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**Factors Influencing Voters' Choice in Elections in
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of the Northern Region**

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Abstract

Purpose: Globally, and most especially in Africa, researchers seem not to have sufficiently explained the underlying factors that influence electorates' choices. Thus, studies often reveal a myriad of factors that determine this behavior of voters. While some scholars posit rationality as the underlying factor, others suggest idiosyncratic factors in that regard. These conflicting positions indicate that the motivation of electorates' choices is multifaceted. In Ghana, few studies have investigated the phenomenon in the Northern part of the country. This study, therefore, explored the phenomenon with regard to elections in the Kumbungu Constituency of Northern Ghana.

Methodology: Underpinned by the three dominant theories; the sociological model, the psychological model and the rational-choice theory, the study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-method design to gather data thereof. A combination of purposive sampling methods was employed to select information rich cases. The selection of the study region and constituency was based on critical case sampling. Purposeful random sampling was used to select respondents for the survey and interviews. A total of 164 respondents were randomly selected for the survey. Ten key informant interviews were also conducted. Qualitative data were analysed using content and thematic analysis. Quantitative data were analyzed using Predictive Analytic Software by employing descriptive statistics and regression.

Findings: The findings indicate that the voting behavior of electorates are not primarily influenced by stable and distinctive factors, such as ethnic or regional ties, but rather the electorate make voting decisions based on conscious evaluation of government performance, economic conditions, and campaign issues. Also, the developmental impact of government programs, ethnicity and ideological leaning of voters do play a role. Therefore, politicians need to heed this in their effort to win the hearts of voters.

Unique Contribution and Recommendation: This study recommends that ruling political parties should always endeavor to promote and foster policies and programs that improve the living standards of the Ghanaian electorates if they desire to retain and cling on to political power.

Key words: *Elections, electorates' choices, determinants, Northern Ghana, and voter behavior.*

Introduction

Democratic practice is not new to Africa as it predates the era of European colonialism of the continent (Benson, 2020). Some features of African democracy in the past included elections (Benson, Achanso & Zuure, 2021). In Africa, the utmost thought-provoking question about election is not necessarily about which candidate won the election, but, rather, the underlying reasons why the electorates voted for that candidate and the consequences of such voting behavior (Antwi, 2018). The indispensable nature of elections in democracies all over the world provides an opportunity for citizens to endorse or reject an incumbent (Antwi, 2018; Ayee, 2006). Democracies, therefore, afford the citizenry an opportunity to choose those they think best represent their interests and aspirations. This right of the citizenry to choose their representatives is a fundamental right which has legitimate authority (Antwi, 2018; Ayee, 2011).

Research on voting behavior signposts that a myriad of factors determine the choices and behavior of electorates. For instance, Antwi's (2018) study of elements that determine voting behavior identified factors, such as economic conditions, ethnicity, identity, candidate's personality, political party affiliation, incumbent's performance, and campaign issues. These elements identified by Antwi (2018) in addition to issues, such as immigration and abortion, were found to equally determine voter behavior in the United States (Rock & Baum, 2010). Indeed, the foremost understanding is that rational evaluations are the key determinants of voting behavior and electoral choices in Western democracies (Cassette et al., 2013; Hix & Noury, 2016). However, the same has not been said of African democracies. Many studies have suggested that voting behavior in Africa is influenced by idiosyncratic factors, such as religion, ethnicity, and family lineages (Agomor & Adams, 2014; Ferree et al., 2014; Ferree, 2008; Hoffman & Long, 2013). Nevertheless, other studies (Anebo, 2006; Antwi, 2018; Debrah, 2008; Lindberg & Morrison, 2007) have downplayed the salience of ethnicity in African elections. These scholars suggest that African voters are influenced by a myriad of factors, such as party affiliation, campaign issues and incumbent's performance, with ethnicity playing less influence on voters' behavior in African elections.

The conflicting assertions above are an indication that the motivation of African voters is intricate and multifaceted hence cannot be easily defined. As a matter of fact, if voters idiosyncratically vote based on what they perceive to be their economic interests, then why do incumbent candidates and/or political parties frequently get re-elected in the face of indescribable destitution and deprived economic circumstances in their respective constituencies and/or countries? Additionally, if electorates vote based on their respective ethnicities, then why do many constitutionally elected parliamentarians and/or head of states in many African nations hail from minority ethnic groups (Antwi, 2018; Bratton et al., 2012;)? This is an indication that there are mixed realities for the past 2 decades in many African countries since some countries such as Ghana, Mauritius, Zambia, amongst others have had successive elections leading to peaceful change of power; while others such as South Africa, Botswana, amongst others have had one party in power for an extended period of time (Antwi, 2018). The critical question that engaged the attention of this study was; what then determines voting behavior in Ghana for that matter Africa and what are the underlying reasons electorates consider in choosing one candidate or party over the other in elections? This study, therefore, sought to explore the factors that influence votes'

choice in the parliamentary and presidential elections in the Kumbungu Constituency of the Northern Region of Ghana.

Theoretical Framework

Three dominant theories exist when it comes to explaining voting behaviours of voters. These dominant theories are the sociological model, the psychological model and the rational-choice approach. First, the sociological model by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1944) assumes that familiarity and belonging to a particular social group influence the voting preference of electorates. It further specifies the economic and social position one holds in that social group. Furthermore, the theory postulates that religion, social class, region and ethnicity form the basis for the voting pattern of electorates. As such, electorates tend to vote *en bloc* for a particular candidate that shares the above identities with them (Andersen & Heath, 2003). Consequently, social groups vote for the candidate or party that is perceived as representing their interests or that is most likely to prioritize their needs (Adjei, 2012). Voter choice, therefore, is a type of social activity. Put simply, the social environment helps determine the political adherence of citizens.

The sociological model further asserts the importance of family as the dominant agent of socialization thereby influencing voting preference. Through political socialization, political culture, values and norms of older generations are passed along to the younger generations (Sarlamonov & Jovanoski, 2014). This socialization is most intense in childhood, during which most of the political attitudes are formed. At this early stage, the basic values that determine the political lives of voters are learned within the family, primarily through the relationship between parent and child. Thus, people inherit their political preferences from their families and tend to vote as their families do (Sarlamonov & Jovanoski, 2014).

Further support for the sociological basis of voting has been established by multiple case studies in Africa. The linkage between ethnicity and voting in Africa has been examined by several scholars. According to Hoffman & Long (2013), ethnicity exerts a strong direct influence on segmented societies, by generating a long-term psychological sense of party loyalty, anchoring citizens to parties. The resultant effect of the ethnic affiliation is voting *en bloc* in order to enforce that ethnic identity. Voting in such communities is based on ethnic considerations, as members will prefer to have one of their own as a leader. Gyimah-Boadi (2008) agrees with these viewpoints by stating that African elections and electoral campaigns are not based on issues and, as a result, political parties and candidates focused on ethnic bonds, the personality of candidates, party loyalty, and symbols to canvass for votes. This happens because elections in Africa often involve the mobilization of ethnic support, especially in elections where the political elite are incapable of articulating better policies (Antwi, 2018).

Despite the many advantages and positives of the sociological theory of voters' behavior in shaping the understanding of the rationale or motivations behind voter choice, it has its shortcomings. First, its deficiency can be traced to the variations that take place in voting as a result of the peculiar nature of economic conditions in relation to one election and another. Although social factors may explain the long-term constancy of voting behavior, they do not explicate the disparities that arise in the behavior of voters in different elections. This relates to the same way that they do not explain why persons who have affinity with certain social groups vote in a manner that is expected of people belonging to different social groups (Antunes, 2010).

Notwithstanding the stated deficiency of the sociological theory, the trajectory of Ghana's electoral politics suggests that the sociological theory explains the voting behaviour of some sections of the populace. This claim is premised on the fact that ethno-regional bloc voting has persisted in two core regions of Ghana via the Volta and Ashanti Regions since 1992. Despite three consecutive interchanges of political power in Ghana, the Volta and Ashanti Regions have unwaveringly voted overwhelmingly for the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and New Patriotic Party (NPP) respectively. It is often reasoned that the Volta and Ashanti Regions vote the way they do because the two Regions' voting patterns are what they are because the areas serve as the home-based regions of founding fathers of the NDC and NPP political parties (Antwi, 2018).

The second theory that explicitly explains voters' behavior is the Psychological Model by Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1960) which underscores partisanship or party identification as the most important determinant of voting behavior. Partisanship is defined as the continuing psychological affinity and attachment people have for a particular political party (Arthur, 2009). The partisan voter is viewed as a loyal, long-term supporter, who strongly identifies with a political party. Such strong affinity makes it difficult to persuade partisan voters to vote for another party or even withdraw their support from their preferred party. Partisan voters will remain attached to their preferred party even if they have moved out of line with them on major political principles. In this regard, a voter's party identification is considered a stable phenomenon that does not change easily (Heywood, 2002).

There are motivational factors under the psychological model that underscore its decision-making process. These factors include; party, campaign issue and the candidate being presented to be voted for. These motivational factors are termed funnel casualty. The social group becomes the first point of influence. Beneath this social group is the family, which has a sense of partisanship. Partisanship then impacts the processing of information by voters and the evaluation of the issues and candidates by the electorates in making their choice (Antwi, 2018). Additionally, Koppensteiner and Stephen (2014) investigated the relationship that exist between the first impressions of voters and the likelihood of favoring candidates who are considered as having a likeable personality considered pleasant to the voter. Eighty participants were recruited within the University of Vienna. During their experimental study, respondents were asked to rate themselves and identified politicians who were presented to them in short video clips giving a speech, and to give an estimate of the probability that they would vote for each politician they evaluated. The study found that participants tended to vote for politicians who are perceived to have personality traits similar to that of the voters. It was also established that first impressions could influence the participants' electoral choice. The study established that voters cast their ballots in favor of politicians with certain desired personality trait.

Additionally, Hayes (2010) studied the influence of candidate's personality in the United States elections. He specifically focused on the impact of personality traits on voter choice. The study measured traits, such as candidate's leadership qualities, morality, compassion and care for people. The measures were administered to 500 respondents from 30 states during the 2006 midterm elections. The study found that voters' electoral choice was informed by traits or perceived qualities of a candidate. Nwanganga et al. (2017) studied the influence of personality traits on voters' decisions before and during the 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria. The study made use of 400 eligible voters to study candidate's personality and branding as a factor for voters' choice

in the elections. The findings indicate that voters consider the personality dimensions of candidates, such as competence, credibility/sincerity, prior to and during the election cycle. Under this voting model, the concepts of party identification, issue-based voting and candidate personality is discussed.

To begin, the electoral support of a partisan voter is relatively stable. A partisan voter consistently votes for the same party. From this understanding of partisanship, this study assumed that the concept of party identification could be applied to the Ghanaian case. This is because the electoral politics of Ghana is dominated by two main political parties, the NPP and NDC. The electoral results under the Fourth Republic indicate that each of the two political parties has stable and core voters (about 40%) who will always cast their ballot for their party. A number of studies in Europe (Italy) and Africa (Kenya) have found that party identification has become a less significant factor in predicting the outcome of elections. Candidate personality and issues have replaced party loyalty as the primary motivation for individual voting. Thus, it is difficult to accept the assumption that partisanship stays constant and never changes. Empirical studies have shown that partisan support is not unbreakable. Voters move to and from their respective political parties in response to their orientation on issues as well as their evaluations of candidates and parties (Conroy-Kruts, 2013).

The Rational Choice Theory by Downs (1957) is the third model that was employed in this study to explain voter behavior. The underlying assumption of the Rational choice theory is that voting is a conscious rational act where individual voters weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the options available before determining their voting choices. Consequently, upon a careful evaluation of the costs and benefits, a person will vote for the party or candidate with programmes and policies that best serve and reflect one's own self-interests (Autunes, 2010). In one breadth, a voter may consider educational policies during one election cycle, but their interest may change into health and immigration policies in subsequent elections. It is these unaligned voters whose interests are constantly changing that are partly responsible for the alternations in electoral outcomes and for determining the winners and losers of elections. This study anticipated that the rational-choice perspective was helpful in explaining voting patterns in areas or polling stations noted for swing voting.

Rationality as a model is of great essence when one is seeking to understand the theory of rational choice and it is noteworthy to shed light on the fact that rationality, based on Down's economic theory, hypothesis that voters and political parties to a large extent behave in a similar manner, at least based on their wishes, values and interests. Therefore, rationality as a term is applied based on the inference that the methods or mediums employed are suitable to the objectives and by extension, elections function as a medium used for selecting a government and for that matter, rational behavior in an electoral period is aimed towards this objective and nothing else. The Rational Choice Theory also takes into account that what voters essentially prioritize is not ideology but rather the tangible or material actions governments undertake. This, however, does not imply that voters are entirely abreast with or well-informed about all government proceedings and decisions as it takes a great deal of effort to completely comprehend and assess the outcome of all government policies (Farber, 2010).

The rational choice theory further posits that there is a higher chance of voters more likely to vote if the gains arising out of the choice, they make far exceed the losses. In making the decision as to

whom to vote for between a number of candidates, “the voter must determine what the difference to their interests, resulting in victory (or loss) of candidate A, B or C. If this analysis does not expect significant differences associated with victory or defeat of any candidate, the potential benefit of voting is zero and the higher the probability of not participating in the elections” (Antunes, 2010).

In a more recent study on Ghana, Harding (2015), using the electoral results of 2004 and 2008 elections, reports that infrastructure provision particularly roads, likely affected the electoral fortunes of a party in the rural areas. The findings of Harding were further corroborated by Bossuroy (2011), which revealed that rural voters’ interest generally differs from urban voters in terms of their understanding of democracy, policy preferences, knowledge of opposition political parties, and access to private media. These issues in one way or the other, have a strong influence on voter choices. The rational choice theory is weak in explaining voting behavior. Blais (2000) and Antunes (2010) reveal that about half of the electorates vote without even taking into consideration the potential profits and losses of their decisions but rather, they vote out of a sense of obligation.

From the lens of the rational choice model, this study assumed that economic voting is a significant factor shaping electoral outcomes in Ghana. This assumption is underlined by the fact that elections are highly competitive in the swing regions of Ghana. Thus, the swing regions are the key to determining who wins Ghanaian presidential elections. Indeed, it is the variations in the electoral outcomes from the swing regions that has made possible the alternations of power in the elections of 2000, 2008, and 2016. It is argued that voters in the swing regions make a conscious evaluation of the candidates, the incumbent party’s performance, and their personal economic conditions when determining their vote choice (Lindberg & Morrison, 2008). In brief, the economic voting model was employed in an attempt to explain the motivations of voters in the selected region.

Study Area and Methodology

The Kumbungu constituency is ethnically diverse. It has a population of 39,341 according to the 2010 Population census. The main ethnic group in the constituency are Dagombas. However, other ethnic groups, such as Gonjas and Ewes, also live in the constituency. Islam is the dominant religion in the constituency followed by pockets of Christians. The major ethnic group, the Dagombas, are predominantly Muslims while the rest of the ethnic groups who come from other regions of the country but reside in the constituency are largely Christians. Agriculture, specifically peasant farming, constitute the main economic activity of majority of the citizens of the constituency. They are mainly engaged in mixed farming; crops and animals (mainly poultry) and fishing.

Kumbungu is predominantly a rural constituency. With regards to roads, only few are in good shape. Roads in the constituency are generally in a deplorable state especially the rural roads. Asphalt and bitumen roads can be counted in the constituency whereas feeder roads constitute the majority of roads in the constituency. Many communities in the constituency still lack basic utility services, such as electricity, water, roads, markets and communication services (GSS, 2012). The parliamentary primaries of the main opposition party, NDC, was marred with issues of vote buying. The incumbent Member of Parliament lost his bid to contest the seat on the ticket of the

NDC. He raised allegations of vote-buying, which he reported to the Bureau of National Investigations (BNI).

Many previous studies on voters' behaviour in Ghana selected samples to reflect safe-havens (areas/regions dominated by each of the major parties) and capital districts (Greater Accra) with a complete neglect of competitive districts (areas/regions where the major parties were almost at parity in their share of the vote) precisely in the middle belt and the 5 Northern regions. From the 2012 and 2016 elections, it is clear that the NPP has consistently increased their percentage share of votes in the northern regions.

This study is founded on pragmatism, hence employed a mix methods approach in order to capture multiple perspectives. A combination of purposive sampling methods was employed to select information rich cases to gain in-depth understanding and learn a great deal of issues about central importance to the purpose of the study. The selection of the study region and constituency was based on critical case sampling (Patton, 2002) which permits logical generalization and maximum application of information to other cases because if it is true of this one case, it is likely to be true of all other cases. For instance, if allegations of vote buying are true for the Northern region, they are likely to be true for other regions except the safe-havens.

Purposeful random sampling was used to select respondents for the survey and interviews. A total of 164 respondents were randomly selected in the Kumbungu constituency (where allegations of vote buying were rampant during the past elections) for the survey. 10 key informant interviews were also conducted. The structured survey questionnaires were administered to only participants 18 years old and above and who had voted in at least one of the previous elections. Qualitative data in the form of field notes and audio recordings were transcribed, coded and index with the aid of Atlas.ti and analysed using content and thematic analysis (Miles et al., 2014). Quantitative data were analyzed using Predictive Analytic Software by employing descriptive statistics and regression and presented in the form of tables to give graphical representation to the data.

Presentation of Results

Demographics of Respondents

A total of 164 respondents participated in the survey. Out of this number, 70.2% were males. The dominant age group falls within 35-54 years while married respondents constituted 70.9%. Approximately 85.1% of respondents were Muslims while 14.9% are Christians. Respondents who were employed constituted 46.9% while 38.3 were unemployed. Mole Dagbaanis were the largest ethnic group in the Kumbungu constituency constituting 96.9% with 2.5% being of other tribes and 0.617% being Guans, Gurmas, amongst others.

Analysis of Voting Patterns (1992-2016)

Electoral data spanning the Fourth Republic (1992-2016) reveals fascinating dynamic concerning elections in Ghana. The elections are extremely competitive among the NPP and the NDC. These two dominant political parties have won elections 3 and 4 consecutive times respectively between 1992 and 2016. The NPP and NDC have relatively equal electoral strength making Ghana more or less a dominant two-party system. Since 1992 to 2016, none of the main political parties has won the majority in three consecutive presidential elections. The Ghanaian voters consistently voted out the incumbent after two terms in office, resulting in the three alternations of power

between the two main political parties (Antwi, 2018). These voting patterns suggest that the behaviour of the Ghanaian voter is sufficient enough to sustain a high level of electoral competition, and the prospect of future changes in government, an attitude indicative of a relatively mature voting behaviour, which is a hallmark of a functioning democratic system (Antwi, 2018).

The study also reveals that there are core (safe-havens), neutral and swing electoral regions in Ghana. In the swing regions, the elections are more often competitive, where either the NPP or the NDC can win dependent on many factors which are presented in the subsequent sections. For instance, the outcome of the 1992 and 1996 elections saw the NDC winning in all the swing regions but again lost all the swing regions to the NPP in the subsequent 2000 and 2004 elections. Again, in the 2008 and 2012 elections, the NDC won all the swing regions but lost all the swing regions again to the NPP in the last election (2016). If this pattern is to continue, it is expected that this year upcoming elections (December 2020) will favour the NPP.

The records have shown that, in addition to a political party winning in its core (safe-haven) region, the political party must necessarily win majority votes in the swing regions in order to secure victory (the 50% plus 1 vote threshold) for the presidency. The voting patterns demonstrated in the swing regions suggest that unlike the safe-havens, voters are not primarily influenced by stable and distinctive factors, such as ethnic or regional ties, but rather they make voting decisions after conscious evaluation of government performance, economic conditions, and campaign issues (Antwi, 2018). Since the beginning of the Fourth Republic (1992 to 2016), the Ashanti and Volta Regions have been safe-havens for the NPP and NDC respectively, where each party has consistently secured over 80% of the votes in their respective strongholds.

This overwhelming support has led some political observers to describe the NPP as an Akan-Ashanti party and the NDC as Ewe-Volta party (Antwi, 2018). To a lesser extent, the Eastern Region could be added to the Ashanti Region as a stronghold of the NPP because of their consistent support for the party, beginning in the election of 2000. On the other hand, the Northern regions are also considered strongholds of the NDC, following the party's consistent victory in all of the seven presidential elections since 1992. The pattern, however, took a swift turn in the 2016 general elections when the NPP made significant gains in the safe-haven (the northern regions) of the NDC. The presidential candidate of the NDC hailed from the Northern regions, as well as the vice-presidential candidate of the NPP (a strong pillar in the 2016 general elections).

The usual voting pattern in the Northern regions, pronounced as ethno-regional trend seemed to have taken a different twist. It is obvious in Ghana's seven elections that some regions and ethnic groups vote as blocs for particular political parties. According to Bratton, Bhavnani, and Chen (2012:1), ethnic voting occurs "whenever members of a cultural group show disproportionate affinity at the polls for a particular political party". Based on this characterization of ethnic voting, this study argues that ethnic and regional considerations influence voting decisions in Ghana, especially in the core regions. Nonetheless, the analysis from the 1992 to 2016 elections indicates that the so-called ethno-regional voting is limited to the Ashanti and Volta regions. It is the Ashanti and Volta regions that have unequivocally demonstrated a biased, unalloyed, and untouchable allegiance to the NPP and NDC respectively. However, past elections have shown that victory in the core regions alone are not enough to ensure electoral victory. Thus, even if ethno-regional considerations drive voting outcome in the core regions, it does appear that ethnicity is not the most important factor in winning elections in Ghana. This is because in all the seven elections held

under the Fourth Republic, electoral victories have depended on garnering support beyond a party's ethnic region or core base (Antwi, 2018; Ayee 2011).

Therefore, taken together, it is overly simplistic to portray ethnicity as the defining element of electoral behaviour in Ghana. Besides ethnic and identity, other factors such as the state of the economy, the personality of the candidates, and the message of the campaigns have altogether influenced the voting behaviour in Ghana. Although ethnic bloc voting is prevalent in the Ashanti and Volta regions, the strongholds of the NPP and NDC, respectively, the electoral data suggest that a host of factors, such as economic conditions, incumbent performance, candidate personality, and campaign issues influence electoral outcomes in the swing regions. The crucial question, then is, what other variable(s) drive voting behaviour in the electoral politics of Ghana? The following sections presents data that attempts to reveal the determinants of voter choice in Ghana using a neutral area as a case study.

Factors that Influence Voter Choice: Regression Results and Analysis

Table 1: Model 1- Regression Analysis on the Economy, Candidature and Campaign Promises and Voter Choice.

Variables	Standard Coefficient Beta	Sig (p) =0.05
Overall Gov't Performance	0.031	0.00
Standard of living	0.043	0.00
Employment	0.035	0.00
General Economy	-0.104	0.00
Prices of Food	-0.026	0.00
Educational Level	0.067	0.00
Appearance of Candidate	-0.068	0.25
Marital Status of Candidate	0.019	0.31
Party Manifesto	0.042	0.32
Educational Policy	-0.296	0.30
Ethnicity	-0.143	0.21
Religion	0.229	0.40
Political Party	0.040	0.23
Political experience	-0.34	0.23
N	157	
Constant	4.855	
Adjusted R-squared	0.124	

Source: Field Survey, March 2020.

In Table 1 above, the performance of the ruling government in managing affairs of the country has a direct effect on the voter choice of the electorates. Same way, the voters' standard of living, employment status and political party of the candidate have significant effect on voter choice. Variable, such as candidate's political experience, do not influence the choices voters make. The beta coefficient, β , value for general economy, prices of food, appearance of candidate, educational policies and ethnicity show negative effect -0.104, $p < 0.05$, -0.026, $p < 0.05$, -0.068, $p < 0.05$, -0.296, $p < 0.05$ and -0.143 on the voter decision of respondents statistically significant at p -value 0.05. This reveals that voters do not seem to consider these factors in casting their ballots to

candidates. The finding suggests that factors like the performance of the economy, prices of food, policies on education, appearance of the candidate and ethnicity, do not influence the voter choice of voting in an election. The significant variables of this model could be generalized to the larger population as the model explains 12.4 percent of the total variation in the voter choice decisions.

Table 2: Model 2- Regression Analysis- Demographic variables and Voter decisions

Variables	Standard Co-efficient Beta	Sig (p) =0.05
Gender	-0.14	0.33
Age group	0.110	0.41
Religion	-0.115	0.32
Occupation	-0.204	0.21
Average Income	-0.214	0.12
Marital Status	0.029	0.56
Ethnicity	0.079	0.02
N	141	
Constant	2.025	
Adjusted R-Squared	0.076	

Source: Field Survey, March 2020.

For the demographic variables, only one of the indicators (ethnicity) is positively associated with voter choice. For the indicator; ethnicity, the beta coefficient (β) value is 0.079 ($P < 0.05$) which is statistically significant. However, the rest of the demographic variables are not statistically insignificant. The variables; Age, Gender, Religion, Occupation, Average income and Marital status with Beta coefficient of 0.11, -0.14, -0.115, -0.20, -0.21, 0.029 showed they are not statistically significant as their p-value were greater than 0.05. The model is explained by only 7.6% variation.

Table 3: Model 3-Sample T –Test- Economy, Policies and Candidature on Voter Choice

Variables	Mean Values	Sig (p) =0.05
Standard of living	.22	.00
Employment	.32	.00
General Economy	.41	.00
Prices of Food	.39	.00
Educational Level	.72	.00
Appearance of Candidate	.30	.00
Marital Status of Candidate	.71	.00
Party Manifesto	.04	.00
Educational Policy	.02	.00
Ethnicity	.89	.00
Religion	.45	.00
Political Party	.56	.00
General Policies	.02	.45

Source: Field Survey, March 2020.

The one-pair T-Test was used to determine the significance of variable in relation to voters' voting decisions. Table 3 indicates the mean values and their statistical significance at 95% confident level. The results show that, apart from policies of the presidential candidate, which is statistically insignificant - $p > .05$, the rest of the variables are statistically significant. Standard of living, appearance of candidate and ethnicity with mean values of 0.22, 0.30 and 0.89 respectively are statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

Discussions of Findings

The outcome of the regression results shows that some indicators are positively associated with voter choices. This means that performance of the government, standard of living and employment issues matter to the electorate as far as their voting decisions are concerned. The findings of this paper are consistent with the Rational Choice Theory. Predictive indicators, such as standard of living, employment status and the government's general performance, are statistically significant determinants of voting choices (Faber, 2010). This finding is also in tandem with the works of Aryee (2011) and Bofo-Arthur (2006), which suggest that one of the crucial factors that influence voters' decisions during general elections (parliamentary and presidential) is the standard of living. The Rational Choice Theory takes into account what voters essentially prioritize and not merely party ideology. Again, tangible or material actions governments undertake is most important to the electorates than the political party sentiments or allegiance. This supports the findings of this study which indicates that living standards and employments status are key determining factors in voting behavior of electorates (Faber, 2010). This discovery implies that what counts most for the electorate is their standard of living. Therefore, a government that pussy-foot when it comes to development and the welfare of the citizenry is likely not to be voted for. The finding is, however, inconsistent with the sociological and psychological school of thoughts which believe that family ties-ethnicity and ideological leanings have an influence on the voting decisions of voters and not living conditions (Heywood, 2002; Sarlamanov & Jovanoski, 2014). This, however, does not imply that voters are entirely rigid when it comes to decisions that influence their voting choices. It should be noted that voters' choices depend on several factors and these factors (for example the standard of living, employment, ethnicity, ideological leanings, etcetera) could vary at different times/places and on different conditions.

The findings further reveal that respondents accept that ethnicity, appearance and party manifesto do not matter to them in their choice of a parliamentary or presidential candidate during a general election. Citizens perceive that voting choices should be based on crucial necessities and the provision/availability of basic life sustaining needs which are of interest to the citizenry. Meeting these requirements and obligations causes citizens to exercise their franchise to the candidate that showed faith with those promises and also, gives them a sense of security in meeting their needs which paves way for positive effect on their choices. These findings are, however, at variance with the sociological school of thought that believes in family ties as the key reason for making a voting decision (Sarlamanov & Jovanoski, 2014). However, the Rational Choice Theory supports this assertion on the reliance on satisfying the needs of the voters as the basis for voter choice (Faber, 2010).

Furthermore, the regression in model 2 reveals that demographic variables are not entirely correlated with voting decisions. It was revealed in the findings that the ethnic background of the respondents was statistically significant in determining their voting choices of a candidate. What

this means is that the electorates of a certain ethnic block may consider what is appealing to them about the candidate before casting their vote in that regard. This is consistent with the work of Asante & Gyimah-Boadi (2004) on the role ethnicity plays in Ghana's elections. The finding is, however, not supported by the Rational Choice Theory. They believe that real meaningful impact on the lives of citizens by government (good standard of living) should rather be the determinant in their voting choices and not family ties (Faber, 2010). The implication of this finding is that ethnic groups have a part to play in the choice of candidates since it is an influencing factor in voters' choice. This means that voters' choice of candidate is purely based on other factors other than their Age, gender, religion, occupation and marital status.

The study also revealed in model 3 that the standard of living, candidate's appearance and personality, prices of goods have an influence on voter decisions. The model 3 finding is supported by the three (3) theories namely the Rational Choice, the Sociological and Psychological theories. This means that the developmental impact of government, family ties and the ideological leaning of the voter play a role in the voters' choices in exercising their franchise. Voters' decision is, therefore, not a one-theory-fits-all approach and the political parties must take heed in meeting these expectations of voters.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that standard of living of the people, the political party and ethnicity of the candidate have an influence on decisions of voters. The analysis also showed that ethnicity of voters influences how they form their decisions on their voting behaviors. Aside ethnicity, it was revealed in the study that age, gender and other demographic variables do not have any relationship with how voters' form their voting decisions.

The study's results challenge the mainstream assumption and literature on African politics that presume that ethnic bloc voting is pervasive in the country's elections and that parties serve as little more than a cover for ethnicity. The findings of this study, therefore, suggest that, generally, the Ghanaian electorate, particularly those in the Kumbungu constituency, is comprised of evaluative voters, who make their voting decisions after assessing their living conditions and campaign policies. Generally, this study draws attention to how standard of living and pragmatic policies may matter in voter decisions in Ghana, and other democracies. Accordingly, politicians need to be concerned about the policies they advance on the campaign platform that may have a positive change in the lives of the electorate.

Recommendations

This study recommends that ruling political parties should always endeavor to promote and foster policies and programs that improve the living standards of the Ghanaian electorates if they desire to retain and cling on to political power. The study also recommends that the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE), the media and civil society Organizations should sensitize the electorates to take consideration of political party manifestos and policies in making decision regarding their choice of political leaders and not base their decision or choice on ethnicity of the candidate.

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