

GENDERED NEWS COVERAGE AND FEMALE PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES IN GHANA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF DAILY GRAPHIC AND GHANAIAN TIMES NEWSPAPERS

Lawrence Naaikuur

Department of Communication, SD Dombo University of Business and Integrated Development Studies, Upper West Region, Ghana, lnaaikuur@ubids.edu.gh

Samuel Adadi Akapule

Marketing and Communication Department, Bolgatanga Technical University, Upper East, Ghana, sammyakapule@yahoo.com

Thomas Azagasiba Agana

Department of Communication, SD Dombo University of Business and Integrated Development Studies, Upper West Region, Ghana, tagana@ubids.edu.gh

Abstract

This study looked into how female parliamentary candidates fared in the 2016 general election in Ghana. The frequency of media coverage and the prominence accorded to female parliamentary candidates were ascertained through an analysis of the *Ghanaian Times* and the *Daily Graphics*. The study also examine the framing of female parliamentary candidates in the reporting of the *Ghanaian Times* and *Daily Graphics*. There were 59 publications for the *Daily Graphics* and 31 for the *Ghanaian Times*, making it a total of 90 publications. The July 1, 2016–December 7, 2016 editions were used for the study. According to the study, the two newspapers covered parliamentary candidates more frequently overall, although they covered female candidates less frequently. The study also showed that when it came to giving priority to the coverage of female parliamentary candidates during the 2016 parliamentary election, the two national newspapers performed poorly. Of the eight front page articles about parliamentary candidates that the newspapers published, just two of them featured female candidates; the other six featured male candidates. The results showed that, based on the descriptions of female parliamentary candidates in their reporting, the *Ghanaian Times* and the *Daily Graphics* both stereotyped the female candidates. The framing theory (Goffman, 1974) etc., serve as the study's foundation. Gender-based Non-Governmental Organizations should create award programs for media outlets and journalists who cover more events that encourage women to enter the political sphere.

Keywords: Female parliamentary candidate, appearance, gendered news, family ties, incompetence, sexuality, frequency, prominent, framing media

Introduction

Globally, research on gender coverage and elections has revealed differences in the quantity and quality coverage given to female candidates compared to their male counterparts. According to Goodyear-Grant (2013), there is a lack of awareness regarding female candidates. However, some women do make headlines occasionally due to their special qualities or their associations with influential males. As a result, males predominate on the front and political pages of newspapers, while females are seen on less prominent political pages (Dzeble, 2006).

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP, 2019) report's findings also show that women account for 24% of the subjects that are heard, seen, and read about in the media. Just 16% of the news stories had a specific focus on women, while 48% of them reinforced gender stereotypes and only 8% of them addressed them.

According to the 2020 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, globally political empowerment is poor (World Economic Forum, 2019). The report continues that it will take 95 years to close the gender gap in political representation, with women in 2019 holding 25.2 percent of parliamentary (lower) house seats and 21.2 percent of ministerial positions. This research sought to

investigate whether the media which is part of the society helps to perpetuate this phenomenon or help to address it.

Existing literature shows that the Africa continent has its fair share of varying challenges of media treatment of female candidates in elections reportage just as it is in abroad. Akor (2014) in analysing why media coverage of women politicians was poor in Nigeria during the 2011 general elections avers that this fuels the reluctance of political parties to have women as candidates thereby feeding into a vicious circle of their low political representation (Akor, 2014).

The author observed that voters rely on the media to make informed decisions especially during elections periods and stressed that the media constitute the ears and eyes of the public, which help to mould and shape perceptions.

Thuo (2012) who also conducted research on print media coverage of women parliamentarians in Kenya's general elections in 2011, concluded that the print media coverage of women in politics was low, with their stories placed in the inside pages and hardly on the headlines thus making them invisible. The researcher concluded that hidden influences such as cultural backgrounds of the media professionals, principles of what makes news and commercial interest contributed to the low coverage of women.

In the 2011 General elections in Nigeria, Oyesomi and Oyero (2012) aver that the media dictate what the people think about and not what the people think, thus the agenda of the media becomes the agenda of the people. The authors employed the agenda setting theory and analysed 288 editions of two leading Nigerian newspaper publications, the Guardian and the Punch from December 2010 to August 2011 during the run-up to the Nigerian 2011 elections. Findings revealed that out of 464 issues in both newspapers analysed, only 64 stories represented issues of women. In addition, fewer stories that were covered about women were not given in-depth coverage or prominence because most of the stories appeared in the inner pages while the front 27 pages captured only 10 percent of all such stories.

In a study of how the media set an agenda during elections in Liberia on two Presidential candidates, Mr. George Weah and Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf, Shaw (2007), study revealed that Mr. George Weah had openly issued threats to the media in Liberia. As a result, some media practitioners deliberately set an agenda to sway un-decided voters to vote in favour of Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf by framing issues such as qualifications vs. popularity. The author concluded that by emphasising the strength of Sirleaf Johnson, the newspapers framed her positively and Weah negatively.

Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF, 2009) a women centered NGO in a study to elicit respondents' views and opinions on how Ghanaian women fared during the 2008 parliamentary elections, revealed that majority of the female candidates were not happy about the discriminatory manner the media provided coverage to them, favouring men more than the female parliamentarians. The study concluded that the phenomena of cultural and traditional barriers coupled with legal, political and economic factors debar many women from active participation in politics and making them to receive less attention. The study also recommended more proactive and increased coverage of women candidates in the future.

Closed to this, is a study by Benneh (2005) on challenges of media coverage of Ghanaian women parliamentarians. The study which was underpinned by the framing theory, also sought to find out whether coverage in the media of the women parliamentarians reinforced or challenged the dominant culture and thereby contributed towards the marginalization of women. She conducted an in-depth interview with eight women parliamentarians, four each from the ruling NPP and the main opposition NDC political parties. The findings revealed that the women felt they received an unprecedented low level of attention from the media although most of the coverage was positive. This notwithstanding, the NDC women parliamentarians felt the media discriminated against women and that most of their contributions in parliamentary debates were not covered. The interviewees all agreed that the state media did not cover many of their activities, especially at the constituency level. As a result, many of the respondents had to depend on private FM stations.

Women's interactions with authority were typically indirect and mediated by men, with the exception of situations in which they held the position of queen or empress (Stichele, 1998). For many years, African women's political representation, for example, continuously lagged behind the global average (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2014).

It has been observed that one of the main actors in democratic elections is the media. By informing voters about how to exercise their democratic rights, covering the progress of an election campaign,

and giving political parties and candidates a forum to address the public and engage in debate, the media plays a crucial role (National Communications Authority [NCA], 2015). The electorates can also voice their issues and thoughts to the parties and candidates through the media.

The media thus play an important role by selecting issues or personalities that stand to gain prominence in election campaigns coverage. Whatever is reported in the media, presents the voting public with frames with which to make critical election decisions. Issues and personalities have become phenomena in election campaigns and are constantly competing for media attention (Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2001).

Politics and how women are portrayed in the media continue to spark heated debate on a worldwide scale. According to Anderson et al. (2011) media portrayals of female politicians are frequently inaccurate. This raises doubts about these women's legitimacy as national leaders. Gadzekpo (2011) claims that the way the media trivialises women's issues in Ghana is comparatively to how they do same for women in politics around the world.

Literature Review

Historical Development of Media Landscape in Ghana

Since 1991, there have been some notable changes to Ghana's media landscape. The Newspaper License Law was repealed in 1991 prior to the commencement of the fourth republican constitutional rule, which resulted in the emergence of several privately held newspapers and periodicals (Hasty, 2005). Another significant development in Ghanaian press freedom occurred in 2001 with the removal of the Criminal Libel Law (Criminal Code, 1960, Act 29) (Boafo-Arthur, 2007). These profound changes opened the floodgates for media independence and pluralism. According to the NCA (2015), there are currently 342 authorised radio stations, 285 of which are functioning and 57 of which are not.

Additionally, there are 466 newspaper publications in total, including 28 authorized TV operators nationwide that operate 11 free on air and 6 pay per view, as well as 11 national daily newspapers, 67 weeklies, 23 bi-weeklies, and five tri-weeklies (NCA, 2015). Because there are multiple media outlets in Ghana, particularly electronic media, news reporting has become more vibrant and diverse due to the broadcasting of multiple indigenous Ghanaian languages. Therefore, it is anticipated that Ghana's exponential growth in media outlets will contribute to a wider media coverage of politicians, particularly female candidates, during election seasons. Research on the representation of women in the media has revealed varying degrees of stereotyping (Lindner, 2004; Mann, 2011; Manya, 2013).

Social Norms and Media

It is critical to prove that socialization and sociocultural barriers are among the causes of women's low representation in public office and politics. The unequal gender power dynamics in Ghanaian culture are the reason behind the small number of female lawmakers in positions of significance within the government. The gender construction of society resulted in the public space that was previously mainly designated for men. According to Flores (2000), gender is a social construct shaped by culture, norms, rituals, values, and social relationships between males and females.

Thus, the act of fostering and influencing people through societal norms, laws, and values as well as the distribution of gendered tasks or obligations within society is known as gender construction (Britwum, 2009). Women have been disadvantaged and gender inequality in society has been sustained by patriarchal institutions and structures, as well as the social creation of gender roles and status (gender construction). These social structure notions explain how gender inequality is upheld, most likely as a result of the connections between cultural systems (beliefs and practices). There are clear links between the socio-cultural practices and gender construction where the connection relates to the historical legacy of patriarchal forces and agents (e.g. family, marriage, cultural practices, religion, social norms and values). Subsequently, culture and cultural systems, patriarchy and patriarchal agents are presented to surmise how they contribute to the disadvantaged position of women in Ghana particularly on the stereotypical portrayal of women.

Emerging Trend

The 21st century witnessed more feats for female political leaders. Cunningham and Mavin (2010) in a study to highlight media's representation of women politicians in the United Kingdom (UK), revealed that media representation discouraged and trivialized women's suitability as political candidates, in the 2010 general elections in UK. The two researchers concluded that the media portrayed the women MPs as aliens in the hostile environment of male-dominated political leadership. The authors concluded that the media focused mainly on the personal appearance of women MPs and their age at the expense of marketing their political campaign messages to the voters.

Notable among these women are Liberia's Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf who was elected as the first female African Executive Head of State in 2005 (Economic Commission for Africa, 2009). In 2012, Malawian Joyce Banda the then Vice-President (2009-April 2012), became the President after the death of President Binguwa Mutarika (Ndlovu & Mutale, 2013). In all these scenarios, in 2012, South Africa's Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma became the Chairperson of the Commission of African Union, and Catherine Samba-Panza, became the Acting Head of State of the Central African Republic in January 2014 (Current Female Leaders, 2015).

Manya (2013) also avers that "clothing, makeup and hairdo of female politicians are scrutinized obsessively just as their views on vital issues. But no journalist can be bothered to comment on the mismatched shirt and tie of an overweight male politician" (p. 28). This the media are blamed for trivializing women and their issues.

Gadzekpo (2011) claims that the denigration of women in politics worldwide is comparable to the media's trivialization of women's issues in Ghana. She gives an example of how a private newspaper's story about women in the NDC political party infuriated feminist campaigners. The publication made much of their single status, implying that it was a penalty for their political activism. She believes that this kind of framing portrayed politics as an unwelcoming environment for women.

Gadzekpo (2011) assessed the occupational status of women in the Ghanaian media landscape and examined whether or not transformations in the media landscape really exist from re-democratisation have facilitated women's rights in the decision-making process. Gadzekpo (2011) analysed data from the Global Report on the status of women in the news business and antecedent of female workers dating back from the colonial period. Oyesomi and Oyero (2012) ascertained how the Nigerian newspapers reported politicians in the 2011 general election in Nigeria.

Lindner (2004) examines the portrayal of women in advertisements in general interest magazine and women fashion magazine over the last 50 years. Anderson et al. (2011) investigated the validity of such claims and instances of bias and negative representations of female candidates have declined significantly in the media of Ellen Johnson Sirlea. They compared the Africa and the international media report on Johnson and her major rival George Manneh Opong Weah who contested with Ellen Johnson during the presidential election of Liberia in 2006 and lost.

Globally, politics and media coverage of women continue to attract many debates among scholars. Anderson et al. (2011) argue that the media misrepresentation of female politicians in the media make them to be perceived by the public and for that matter the electorates. This, scholars note often affect the credibility of women as leaders of their nations.

Gap exists in media coverage of Female Parliamentarisms in Ghana. Another gap exists in the coverage of female parliamentary candidates using the *Daily Graphic* and the *Ghanaian Times newspapers* as examples. Aside most of the studies reviewed above used either the framing theory, discourse analysis or the glass ceiling theory leaving out the liberal feminist theory which is very critical in analysing female representations in the newspapers and media studies in general.

This study which seeks to fill in these gaps highlighted in the above reviewed literature, seeks to investigate the coverage of female parliamentary candidates in the two-state- owned national daily newspapers in the 2016 parliamentary elections in Ghana. The objectives of this research are:

1. To examine the length, frequency and prominence of media coverage of male and female parliamentary candidates in the *Daily Graphic* and the *Ghanaian Times* in the 2016 parliamentary election.
2. To investigate the dominant gender frames used by the *Daily Graphic* and *Ghanaian Times* in the coverage of female parliamentary candidates in the 2016 parliamentary election.

Framing Theory

Based on Goffman's 1974 work on frame analysis, the framing theory was developed. Frame analysis was first presented by Goffman (1979), who also described how the media choose specific aspects of reality to emphasize, explain, and convey. Goffman asserts that the dominating order that advertisers employed to organize how audiences perceived women formed the identified frames.

According to Gadzekpo (2011), the hegemonic function of media is clearer when one examines how the media frame events. Together with news traditions and values, it is that pattern of selective emphasis and interpretation referred to as framing that makes certain representations (often derived from the dominant ideology) seem natural and acceptable. The way and manner the media frame and produce meanings contribute to the reproduction of ideology, thereby creating and sustaining the relationships of inequality and oppression. This study examined this in the context on how the media framed female parliamentary candidates during the last 2016 general election.

Agenda Setting Theory

The inception of agenda setting theory dates back to 1922, when Walter Lippmann raised concerns about the critical role that the media can play in shaping the public's perception of a particular issue (Lippmann, 1922, p. 9–16). Lippmann uses the example of people who are supposed to be adversaries during a war to illustrate the power of mass media. Those people are able to coexist peacefully on a remote island without turning into adversaries as they are unable to learn about the war from the media. Lippmann discusses how the media can set a specific agenda and sway the public's perceptions. It is assumed that the media does more than just present audiences with news; rather, it forms and filters what we perceive. The second premise, according to which the public is more likely to view a topic as significant the more attention it receives from the media, could also be taken into consideration. The study investigated this argument in the context of this study.

Liberal Feminist Theory

In her book “The Feminine Mystic”, published in 1963, Betty Friedan advanced the liberal feminist idea. Friedan (1963) examined the notion that women may achieve fulfillment outside of traditional roles if they were granted full legal, political, economic, and social rights in modern society. The hypothesis is predicated on the idea that prejudices about sex roles endure in the media and that audiences' exposure to them on a regular basis propagates these stereotypes across society (Mann, 2011). In her research, Strinati (2004) asserts that the media's cultural portrayals of women uphold and sustain the dominant sexual division of labor. This study examined this in the context of media coverage of female parliamentary candidates by content analysis of the *Daily Graphic* and the *Ghanaian Times* newspapers.

Guidelines on the Portrayal of Women in the Media

The media at both the local and global levels have attracted a lot of bashing for initiating various forms of stereotyping and portrayal of women, the elderly, disabled, racial and ethnic groups. Studies conducted by many scholars on women's portrayal have shown various ways of stereotyping them especially when it comes to their depiction in the media (Manya, 2013). To address this negative trend, scholars have proposed some guidelines to ensure that women are portrayed positively beyond their stereotypical roles.

The code of ethics of the Advertising Association of Ghana (AAG) is among some of these protocols. It emphasizes that, advertising must not exploit sex in obvious or implied context or cast a group as inferior to others. Aside, Article 6 of the code of ethics of the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) also impressed upon journalists that in composing their stories they should not produce journalistic material that is discriminatory to either by ethnicity, colour, creed, gender or sexual orientation. The Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952), Article 7 of the UN Convention for Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration Platform for Action (BDPFA)

among others contain some of the proposed guidelines to ensure that the media portrays women positively in the journalist space.

For the purposes of this study, the above international protocols identified the media as very critical in representing women's issues, and therefore advocated for the promotion of a balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the media. The protocols also advocated for the political right of and equality in women's access to and participation in the decision-making process of governance in their various countries.

These guidelines are also followed by non-governmental organizations and the National Media Policy (NMP). Section 7(2) of the National Media Commission's (NMC) media policy states that programming by the media should show high sensibility to the dignity and respect of womanhood, defend and protect women's rights and interests. This is buttressed by the Women's Manifesto for Ghana, a political document put together by a coalition of women's organisations. The Women's Manifesto, a political document initiated by ABANTU for Development and Action Aid Ghana, identified the lack of women's representation in politics and also recognised the role of the media in addressing some of the gender inequalities. Research has shown that media coverage of female candidates in elections both locally and internationally spans several decades ago with the most extensive of these studies being conducted by the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP). Findings of the GMMP (2010) study revealed that women make up 24% of subjects seen, heard and read about in the media. Only 16% of the stories focused on women specifically, 48% reinforced gender stereotypes while only 8% of the news stories challenged such stereotypes.

The current study also sought to find out the attention the media gave to women parliamentary candidates in the 2016 election in Ghana by content analysing two national newspapers in Ghana, the *Ghanaian Times* and the *Daily Graphic* from the heat period of the election which begun in the third and fourth quarters of 2016 (July to December 2016).

Daily Graphic

The Mirror Group of London with its headquarters in the United Kingdom established the *Daily Graphic* in Ghana in 1953 (Asante, 1996). However, Barton (1979) and Hachen (1971), point to the fact that the *Daily Graphic* was sold to the government and became nationalized in 1963. The newspapers currently enjoy the highest coverage in Ghana with a daily circulation of about 200,000 representing 45% of the daily newspaper circulation and is published six days in a week (Monday to Saturday). Distribution is mainly within regional capitals and urban centres of the country.

The *Daily Graphic* is made up of 80 pages including the Gender and Children pages (pages 8-10) World News (page 2), Inside Africa (Page 5), Editorial and Features/Opinion articles (Page 4), Education (Page 11), Politics (Pages 15-19), Regional News (Page 21), Metro News (Pages 29-31), Business (Pages 33), Classified and Funeral Announcement (Pages 42-43) and Sports (Pages 46-47). It is very significant to note that these pages may vary taking into consideration advertisements available for the day's publication.

The *Daily Graphic* has over the years attained reputation for asserting its independence through editorial policies, a position often seen by Government as critical of their administration. As a result, several government interferences have occurred (Asante, 1996). However, the paper has continued to maintain its editorial independence and has remained economically viable.

Ghanaian Times

The *Ghanaian Times* published its first newspaper on March 3, 1958 as the Guinea Times led by Ghana's first president, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah who did so to propagate his own political agenda and that of his Convention People's Party (CPP). Established during the period when the CPP was in power, the paper operated an editorial policy that served to ensure the protection and defense of the government (Asante, 1996; Yankah, 1994). Following the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah in 1966, the Guinea Press was transferred to the new government as state property. In 1971, an instrument of incorporation (Act 363, 1971) established the New Times Corporation to oversee the publication of the Ghanaian Times. The paper receives a major portion of its budget from government, a situation that lends itself to some

form of governmental control, creating a seeming 'healthy' and dependable' relations with governments in power (Ofori-Birikorang, 2009).

The *Ghanaian Times* comes second to the *Daily Graphic* in terms of circulation, which stands at 150,000 copies daily. Like the *Daily Graphic*, The *Ghanaian Times* is published from Mondays to Saturdays. The paper has a page extent of 32 including pages dedicated to editorials (page 4), Africa News (page 5), World News (Pages 6-7), Features (Pages 8-9), General News (Pages 2, 11, 14 and 21), Regional News (Pages 22-25), Business (Pages 26), Sports (Pages 28-32) and Politics (Pages 12-13) with the rest dedicated to advertisement. The paper has regional offices countrywide with regional editors and journalists who compose and transmit news from their specific regions to Accra, the headquarters of the newspaper for onwards publication for general consumption of the public.

Methodology

Data Collection and Method

News items on male and female parliamentary candidates published in the two newspapers were selected for the study. Data collection began from the library of the University of Business and Integrated Development Studies (SDD UBIDS) in Upper West Region and the Bolgatanga Technical University in Upper East Region between January 1, 2020 to March, 2020. Hard copies of news articles spanning the period of July 1, 2016 to December 14, 2016 were collected. The papers that contain news items on male and female parliamentary candidates were selected for the study. As stated earlier, the researchers collected data from news items covering the male and female parliamentary candidates mentioned in the two newspapers in terms of placement, frequency and length of stories and kind of stories.

Data Analysis

Content and textual analyses of news items on the male and female parliamentary candidates were done. We employed a close reading of the news items to identify the recurring frames in the reporting in the studied newspapers. Inductive data analysis procedure as one of the features of qualitative data analysis was adopted to analyse the large volume of data collected from both the *Daily Graphic* and the *Ghanaian Times newspapers*.

Interpretation which is another feature identified by Creswell (2012) was used to interpret the data collected such that meanings could be made of the entire research. Qualitative research adopts interpretative method of inquiry in which case researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear and understand. Their interpretations are done in relation to their backgrounds, history, contexts and prior understandings. These procedures were informed by the researchers understanding of the subject matter under investigation as well as the social context of the Ghanaian society. The Feminist theory, the Framing and the Agenda Setting theories employed by this researcher played significant part in arriving at a particular interpretation in this research work.

Coding and thematic analysis were employed for the data analysis. News items concerning male and female parliamentary candidates that appeared in the two newspapers between July 1 and December 14, 2016 were included in the sample and coded for analysis. Inter-coder reliability is an integral part of content analysis. It allows researchers to argue for the consistency and by extension the validity, of their findings (SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods, 2017). Inter-coder reliability was 89%. Each article was looked at by coding the newspaper title, headline, date of publication, type of news item, section, and number of paragraphs, story entered on male and female parliamentary candidates, source of quotes, nature of story, and the themes used in framing the female parliamentary candidates. For clarity and visual impression, we augmented the findings and discussions with some quantitative data, as can be seen in Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5.

Results and Findings

The research findings are underpinned by the below research questions:

1. How did the *Daily Graphic* and the *Ghanaian Times* newspapers cover female parliamentary candidates in terms of length, frequency and prominence in the 2016 parliamentary election?
2. What are the dominant gender frames used by the *Daily Graphic* and *Ghanaian Times* newspapers to cover parliamentary candidates in the 2016 parliamentary election?

How did the Daily Graphic and the Ghanaian Times newspapers cover female parliamentary candidates in terms of length, frequency and prominence in the 2016 parliamentary election?

Table 1. Coverage by length on the Daily Graphic from July to August 2016

Month	Male	Female	Total
July	5 full pages and 14 quarter pages	2 full pages and 7 quarter pages	7 full pages and 21 quarter pages
August	4 full pages and 15 quarter pages	3 full pages and 9 quarter	7 full pages and 24 quarter
September	7 full pages and 10 quarter	3 full pages and 7 quarter pages	10 full pages and 17 quarter pages
October	6 full pages and 12 quarter pages	2 full pages and 4 quarter	8 full pages and 16 quarter pages
November	5 full pages and 18 quarter pages	2 full pages and 12 quarter pages	7 full pages and 30 quarter pages
December	6 full pages and 9 quarter pages	3 full pages and 5 quarter	9 full pages and 14 quarter pages
Total	33 full pages and 78 quarter pages	15 full pages and 44 quarter pages	48 full pages and 122 quarter pages
Percentage	68.75% full pages and 63.93% quarter pages	31.25% full pages and 36.07% quarter pages	

Within the study period combined together, the *Daily Graphic* published 48 full pages of stories for both males and females. Out of the total number of 48 full pages, 33 of them were composed for aspiring male parliamentarians representing 68.75% while 15 full pages of stories were written for aspiring female parliamentarians representing 31.25%.

While put together the *Daily Graphic* composed 122 quarter pages of stories, 78 of such stories were for aspiring male parliamentarians representing 63.93%. On that of the aspiring female parliamentarians the quarter pages of stories were 44 representing 36.07%.

Table 2. Coverage by length on the Ghanaian Times from July to August 2016

Month	Male	Female	Total
July	4 full pages and 6 quarter pages	1 full page and 7 quarter pages	5 full pages and 13 quarter pages
August	2 full pages and 7 quarter pages	No full and 2 quarter pages	2 full pages and 9 quarter pages
September	3 full pages and 8 quarter pages	1 full page and 6 quarter pages	4 full pages and 14 quarter pages
October	4 full pages and 7 quarter pages	1 full page and 3 quarter pages	5 full pages and 10 quarter pages
November	5 full pages 10 quarter pages	1 full page and 8 quarter pages	6 full pages and 18 quarter pages
December	2 full pages and 7 quarter pages	No full page and 3 quarter pages	2 full pages and 10 quarter
Total	20 full pages and 45 quarter pages	4 full pages and 29 quarter pages	24 full pages and 74 quarter pages
Percentage	83.33% full pages and 60.81% quarter pages	16.67% full pages and 39.19 % quarter pages	

With the 24 full stories granted by the *Ghanaian Times Newspapers* to the parliamentary candidates during the period of the study, male aspiring parliamentarians received 20 full pages of stories representing 83.33 percent while their counterparts' female parliamentary candidates got only four (4) full pages of stories representing 16.67 percent. Forty-five quarter pages of stories representing 60.81 percent were allotted to male parliamentary candidates while 29 quarter pages of stories representing 39.19 percent were meant for female parliamentary candidates. From the above analysis it is quite clear that both the *Daily Graphic* and the *Ghanaian Times* gave more coverage in terms of length of stories to male parliamentary candidates than the female parliamentary candidates under the period of the study.

Table 3. Coverage by frequency of male and female parliamentary candidates from July to December 2016 (Daily Graphic)

Month	Frequency (Male)	Frequency (Female)	Total
July	9	19	28
August	12	19	31
September	17	10	27
October	18	6	24
November	23	14	37
December	15	8	23
Total	94	76	170
Percentage	55.29%	44.71%	100%

One of the first measurements through which gendered coverage could determine is simply through how many stories the media composed about male and female aspiring Parliamentary candidate in politics.

From the above table, the *Daily Graphic* gave 170 frequency rates of coverage to both male and female parliamentary candidates. Out of this frequency rate, the male parliamentary candidates enjoyed 94 frequency rate of coverage representing 55.29 percent while the female parliamentary candidates enjoyed only 76, representing 44.71 percent.

Table 4. Coverage by frequency of male and female parliamentary candidates from July to December 2016 (Ghanaian Times)

Month	Frequency (Male)	Frequency (Female)	Total
July	10	8	18
August	9	2	11
September	11	7	17
October	10	8	18
November	11	4	15
December	9	3	12
Total	60	32	92
Percentage	65.23%	34.78%	100%

In terms of frequency rate, the *Ghanaian Times* allotted 60 frequency rate representing 65.23 percent to male parliamentary candidates and 32 representing 34.78 percent to women parliamentary candidates.

The findings from the analysis showed that in terms of media frequencies for the coverage of female parliamentary candidates, the two national newspapers understudied for the period did not fare well as the two put together allotted only 108 times of media frequencies to female parliamentary candidates and a quantum of 154 frequency rates of coverage to male parliamentary candidates under the period

of the study. This resonates with the findings of the GMMP (2019) study which indicates that women make up 24% of subjects seen, heard and read about in the media.

The inclination of the two newspapers of not giving more coverage to female parliamentary candidates during the period of the study confirms the agenda-setting theory which states that the more frequently the media hype an issue, the more importance society attaches to such an issue. It is therefore paramount to state that the more frequency the media give to the coverage of female parliamentary candidates, the more importance the electorate will attach to female parliamentarians and vote for them. Unfortunately, the two newspapers under this study failed to meet these criteria in the coverage of female parliamentary candidates during the 2016 election.

However, *the Daily Graphic* newspaper gave more media space to female parliamentary candidates during the period of the study than that of the *Ghanaian Times*. The *Daily Graphic* apart from its political page, established its Constituency Watch page as one of its pages for promoting the coverage of aspiring politicians during the 2016 general elections and that might have accounted for its more frequent coverage of female parliamentary candidates than the *Ghanaian Times newspaper*. Another factor that may also account for the paper giving more coverage of the female parliamentary candidates than the *Ghanaian Times* newspaper could also be attributed to its gender page, which was used to promote female parliamentary candidates during the period. The *Daily Graphic* also is voluminous and has 80-pages whilst that of the *Ghanaian Times* is less voluminous and has only 32 –pages. The research concludes that this might have accounted for the *Ghanaian Times* newspaper providing less frequencies for the coverage of female parliamentary stories.

Table 5. Prominence given to both male and female parliamentary candidates (Daily Graphic and Ghanaian Times from July to December 2016)

Pages	Daily Graphic	Ghanaian Times	Total
Front	4 for males and 1 for females	2 for males and 1 for females	6 for males and 2 for females
Back	2 for males and 0 for females	3 for males and 0 for females	5 males and 0 for females
Centre spread	4 for males and 0 for females	2 for males and 0 for females	6 for males and 0 for females

According to Dzeble (2006), the front page, middle page, and the back page are the most prominent pages in newspapers and therefore have the potentials of marketing policies and political party candidates.

The table shows the level of prominence the two media houses gave to female parliamentary candidates during the 2016 elections. The study revealed that both the *Daily Graphic* and *the Ghanaian Times* did not fare well when it comes to given prominence to female parliamentary candidates. Out of the eight front-page stories, the two papers allotted only two front pages for the coverage of female parliamentary candidates with the remaining six (6) going to male parliamentary candidates. This situation did not change when it comes to the back page and the centre spread. While both papers allotted five back page spaces and six centre spread pages spaces for the coverage of male parliamentary candidates, the papers gave none to the female parliamentary candidates in such media spaces which have the huge potential of marketing political candidates.

The study also established that the publication of the two stories on the front pages of those newspapers may be due to their controversies in nature as they published same story. Even that it was only the headlines that were published on the front pages of the two newspapers but the main story was buried inside the newspapers. For instance, of the *Ghanaian Times newspaper* with the headline “Zenator Rawlings cleared to contest Korle Klottey seat” published on the front page of the July 19 edition of the paper, the main story was buried on the bottom of page 16 of the paper.

That of the *Daily Graphic* repeated same scenario like the *Ghanaian Times* also with the headline “Zenator looks for Parliamentary ambition” on the front page of the paper whilst the main story was also buried on page 16 of the paper. Besides, the two newspapers did not give prominence to the female parliamentary candidates by failing to publish female parliamentary candidates’ stories in the centre and back pages which serve as the avenues for portraying the prominence of political candidates. In

fact, none of the papers published a single female parliamentary candidate story in their centre and back pages.

According to Dzeble (2006), the front page, middle page, and the back page are the most prominent pages in newspapers. Female parliamentary candidates' coverage was missing in the two newspapers selected for the study. The prominence a newspaper attaches to a story may be determined by the front, centre and back pages on which the story is placed. It is, therefore, assumed that stories that are placed on the front pages of newspapers are considered more important, and followed by the centre-spread and back pages. This confirms Thuo's work that the print media coverage of women parliamentary candidates was low, with their stories placed in the inside pages and hardly on the headlines or prominent pages thus, making them invisible (Thuo, 2012).

However, where the newspapers seemed to perform satisfactorily was that they accompanied many of their female parliamentary candidates' stories with pictures. In all 53 female parliamentary candidates' pictures were used by the two newspapers in their publications. The *Daily Graphic* carried the largest with 47 pictures and the *Ghanaian Times*, 6 pictures. This enhances the chances of the female parliamentary candidates in winning the election as their images accompanied the stories exposed them to the electorates and enhance their visibility.

What are the gendered frames used by the Daily Graphic and Ghanaian Times newspapers to cover parliamentary candidates in the 2016 parliamentary election?

Discovered Dominance Gender Framing

On the above subject matter, the following Dominance Gender Framing themes which are mostly gender identifiers emerged from the results:

Mrs and Female Parliamentary Candidate, Married women with children, Incompetent, women perceived as weaker vessels, women and, appearance, Stereotypes, Family Tiers.

Mrs and female parliamentary candidate

The result revealed "Mrs" was attached to all female parliamentary candidates the two national dailies newspapers provided coverage for. The *Daily Graphic*, 11 extracts of news items published on female parliamentary candidates attached Mrs to their names. The situation was not much different with the *Ghanaian Times* as seven (7) of such extracts from the *Ghanaian Times* newspaper also did same bringing the total number of such scenario to 18. Among such examples found by this study include the extracts below:

1. Mrs. Benedicta Naana Ampem (July 23 edition of the *Daily Graphic* newspaper, 2016 page 11).
2. Mrs. Mercy Adu-Gyamfi (page 11 of the 12 September edition 2016 of the *Ghanaian Times*).
3. Mrs. Diana Aburiya (*Ghanaian Times*, August 7, 2016 edition, page 8).
4. Mrs. Fidelia Kudariwor, (*Ghanaian Times* edition July 9, 2016, page 7).

The pre-fix of Mrs. to the female parliamentary candidates' names might seek to portray to the electorate that the female parliamentary aspirants depend on their husbands. This may also send a signal to the voter population that since the female parliamentary candidates depend on their husbands any political decision, they make in their political positions might be been influenced by their husbands. This may have the tendency of influencing the electorates not to vote for them in an election.

Media stereotyping of female parliamentary aspirant

Stereotyping is about the over generalized belief about a particular group of people. This means the society assigned roles to certain groups of people and politics is not an exception. In this study the researcher identified certain stereotypical statements made by the *Daily Graphic* and the *Ghanaian Times* newspapers primarily in their coverage of female parliamentary candidates during the 2016 elections.

For instance, the portrayal of Mrs. Adu Gyemfi, the female parliamentary aspirant by the Daily Graphic newspaper as a “businesswoman” and hairdresser” found on page 11 of the July 16, 2016 edition of the Daily Graphic seems to suggest that the female parliamentary candidates lack the administrative and political skills to go into politics. Some electorates may be influenced by these statements or forms of descriptions that once the female political candidate is a “hairdresser and businesswoman”, she will lack the political capability to run any political affair when elected into government.

Additionally, the excerpt “Apart from her few sunbaked dis-coloured posters seen on the walls, she has not yet made herself available for any gathering or the press” (page 20 of the November 21 edition of the Daily Graphic). The adjectives such as “sunbaked”, “dis-coloured posters” used by the journalist of the Daily Graphic seems to suggest that the female parliamentary aspirant is not capable and competent of managing her own political campaign let alone to manage her constituents should the electorate give her the mandate to run the affairs of the Akropong Constituency. The story continues “Her constituency office cannot be located while the regional office which is located at Koforidua is being rehabilitated with no one on sites” (Daily Graphic page 20 of the November 21 edition 2016). The Daily Graphic seems to portray the female aspirant and her party to the electorates as not having the political muzzle and competency to run the affairs of the constituency since they cannot even manage their own campaigns and party structures.

Beside the above, the Ghanaian Times newspaper framed female parliamentary candidates as incompetent in its reportage during the 2016 parliamentary election. For instance, in its December 9, 2016 edition, (page 11), the paper carried a headline story “Samia falls again” in Jomoro. The journalist and the paper, the Ghanaian Times, seem to portray Samia as somebody who is incompetent of capturing the Jomoro seat. The frame “falls again” indicates that this is not the first time the female parliamentary candidate had contested the seat and lost. This sentence employed by the Ghanaian Times could also discourage Samia from contesting subsequent elections. In other words, she could become frustrated by the way she was described by the Ghanaian newspapers.

This negative style employed by journalists in the election coverage of female political candidates could discourage other female political candidates who want to seek for political position not to do so and may also affect the voting patterns of such candidates if they even want to stand for election for political positions. As revealed by Chong and Druckman et al. (2007) study, framing is seen as very critical in media content studies since the media is able to redirect the attention of people from one side of an issue to the very opposite of the issue through framing. The two authors, therefore, in their study agreed that framing is a powerful tool in determining the outcomes of elections in the arena of political communication. They concluded by suggesting that framing is a deliberate tactics used by politicians and media personnel to co-ordinate individuals around particular interpretations. The two authors findings collaborate with the above- stated findings of the current study.

Another clear example of this could be cited in Shaw’s study of how the media set an agenda during the run-off of the 2005 Liberian presidential elections between Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Mr. George Weah and how the media framed the Presidential candidates (Shaw, 2007). Shaw did content analyses of newspaper stories from *The Analyst* and the *Daily Observer* and conducted in-depth interviews with the two newspapers editors. She conducted a purposeful sampling to find evidence of the agenda-setting and framing theories as employed by the media in the run-off of the elections scheduled on November 8, 2005. Her findings revealed that Mr. Weah had openly threatened the media in Liberia. Infuriated by Mr. Weah’s threat, some media practitioners through the framing concept deliberately set an agenda to sway un-decided voters to vote in favour of Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf by framing issues such as qualifications versus popularity and thus, pushed Mr. Weah out of the contest for the presidency. The author concluded that by emphasising the strength of Sirleaf Johnson, the newspapers framed her positively and Weah negatively. The findings of Shaw’s work confirmed the findings of the current study that the media could deliberately frame women politicians the way they want if they choose to do so or otherwise.

In addition, the excerpt “She attempted becoming the flag bearer of the party but also lost the primaries to Mr. Ivor Green Street.” Here again the Ghanaian Times newspaper portrayed the female candidate as incompetent. The word she “attempted”, used by the Ghanaian Times newspaper to describe her portrays her as incompetent.

For instance, the excerpt “Mrs Adu Gyemfi, a married woman with four children...” found on page 11 of the July 16, 2016 edition of the Daily Graphic with the caption “Female Parliamentary Candidate determined to work hard” is seen as an illustration of one of the stereotypes exhibited by the newspaper in the coverage of female parliamentary during the 2016 election in Ghana. The stereotypical manner in which the journalist of the Daily Graphic portrays the female parliamentary candidate to the electorates could influence the choice of the electorates. The aspirant is married; she may be perceived as somebody who cannot hold political position because of her marital roles.

To add to the report, the journalist of the Daily Graphic describes the female parliamentary aspirant as somebody who is married with the phrase “four children”. This seemed to suggest that once Mrs. Adu Gyemfi had so many responsibilities in her hand, she might not be able to combine that with politics. Such description by the journalists during election coverage has the tendency of dissuading many electorates from voting for female politicians.

The Daily Graphic journalist action is in tandem with Goffman (1979) framing theory which is used as one of the frameworks by this researcher. Goffman explained how the media selected certain aspects of perceived reality to highlight, interpret and communicate. In building upon Goffman’s framing theory, Dewulf and Bouwen (2012) in their study, define framing “as the forceful portrayal and direction of meaning in ongoing interactions, which are temporal communications structures that people build around issues during discussions or debates”. This study found that the Daily Graphic journalist who is a male in this write-up might have been influenced by the cultural settings on how the society stereotypes females as being only assigned to marital roles such as domestic chores and giving birth and raising children up.

In other words, society does not see women as persons who are the occupiers of political positions and that political positions are preserved of men and not females. This corroborates Strinati’s study which avers that cultural representations of women in the media support and perpetuate the prevailing sexual division of labour. She ended in her study by blaming the unequal position of women in society to assigned roles such as the mother, homemaker by society, and often accepted to be the normal roles of women in a patriarchal society (Strinati, 2004).

Furthermore, the Daily Graphic newspaper displayed another stereotypical element in its coverage of female parliamentary candidates with the headline “two iron ladies clash at Krowor” on page 26 of the September 12, 2016 edition of the Daily Graphic. This forms part of another typical examples of gender frames. Generally, women are often perceived as persons who exhibit masculinity in their endeavours especially when seeking for positions. Nonetheless describing them with the word “iron ladies” as done by the Daily Graphic could send a signal to the electorates that they (female political candidates) are violent and may dissuade the electorates from voting them into power.

Another negative diction which is used inappropriately for the two female parliamentary aspirants is the two iron ladies “clash” at Krowor. The word “clash” seems to describe the two female parliamentary candidates as combatants. This also has the potential of portraying the two female contestants in a negative manner to the electorates and may affect their chances of winning the seat.

Women as weaker vessel

Also, the extract, “She definitely has” herculean task “of erasing the memories of the former NPP MP for the area”, (August 26 edition, Daily Graphic, page 26) employed by the Daily Graphic reporter in referring to Mrs Morrison Cynthia, female parliamentary aspirant for the Agona West Constituency, also depicts the dominant gender framing of stereotypes of females often exhibited by the media towards female parliamentary aspirants. A herculean task is an extremely difficult task; an almost impossible undertaking. It is therefore assumed that the Daily Graphic perceives female parliamentary candidate as “weaker vessels” not capable of handling difficult task such as political positions.

The excerpt “Madam Mercy Anarkwa, a 58-year-old teacher who is representing the Convention People’s Party (CPP) seems to be making “some inroads” is an example of incompetence ascribed by the Daily Graphic to the female parliamentary candidate. This is what the journalist of the Daily Graphic used to describe, the female parliamentary candidate on page 20 of the November 21 edition of the paper.

The extract “seems to be making some inroads” could suggest to the electorates that the female parliamentary candidate is not competent enough to lead the people. Such portrayals could affect female

parliamentary candidates' chances of winning elections. In other words, the journalist and his, newspaper, the Daily Graphic, seem to suggest to the electorates that they need not waste their time and energy in casting their votes for the female parliamentary aspirant since she was not making any headway in her campaigns and might be defeated in the election.

Portrayal of aspiring female parliamentarians as married women

The study found out that in providing media coverage for the aspiring female parliamentary candidates for the Akwati constituency, the Daily Graphic portrayed the female candidate Mrs. Adu Gyemfi as “a married woman with four children ...” (page 11 of the July 16, 2016 edition of the Daily Graphic) This is one of the illustrations of family ties deployed by the newspapers in their election coverage of female parliamentary candidates. This has the potentials of informing the electorates that once female parliamentary aspirants are married with children, they cannot hold political positions and deliver efficiently.

The paragraph “Mrs. Mercy Adu-Gyamfi, a married woman with six children is the New Patriotic Parliamentary candidate for Akwatia” found on page 11 of the 12 September edition 2016 of the Ghanaian Times also demonstrates the family ties as one of the dominant genders frames the media often use in covering female. This frame used by the Ghanaian Times newspaper could also undermine the chances of Mrs. Adu-Gyamfi in winning the political election. She may be perceived as somebody who is already occupied by household responsibilities and cannot perform political roles effectively.

Aspiring female parliamentarians and family tier

The result revealed that instead of the newspapers focusing more on the political messages of the female parliamentary candidates, they concentrated more on their family ties. Family Ties is the phenomenon where journalists and media houses in providing media coverage for political candidates during election relate the families of the political candidates to their stories. For instance, while the Daily Graphic 20 reports on female parliamentary aspirants' issues relates to their family tiers, that of the Ghanaian Times carried 7, bringing the total number to 27.

The study also showed how the Ghanaian Times newspaper framed Samia with her family ties when the journalist of the Ghanaian Times described her in the paragraph “The only daughter of Ghana's first President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah lost the seat in 2016 on the ticket of the Convention People's Party “This demonstrated one of the dominant gender frames often employed by the media during the election coverage where they mostly link female parliamentary candidates to their family life relations. Such framing has got nothing to with Samia's political ambitions and campaigns. Manya (2013) avers that “clothing, makeup and hairdo of female politicians are scrutinized obsessively just as their views on vital issues. “But no journalist can be bothered to comment on the mismatched shirt and tie of an overweight male politician” (p. 28). This, the media are blamed for trivialising women and their issues. Again, according to Gadzekpo (2011), the way the media trivialize women's issues in Ghana is similar to the disparaging of women in politics globally. The various forms of stereotyping and portrayal of women, the elderly, disabled, racial and ethnic groups by the media is one of the major criticisms leveled against the media both locally and internationally. Studies conducted on women's portrayal have reported various degrees of stereotyping when it comes to their depiction in the media (Lindner, 2004; Mann, 2011; Manya, 2013).

Discussions

One development that emerged from the study is that the principle of objectivity which is one of the core values of journalism was relegated to the background as the journalists viewed female parliamentary candidates in terms of their viability for a political post. In fact, most of the female parliamentary aspirants' stories were being juxtaposed with family issues rather than policy issues.

The dominant gender frames in the Daily Graphic and the Ghanaian Times discovered by this study corroborated the assumption of the Liberal Feminist theory employed by these researchers as one of the theoretical frameworks, which states that sex roles' stereotyping persist in the mass media and its constant repetition to audiences reinforces such stereotypes in the broader society.

Perhaps it is against this background that a number of national and international guidelines have been suggested to ensure that women are portrayed positively beyond their stereotypical roles. Article 6 of the code of ethics of the Ghana Journalists Association (2017) also urges journalists not to produce journalistic material that is discriminatory to either by ethnicity, colour, creed, gender or sexual orientation. Also, other international protocols such as the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952), Article 7 of the UN Convention for Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration Platform for Action (BDPFA) have all proposed to the media to promote a balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the media and also present them as creative human beings, key actors and contributors to and beneficiaries of development process. The protocols further advocated the political right of and equality in women's access to and participation in the decision-making process of governance in their various countries. These guidelines are also followed by non-governmental organisations and the National Media Policy, (NMP). Section 7(2) of the National Media Commission's (NMC) media policy states that programming by the media should show high sensibility to the dignity and respect of womanhood, defend and protect women's rights and interests.

Liberal Feminists are of the view that women are inadequately represented in the processes of democratic self-determination. The Liberal Feminists who attribute this autonomy deficit to the gender system or the phenomenon of patriarchal inheritance from traditions and institutions, advocate the need for stakeholders to work towards addressing the challenge. The media is one of the powerful advocacy institutions which could help in achieving this result, yet it seems to be failing in this direction as shown by the findings of this current research. The two newspapers apart from their low coverage of female parliamentary candidates as indicated by the findings, also failed to give prominence to female parliamentary candidates. The two newspapers portray the female parliamentary candidates stereotypically in their coverage. This has the greater tendency of limiting the chances of the female politicians in winning election. The liberal feminists further stress that it is the responsibility of the state to protect and promote citizens' autonomy. While lauding the effort of some states including Ghana for championing this cause, there is still the need for states particularly, those in Africa to redouble their efforts in making sure that more women are appointed to governmental positions.

According to the 2019 World Economic Forum, countries that have set the pace and have achieved gender parity or female majority in their cabinets include: Colombia – August 2018, Costa Rica – April 2018, Ethiopia – October 2018, Nicaragua – January 2017, Rwanda – October 2018, Seychelles – April 2018.

In 2019 South Africa for the first time in its history, appointed up to half in its government's cabinet women, following changes implemented by President Cyril Ramaphosa. A country like Ghana which has chalked a lot of democratic credentials at both the continental and international levels is still crawling at a drafting stage with the Affirmative Action Bill, though with claims that the draft has been finalized. It is very critical and crucial for Ghana at this stage to re-examine itself very well by taking a cue from Rwanda and South Africa and other countries which have passed the Affirmative Action Bill into law and giving more quotas of political leadership to women.

Affirmative action could be defined as a set of measures adopted by governments and public and private institutions to address a history of systemic discrimination and exclusion of particular social groups or to encourage the efforts of particular social groups in the interests of certain development goals. Institutions such as governments and public and private institutions, political parties, educational establishments, corporations and companies are expected to champion Affirmative action. Affirmative action is expected to improve development indicators by reducing inequalities and facilitating the contribution of particular social groups to development. Affirmative action therefore relates to both the productive and distributive aspects of development. While affirmative action may or may not arise from the agitation of disadvantaged social groups and advocates, the state and in institutions are central to its design and implementation. Without public policy in support of affirmative action, it cannot be adopted and implemented.

Affirmative action has been used in Ghana since independence to address gender and regional imbalances in access to education, health, work and politics. It is important to note that while there had been some appreciable success, particularly in improving the male female ratios in primary education, it has been less effective for improving women's representation in politics and their public life. A reason for this is that the measures for improving the political representation of women in particular have not been commensurate with the serious nature of the inequalities being addressed. The passage of the

Affirmation Action Bill into law in Ghana is long overdue and no further delay is excusable. Ghanaians, particularly Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), are not pleased with the empty promises made by successive governments and political parties.

The stated justification for affirmative action is that it helps to compensate for past discrimination, persecution or exploitation by the ruling class of a culture and to address existing discrimination. There are so many advantages that could be accrued when women are empowered. It should be emphasised that, apart from the development it brings to the women by enabling them to adequately participate in issues affecting them, it is the best means of addressing poverty, disease and hunger. A country like Ghana, which has amassed democratic credentials to the applause of the international community, is yet to pass the affirmative bill into law. Some CSOs including the ABANTU for Development and Action Aid Ghana are continuously expressing their disappointment and frustration in diverse ways about the delay of Ghana in passing the bill into law. There is no doubt that when the Affirmative Action Bill is passed into law by Parliament and implemented, it would empower the Ghanaian woman to also participate effectively in the decision-making process of the country.

Dr. James Aggrey's decades-old assertion "if you educate a man, you educate an individual; but if you educate a woman, you educate a whole nation" still holds true. Measures have to be put in place to ensure that women are fairly represented in politics to help ensure overall total development. History has it that countries that have embraced women participation in governance are far ahead in terms of development than those which have neglect this idea.

The media as the fourth estate of the realm must take the lead in championing this concept and also give more space to the coverage of women politicians devoid of stereotyping them. There is the need for editors of the various media houses to realize that since the era of Ghana's independence to date, the country had not recorded any significant number of women who had won parliamentary elections. The editors as the gatekeepers of their respective media houses must therefore make it one of their policies to ensure that their reporters/journalists give fair media coverage to all during election without discrimination.

Notwithstanding the above discussions, it is also very significant to put into perspective that apart from the media given low coverage and prominence to the coverage of female politicians thereby affecting their election into office, other factors also come into play. It very imperative to note that the parliamentary elections are often not given much national outlook as compared to the presidential races. Perhaps it is against this background that some of the stories about female parliamentary aspirants may have been overlooked over the importance place on presidential campaign stories. Aside, it is also possible that some female parliamentary aspirants might have been extensively engaged in campaigning for their party presidential candidates against their own campaigns and that might have accounted for their low coverage.

It is also equally significant to stress that Presidential candidates are often cleared to start their campaign activities before the parliamentary candidates and that might have also accounted for the insignificant coverage of female parliamentary candidates. In essence, unlike Presidential aspirants who had more months to campaign ahead of the main elections, the parliamentary candidates had only few months to campaign before the elections. All these might have been cited for the low cause of the coverage of female parliamentary candidates.

Conclusion

From the findings the study revealed that the two newspapers did not give much importance to the coverage of female parliamentary candidates as each of the paper featured only one female parliamentary candidate in its front page. Besides that, the newspapers carried only the headline of their front pages and buried the main stories inside their publications. As established by the findings of the study, the two newspapers exhibited dominant gender frames in providing coverage for female parliamentary candidates

Additionally, the newspapers did not give much coverage to female parliamentary candidates. Out of the total number of 261 news stories on parliamentary candidates within the period under review, a total of 90 news items or stories were on female parliamentary candidates, thus, 59 news items for *Daily Graphic* and 31 news items for *Ghanaian Times*. The *Daily Graphic* published more female

parliamentary stories than the *Ghanaian Times* because of its voluminous nature. The newspapers also framed and portrayed female parliamentary candidates in stereotypical manner.

However, the papers seemed to fare well by using good pictorials for the coverage of the female parliamentary candidates. This help to project them well to the voter population.

Limitation and Recommendations

The study focused on only the two-print media, the *Daily Graphic* and the *Ghanaian Times* newspapers. In conducting future research, there is the need to broaden the scope to include both the print and the electronic media.

Gender focus NGOs in collaboration with women's organisations should advocate for the implementation of editorial guidelines and policies promoting gender -inclusive coverage. There is the urgent need to offer practical suggestions for improving journalist's awareness of gender bias in reporting.

There is the need for the formation of a stronger partnership between media outlets and women's organizations to promote gender balance reporting.

Media practitioners and Editors should be sensitized on the need to also feature women aspiring for political positions in prominent pages of newspapers as well as publish their stories frequently to ensure visibility.

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