availability of recreational facilities to young people will reduce crime.

This model of locality development "asserts that community change can be brought about at its best through broad based participation of a wide spectrum of people at the local community level" (Zastrow, 2006).

This theory postulates that change efforts at the community level are most achievable with the cooperation of the local citizens as they should be involved in the problem-solving process. In community development, the practitioner's role is to be that of a catalyst within the change effort due to the fact that residents and citizens are responsible for the contribution of various ideas in





the problem-solving process. This is evident as many organizers are challenged in allowing the community members complete objectives, as they could readily be accomplished by the organizer. However, there is a blatant necessity in this model for organizers to encourage community participation, because residents should be responsible for obtaining, maintaining or securing their own interest, rather than the organizer. In doing so the outcome is greater cohesiveness, pride, confidence and problem-solving capabilities within the community (Amoako, 2011).

The basis of this theory is that individuals are stronger together than they are separately, and therefore, collectively, they may be able to resolve issues and challenges. Education experts have used this philosophy within the school setting, and it is known as tribes. Children of varying ages (5-13) come together and collaborate, as well as solve various projects, rather than seeking individual attention regarding issues. The students learn how to rely on the strength of each other to accomplish goals, assignments or tasks. They learn to rely on each other rather than the teacher to provide solutions. Moreover, the role of the teacher is to be a facilitator or a catalyst in that they motivate the children to rely on their 'tribe' to resolve issues, conflicts, questions and academic assignments. This has been beneficial to their learning community as students are encouraged to be interdependent as they realize the steps necessary to resolve the challenges (Claridge, 2013).

2.5.4 The Social Planning Model

This model makes a different set of assumption, thus: any local community or society is complex and as a result of its complexity, an attempt to change it requires expert planners who can exercise technical ability and who can manage change. The aim of this approach is to establish, arrange and deliver goods and service to people who need them.

"Social integration" is not the social conditions for people to modify the equality among the range of services provided the community. This model brings meaningful solutions to substantive community problems. It gathers facts about identified problems and decides on the

most rational way of providing solutions to them. Social planning is when a group of people related in some way to a specific community come together to make "plans" for the development of a program or service. There has to be a general community consensus that such a service is needed or wanted.

The planning group decides what the particular needs are that need to be met. They approach the people who would benefit from such a program or service and see to "sell", "convince" and to get them involved in the anticipated program. The planning effort makes heavy use of statistics, data, or facts about the issue. The view is that they are taking an intellectual, factual, and objective approach to a need or social problem. Much of the time, the group doing the planning will not be the recipients of the service

2.5.5 The Social Action Model

This model admits tacitly that in every community, there is a disadvantaged segment of the population that needs to be organized, perhaps together with others to make adequate demands to the larger community for increased allocation of resources or treatment in accordance with social justice. This model seeks the redistribution of powers, resources and decision making in the community.

This theory asserts that there is a disadvantaged (often depressed) segment of the population that needs to be organized. (Zastrow, 2006). Therefore, social justice needs to be employed in order to assist the community system in challenging the power structure.

Women in our communities may experience various forms of oppression; in which case the role of an advocate becomes necessary in order to determine the appropriate service or intervention, that it is important to understand the pressing needs of the community rather than concentrating more on the interest of community leaders. It is also important to hear the concerns of the community and which will enable one to mobilize them to take action which may pave the way for community interaction.



The correlation between this study and the social action model is that they both relate to issues about the underprivileged in societies, such as women and children. The theory alludes to the fact that there are marginalized people in the society and hence seeks to advocate for the mobilization of support to empower them. The principle of this theory is not very different from the objective of this study which seeks to advocate for the participation of women in decision making for the development of their communities.

2.6 The Dependency and Underdevelopment Theory

This theory argues that what causes underdevelopment in third world countries is the neo-imperialistic structure. It is observed that the metropolitan- periphery relation to whom the third world states are the periphery of the metropolitan capitalist economies is what breeds underdevelopment. Thus, the structure is not conducive for third world countries because of their penchant dependence on the metropolitan capitalist. It is argued that the metropolis have indigenous collaborators and those indigenous bourgeoisie further exploit the resources of their people and cause further underdevelopment. The peripheral states could only develop when they break their links with the metropolis.

Even though this theory has some significant implication for community development, it has been criticized on a number of grounds, some modernization theorists argue that it is difficult for states to develop in isolation. They also argue that some third world countries developed with the capitalist ideology (Frank, 1969).

According to dependency theories, the cause of underdevelopment is the dependence on industrialized countries while internal factors of developing countries are considered irrelevant or seen as symptoms and consequences of dependence. The development of industrialized countries and the underdevelopment of developing countries are parts of one historical process. Developing countries are dependent countries. The economic and political interests of



industrialized countries determine their development or under development. The goals are superimposed. Underdevelopment is not backwardness but intentional downward development.

Since the end of World War II, there has been a worldwide struggle for the improvement of living conditions in the so-called developing countries. At the beginning, there was little query as to the causes of underdevelopment; the newly independent countries as well as United Nations bodies and industrialized countries tried to promote development by applying measures like the introduction of know-how through the assignment of experts, the expansion of education, the development of infrastructure, etc., i.e., Developing Countries followed the example of the industrialized countries. In the course of time, it became obvious that this was more or less a treatment of symptoms instead of causes, and the gap gradually widened between the developed and less developed countries of the world. During the early period of development efforts, there was little discussion on the historical causes and the real nature of underdevelopment. Theoretical considerations at this time of "cold war" explained the situation of underdevelopment and the path for development from the viewpoint of western or socialist metropolis. Only in more recent times has the viewpoint of developing countries gained momentum in development theory. This has great practical implications: development theory offers the justification for policies. The answer to the question "What is development?" determines which strategies, policies, projects, what type of industry, or what organization of agriculture should be considered to be in line with development goals or detrimental to these. Different positions in development policy are based on differences in underlying development theories.

Like many women in other parts of the country, the women in Tolon lives impoverished lives and hence needs the urgent attention of Government in order that their conditions may improve. Women in Ghana and particularly Tolon District may have to follow the 'path' their counterparts



in other parts of the world followed to get recognized. A number of policies, programs and projects may be designed to support women and improve their living conditions.

Politically, women in Tolon have been relegated to the background. Since the inception of the decentralization system in 1988, the district produced only three female Assembly Members (District Assembly, 2016). This is insignificant considering the high number of women in the district. Women cannot become chiefs in the community. This and many other political injustices have incapacitated women to participate in decision making in the community. The effect of the low representation of women in Decision Making has affected development in the communities.

Economic injustice involves the state's failure to provide individuals with basic necessities of life, such as access to adequate food and housing, and its maintenance of huge discrepancies in wealth. In the most extreme cases of misdistribution, some individuals suffer from poverty while the elite of that society live in relative luxury. Such injustice can stem from unfair hiring procedures, lack of available jobs and education, and insufficient health care. All of these conditions may lead individuals including women to believe that they have not received a "fair share" of the benefits and resources available in that society.

In Tolon community, women have limited right to own land and to engage in farming due to some cultural beliefs. Until recently women could not own cars or motorbikes to aid them in their trading activities. A woman's attempt to own a property is deemed to be claiming parity with their husbands. This trend has affected the economic status of women in this part of the country. Large populations of the 420 million people living in Latin America and the Caribbean have begun the third millennium living under conditions of poverty. Nearly 40% of households are poor and 16% extremely poor (Cepal, 1999).



Poverty is even more widespread and deep in rural areas where 32% of population live and work. Near 55% of rural households are poor and about 33% extremely poor. This is a sad record for Latin America and the Caribbean most of its countries constituted themselves as nation states after 1810, under the liberal ideals of equality, liberty and fraternity. Furthermore, all those countries under took massive economic development programs after world war II. Many of them were financed by World Bank, the USAID, UNDP, and many other international agencies and donors. In Latin America and the Caribbean, like in other third world countries, poverty reduction never was a major policy goal in itself until the beginning of the 1970's. The assumption was that economic development will reduce poverty, and economic growth was a measure of development. Most households in Tolon are poor and can hardly procure the three daily meals. Even the households that can provide do not provide them in a well-balanced manner. This is evident in the high nutritional deficiency cases among women and children recorded at the Tolon clinic (GDHS, 2014).

Terrorism is another cause of underdevelopment, where terrorism exists the process of development slows down. Foreign investments, trade, and exchange of goods & services which are the keys for underdeveloped states are stopped because of terrorists' activities. Terrorism is a controversial issue with no internationally agreed single definition. There are however several International conventions on terrorism with somewhat different definitions. In one modern sense, it is violence against civilians to achieve political or ideological objectives by creating fear. Most common definitions of terrorism include only those acts which are intended to create fear (terror), are perpetrated for an ideological goal (as opposed to a lone attack), and deliberately target or disregard the safety of non-combatants. Some definitions also include acts of unlawful violence and war (Wellman, 2013).



Terrorism is also a form of unconventional warfare and psychological warfare. The word is politically and emotionally charged, and this greatly compounds the difficulty of providing a precise definition. One 1988 study by the US Army found that over 100 definitions of the word "terrorism" have been used. A person who practices terrorism is a terrorist. Terrorism has been used by a broad array of political organizations in furthering their objectives; both right-wing and left-wing political parties, nationalistic, and religious groups, revolutionaries and ruling governments. The presence of non-state actors in widespread armed conflict has created controversy regarding the application of the laws of war (IIHL, 2003).

Similar to terrorism from the researcher's observation, Tolon community has been bedeviled with sporadic chieftaincy, land litigations among other conflict situations which results in insecurity and fear especially among the women folk of the community.

The U.S. population grew to around 250 million in 1991. But over 10%- 25+ million- cannot read or write at all. Another 45 million are functionally illiterate. That's around 28% that are out to lunch. 44% of the American adults do not read a book in a year. A publishing industry study showed that from April 1990 to March 1991, 6 out of 10 households did not buy a single book. It's no wonder the country is falling further and further behind in skills and competency. The Japanese statement that many of the U.S. workers are lazy and illiterate may be reasonably accurate. While the aspect of being lazy is subjective, an illiterate person working hard probably isn't worth that much anyway (Kaestle, 1993).

When illiterate, one cannot read or write at all. In contrast, one who is functionally illiterate has a basic grasp of literacy (reading and writing text in his or her native language), but with a variable degree of grammatical correctness, and style. In short, when confronted with printed materials,



functionally illiterate adults cannot function effectively in modern society, and cannot adequately perform fundamental tasks such as filling out an employment application; understanding a legally-binding contract; following written instructions; reading a newspaper article; reading traffic signs; consulting a dictionary; or understanding a bus schedule. Those who are functionally illiterate may be subject to social intimidation, health risks, stress, low income, and other pitfalls associated with their inability. Until recently, it was viewed that the woman's role in the society was to cook food and care for kids, hence there was no need sending them to school. This wrong impression prevented a lot of women from becoming literate which have affected their general lifestyle. (GBN, 2015)

2.7 The Socialist Theory

The major proponent of this theory is Karl Marx. It is sometimes referred to as the Marxian perspective. Marx sees the socialist theory as the theory that will enhance development as against the capitalist system. Karl Marx in (1979), believed that poverty and underdevelopment was generated by excessive acquisition of capital and its exploitative tendencies due to the fact that in the capitalist system capital is owned by a few who use their position to impoverish the rest, whereas in the socialist form of development, the state owns the instrument of production and there is no private ownership of the means of production, Thus, the state regulates the economy and development is centrally planned. The socialist theory is aimed at radically transforming communities by providing the essential social services and welfare packages at relatively cheaper prices and making them available to all without any form of discrimination. Notwithstanding the suitability of the socialist theory in community development, the theory has been criticized heavily of stifling individual initiative by ensuring that no one acquires much profit and thereby minimizing the motivational spirit in mankind (Stein, 2001).

The significance of the socialist theory to this study is embedded in the fact that no one or few individuals should have control over resources. In many communities including the study area of this study, resource control is largely authoritatively commanded by men and, as a result, women are left to live impoverished lives without recourse to their basic fundamental rights, including the right to take in decisions affecting the development of their communities.

2.8 Theoretical Framework

The aim of this study is to use advocacy to improve the participation of women in decision making for community development. The theoretical framework used here includes the Rothman's Three Models, the Dependency and Underdevelopment Theory and the Socialist theory.

With the adoption of the Locality Model, a community can develop where there is a broad participation of a wide spectrum of people at the community level in terms of aims and actions. The people here includes the women of the respective communities. The relevance of this model is that it encourages the participation of all stakeholders in decision making towards developing communities. The Social Action Model emphasizes the empowerment of the disadvantaged few in the communities in order to enable them to develop the communities. In this context, women are the vulnerable in societies and must be given the support (economic, political, and social) they need to be able to contribute to decision-making towards community development (Zomeran & Iyer, 2009).

The Dependency and Underdevelopment theory is significant to this study in the sense that women in the Tolon have to a larger extent their rights in decision making (political right)



infringed upon. It also significant because corruption has become pervasive and eaten deep into the fabric of the Ghanaian Society.

The significance of the Socialist Theory to this study is embedded in the fact that no one or few individuals should have control over resources. In many communities including the study, resource control is largely in the hands of men and, as a result, women are left to live impoverished lives without recourse to their basic fundamental human rights.

2.9 Potentials of Women in Community Development

According to the Women's Manifesto for Ghana (2004), when women are economically, socially, and politically empowered, they become a potent force for change. In rural areas of the developing world, women play a key role in running households and make major contributions to agricultural production. But the inequalities that exist between women and men make it difficult for women to fulfill their potentials. Women rarely have access to the resources that would make their work more productive and ease their heavy workload. Ultimately, it is not just women who are held back, but also their families, their communities and local economies (Dudte, 2008).

Rural women have many roles, and they have responsibilities and knowledge that differ from those of men. As farmers, they plant, weed and harvest food crops and tend livestock. As caretakers, they look after children and relatives, prepare meals and manage the home. Many women earn extra income by working as wage labourers, producing and selling vegetables, or engaging in small-scale trading and enterprises. Added to these multiple tasks, they spend long hours fetching water and collecting firewood. In poor and marginal areas and areas affected by climate change, where men have been forced to migrate in search of work, women often have the sole responsibility for farming and raising the children. Despite their many responsibilities,





women have significantly less access to the resources and services they need to increase their productivity and their income and ease their burden of household duties. Women are held back by lack of education, unequal property rights and limited control over resources. Labour intensive and time-consuming activities further hinder women's ability to improve their income-earning potential. In order for poor communities to prosper and grow, women's needs and rights must be addressed (IFAD, 2011).

Most remote communities are face with a striking poverty situation, a canker that needs to be addressed amicably to pave way for development to take place. Poverty reduction involves the participation of all sectors of society; with a particular emphasis on the inclusion those social groups considered that tend to be marginalized such as women, children, the disabled, and the elderly. Women tend to be marginalized by poverty because it exacerbates cultural obstacles that limit women's access to economic, education; and healthcare. Gender is a "determining factor in the division of labor, rights and responsibilities". A gendered division of these three aspects of life often leads to what is known as the "feminization of poverty"; where the costs and benefits of development are unequally distributed between genders (Hora, 2014). Women are also the primary users of natural resources because of their daily responsibilities, and are thus the first victims of a degraded environment. This marginalization worsens by its extension to the "juvenalisation of poverty" as a child's wellbeing is intricately linked to his mother's. With this in mind, it appears evident that eliminating gender disparities throughout politics, economics, and social groups would aid in the quest for sustainable development that is yearned by all (Fencl, 2005).

2.10 Obstacles of Women in Participating In Community Decision Making

Women around the world at every socio-political level find themselves underrepresented in decision making at all levels as indicated already. The factors that hamper or facilitate women participation vary with level of socio-economic development, geography, culture, and the type of political system. Women themselves are not a homogenous group; there are many differences between them based on class, race, ethnicity, cultural background and education (Allah-Mensah, 2005).

As noted in the Millennium Development Goals, women equal participation with men in power and decision making is part of their fundamental human rights. Women have to be active participants in determining development agendas (Hora, 2014).

Women who want to take part in Decision-Making find that the political, public, cultural and social environment is often unfriendly or even hostile to them. Even a glance at the current composition of political decision makers in any region provides evidence that women still face numerous obstacles in articulating and shaping their own interests. What are the obstacles women face in entering parliament? How can women better cope with these hindrances? These problems are categorized into three areas: political, socio-economic, ideological and psychological (Amoako, 2



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research process. It explains the type of research design used and justifies its usage. Sampling and sampling techniques used are also explained and justified, how data was collected, managed and processed have also been explained. Reliability of the study as well as the ethical issues considered have all been captured in this chapter. The intervention strategy employed and how the strategy was consummated.

3.1 Research Design

The researcher conducted the study qualitatively. The design is the Action Research design where the researcher sought to find spontaneous solutions to societal problems. This involved three main steps; Intention, Implementation and Review (Asante & Yirbekyaa, 2015). The instruments used included an interview guide and a mobile phone voice recorder. The selection of this design arose out of the fact that it allowed for exploration and understanding of complex issues such the participation of women in decision making. The design also enabled the researcher to observe and record the perspectives of the actors in the study. The suitability of the design to the study also resulted in the understanding and analysis of data looking beyond statistical figures. Recognised as important in many social science studies, the role of case study method in research becomes more prominent when issues with regard poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and so on.



3.2 Study Area

The focus of the study was to examine the low participation in decision making of women in Tolon and to advocate for an improvement in the status-quo. Tolon is the District capital of the Tolon district of the Northern Region of Ghana. The District lies between latitudes $9^{\circ} 15'$ and $10^{\circ} 02'$ North and Longitudes $0^{\circ} 53'$ and $1^{\circ} 25'$ West. It shares boundaries to the North with Kumbungu, North Gonja to the West, Central Gonja to the South, and Sagnarigu Districts to the East. It also covers a total land area of 1353.65550Sq. KM. Tolon community experiences one single rainy season.

The main vegetation is grassland, interspersed with guinea savannah woodland, characterised by drought-resistant trees such as the sheanut, dawadawa, mango, which are economic trees and form an integral part of livelihood of its people. There is also the neem which mostly has some medicinal use. Though one can find other tribes in the community, the Mole-Dagomba is the predominant ethnic group, constituting 98.2% of the population. The Akan is about 0.7%, Ga-Adangbe 0.1%, Guan (0.2%), and Gurma (0.1%) and other minority of 0.4% (PHC, 2012). This implies the people of Tolon co-exist peacefully with varied ethnic groups which serve as a very good ground for investment. Islamic Religion is predominant in Tolon forming 94.1% compare to the District rate of 60.0%. However, it is worth mentioning that, there are pockets of other spectrum religious denominations of the population in the community. These include Traditional believers (3.7%), Christians (1.5%) whereas those without religion constitutes 0.5% (Ghana Statistical Service-2010 PHC, 2012). Hence the people of the community are religious and this can serve as a tool that can be used to build peace and further strengthen the co-existence among the people. Tolon community has a lot of opportunities awaiting private investment; joint venture partnership between the private and the public sector. In Agricultural sector, studies have





indicated that irrigation farming is feasible and can take place throughout the year given the presence of a number of streams and dams. Available records show that, the Tolon has a comparative advantage over the other communities in the northern region due to its numerous potentials. Households in Tolon depend on collective and individual resources generated largely from agricultural activities (Bacho, 2005). Under traditional family residential arrangements, members of the farm household play specific and critical roles. These roles are based on culturally-specified gender divisions of labour, authority structures and social obligations.

Tolon like any other community, men are seen as heads of households and boys as potential heads socialized as providers and thus owners of the production system. This places men and boys in super-ordinate positions. Their assigned roles position them as heirs of household resources, especially land, over which they exercise decision-making concerning production and distribution.

Women and girls however are viewed as wives or potential wives and are socialized into subordinate positions to depend on male members for resources. This put them in disadvantage position in terms of resource control and property ownership such as land.

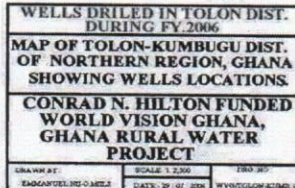
Limitations on the rights and capabilities of women in the community are reflected in their farm production and engagement in minor farming and petty trading, which focuses largely on non-staples such as rice, beans, groundnuts and vegetables. Yet, women are said to be in the majority according to the 2010 PHC report of the Tolon district.

The household production structure also presents an imbalance gender condition. There is a well-defined hierarchical titling structure in favour of males. Traditional authorities such as chiefs and household heads, who are largely men, are held in high esteem and revered for their decision-

making powers and control over resources. Also, within the agrarian production system, male custodianship is purported to guarantee equitable distribution of resources.

This condition calls for education to drum home the significance of bridging the gender gap so as to promote and encourage women and girl empowerment and general economic growth of the community.





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3.3 Study Population

The population of this study was the entire women of the Tolon community. Whilst the total number of people in the Tolon-Kumbungu district, is about 112,331 the male population in the district is about 56,046 whilst the population of their female counterparts' hovers around 56,285 (GSS, 2012). The population of Tolon community is estimated to be 1600. About 900 are women whilst the male population is about 700.

3.4 Sampling

Since the study was carried out qualitatively, the sampling technique for the study was the non-random or non-probability sampling techniques. The strategies included the purposive and convenient sampling strategies. A Sample refers to the smaller sets of cases a researcher selects from a larger pool and generalizes to the population (Newman, 2006). According to Merriam Webster dictionary, Sampling is the process, technique and act of selecting a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population. A non-random/non-probability sampling is a type of sampling in which the sampling elements are selected using something else other than a mathematically random process. Purposive sampling strategy is a non-random sampling strategy in which the researcher uses a wide range of methods to locate all possible cases of a highly specific and difficult to reach population. Convenient Sampling is a non-probability sampling techniques where subjects are selected because of their convenient, and proximity to the researcher (Farrokhi & Hamidabad, 2012). Twenty participants (all women) were sampled for the collection of data through convenient sampling technique. The researcher moved to the community under study to be able to reach out to the participants most of whom were either at home, shops, farm or spotted on the



street. Women leaders, such as chairpersons of women groups who prior to this study ever took part in decision making at some level were sought at home or their workplace and interviewed.

3.5 Intervention

The major intervention strategy used was Advocacy and Sensitisation. The researcher relied on female role models, the clergy, and musicians as resource persons.

Female role models were made to visit women groups to encourage them not to take the back seat but to be conscious of their community development and actively take part in it. The clergy was persuaded to include the participation of women in community development in their sermons so as to appeal to the conscience of opinion leaders who mostly are men. Selected musicians were made to lead the crusade in the inclusion of women in decision making by composing songs that espoused the potentials of women as far as community development is concerned.

3.6 Data Collection

The study relied on both primary and secondary data from Tolon. An interview method (semi-structured) was employed through the use of an interview guide in eliciting information (primary) from respondents. The questions asked during the interview centered on the four research objectives of the study. The interview sessions were carried out on one on one basis. The study also relied on relevant documents, registers, reports, newspapers among others to elicit secondary information. The researcher used a mobile phone voice recorder to record the responses of the respondents for later transcription. This was to ensure fast and efficient data collection. The interviews had an average duration of seven minutes.



3.7 Reliability

The qualitative research approach has most of the time been subjected to criticism about issues of reliability because of its subjective nature. The researcher introduced the inter-rater reliability measure in the present study. In this process two other parties (MA holders in Leadership and Development) familiarized themselves with the raw data by listening to the interviews and helping with the transcription process. These two later assessed the results for consistency.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

This study followed accepted ethical principles regarding research. Throughout the process, the anonymity of respondents was maintained and this motivated most of the respondents to open up and give out relevant information. The study conformed strictly to the American Psychological Association (APA) ethical guidelines, such as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. Data collected was kept safe and secured under password protection



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.0 Introduction

Since this study is conducted qualitatively, the analysis of its findings are analyzed by qualitative data analytical strategies which dealt with the meaning of the experiences of respondents. Data was analyzed through content analysis (Mayring, 2014)

4.1 Thematic Content Analysis

This presents the analysis of the qualitative data in order to answer the research questions. It involved the description and breakdown of the data and a detailed discussion (comparisons, similarities and differences) of the data with respect to findings on the research questions. The present study sought to explore the low participation of women in decision making at the household and community level. First, familiarization with the data was essential for the generation of initial ideas. This was achieved through the process of transcription, reading and re-reading through the transcribed data. Initial codes were generated in a systematic fashion throughout the entire data. The coding phase involves the organization of data into meaningful clusters: this is essential to qualitative analysis. (Brown & Clarke, 2006).

Phase four witnessed the reviewing of the themes for “internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). Further analysis went on to refine the themes. This resulted in distinct classifications of each theme. The final stage of the analysis was characterized by the write-up of the report. This stage witnessed the careful selection of vivid extracts and examples towards answering the research questions and comparing it with empirical literature.



This systematic framework was adopted because the study aims at exploring the low participation of women in decision making at the household and community level.

4.2 Findings and Presentation of Themes and Categories

4.2.1 Development Potentials of Women.

Petty Trading

The interview conducted revealed that women have the potential to trade. They are able to maximize profit. One of the respondents alluded as follows; *'The trading is what we are good at, yes we are good at trading and we can use it to develop ourselves'* (Respondent).

Almost all the women were of the view that the benefits of their trading could help them to educate their children very well. The researcher interacted with one woman and this is what she said; *'I do trading and through that I'm able to pay my wards school fees, and also provide their educational needs such as books and uniforms, are these not issues of development?'*

The study reveals that there is a greater commitment of women in the education of the wards in Tolon. This stands out as a great potential to the development of the area. The women have demonstrated their readiness to participate in decision making process of the area in spite of the fact that they are seldom invited. *'We are ready even though we have never been called to take part in decision making processes'*. One respondent remarked.

Organisational Skills

Good Organisational skills of women was another potential identified during the interview session. Leaders of women groups (magazias) were said to have organizational prowess. One of the respondents remarked; *'We are able to organize ourselves within the shortest possible time*



especially our leaders, anytime we (women) are needed to do something we are able to organize ourselves quickly'.

The skills to organize effectively in any human institution is a necessary ingredient, the ability of these women to organize themselves effectively is spectacular given their busy tasks of domestic and biological responsibilities. From the literature review of this study it was discovered that a good organizational skill saves time and reduces stress.

Ability to Farm

During the interview respondents were unable to identify the specific opportunity which women with specific skills in the community could engage in. However, some of the respondents alluded to the fact that they have taken advantage of the availability of arable land to engage in farming especially maize, cotton and groundnuts.

'We women in this part of the country sometimes do farming ourselves therefore given the necessary support we can farm since there is adequate land space' (verbatim report of respondent).

The researcher observed that the women of Tolon could take advantage of the proximity of Tolon to Daboya community which is home for traditional smocks to engage in the spinning of cotton yarns for sale to smock weavers in Tolon. This could be a viable source of income to the womenfolk and hence making them financially independent and also making them 'legitimate' partners in development.



4.3 Women's Participation in Decision Making.

Low Representation in Decision Making.

The researcher's interaction with some of the interviewees revealed that women had been entirely alienated in decision making in the community. *'What can we offer to the development of the community when we are not invited to take part in decision making?'* (Verbatim report of respondent).

This clearly suggest that the level of participation of women in decisions in the Tolon community is low, hence their contribution to community development is negligible. The failure of some of their male counterparts to realise women as partners in development accounts for the low inclusion and participatory levels. *'Our level of participation in decision making at the household and community level is low, I think the men have not realized our importance as women'* (respondent).

Low Participation in Decision Making Based On Religious Considerations

The interview revealed that women are not allowed to participate and contribute freely. Some of the respondents admitted that there have been some cultural and religious limitations in the participation of women in decision making. One respondent remarked that;

'Some of the men especially the traditional believers don't consult their wives in taking decisions, they claim we (women) have no sense or wisdom, they also think consulting women during decision making will make them claim equality with men if it is Islam or something its better'(respondent).

This rendition seeks to fault the traditional belief system whilst exonerating other faiths such as the Islamic and Christian religions. However available literature indicates that these two



religions have also relegated women to the background. For instance, the bible teaches that no woman should be allowed to lead or even talk in the presence of men whilst in church.

'Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something they should asked their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church'.

Also in the book of Timothy it is said that; *'A woman should learn in quietness (heschuia) and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over man; she must be quiet (hesuchos)'.* Contrary to the respondents' rendition about the traditional belief system, Islam has stifled women right to leadership and decision making. According to the teachings of the Quran, women are created from the rib of men and for that matter women must be subservient to men. It argues further that women are not 'straight' just like the rib implying women cannot do things better.

'...For they are created from a rib, and the most crooked portion of the rib is its upper part, if you try to straighten it, it will break, if you leave it, it will remain crooked....'.

Low Participation Due To Mistrust in Women Leadership Qualities

The researcher observed that a female has never won an elective position such as Member of Parliament (MP) or assembly woman in Tolon. Some respondents attributed this to the mistrust in the leadership qualities of women by their male counterparts. *'The men do not trust our leadership capabilities and even some our colleague women too'* (respondent).

As a result, women in Tolon community are reluctant to contest for positions at various decision making structures.



Fairly High Due to Change in Perception

Contrary to the views of other interviewees, some of the respondents believe that women participation in decision making in Tolon is fairly high. In a response to a question posed by the researcher on her views about the level of women participation in decision making in Tolon, a female respondent had this to say;

'Yes, it is strong, in this community any day there is a community meeting we (women) are adequately represented and allowed to express ourselves freely, I have participated in several community meetings to take decisions' (verbatim report of respondent).

She opined further that their inclusion could possibly be driven from the realization that women have a role to play in the development of their communities. For her, she believes that their male counterparts have had a change in perception about the capabilities of women. *'The men have now understood that we are also important especially in the upbringing of children' (respondent).* The researcher observed that the views or responses was informed by the respondent's own experiences, that is those who ever got the privilege to take part in decision making described as high whilst those who never got the privilege to participate in decisions describe as low the level of participation in decision making.

4.4 Challenges faced by Women to participate in Decision making.

Finance

Almost all the respondents have cited finance as a major challenge facing women in taking part in decision making. They assert that women candidates need financial resources to afford logistics to be able to reach out to many people to put their message across. One of the respondents said';



'Here in Tolon if you don't have money as a woman, you cannot contest for any position to take part in decision making, because the electorates demand for cash anytime you go to speak to them' (respondent).

Another respondent said;

'If a woman candidate goes to speak to a group of people and they ask for benches and she is not able to buy it for them they will not vote for her but will vote for her male contender who has money to buy the benches for them' (respondent).

The researcher observed that financial resources are necessary for women to secure representation in the decision making structures of Tolon community.

Poverty emerged as the basic issue hindering the effective participation of women in decision making. Indeed, poverty was pervasive in all the interviews conducted. This was viewed in two dimensions- the fact that they could not take care of their kids and themselves and also the reason many of the young female girls migrate to the urban centers to engage in head portorage.

' If we get support such as credit facilities we can engage in petty trading which will enable us take care of ourselves and children, we can even help eradicate rural-urban urban migration among young girls popularly known as "kayayo" ' (respondent).

This reasoning seems to be in line with Barbara Stanny's article in Forbes magazine. In her article she said;

Once a woman is financially secure, she is rarely motivated by money. What drives her is an added spiritual component, a deep commitment to a higher purpose-how she can help others and improve the world.



Most women unlike men are by nature not corruptive but conscious of the development of their communities.

As a result of poverty women had no control over resources and thereby cannot afford the logistical requirements to participate in any of the decision making structures, for instance election into parliament. A respondent alluded as follows:

'Here in Tolon if you don't have money as a woman, you cannot contest for any position to take part in decision making, because the electorates demand for cash anytime you go to speak to them' (respondent).

The discussion above gives an indication that for women to effectively participate in decisions at the household and community levels they should be empowered economically. This view is supported by some of the demands made in page 14 of the 'Women's Manifesto' for Ghana (2004):

That Government should take steps to reverse an economic policy which discriminates against women and ensure their active involvement in economic decision making at all levels". "That the Government implement the provisions in the Beijing Platform for Action which relate to valuing and accounting for unpaid work in order to ensure that the disadvantages women suffer because they are disproportionately involved in unpaid labour are removed (WMFG, 2004)

From the afore discussions, issues of fighting poverty among women and increasing women's resource control is a necessary condition for effective participation in decision making. The persistent reliance of women on men for what is described in our local parlance as 'chop money' for their upkeep and that of their children is what makes them so vulnerable. It is also a reason for their non-participation in decision making. This challenge is delineated in the Dependency Theory as espoused in the literature review. The theory explains that countries which are over reliant on bigger countries for their development usually do not achieve their desired





development. The theory argues as follows; “what causes underdevelopment in third world countries is the neo-imperialistic structure. He observed that the metropolitan- periphery relation in whom the third world states are the periphery of the metropolitan capitalist economies is what breeds underdevelopment. Thus, the structure is not conducive for third world countries because of their penchant dependence on the metropolitan capitalist. It is argued that the metropolis have indigenous collaborators and those indigenous bourgeoisie further exploit the resources of their people and cause further underdevelopment”.

Attitudinal Issues

Through the interview it was revealed that women who put up themselves for inclusion in the decision making structures were often ridiculed as prostitutes, this in the opinion of one respondent have deterred many women from taking part in decision making in the community.

‘Sometimes as a woman if you offer yourself to be included in the decision making structures, you find others making mockery of you and calling you names , sometimes they tag you as a prostitute because they do not understand why a woman wants to be part of a male dominated decision making structures’, (verbatim report of a respondent).

The researcher observed that women themselves have the attitude of mocking their fellow women who are making efforts to participate in decision making in Tolon.

Lack of Formal Education

Almost all the respondents were of the view that the lack of formal education has posed a great challenge to the participation of women in decision making in the community. The fact that the ability to read and write becomes vital in every society, so it is to every decision making structure and for that matter education has become a necessary condition to actively participate



in decision making. The lack of education by these women incapacitates them from knowing what their civil rights are and hence will not be able to fight for them *'The fact that we lack formal education have retarded our growth and development'* (respondent). The researcher observed that non-formal education which used to be effective in the community have become moribund. Women are regarded globally as agents of development and hence needs formal education to be able to do that. This argument is supported by the words of a renowned Ghanaian educationist Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey; if you educate a man you have educated one person but if you educate a woman you have educated a whole nation.

Belief System

The researcher gathered from the interview that some cultural beliefs also poses a great challenge to the participation of women in decision making in the community. People of Tolon in the opinion of the respondents revere their cultural beliefs including the belief that the woman's role is to cook and perform her biological role of child birth. Hence they do not recognize the right of a woman to take part in decision making, and this is gravely affecting the development of the community.

'In this community it is abominable for women to take part in certain activities, our people believe that when women are allowed to take part in certain issues in the community, some calamity may befall the community' (respondent).

These beliefs have made several intelligent women who could contribute meaningfully to the development of the community to become timid for fear of the curses or calamities associated with such beliefs. The researcher gathered that some of these beliefs are mere myths but the people have held strongly to them since it has been bequeathed to them by their ancestors.

This phenomenon has affected women's participation in decision making at the local and household levels.

4.5 Empowering Women to Efficiently Participate in Decisions for Development.

Advocacy

The study conducted, also revealed that the participation of women in decision making could only be advanced through advocacy. This, in the opinion of respondents would bring to light and awaken people about how brilliant women are and why their brilliance must be harnessed for the development of their communities. It will also help remind people about the rights of women to participate in decisions as contained in statutory books such as the constitution. Sensitization and advocacy will also soften the posturing of some stereotyped persons who hitherto had little respect for women's rights especially their right to participate in decision making. Also sensitization and advocacy would demystify certain cultural beliefs.

'If we need change then the men of this community must be spoken to, they must be enlightened about the importance of women as far as development is concerned' (respondent).

The issue of Advocacy is also highlighted in the Social Action Model in the literature review as follows;

Women in our communities may experience various forms of oppression; in which case the role of an advocate becomes necessary in order to determine the appropriate service or intervention, it is important to understand the pressing needs of the community rather than concentrating more on the interest of community leaders. It also important to hear the concerns of the community and which will enable you to mobilize them to take action which may pave the way for community interaction.

Micro-Finance Schemes

Almost all the respondents called for the availability of micro-finance schemes to support them with finances in order that they could boost their petty trading. The benefit of such support



would have a trickledown effect on their children as households can afford the three daily meals in their balanced form among others.

'if we get support such as credit facilities we can enhance our petty trading which will enable us take care of ourselves and children, we can even help eradicate rural-urban migration among young girls popularly known as "kayayo" ' (respondent).

The view of the respondent above indicates how crucial the availability of micro-finance schemes could help transform their lives and how it can possibly help restore their dignity as women.

Sensitization

The researcher found out that women could freely participate and contribute during decision making in their communities if and only people change their perception about the role of women which negatively influenced their attitudes toward them. *'for me I think if we are to have a free society where women are allowed to take part in decision making, all we need is attitudinal change' (respondent).* Attitudinal change is very crucial in every human endeavor. The holding onto certain attitudes over time had retarded the growth of many societies.

The issues of Religion and Culture featured in almost all the interviews conducted. Religious and cultural considerations had in one way or the other impacted positively and negatively on the participation of women in decision making. Below is a quote from one of the respondents;

'In this community it is abominable for women to take part in certain activities, our people believe that when women are allowed to take part in certain issues in the community, some calamity may befall the community, that is the culture' (respondent).



Another respondent alluded as follows;

'some of the men especially the traditional believers don't consult their wives in taking decisions, they claim we (women) have no sense or wisdom, they also think consulting women during decision making will make them claim equality with men' (respondent).

Demystifying the Belief System

Available literature points out that the issues of religion and culture vis a vis women in decision making is not peculiar to the community under study. Religion and Culture are said to be based on very strong patriarchal pedestal which affect the participation of women in decision making even at the household levels. Cornwell states that, the mutual impact of gender issues on the establishment and the maintenance of democratic processes cannot be examined by looking at democracy at a fairly centralized level that is the public domain only. It is equally important according to her to focus on the lowest level at how intra-household power relations affect the opportunities of women to participate in any democratic actions. Reiterating this, Rai remarks "...the time and resources at their disposal to cross the boundary of their private lives into the public sphere remain very limited". These are often based on religion and culture.

In the literature, Tsikata (2001), made some interesting observation on religion and culture, she observes that what people often refer to as religion and culture are no more than the institutions, practices and ideologies which are the framework within which social relations unfolds, interactions takes place and identities established.

Many women in Tolon have been denied the chance to participate in decision making in Tolon. The researcher's interaction with one respondent revealed as follows:



'In this community it is abominable for women to take part in certain activities, our people believe that when women are allowed to take part in certain issues in the community, some calamity may befall the community'.

The researcher observed that religion and culture had defined roles for males and females which discriminates against women. For instance women are not allowed to lead men in an Islamic prayer.

Promotion of Formal Education

The issue of illiteracy also came up in the interviews as one of the factors surrounding the participation of women in decision making at the household and community levels. The researcher observed that illiteracy among women is high in the community under study as such women do not get the opportunity to take part in any elitist decision making situations. Available statistics had showed that about seventy percent (70%) of women in the community were illiterates.

This limited literacy among women limited their access to information and proper utilization of available information and opportunities due to other complexity of factors. One of the respondents alluded as follows: *'the fact that we lack formal education have retarded our growth and development'* (respondent). Though education is important it should not be used as a barrier to women's participation in decision making. However, it is important to understand that education or lack of it, though not legally or constitutionally sanctioned, is one key requirement in almost every decision making structure. However there are exceptions in every situational analysis. For instance, illiterate women have in the past formed part of our independence struggle, again the 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana was promulgated with inputs from



illiterate women and men. Literacy can only be said to help improve the performance of women at the decision making level, the lack of it should not be basis for denial or exclusion from decision making processes.

Instituting Policy and Enforcing Existing Laws

Central to the issues of women participation in decision making is policy. Throughout the interviews respondents who were all women had no fore knowledge of existing policies regarding their participation in decision making. One of the respondents opined as follows; *'As it is, there is nothing that compels our husbands to include us in taking decisions'*. The researcher observed that females were deliberately left out of decision making without recourse to provisions in the constitution by their male counterparts. Perhaps their (both men and women) ignorance of the provisions in the constitution of Ghana and other statutory books could account for that.

The recent attempt by government to ensure the mainstreaming of gender equality in public policy, planning and in delivery of services received a boost when in December 1998, cabinet approved the Affirmative Action white paper. As a means of implementation, all government ministries were mandated to have gender desk officers (GDOs). However, some respondents noted the ineffectiveness of these gender desks, perhaps it was due to this realization that the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs organized a workshop for gender desk officers in the ministries with the theme "Promoting Gender Mainstreaming and Children's Issues in Ghana- Role of GDOs in the MDAs".

The constitution guarantees the citizenry equal rights without regard to gender, so going forward, the media must be used to disseminate and educate people about provisions in the constitution or



better still abridged versions of the country's constitution must be made available to every household in our communities in order that people become aware and conscious of the rights of women as enshrined in the Constitution.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter elaborates on the key findings of the study. It revisits the theoretical implications of the study as posited in chapter one before proceeding to the conclusion of the study. The chapter then closes with recommendations to enhance women participation in decision making at the community level and makes suggestions for further studies on the topic under study.

5.1 Discussion of Results

Findings from the study indicate that women in Tolon consider Trade as one of the potentials which could help improve their living conditions and hence make them active participants in decision making. This thinking is not too different from what pertains in most countries globally. Trade or Commerce which involves buying and selling, has become the bedrock on which most countries across the globe depend for development. According to the European Commission, trade can help boost development and reduce poverty by generating growth through increased commercial opportunities and investment. The Commission further argues that trade expands choice and lowers prices for consumers by broadening supply sources of goods and services and strengthening competition. The importance of trade from the view point of women in Tolon can therefore not be underestimated.

The study also discovered the skills to organize themselves (organizational skills) as a major potential for women in Tolon which could be harnessed to enhance the participation of women in decision making. This is because skills to organize effectively in any human institution are a



necessary ingredient. It was discovered in the literature review above that a good organizational skill saves time and reduces stress.

The ability of these women to organize themselves effectively is spectacular given their busy tasks of domestic and biological responsibilities. The advantage of this organizational skill is that, the women could easily be reached out to within the shortest possible time in the event of undertaking any development project in the community.

The ability to engage in farming was yet another potential discovered by this study. It was evident from the responses that they women engaged in farming activities which is a major source of income to them. Until recently, farming was previously perceived to be the sole occupation of men whilst women were to handle domestic chores. The venturing of women into farming in Tolon is spectacular and worth commending since it forms basis upon which women from other communities can emulate. Farming or agriculture is one of the major component in the supply side sector of the Ghanaian economy.

The study revealed a variety of viewpoints of the level of participation of women in decisions making. Whilst many were of the view that participation was low, others on the contrary thought participation was high whilst others were indifferent. These opinions were expressed by them based on their own experiences. The study discovered that a number of factors accounted for different views. They include change in perception, lack of respect for women's rights, and the belief system among others.

The challenges which militated against women participation in decision making in Tolon were also identified in the study. The efforts of women in Tolon had been relegated to the background



as a result of those impediments. These challenges included finance, lack of formal education, religion and culture as well as attitudinal issues.

In order to enhance respect for women rights in Tolon, the study revealed a number of antidotes from the responses that ought to be prosecuted to enhance their participation in decisions. They allude that certain religious or traditional beliefs albeit handed down from previous generations are outmoded and must be discarded. The lack of formal education was also said to be inimical to their participation in decisions, and for that matter formal education must be promoted. The study also discovered the necessity of supporting women financially to boost their trading activities which will enable them to cater for themselves and their children by paying their school fees. It was revealed in the study that a change in attitude towards women by their male counterparts is a necessary condition for the enhancement of the participation of women in decision making in Tolon.

5.2 Limitations of the study

The study was carried out qualitatively and could not have been without a number of limitations, it is, therefore, open to criticisms. Data collection was hectic, since the researcher had to travel from Tamale to Tolon to collect it, it involved transportation hence cost. Language barrier was a challenge; most of the respondents did not understand English and therefore had to be interviewed in their local dialect. The respondents who were all women were mostly not readily available for the interviews. Also, respondents were shy and did not adequately open up to the researcher. There was no transcription gadget to transcribe directly the voice recordings of the respondents; as a result transcription was done manually by the researcher which wasted a lot of time.



The researcher had no access to adequate materials which was related to the topic but had to rely often on the internet. The researcher had no control over the responses given by the participants.

The researcher could have employed some quantitative research methods which could have could have strengthened the exactness of the findings of the study to enhance its reliability.

In spite of these limitations the study with its analytical design and approach has clearly dealt with the participation of women in decision making at the community level.

5.3 Theoretical and practical implications of the study

The aim of this study was to use advocacy to improve the participation of women in decision making for community development. The theoretical framework used for the study includes the Rothman's Three Models, the Dependency and Underdevelopment theory and the Socialist Theory.

With the adoption of the Locality Model, a community can develop where there is a broad participation of wide spectrum of people at the community level in terms of aims and action, the people here includes the women of the respective communities.

The relevance of this model is that it encourages the participation of all stakeholders in decision making towards the quest in developing our communities.

The social action model emphasizes on the empowerment of a disadvantaged few in our communities in order to be able to develop our communities. In this context, women are the vulnerable in our societies and must be given the support (economic, political, and social) they need to be able to contribute to participate in decision making and thereby community development.



5.5 Recommendations

A number of solutions were suggested to reverse the situation. Some of these includes advocacy, sensitization, instituting whilst enforcing existing laws, promoting formal education, financial support to women, shunning outmoded cultural practices and so on.

It was also recommended that women should be given all forms of support (physical, social, and economic) they need to be able to contribute their quota to National Development.

Non-Governmental Organisations, Civil Society Organisations and other relevant bodies were also encouraged to focus more on empowering women by way of developing their capacities to enable them participate fully in decision making .



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APPENDICES

Appendix A

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Interview Guide regarding Women Participation in Decision Making at the Community Level.

TOPIC: Using Advocacy to Promote Women Participation in Decision Making at the Community Level in Tolon.

Introduction

I, Abdul-Ganiyu Sandow Abdulai, a final year MA student of the Faculty of Education, University for Development Studies. I am interested in the improvement of women participation in decision making towards the development of their communities. I believe that the collective participation of women and their male counterparts will yield to the development that generations have yearned for. It is in the light of this that the following questions have been asked in the research, what potentials do women possess to contribute to the development of Tolon community? What is the level of participation and contribution of women to community development in Tolon? What challenges do women face in their quest to contribute meaningfully to community development in Tolon? Which possible ways can women be empowered to participate and contribute efficiently to the development of Tolon community. All these are at the heart of this research. With your permission, your comments will be recorded. Please be assured that all your responses will be kept confidential: This means that the interview responses will be used for academic purpose only; the report will not identify you as a respondent. Also, your participation in this survey is absolutely



voluntary and you reserve the right to withdraw at any point in the process or choose to answer some questions and not others.

Thank you for accepting to participate in this research.

Potentials of women towards community development

1. What do you think are the potentials women possess which can be harnessed for the development of the Tolon community? Give specific examples
2. In what ways can these potentials be unearthed?
3. How can these potentials be harnessed to enhance the development of Tolon community?
4. What specific opportunity abound in the community for women with specific skills to engage in?
5. What specific leadership qualities do most women in this community possess?

Level of women participation in decision making

1. In this community how will you describe the participation of women in decision making?
2. State reasons for your description above
3. Are women allowed to freely contribute in decision making without discrimination?
4. Have you had any woman representative in the decision making structures in this community? Give specific levels. Example parliament, district assembly unit committee etc.
5. What social, cultural and religious factors affect the level of participation of women in decision making?





Challenges faced by women in taking part in decision making in Tolon

1. Briefly give a narration of the problems encountered by women in their quest to take part in decision making in this community.
2. Why do you think these challenges exist?
3. How has our belief system affected the participation of women in decision making in this community?
4. How does people in this community perceive women who put themselves up for election to the various levels of decision making structure?
5. Do you think the lack of resources control by women is also a challenge?

The way forward to empower women to effectively participate and contribute to decisions that affects the development of Tolon.

1. What do you think should be done to in order that the right of participation in decision making by women is respected?
2. What role do you think government should play in this regard?
3. What role do you think NGOs should play this regard?
4. What role do you think opinion leaders, groups and individuals should play in this regard?
5. What societal or attitudinal change needs to be effected to enhance the participation of women in decision making for the development of our communities?