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# Women's Representation in Media in Ghana's Democratic Governance

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**Abstract:** Political participation is the linchpin of democratic governance and development. Women are the majority of the population in many countries, including Ghana. However, their participation at various levels in decision-making processes in democratic governance is generally low. This paper focuses on the media through a desk review of relevant theoretical and empirical literature and examines the representation of women in Ghana's media political landscape. The paper seeks to increase media awareness in Ghana about their role in moulding the public's impressions about women in politics and government, as well as their contribution to the fight for gender equality. The discussion was guided by the theory of representation. The study finds that both men and women receive massive media coverage. However, the media do not focus on women in democratic governance as intelligent individuals who have an impact to make in society; rather, they focus on their appearance, family life, parental status, or marital status. These perspectives create a narrow representation of women to the public. This discourages many women from vying for political positions, as it creates the impression that only men can thrive and succeed in politics. Additionally, the media is a gatekeeper that exposes the ills of government. This motivates politicians to work hard, knowing that they will be held accountable. The study recommends that women be given the same opportunities as men and that they be presented as people with experience and expertise to share. Media practitioners should highlight the positive aspects of women in political leadership.

**Keywords:** Representation Theory, Gender Equality, Democratic Governance, Stereotype, Media Influence, Politics

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## 1. Introduction

Scholars and development partners are becoming more interested in the struggle of women to obtain their political, social, and civil rights in order to alter the status quo, where women were viewed as an "accessory" of the householder. Legitimate children had no rights to protection. They were unable to control their income from employment. They were denied access to public office and many professions, and they were denied the right to vote.

The fact that women make up the vast majority of people on the planet cannot be disputed. They are therefore indispensable to the advancement of every community in existence today. In other words, because they make an equal contribution to national economies, women's participation in

governance and decision-making is essential for the development of society. In addition, women's involvement in democratic governance and politics, where important social decisions are made is crucial for the development of society. This is because they are the ones most impacted by the decisions made, and their involvement would give them a meaningful amount of power to influence decisions at the local and national levels that have an impact on their lives [14].

Fast-forward Globalisation and democracy have become bedfellows in modern times, with some democratic supporters emphasising the importance of women's participation in positions of authority prior to the establishment and development of democracy in developing countries. Nevertheless, the unfavourable consequences of globalisation usually affect how newly established democracies function,

especially with regard to challenges involving minorities and gender.

How democracy affects women's rights and political participation in developing democracies is one crucial question. African Women's Development Fund, Mbaasem Foundation, ABANTU for Development, Women's Net, and a host of other women and women's organisations from across the globe have realised that females must demand for their rights in governance and political participation in a great deal of societies today.

As waves of democratisation spread across the African continent, a desire to boost women's political participation emerged. Legal and policy frameworks like the Beijing Platform of Action (1995) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) serve as the foundation for the increasing global awareness of women's political participation. The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) report in 2020 estimates that closing the average gender equality gap in traditional news media will take 67 years [12].

According to Trabelsi [27], women in politics are subjected to biases, misogynistic and discriminatory media coverage. Women in politics continue to be underrepresented in the media, according to research carried out within the past few decades. Journalists frequently use terminology that reiterates the conventional positions of women, and write about women in politics, considering their physical features. They support the notion that female politicians are emotional, flimsy, and weak. In news reports, their age and marital status are frequently mentioned, unlike men, who are given issue attention. Women often receive just first names, are photographed in casual settings as opposed to official ones, and subjected to excessive scrutiny by journalists when it comes to how they look. Political women are frequently depicted in the media in ways that minimise the issues they address and overemphasise their physical attributes.

According to global research conducted by the GMMP in 2020, women were only 25% of those seen, heard, and read about in news, citing new and emerging issues pertaining to how information was generated, circulated, and ingested, which persisted to obstruct global gender equality and women's empowerment [23].

Akua Sena Dansua, a former Ghanaian politician, describes her first-hand encounter with misogynistic treatment from the media as traumatising. She indicated that throughout her twelve-year tenure as a Member of Parliament, the media frequently attacked her with the intention to overpower her and halt her political career. She asserts that men who had an interest in her job and were displeased with her performance started many of the media attacks on her being the first female Minister for Youth and Sports. She recalls having to fight male colleagues to include stories about gender inequality and women in politics. According to studies on the representation of female politicians in media in Ghana and Nigeria, the culture of the newsroom is masculinized and eschews issues about women in news coverage. This is because most media houses are owned, led, and operated by men [27]. Thus, it is

possible to interpret media attention to Ghanaian women in politics, as being focused on the gender bias that already exists in society.

Ghana's media has grown significantly since the industry was liberalised 25 years ago. What began the nation's return to democracy in 1993 as a small industry with one national broadcaster (providing both TV and radio transmission services) and mostly state-owned newspapers is now a vibrant industry with more than 400 operational radio stations, over 100 TV stations (National Communication Authority (NCA) Q2, 2020 Report) [3], and hundreds of mostly privately-owned newspapers and magazines. Other widely accessible digital media options exist as well, though there is limited credible industry information on them.

Once more, empirical research on how the media represents politicians has repeatedly established that there is an ongoing prejudice in the amount and nature of media coverage of men and women in politics [6]. When it comes to gender and media, several studies have been done. Again, numerous studies have been done to scrutinise the coverage given to male and female candidates in political contests or elections.

In a report by the Ghana News Agency, the Second Lady, Mrs Samira Bawumia, reemphasized her call for the media to prioritise issues affecting women in their coverage. She stated that women's empowerment should not be a token effort to balance the gender equation or to hear women's voices, but rather a deliberate effort to make women a part of the space. She said, "The media is vital to shaping the woman narrative. Women empowerment in the media should start with not only giving women a voice but also ensuring that they are protected from unnecessary attacks and unfair scrutiny that make participation in the media space unattractive." [23].

Nevertheless, there have not been many studies looking at how women are portrayed in positions of authority; in the literature, especially Ghanaian literature, women who hold positions in the legislature, executive, or judiciary tend to be considerably underrepresented. By examining secondary material on Ghanaian media outlets, this study aims to evaluate how Ghanaian women in governance are represented in the media. The study seeks to raise awareness among the role the media in Ghana plays in altering how people view women in politics. Thus, the role of the Ghanaian media in the fight for equality between men and women will be highlighted in light of the findings, particularly with regard to governance, leadership, and politics.

The study's empirical findings may or may not support liberal feminists' concerns about political women in the news, which are primarily related to women's empowerment. This could lead to the creation of internal editorial guidelines that support the cause of women in the nation. This study is also essential because, by dealing with this issue in a country that has received little scholarly attention, it leads to the expansion of information in the media, gender, and politics disciplines, as well as placing coverage in a context that receives little attention from researchers.

Essentially, this study aims to build up the already existing body of knowledge, especially in connection to the

representation of women in governance and leadership and will be extremely useful in future studies on how the media portrays and propagates stereotypes of women. This is because the majority of studies on the representation of female politicians have received disproportionate attention in the media.

The study employs qualitative methods in analysing secondary sources of data and information, such as articles, reports, reviews, books and research papers. The study relies entirely on secondary sources as they allow a researcher to thoroughly examine the literature in order to gain insight into a topic while avoiding the risks associated with primary sources. Several difficulties are expected to arise during the course of the research. However, they will be dealt with the utmost skill and knowledge. This aids in the achievement of the study's objectives. It should be noted that because this research was conducted in a short period of time, no interviews or primary sources of evidence were collected. Data updates and unexpected developments may also have an impact on the relevance and timeliness of the research.

The subsequent sections in this paper will discuss representation theory, define media and other related terms, discuss media as a gatekeeper, mass media and political development, media's representation of women, and Media Representation of women in politics in Ghana.

## 2. Representation Theory

Nugroho [22] states that Hall defines representation as the ability to describe or imagine. Representation is important because culture is always formed through meaning and language, and language is a symbolic form or a form of representation in this case. The concept of representation has taken on a new and vital role in the study of culture. Meaning and language are linked to culture through representation. But what do people mean by that? What is the relationship between representation and culture and meaning? 'Representation means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people,' says one common-sense definition. 'Is that all?' you may wonder. Both yes and no. Representation is an essential component of the process by which meaning is created and exchanged among members of a culture [22].

According to Nugroho [22], Hall explains two representation systems at work. The first is the 'system,' which correlates various objects, people, and events with a set of concepts or mental representations that we carry around in our heads. We could not interpret the world in any meaningful way without them. First and foremost, meaning is determined by the system of concepts and images formed in our minds that can stand for or 'represent' the world, allowing us to refer to things both inside and outside our heads. It is easy to see how individuals might form concepts for things we can see, such as people or physical objects like chairs, tables, and desks. However, people also form ideas about things that are obscure and abstract and that we cannot see, feel, or touch. Consider our perceptions of war, death, friendship, and love. In addition, as previously stated, individuals form ideas about things they

have never seen and may never see, as well as people and places we have made up.

There are two other perspectives of representation theory. The Fregean theory and the Kripkean theory. The Fregean theory assumes that a picture's meaning depends on its "sense," whereas the Kripkean theory holds that a picture's meaning depends on its "history". Although there are issues with both, it is demonstrated that both theories are realistic theories of representation [26].

Hence, this study will use the notion of representation according to Hall and the Fregean Theory. These two different ideological explanations of representation present the theory in a similar light and thus, are very useful to the study, as they will help in the comprehension of the extent to which representation of women in democratic governance in media affects the mind-set of people about them.

Even though all the various notions of representation appear to be unable to explain figurative instances of representation, they all aid in understanding a specific group, or a class of groups. Looking at representations can often help one better understand a specific group or a class of groups [26].

## 3. Media

According to Magallanes-Blanco [19], the Latin origin of the word media is "middle" or "in the middle". Basically, "media" denotes a form of communication. Additionally, it refers to various kinds of content producers and mass communication systems, as well as tools that facilitate interpersonal communication. Periodicals, books and newspapers, which are traditional forms of publishing. Conventional electronic media like movies, recorded music, video games, advertisements, satellite, broadband, broadcasting, or cable and Internet adaptations for any of these media are all included [19].

Media is a type of communication that is intended to reach a large number of people. Mass media platforms include radio, television, magazines, newspapers, video games, books, and online content like podcasts, video sharing, and blogs. A different way to look at it is by recognising that different types of mass media are capable of being used to spread a message.

## 4. Media Profession

Media professionals are people with advanced skills in using open channels of communication to gather, analyse, and report news. They have obtained specialised training in communications and journalism. A profession is a vital job that requires highly specific expertise acquired through an extensive and closely monitored apprenticeship. It is not possible to enter the media industry responsibly at will; rather, one must do so in accordance with a set of rules that are frequently very strict and only after demonstrating competence. [3].

## 5. Media as Gatekeeper

By closely examining how well leaders, institutions, and

procedures that are supposed to serve the public interest perform, the media serves as a gatekeeper. The media educates the public about how those in power use it through the investigation of institutions, issues, people and processes. The media constantly writes, speaks, or broadcasts about the operations of governments and their agencies, which influences which areas governments should concentrate on, provides explanations, and prompts governments to take corrective action. In this instance, the media significantly affects what appears on the national agenda [18].

In an effort to produce law-abiding governments and citizens, the media seeks to determine who has the authority to do what. People are taught about their respective rights and responsibilities to one another. The media's reporting may at times be sensational, but their aim is to publicise certain actions of public officials and omissions by public officials, which endanger the shared heritage.

The public's expectations of government actions are occasionally raised by the media to the point where many governments believe that the media is insatiably demanding and never content. In the 1970s, when General Acheampong was the head of state of Ghana, he used to gripe that Ghanaians always blamed him whenever it did not rain, whenever it rained too much or whenever other major national catastrophes occurred that were out of the government's reach.

A critical example is how the media in Ghana scrutinised the National Cathedral project that the government is doing. Joy News, a local media house in Ghana, followed the project keenly, publishing stories and following the project to keep Ghanaians informed. In one of the reports published by Joy News on March 3 2023, the speaker of parliament had admitted the motion by the minority to examine the National Cathedral project [9]. This came after several local media including CITI News, The Ghanaian Voice, TV3, and others had published various stories on Ghanaians' reactions to the project. Clearly, the media's move caused parliament to move for the investigation into the project.

Moreover, the media in Ghana engage in investigative journalism projects, which scrutinise and bring to light the ills of political leaders, public organisations and private organisations as well. A typical example is a report by Joy News. 'Smugglers Paradise' by Joy News uncovered customs officers who were helping smugglers steal over \$300 million at Ghanaian borders. The report revealed the smugglers and dealers, hazardous unapproved routes used by them, as well as the customs officials involved [21].

A nation's spirit can be raised from despair to hope through the media, and it can also be moved from peace to war. "A man must not swallow his cough because he fears disturbing others," wrote Achebe in 1987 [3]. Media must have the guts to expose the shortcomings of their governments.

## 6. Media and Politics

The media attempts to recommend a course of action to enhance the wellbeing of their viewers in a specific state, going beyond simply criticising or denouncing perceived

infractions. The media works to inform the public during election seasons so they can make wise decisions. Additionally, they exhort politicians to win public support through legal means. Media professionals frown on the use of financial incentives and dominance during elections. Politicians strut around and sneer at everything while claiming to be visitors with preferable behaviours; however, they are actually tardy people with a somewhat prosperous fortune in their travels [15].

It is possible to categorise a large portion of the media terrain as pre-independence, post-independence, post-1992, or present. It is important to remember that though it is necessary to describe the landscape of media in Ghana prior to the republican constitution of 1992, it was only after that document that the media in Ghana truly became independent and spread across the entire country. Indeed, the private media began to emerge after the 1992 constitution was fully implemented and after a series of coups, the country underwent a complete political transformation.

Avorgbedor [3] indicates that by 2001, private media had significantly increased in number nationwide in Ghana in an effort to compete with the government-owned media that had subsisted throughout the country's diverse military and democratic regimes. It did not take long for Ghana to experience the effects of media liberation in its political and socioeconomic sphere due to this media expansion, which was particularly evident in the electronic media (television and radio). Presently, all districts in the country possess at least one audience-reaching media outlet that is operational (TV, radio, newspaper, etc.).

It is critical to note that Ghana's media freedom was established by the 2001 repeal of the Criminal Libel Law as well as the execution and creation of other laws and commissions. Subsequently, Ghana's media, led by private media organisations, has supported activism campaigns, political change, societal change, and other issues, earning its position as an important factor in the socioeconomic development of the country [16]. As a result, Ghana has steadily improved its standing among countries that support and actively use the media, moving up from 67th in 2002 to 23rd in 2018 of the World Press Freedom Index.

Ghana moved up the African continent's media freedom rankings from 19th to first in 2018 owing to media efforts and government support [25]. Unquestionably, the country's socioeconomic activities and ranking on the global media and democracy index have benefited from the proliferation and vibrancy of the media.

Although radio and television are the media outlets of choice in Ghana, people are increasingly using social media platforms and other media formats based on the internet [16]. In 2017, the National Communications Authority (NCA) granted operating licences to a total of 128 TV operators across the nation. The other stations were digital terrestrial and satellite TV stations, with only 21 analogue terrestrial TV stations [20].

As of 2018, over 30 new TV stations had opened their doors, with reportedly 350 new commercial and community-based

radio stations nationwide. Because of media freedom digitization and entrepreneurship facilitated by the quick advancements in media technology, a large number of private media organisations, including TV and radio stations, the internet, and social media have emerged [7].

Notably, Trabelsi [27] believes that the media can help make politics more representative, sex sensitive and equitable. However, it frequently does not, according to Akshi Chawla, an Independent Researcher and Editorial Consultant, Founder of #WomenLead, India. Although politics is vastly explored and discussed, it is seldom carried out from a gender perspective. When compared to men, she claims that when stories are made on women in politics in India, excessive priority is given to their private lives, appearance, or clothing rather than their work and policy views.

## 7. Representation of Women in Media

Most people believe the media, especially films; reflect what is happening in society. Through the films they produce and the news they cover, media outlets reflect society directly and indirectly. On the other hand, research suggests that the media significantly affects society's sociocultural makeup. In society's construction and representation of gender, the media's impact is more obvious. One of the key sociocultural factors that influences how we understand what it means to be a man or woman is the fabrication of media products. Therefore, the media and how it depicts femininity and masculinity are crucial to understanding.

Women have been represented and depicted in the media since time immemorial. Over the years, the media has repeatedly portrayed the idea of femininity in ways that have encouraged misconceptions in society. The recent generations and cultural backgrounds have established specific prejudices about the feminine gender, women, and their alleged social functions as a result of how women have been depicted and represented in the media over the lengthy history of this phenomenon [17].

According to Avorgbedor [3], the debate surrounding female representation and depiction in the media has remained consistent. Alternatively, it has been bolstered by multiple interpretations brought about by new media trends. Gendered media prejudices, specifically female stereotypical representations, are, for example, so firmly ingrained in today's communication systems such that eliminating them would be highly challenging. As varieties of female movements develop and more women enter the labour force in many countries, it could be expected that the media's depiction of women as housewives would alter ultimately; nonetheless, the media keeps depicting women in the same vein that it did previously.

Since 2005, when this criterion was introduced into monitoring, the proportion of women in traditional mediums has remained relatively stable, falling from 23% fifteen years ago to 24% today. They are more likely to be the subjects of news articles published on online platforms, especially news websites. It could be contended that the capacity of people to

speak or have a voice in the news represents the importance placed on their opinion. Gender inequalities in these capacities indicate the value placed on people's voices based on gender identity. Women's participation as experts has increased over the last five years, rising from 19% in 2015 to 24% today, a seven-point increase in 15 years. In recent years, numerous initiatives have sprouted around the world to source women for expert opinion, culminating in the compilation of various directories of women experts for use by journalists. Media organisations are making visible efforts to diversify their expert pools, despite pressure from civil society, such as anti-Manels (male-only panels) campaigns on social media [12].

In France, women in politics are frequently slandered, vilified, and disrespected, in comparison to men, who appear to safeguard each other, according to Claudine Cordani, French journal *Les cents plumes*, Journalist and Director. In a similar vein, Akshi Chawla cited scenarios where the media reinforces political misogyny rather than dealing with it; in the course of her reporting on women in politics for international news. For example, in Ireland, a newspaper, mocked a female MP's style of dressing at a government event, while in Fiji, another newspaper published scandalous allegations about a famous female politician as revenge for contesting a bill, and in the United States, a news agency published naked images of a female legislator [27].

According to an Inter-parliamentary Union study on brutality towards female parliamentarians, the media can spread rumours and encourage misogynistic behaviour. According to the study, 27.3% of the participating female MPs felt that sexually explicit or substantially slanderous visuals or comments had been made about them in the traditional media. When questioned about photos or comments shared on social media, the percentage rose to 41.8%. Internationally, women in politics, particularly women of colour, face a barrage of abuse and gendered disinformation campaigns, which are frequently fuelled and perpetuated by traditional and social media. Studies have demonstrated that women are often frightened and stifled from getting involved in politics because of gendered media reporting, with the goal of discrediting, denigrating, and suppressing women in politics [27].

Misogynistic media coverage contributes to women's political underrepresentation. According to a global study, while women's positions have generally improved, progress in political representation in the media has been slower. It concluded stating that there are less female prospective politicians the more sexist bias there is in the media. The media has an immense effect on voters, and gender imbalances in media coverage are likely to have serious electoral repercussions. It dissuades lawmakers and political parties from nominating women as well as women from entering politics [27].

Similarly, one critical representation of women in the media that has persisted for years is the representation of women as sex objects. According to Avorgbedor [3], the media's representation of women in the late 1990s and early 2000s was

primarily one of empowerment, social activism, and not that of passive members. Women as sex objects, on the other hand, were heavily portrayed in the media. Pictures of appealing, partially unclothed women selling products predominated in the media, indicating a gradual but apparent shift away from depictions of women as housewives. This depiction was promoted by advertising agencies with the objective to market products romantically and sexually. The constant depiction of women as sexual objects in the media has impeded the increasing tide of female empowerment, guaranteeing that the predominant representation of women in the media has been one of commercialization and sex disparagement [3].

Generally, women are portrayed in four stereotypical roles in the media. This includes the role of homemaker, domestic worker and an indecisive person, who relies on men and requires protection. Most studies conducted between the 1970s and 1990s followed this pattern. Wagner and Banos [28] discovered similar patterns in their subsequent research on advertising with print media. They argue, however, that these representations were dominant in a variety of forms, with diverse versions of representation of women by the media emerging between the 1970s and 1980s [3].

Further, according to the report of an e-discussion on women in politics and the media, [27] a number of women who have held key political positions in Africa shared their views on women's representation in democratic governance in media based on their experiences. Expert in Gender Equality and Governance, former Gender Advisor to the Prime Minister, Lebanon, Abir Chebaro, explained that a latest research revealed that male representation in broadcast debates about politics and programmes was 93% throughout the months of February and March, four months before Lebanon's general election in 2022. Male representation was 78% in April and 88% in May. Despite being 16% of the candidates running in Lebanon's parliamentary election, women received only 5% of press attention from February until Election Day, according to a different study.

Additionally, Independent Researcher and Editorial Consultant, Founder of #WomenLead, India, Akshi Chawla, mentioned a study she worked on with UN Women that revealed that men continue to dominate the media in India. Similarly, a Programme Officer at the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, Zimbabwe, Antonetta Lovejoy Hamandishe, stated that Zimbabwe's media landscape is still largely male-dominated and patriarchal. Apart from politics, to fairly cover all political actors, the whole information system needs to become more diverse, democratic, and gender-sensitive. Hamandishe shared findings from Media Monitors in Zimbabwe that there was very little news coverage of female political figures during the 2018 elections. Only 12% of coverage of female politicians in online media was found to be extremely insufficient [27].

A research conducted by the "Uganda Media Women's Association" that examined media coverage surrounding the general elections of 2016 showed that women were considerably less prevalent in written, documented, and visual press reports in comparison to men, according to Dr Florence

Ebila, a Professor of Women and Gender Studies at Makerere University in Uganda. Women were only 20% represented as political news subjects. Additionally, it was discovered that candidates were more likely to receive exposure the higher their socioeconomic position was. The few instances where women were profiled emphasised caregiving and domestic functions like mother and homemaker. In addition, it was discovered that women had a seven-fold higher likelihood than men to be recognised by their familial situation, such as mother, daughter, sister, or wife [27].

Moreover, Maggie Alonzo states that in Guatemala, the macho culture remains dominant. When a woman assumes an office of leadership, the media frequently focuses on her looks, personal relationships and family. Despite the fact that women operate diligently to acquire their autonomy, she asserts that the media frequently refers to women as a girlfriend, wife or daughter, suggesting that women receive positions of authority solely due to their intimate relations to men with societal influence [27].

Indeed, media representation in literature is largely perceived as negative. Since the advent of mass media, women have traditionally been depicted as being weak and unfit society members universally. Moreover, the media's representation of women is extensively focused on sexism and commodification; inert routine mothers; inability to manage high-level positions; and apathy to their male colleagues.

## 8. Media Representation of Women in Politics in Ghana

In Ghana, the media has been acknowledged as a key champion of democracy. The media continues to perform a crucial function in informing voters about their constitutional rights to elect leaders, organising campaigns, and promoting peaceful elections. Furthermore, the media is critical in assisting political parties and individuals with delivering their intentions to voters and discussing national and political issues. Consequently, the function of the media in Ghana's political terrain is both imperative and paramount [2]. As a result, during elections and other major political calendar times, the media has an important bearing on the public's perception of issues and personalities.

According to global research, as the basic representation of women in media is stereotypical and prejudiced, the way the media represents women in governance remains rather under-represented and poor. Political participation of women remains underrepresented in terms of quality and quantity. Women are solely recognised by the political media due to their unique value or due to their association with some prominent men. Studies on gendered coverage at the local and global levels date back several decades, with the Global Media Monitoring Project conducting the most extensive of these studies [12].

According to the global research conducted by the GMMP in 2020, women made up only 25% of those seen, heard, and read about in the news, citing novel and developing issues

pertaining to how information was produced, disseminated, and consumed, which continued to obstruct global gender equality and women's empowerment. Given that women make up a sizable portion of the global population, this trend of the media focusing less on female issues breeds several concerns.

Female politicians, according to Akapule [2], are frequently misrepresented in the media landscape of Ghana. This constant media misrepresentation depicts female politicians as unfit to lead Ghanaian society. Ghana's setting mirrors how the media depicts and denigrates women in politics around the world. Women's representation in politics is similarly misrepresented as Ghana's media keeps on reflecting the global media scene's layout and substance. The opposing argument is that Ghanaian media just conveys what it sees in Ghanaian society, and that its depiction and misrepresentation are carbon copies of what happens in Ghanaian society.

In Ghana, the media depicts women in politics negatively, unlike their male counterparts who are presented as major society decision-makers. The media in Ghana tends to concentrate on minor issues related to women, such as fashion, hairstyle, and vocabulary. This just demonstrates women in politics as being ill equipped to cope with the harsh realities of politics, whereas their male counterparts receive coverage that suggests they can [1].

According to a report on an e-discussion on women in politics and the media [27], a former journalist, former Ambassador of Ghana to Germany, Former Minister for Youth and Sports, Former Minister for Gender and Children's Affairs, Former Minister for Tourism, Former Member of Parliament of Ghana, Akua Sena Dansua, shared her own traumatic encounters with misogynistic treatment from the media. Throughout her twelve years as a Member of Parliament, she was regularly targeted by the media, which she claimed was done to discredit her and terminate her career as a politician. She claims that being first female Minister of Youth and Sports, many of the media strikes against her were orchestrated by men who desired her job and were discontented with her performance. Ghana's national team managed to reach the quarterfinals of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa under her leadership, making several opponents who are men green with envy that such an accomplishment was achieved during a female's term of office. Although the media attacks were meant to discourage her, they actually reinforced her because she was ready for such obstacles prior to stepping into the world of politics, recognising that "politics has always been a minefield for women".

She recounted having to contend with peers who were male to include reports about women in politics and gender inequality. According to studies investigating the media as men dominate the media sector in Ghana and Nigeria, the pressroom tradition is frequently masculine and ignores issues affecting women in reports in ownership, leadership, and operations [27].

To emphasise the trivialization of women in politics, media's coverage brims with narratives that proactively dwell on the partners of these women. If they are single or divorced, the Ghanaian media draws attention to their singleness as if

they are being chastised for opting to engage in politics. Hence, such conceptualization conveys that women are not fit to be politicians [2].

Even though Ghana's media representation of women in politics is reminiscent of both global media portrayals of women, it is vital to examine Ghana's local representation of women in democratic governance.

## 9. Discussion

The media is extremely important in every society. The media play the function of gatekeeper in all countries. The media aspires to be every nation's conscience. Taking its place in the gutters among the weak, vulnerable, and powerless, daring the mighty and powerful to come and meet it there if they truly care about the people. Through its gatekeeping, scorekeeping, and watchdog roles, the media works to promote national development. Almost everywhere, the mass media portrays governments and political structures as exploitative of society's most vulnerable members. Many journalists believe that when political parties, politicians, and rulers are in power, they never keep their programmes and promises.

Indeed, the literature shows extensive evidence that women are given massive coverage by the media but be that as it may, that coverage is geared in a particular direction that leaves behind a negative representation of women. Various women who have held political positions in Africa shared their experiences and feelings in terms of how the media represented them including Programme Officer at the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, Zimbabwe, Antonetta Lovejoy Hamandishe; former journalist, former Ambassador of Ghana to Germany, Former Minister for Youth and Sports, Former Minister for Gender and Children's Affairs, Former Minister for Tourism, Former Member of Parliament, Ghana, Akua Sena Dansua; Member of Parliament and Spokesperson of the RPG Arc-En-Ciel party, former Minister of Sports, Founder of the DOM Success Academy, Guinea, Domani Doréw; and Professor at the School of Women and Gender Studies, Makerere University, Uganda, Dr Florence Exile.

Their views demonstrate that women in politics are subjected to biased, misogynistic, and prejudiced media coverage. Women in politics continue to encounter challenges when it comes to media coverage, according to research over the past few years. When journalists write about women in political leadership, they usually employ terminologies that reiterate women's conventional roles and their physical characteristics. They reinforce biases of female politicians as being vulnerable, impulsive, and sentimental. Women in democratic governance, particularly women of colour, face a barrage of harassment and gender-based propaganda, which are frequently fuelled and perpetuated by traditional and social media. Studies have shown that gendered media reporting discourages and dissuades women from getting involved in politics, with the goal of maligning, vilifying, and suppressing women in politics.

Essentially, Akua Sena Dansua's experiences in Ghana with the media establish and emphasise Hall's notion of representation theory, which states that representation is the ability to describe, as well as the Fregean theory of representation that assumes that a picture's meaning depends on its sense. In effect, the way the media presents women in democratic governance is the sense and light in which they showcase them and this creates impressions. These impressions lead to the overall manner in which the public view women in governance.

In all situations, it was clear that the media tends to focus on the negative aspects. They do not focus on women in democratic governance as intelligent individuals who have an impact to make in society; rather, they focus on how they dress, their family life, and whether they have children or not. These perspectives create a narrow representation of women for the public. Eventually, this discourages many young women from vying for political positions or engaging in politics. This is because they do not want to be criticised by the media, not because they are unable to make an impact in their line of duty as politicians, but because they are either married or unmarried. This implies that for future generations, a time will come where women will come to accept this misrepresentation as the true way a woman in leadership should be observed and presented.

Notwithstanding, the misrepresentation of women in democratic governance, the media's active and constant coverage of women in democratic governance is laudable and has created maximum publicity for women in politics. Media coverage provides an unparalleled electoral advantage and increases media interest in female candidates and politicians. However, the massive misrepresentation that accompanies this coverage can harm women's overall representation and participation. Unfortunately, women in politics are more likely to withdraw from public life if they are ignored or ridiculed when they are visible.

## 10. Conclusion and Policy Implications

The media assumes an important role in influencing people's minds. The media constructs and reconstructs perceptions and propagates stereotypic representations via their reporting of occurrences and individuals in society. According to studies, women have been subjected to misrepresentations and negative representations since the inception and spread of the media worldwide. In spite of elevated female participation in national socio-political initiatives worldwide, the premise surrounding how women in politics are depicted in the media has not changed. Women are inaccurately represented in politics, and receive extensive media coverage. The research emphasised the way the media represents women in positions of political power in Ghana.

Additionally, the vast majority of electorates in rural areas of developing nations like Ghana have few opportunities to personally meet their parliamentary and presidential candidates during the election period. They depend on the mass media for candidate opinions via broadcast and

electronic media. Journalists act as the fourth branch of government's oversight, monitoring the profligacy and misconduct of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Media, by playing adversarial roles, offers the reaction that democratic systems require to stay on track.

Constant media attention, inquisitiveness, and direction may result in the resolution of challenges faced by the less privileged in society. Women and people with soft skills are stereotyped as being incapable of holding political positions. Notwithstanding, women are often given more coverage due to the growing appeal for gender equality through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This shows massive growth and change in the media representation landscape.

Again, it appears that males get greater exposure in newspapers than females. Despite the fact that female candidates received more favourable coverage, male candidates were featured in newspapers more frequently than female politicians. While depicting political women in a more positive light tends to be positive, the media denigrates this to reinforce the prevailing societal preconceived notions that represents political women as having delicate abilities and being delicate people. Moreover, women are portrayed in the media as sex objects, housewives, indecisive people, and doers of minor tasks who rely on men and require protection.

This means that future women seeking leadership or careers in Ghana's democratic governance are likely to abandon their ambitions due to public persecution and prejudices propagated by the media. It also implies that women in Ghana's democratic governance are constantly terrified about how the media will represent them to the public, which can harm their ambitions and mental health. More so, gender stereotypes described in the media influence children and are capable of fostering gender inequality. The research demonstrates that once children become privy to mythical gender representations, they favour "gender proper" content and activities, have conventional opinions regarding gender roles and professions, and have orientations in favour of their future aspirations.

To eschew a bleak future for women in democratic governance in Ghana, based on the study's findings; it is recommended that women be given equal opportunities like their male counterparts. Despite the fact that women are constantly featured in the media, there is a need for the media to focus on the positive aspects of women in leadership rather than their marital or parental status or their position on feminism. Women should not be idolised as sex objects. They should be portrayed as human beings who have skills and knowledge to share.

Likewise, in terms of spreading information about gender equality and promoting societal equality, the media could play a transformative role. The media should be prodded to produce gender-inclusive content and to set up internalised rules, like giving more women in its ranks access to positions of power. Mechanisms for surveillance and evaluating progress should be set up to accomplish gender parity in composition, processes, and governance.

Furthermore, legislative bodies and political parties should

make significant attempts to advance and enhance women's political representation and engagement, to ensure that women are more prominent and thus, even recognisably noticeable in the society. Again, training in public speaking and handling the media should be organised for women. More chances should be granted to women to demonstrate their expertise in diverse areas instead of being limited to the discourse on gender equality.

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