Emerging Dynamics in Long-Standing Challenges in Local Governance Participation in Ghana: A Case of the Ahafo-Ano South-East District

Aminu Dramani,[*] Albert Boamah,[†] Ali Yakubu Nyaaba,[‡] Mohammed Abass, [§]

Journal Volume & Issue:
Vol. 6, No. 1 (February 2025)
pp. 55 – 83
DOI: https://doi.org/10.46404/panjogov.v6i1.6188

Received: 25 August, 2024
Revised: 18 February, 2025
Accepted: 25 February, 2025
Published: 28 February, 2025

Copyright:©*2025 by Jimma University, Ethiopia. Under Open Access Journal, the creative common attribute 4.0 international license permits any interested person to copy, redistribute, remix, transmit and adapt the work provided that the original work and source is appropriately cited.*

Notions and associated practices of political decentralization have gained prominence in lieu of the Huntingtonian Third Wave of Democratization. In Africa, many countries have experimented with decentralization and recorded mixed results. However, the assumed advantages of decentralization, such as political participation, accountability, and development, are stifled by important challenges, including partisanship, misappropriation, and the lack of resources, which negatively affect grassroots participation. In a case study of the Ahafo-Ano Southeast District-Ghana, this article presents long-standing and emerging empirical evidence on crucial challenges to grassroots participation in decentralization. Through surveys and semi-structured interviews, we found that the mode and frequency of engagements at the local assembly promote old and new hindrances to citizen participation, namely unidirectional communication channels and political interference, which impede meaningful participation. It was also found that partisan influence in local government setups leads to elite capture of political participation at the local level, weakening meaningful participation. This contributes to the literature on decentralization and local governance in Ghana, where such hindrances are not offered significant empirical analysis, especially concerning emerging dynamics.

Keywords: *Decentralization, Grassroots Participation, Local Government, District Assemblies, Ghana*

[*]Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana. Email: aminudramani@gmail.com
[†]Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana
[‡]Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana
[§]Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana

Introduction

The transfer of authority and responsibility (decentralization) from central entity to regional or local regional levels has become a prominent paradigm of governance in many countries, particularly the global South (Smoke, 2020). Decentralization has become the buzzword for political administration and socioeconomic development, with the broad objectives to provide better public services through improved public administration and governance, leadership, accountability, and transparency. Consequently, decentralization is now universally praised as a crucial element of global good governance and economic advancement (Smoke, 2015a). The potential benefits of decentralization can range from improving service delivery to enhancing citizen participation and ensuring accountability (OECD, 2019). Furthermore, decentralization can promote economic development by fostering local entrepreneurship and innovation (UN-Habitat, 2022).

The concept of decentralization is, however, not without challenges. Some scholars have raised important concerns that often characterize decentralized governance. A key broad critique is that in most decentralized systems, grassroots citizens are hardly involved in local governance as their views usually have a marginal influence on development interventions at the local level. Besides, this batch of scholars is also concerned about the challenges of efficiency, equity, and other context-specific hindrances to decentralized development interventions (Bardhan, 2002; Blair, 2000; Ribot, 1999). If not adequately coordinated, decentralized governance can lead to fragmentation and duplication of efforts (Rodriguez-Pose & Gill, 2020). Lack of capacity at the local level can hamper the effectiveness of decentralized governance. Besides, it can exacerbate inequalities if not accompanied by appropriate redistributive mechanisms (Swaminathan, 2019).

Ghana and other African countries have experimented with decentralized governance practices for decades. Such decentralized initiatives have opened up possibilities for greater citizens' participation, improved service delivery, and more tailored policy solutions to address specific regional needs (Mohammed, 2016b). However, the decentralization process in Ghana and across Africa is mainly widespread but not deep, as it faces several challenges. Weak institutional capacity at the local level, limited financial resources, and political interference from the central government hinder effective decentralization in these contexts (Mohammed, 2016a). Moreover, ethnic and regional divisions may exacerbate inequalities and complicate decision-

making processes, posing further obstacles to successful decentralization efforts (Asante & Debrah, 2019). Despite these challenges, decentralization remains essential for empowering local communities, promoting inclusive governance, and fostering sustainable development in Ghana and the broader African context (African Union's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want).

This article contributes to the discourses on contextualizing the understanding and practice of decentralization to address the one-size-fits-all model in analyzing the challenges of bottom-up governance (see Falleti, 2021). The article employs a case study design involving the Ahafo-Ano South District of the Ashanti region of Ghana to examine the apparent limited positive impact of decentralization, especially in terms of participation. The Ahafo-Ano South district is one of the forty-three districts in the Ashanti region, carved out of the former Ahafo-Ano district, one of the oldest creations of the local government system in Ghana. The district, among the newly created ones, would provide a deeper understanding of how decentralization policies are implemented and their impact at the local level in Ghana. Moreover, the district provides an opportunity to analyze the interplay between decentralization and the area's unique socioeconomic and political dynamics since it is ranked 243 out of 261 districts across the country, according to the UNICEF District League Table report of 2021. Besides academic nuance, this study also has practical implications for policymakers on effective decentralized governance and strategies for local development.

In particular, the focus is on understanding why, despite the awareness and closeness of local government units in these areas, grassroots citizens have limited participation and minimal impact in local governance programs. This leads us to pay particular attention to the channels and nature of communication, bureaucracies, and other context-determined factors that hinder effective participation and input of citizens at the local level of decision-making and development. As the data reveals, *the mode and frequency of engagement recreate old and expose new challenges in three factors: unidirectional communication channels, poor accountability, and political interference. While these challenges are partly reflected in the literature (*Ayee, J. R. A., & Ninsin, K. A. (2015*),* Amanor, K. S. (2009), *the context of this study introduces two new dimensions: (i) an empirical, nuanced contribution from the district and (ii) an added knowledge which concerns the challenge with new technologies and participation in local governance, as will be seen.* The article demonstrates an empirical case of how the

language of participation is rather both hijacked and instrumentalized by influential local actors and suffers ineffectiveness due to citizens' passive attitude to be fully involved, as well as the emerging challenge of new technologies in traditional settings of communication and participation.

The rest of the article is structured as follows: The first section presents the theoretical background of decentralization through the prism of democratic participation. In the second section, the research methodology is presented, followed by the data on the challenges of participation in local governance in the Ahafo-Ano Southeast district. The conclusion reiterates the predominant view of decentralization as a means to enhance local participation, yet deep-seated and emerging dilemmas weaken the practical possibility of boosting grassroots participation through decentralization in Ghana.

A Brief Scholarly Background on Decentralization

Decentralization is broadly rooted within the Participatory Governance Theory (PGT). The participatory theory emphasizes the importance of the active involvement of citizens in decision-making processes, particularly at the local level, to ensure democratic governance and development. The theory claims that an inclusive and collaborative decision-making process that actively involves all members, including actively involved citizens, stakeholders, and marginalized groups, leads to more democratic, equitable, and effective governance (Fisher, 2012). Participatory theory is highly appropriate for the study of local governance because it aligns with the principles of democracy, inclusivity, and effectiveness. However, its success depends on addressing practical challenges such as ensuring equitable participation, providing adequate resources, and fostering genuine engagement. It can transform local governance into a more responsive, accountable, and people-centered system when implemented effectively.

In addition, empowering individuals and communities to participate in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation helps governance become more transparent, accountable, adaptive, and responsive to citizens' needs. This indicates that ordinary citizens are expected to participate by involving themselves in organizations/groups representing their political interests. Thus, the local governance system of Ghana incorporates institutions, mechanisms, and processes through which citizens and their groups can articulate their interests at the local level (Jengre & Kpnpuo, 2019). Evidently, citizens have shared their discontent with government

services, indicating their noninvolvement in decision-making. The participatory governance theory and local governance embrace inclusiveness, indicating the need for open participation in the decision-making process, planning, and budgeting. The goal is to have a responsive and accountable governance system. The inclusivity of citizens in decision-making will promote consensus building and generate trust and satisfaction with service delivery on public needs. Although scholars such as Quick and Bryson (2016) point to the fundamental challenges in participation as ensuring that various interests are engaged in the process, including those normally excluded from decision-making by institutionalized inequities, resistance from entrenched power structures, and the risk of tokenistic participation, the theory provides an opportunity to foster greater inclusivity and accountability as it builds a more resilient and responsive institution.

As indicated, decentralization emerged from the notion of participatory governance. It refers to the transfer of responsibility for planning, management, resource mobilization, and allocation from the central government and its agencies to subsidiary units and sections of a state or territory (Rondinelli, 1981). This is reflected in the ceding of power and authority to subordinate units or levels of government, semi-autonomous public authorities or area-wide cooperation, regional or functional authorities, or non-governmental private or voluntary organizations to manage resources by planning and ensuring effective allocation at the lower levels of government. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), decentralization is a method to reform the public sector, which improves public service efficiency, ensures accountability and transparency, reduces corruption, increases political participation, and fosters policy innovation (OECD, 2019). The definitions point to decentralization as a system allowing subnational governance targeted at efficiency, participation, and sustained economic growth.

Decentralized governance is portrayed in a variety of ways and dimensions. According to Olatona and Olomola (2015), there are three main types of decentralization. The first is deconcentration, which entails assigning duties to local authorities under the tight supervision of the central government. It is the redistribution of administrative functions or decision-making authority from a central government to regional or local offices while maintaining overall control and accountability at the central level. It aims to improve efficiency and responsiveness by

bringing governance closer to the people without transferring full autonomy to local entities. It is viewed as the weakest form of decentralization (Olatona & Olomola, 2015), as local offices often lack real decision-making power, as ultimate authority remains with the central government and can create additional layers of bureaucracy, leading to delays and inefficiencies. The second is delegation, which involves giving decision-making and administration powers to institutions/agencies with some autonomy, like public corporations. It is the process of assigning authority and responsibility to another person (typically a subordinate) to carry out specific tasks or make decisions. It is a key management skill that allows leaders to focus on higher-level responsibilities while empowering others to handle operational tasks. Poor communication during delegation can lead to misunderstandings, errors, or misaligned expectations. Devolution is the third and final type, and it is the strongest because it involves the transfer of political and administrative authority from the highest to the lowest levels of government. In a devolved system, sub-states and local governments have the power to choose their own leaders, generate their own money, and decide how to allocate their investments (Olatona & Olomola, 2015). Similarly, the World Bank indicates that decentralization can take various forms. While political decentralization involves transferring decision-making power to elected local governments, administrative decentralization focuses on delegating authority to lower levels of the bureaucracy, fiscal decentralization entails transferring financial resources and responsibilities to local governments, and market decentralization involves promoting private sector participation in service delivery (World Bank, 2021). Ultimately, providing effective and efficient local service delivery for human development is the primary goal of decentralization, irrespective of the motivations for it or the decentralization mechanism used (devolution, delegation, or deconcentration) (Tshukudu, 2014).

Broadly speaking, administrative, political, and fiscal decentralization are the three main aspects of every decentralized system. Fiscal decentralization is the devolution of financial resources and revenue-generating authority, whereas administrative decentralization involves the transfer of civil servants and public activities to a lower level, and political decentralization denotes the devolution of decision-making authority (Muriu, 2012; Pastory, 2014). As Wagana *et al.* (2017) point out, political decentralization depends on whether sub-national governments are subject to direct elections and hence participate in political governance. Political decentralization is frequently seen in current discourse and practice as the sole genuine method of decentralizing

governance, carrying advantages like local democracy, involvement in local matters, and grassroots accountability (Wagana *et al.*, 2017).

Decentralization is universally praised as a crucial element of good governance and economic advancement across the globe (Smoke, 2015a). Over the past twenty-five years, at least seventy-five nations have tried to decentralize power to lower levels of government (Shen & Zou, 2015). Decentralization is crucial for developing countries to address issues of growing inequality and poor governance, which are mainly consequences of power concentration (Ekpo, 2007). The major debates about the rationale of decentralization are particularly linked to the theoretical view of democratic participation.

As the central stance of decentralization, participation denotes 'taking part', 'involvement', 'consultation', and 'empowerment', giving citizens a significant role in government (Blair, 2000). According to Devas and Grant (2003), participation involves people exercising influence and control over choices that impact them. This indicates that participation deals with people's active involvement in decision-making and activities within their jurisdiction that ensure development (Holum, 2022). Extracted from Arnold S. Kaufman's 'participatory politics' democratic participation has often been the most substantial theoretical basis for decentralization (see Stoyan & Niedzwiecki 2018; Hyden, 2017), as also defended by many great thinkers, including John Dewey, Wright Mills, Alexis de Tocqueville, Mikhail Bakunin, Stuart Mills, and Robert Dahl (Houdret & Harnisch, 2019; Hilmer, 2010). Most advocates draw close similarity and intricate relations between decentralization and democracy because participatory democratic theory envisions maximum citizen participation in governance, particularly in sections of society other than those with access to political power. According to the World Bank reports from 2001 and 2004, decentralization gives local people a voice and creates an environment conducive to participation. This is in synch with Manor (2011) and Azfar *et al.* (1999) that decentralization improves participation.

The literature thus establishes a positive relationship between decentralization and economic development through improved service delivery and bottom-up participation. The rapid economic growth in countries such as China, Nepal, and Chile has been largely attributed to decentralization (Balunywa*et al.*, 2014). Similarly, the consistent economic development in the US and most European countries is credited to the decentralization of revenue performance,

which brings government services closer to the people through structures such as federal systems and local councils (Clegg & Greg, 2010). The government system across the 50 states in the US is very decentralized, with approximately 85,000 municipal governments. Both federal/state and decentralized government bodies are autonomous, with the power to levy taxes, and they frequently enjoy high-level autonomy. As a global trend, there are also approximately 15,000 local governments in Africa, 26,000 in Asia, and over 17,000 local administrations in Latin America (Rosenbaum, 2013, p. 12). Rosenbaum (2013) thus asserts that decentralization is the current trend in global governance.

In the last two decades, most African countries have witnessed significant progress in decentralization to address inefficiencies in the public sector (Amusa & Mabugu, 2016). Some of the key examples of fast-decentralizing states in Africa include Ghana, South Africa, Botswana, Kenya, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, and Uganda (Riedl & Dickovick, 2010). The central governments have launched or intensified procedures in these polities to delegate control, authority, responsibility, and resources to regional and local levels. The empirical literature suggests that decentralization has boosted economic development in Africa, enabling policy transition to solve local problems (Hope, 2000), fostering inter-territorial comparisons and competitiveness (Mackinnon, 2015), creating autonomous and efficient administration away from the central government (Julius, 2021), and enhancing quality service delivery (Saavedra, 2009; Sujarwoto, 2017).

However, other empirical studies have discovered mixed, mostly disappointing results about the link between decentralization and participation. Evidence is partly seen in the work of Devas and Grant (2003), which discovers no clear evidence of a link between decentralization and citizen participation and improved economic development in Uganda. In Ghana, Mohammed (2016a) observes a weak link between decentralization and participation, which suggests that the link between decentralization and effective local-level participation has received less research attention. Thus, while decentralization has received massive support for effective, people-centered development, critical challenges may limit the practical potential of effective decentralization and vary based on context and related factors. Nonetheless, the discourses of decentralization only keep growing in various dimensions with increasing nuance and complexity, especially in the African context.

Decentralization and Participation in Ghana

The governance of local communities has a long history in Ghana, dating back to periods even before European colonialism on the Gold Coast. Communities and societies had their own systems of governance, which involved the chiefs as leaders with the support of their elders. However, the arrival of the Europeans created a local government system through the Indirect Rule, where the chiefs represented the interest of the British Government at the local level (Ahwoi, 2010). Dzakaklo et al. (2023) examined the failures of decentralization in promoting popular participation at the local level. The article highlights issues such as limited citizen engagement, inadequate resources for local governments, and the influence of traditional authorities. The period between 1957 and 1987 witnessed some reforms within Ghana's local government system, which is seen as the foundation upon which the current local government thrives. At independence, Ghana's constitution divided the country into five administrative regions, which were headed by the regional house of chiefs. Following this, further administrative regions were added in 1961 and 1971. However, in 1974, a new local government system was created, which was a four-tier structure that distinguished the central government from the local government. The new system created 58 districts and 273 Municipal, regional, area, and urban councils. This reorganized the process of development within the country. In spite of the new structure, it was observed that it excluded traditional rulers, hence its moderation in 1980, which created space to reintroduce the chiefs and redefined the membership of the local government unit as the government amended the 1971 Act 359. The amendments were the last major reform done on the local government system. The present local government system takes its root from the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC), which introduced decentralization in November 1988. The new system established a new local government system based on PNDC Law 207, which was passed in 1988. The new reform re-demarcated the country and served as the framework of the new decentralized system under Law 207, which was inculcated into the Fourth Republican Constitution to promote grassroots involvement (Alam & Koranteng, 2015; Ayee, 1996).

The decentralization policy in Ghana seeks to transfer power, resources, and responsibilities from the central government to local authorities, including Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs). Ghana's decentralization framework is enshrined in the 1992

Constitution and the Local Governance Act (Act 936) of 2016. The framework establishes MMDAs as the primary institutions responsible for local governance, with mandates to plan, implement, and monitor development projects at the grassroots level (Ayee & Ninsin, 2015). The system also includes structures such as Unit Committees and Area Councils, which are designed to facilitate community participation in governance. The aim of decentralization in Ghana is to bring governance closer to the local people by empowering local authorities and communities to take ownership of their development processes (Ayee, 2008). For instance, Ayee and Ninsin (2015) indicated that the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) has enabled MMDAs to undertake development projects that address local priorities.

Additionally, the involvement of traditional authorities in local governance has strengthened community ownership of development initiatives (Amanor, 2009). These achievements demonstrate the potential of decentralization to promote inclusive governance and sustainable development. Thus, participation is a critical component of decentralization, as it ensures that local communities have a voice in decision-making processes. In Ghana, participation is facilitated through mechanisms such as town hall meetings, community durbars, and the election of assembly members. These platforms provide opportunities for citizens to engage with local authorities, express their needs, and contribute to the formulation of development plans (Bob-Milliar, 2012; Be-ere, 2022). If well-resourced, decentralization in Ghana has the potential to transform local governance by promoting participation and inclusive development. However, studies have shown that participation in Ghana's local governance system is often limited by factors such as low literacy levels, lack of awareness, and unidirectional communication channels (Ninsin, 2010). Research has, for instance, shown that a lack of financial resources and technical expertise at the local level has constrained the ability of MMDAs to implement participatory development plans (Howlett, 2011). O'Flynn & Wanna (2008) identify the lack of trust in citizens' participation, while Kumar (2002) is concerned about limited collaboration in communication and information sharing, transparency and accountability processes, and a lack of sustained conflict resolution and management. Besides, the issue of non-proportional representation of groups at Ghana's grassroots governance level has also been raised (Alumu & Hassan, 2019). An important gap here is that while the issue of limited participation is observed, little empirical discussion is being undertaken, especially concerning some of the least developed districts in Ghana, where participation is crucially required for sustained development within the

logic of decentralization. This is critical because the success of decentralization largely depends on the extent to which local communities are actively involved in decision-making processes.

Research Design and Methodology

This article forms part of a broader project that aims to analyze the state of decentralization in deprived districts in Ghana using the case study of the Ahafo-Ano Southeast district of the Ashanti region, Ghana. The Ahafo-Ano Southeast district was carved out of the Ahafo-Ano North district, which has existed since the start of decentralization in Ghana. The Ahafo-Ano-South East District was selected because it was one of the poorly ranked in 2021, 243 out of 261 districts, in terms of the overall performance of all districts in Ghana from the areas of governance, health, education, information and communication technology, and water and sanitation, by NDPC and UNICEF (2021). The district is situated in the North-Western part of the Ashanti region, about 42 km away from Kumasi, with geographical coordination of a longitude of -1.87 and a latitude of 6.88. Its land size covers 520.4 km2, representing 2.2% of the surface area of the region, which is 24,370.5 km2. Demographically, according to the 2021 Population and Housing Census, the district has a population of 63,468 people, with 32,071 (50.5%) men and 31,397 (49.5%) women. Predominantly, the district is agrarian, as farmers engage in subsistence farming. The agricultural sector employs about 76% of the Land Forces, and it is estimated that 75% of the income of the people in the district comes from agriculture as they are engaged in food and cash crop cultivation such as rice, maize, tomatoes, plantain, cocoa, citrus, palm fruit, etc.

This study adopts the mixed-methods approach to data collection and analysis. The mixed methods offer a powerful approach to studying decentralization in a less literate society. The mixed-method approach is particularly suited to studying local governance in developing countries because it addresses the complexity, context-specificity, and power dynamics inherent in these settings. By combining the strengths of quantitative and qualitative methods, researchers can capture both the breadth and depth of governance challenges and generate comprehensive, actionable insights essential for improving governance and development outcomes. The approach helps to generate rich, nuanced data to contribute important scholarly nuance, inform policy decisions, and improve the effectiveness of decentralization initiatives. This approach also allows for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play.

While the quantitative methods (through surveys) help to measure the extent of participation, the qualitative methods (including interviews) help explore in-depth perspectives and lived experiences behind participation or non-participation, the quality of participation, and the diverse experiences of different groups. Besides, the qualitative methods provide rich contextual information about the socio-cultural, political, and economic factors that influence local participation in decentralization. This is crucial in Ghana, where diverse local contexts can significantly shape how decentralization policies are implemented and experienced. The findings from a mixed methods study can provide valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to improve local participation in decentralization in Ghana. The combination of quantitative and qualitative evidence can lead to more robust and contextually relevant recommendations. In short, while the qualitative methods, such as interviews and case studies, would offer insights into the lived experiences, cultural norms, and power dynamics that influence local governance, the quantitative aspects, such as surveys and statistical analysis, provide generalizable data on governance indicators like service delivery, or public participation.

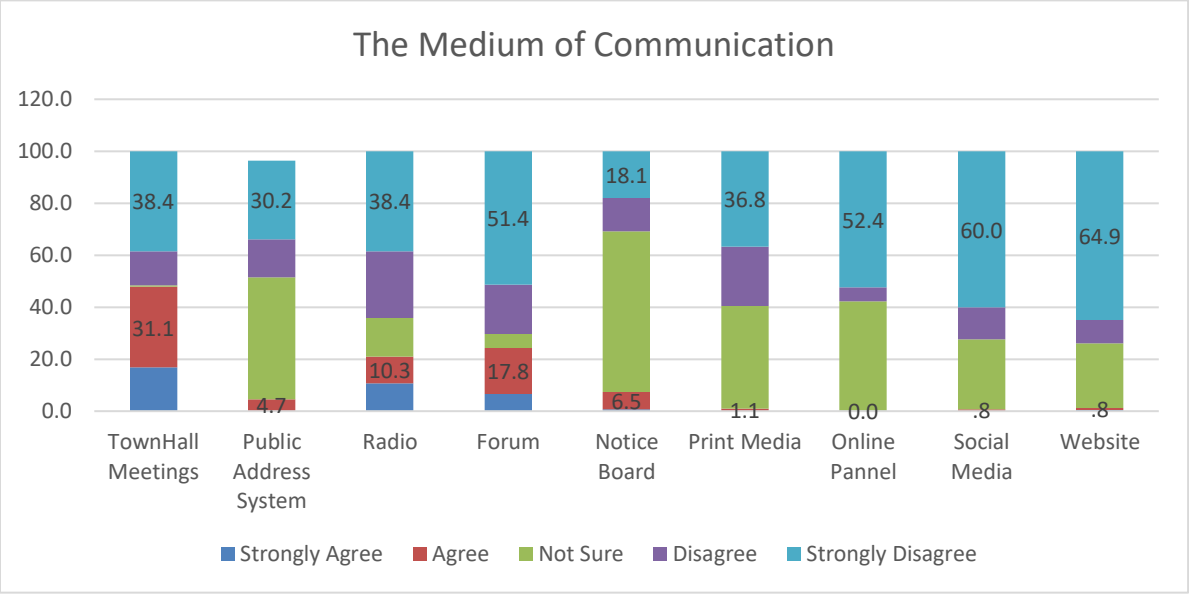
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including local government officials, traditional leaders, community members, and civil society representatives. The study was based on a one-on-one interview with 12 district functionaries and a 370-questionnaires administered to both the assembly functionaries and the ordinary grassroots citizens. The sample for the quantitative data was based on the random sampling method. A list of households from the Ghana Statistical Service was derived to form the sample frame for selecting communities and households in the district. Guided by saturation, the qualitative sample consisted of 12 respondents purposively selected from the district assemblies and ordinary citizens with knowledge of decentralization in Ghana and the functions of the district assembly as the liaison between the district and the citizens. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes and patterns from interviews and document reviews. Questionnaire responses were coded using SPSS and presented through descriptive statistics, while qualitative interviews were analyzed through manual thematic coding and content analysis. Policy documents, local government records, and historical data were reviewed to identify institutional and structural barriers to participation. The chosen research design and methodology would provide a robust framework for studying the complexities of local governance participation in Ghana, offering actionable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and communities.

Old and Emerging Challenges to Local Governance Participation

By law, the local government is mandated to engage citizens to clearly ascertain their needs, which helps find the appropriate development approaches in each locality. Ghana's 1992 Constitution establishes a unitary state with a decentralized system of governance. It mandates the creation of local government structures to promote grassroots participation and development. The constitution provides for Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs), Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs), and Unit Committees as key decentralized entities. The Local Governance Act 939 specifies various methods for the local government to interact with citizens in Ghana. The assembly members, as the direct representatives of the local people within the assembly, are charged with the responsibility of keeping the people well informed about decisions and actions taken by the assembly in addressing their needs. The assembly members are, by law, instructed to use various means to collate and present the views of the citizens to the assembly. These mechanisms also help relay decisions to the people regarding actions taken in response to their demands. This allows people to participate in decision-making processes that address their needs. Members of the assembly's performance in terms of keeping the local people informed through various mechanisms was measured using various means that reached the people and relayed information for both sides.

The data suggests that decentralization has provided a promising platform for citizens' participation in governance, as broadly captured in the literature. As Jengre & Kpnpuo (2019) rightly indicated, the local governance system of Ghana incorporates institutions, mechanisms, and processes through which citizens and their groups can articulate their interests at the local level. In Ahafo-Ano Southeast, this study found that Ghana's decentralization system created the structure for local participation in governance. However, as Quick and Bryson (2016) reflected, there are real challenges in the empirical manifestation of citizens' participation in the local governance processes in the area. These hindrances to meaningful local governance participation are seen through the mode and frequency of engagements at the local assembly, which promotes old and new hindrances to citizen participation. It will be seen that the mode and frequency of participation are hampered by unidirectional communication channels, which breeds poor accountability and political interference, which impedes representation and accountability.

Before delving into the challenges of participation, it is important to understand the various strategies for engagement and communication at the district assembly, especially in the context of this study. Like most other districts in Ghana, the channels of engagement and participation in the decentralized levels take various forms, such as town hall meetings and related fora, print media, online and mass media, or social media and websites, among others. Through these channels, citizens are informed about issues in their communities, as represented in the following figure.



Source: Field Worksheet, 2022

The table above shows that various platforms provide potential opportunities for the local government structure to address pressing needs ranging from infrastructure to human resource development. The local assembly engagements are done within the broader framework of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) in accordance with Section 18 of the Local Government Act of 1992 (Act 462), which usually covers four kinds of meetings, including the inaugural meeting, the ordinary meeting (standing order 1), requested meetings (standing order 2.1 and 4), and special meetings (standing order 4c). We see from the table that town hall, public address system, radio, and open forums provide the most patronized spaces for locals' participation in policy and development in the Ahafo-Ano Southeast district, where survey participants 'strongly agreed' about their existence and utility in serving as great platforms for grassroots decision-making. Yet, it is interesting to note that contrary to the

growing penetration of digital space and e-governance, survey respondents rated online platforms such as social media and websites as the least promoted or patronized platforms for engaging citizens in the district. For instance, when participants were asked about the medium of communication that was common to them as a means of communication within the assembly, 31.1% indicated that the most common medium of communication used was the town hall meetings. This has implications for the broader concern of participation and the challenge of embracing technology and modern practices in grassroots political processes, especially in the era of post-pandemic proliferation of virtual engagements and e-governance.

As the data suggests, the potential of these channels to enhance meaningful communication and participation in local governance is immensely hampered through limited participation, resulting into what the Participatory Theory referred to as the tokenistic participation, largely caused by the unidirectional mode of communication and political interference in the local governance processes, as one interviewee indicated:

> *[…] citizens' participation contribution is very low… The zeal that initially drives citizens to participate is no more there. Even within my community, there exists a lack of concern about government decisions and policies and even maintenance of old infrastructure. So, you see, the local people's contributions are generally not there* (Interview, Ex Presiding Member, Adugyama, September 2022).

The analysis shows that while there are laid down rules and regulations to ensure participation, certain factors act as impediments to the processes and procedures, and this has not yielded the increased participation level of the citizens in the decisions that the idea of decentralized has promised. The level of grassroots participation was tested on a range of indicators, including the medium of communication between the functionaries and the local people, the frequency of meetings held by the assembly itself and also with the citizens, bureaucratic responsiveness, policies and programs of genuine interest to the people, and the relations between the functionaries and the citizens.

Low participation reflected throughout the communication channels used by the district assembly. For instance, while only 13.5% claimed that the assembly does conduct meetings to engage constituents and collate their views and concerns on policy and development, 35.1% of the respondents had no knowledge of or ever participated in town hall meetings. Similarly, like

the physical channels, the online platforms also faced the same challenge of low-level participation. For instance, whiles 57.8% of the respondents had no knowledge about the existence of online channels for engaging constituents, only 0.3% exhibited knowledge of the existence of such platforms. Even though social media has gained massive penetration across most settings in Ghana, the data revealed that citizens' participation was still low, with only 0.8% aware that the assembly is active on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. This limited social media usage suggests that the potential of new technologies enhancing participation could be hampered.

The findings indicate that low-level participation in the local governance processes in the study area is caused by the unidirectional nature of communication between the assembly and the citizens and a lack of awareness of the assembly's existing communication channels, which impede meaningful representation, participation, service delivery, and the accountability promised under the idea of decentralization.

In terms of political interference, the study gathered that the local assembly governance processes are often dominated by political parties' interests, especially the dominant National Democratic Congress and New Patriotic Party. This study found that while Ghana's Local Government Act (939. 8) mandates neutrality of assembly members in local-level development, this remains a distant reality. Political interference in Ghana's local governance system poses significant threats to effective participation, transparency, and accountability. It thus interferes with the principles of decentralization and community engagement, which are critical for sustainable development. This survey revealed that 72.2% of the respondents strongly agree with the influence of political parties on the participation of citizens. Only 20% believes that partisanship does not influence local government participation while 7.8% were unsure if partisanship affects the level of participation in grassroots policy decisions. Such political interference often undercuts the autonomy of local government structures, such as District Assemblies, by centralizing decision-making power at the national level. This restricts the ability of local communities to participate in governance and development processes. For instance, the appointment of Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs) by the central government often leads to loyalty to political parties rather than local communities (Ayee, 2013). It leads to prioritization of the interests of political elites or national agendas over the

needs and aspirations of local communities. This marginalizes local voices and undermines the principles of inclusivity and equity that are central to Participatory Theory. When local people feel their input is ignored, they are less likely to participate in governance processes. This weakens the representation of local interests and negatively affects community trust in governance structures. Related to weak representation, political interference often introduces partisan politics into local governance, marginalizing non-partisan or opposition-aligned members of the same community. This exclusionary practice discourages broad-based participation and creates a sense of alienation among citizens who do not align with the ruling party. Bob-Milliar (2012) found that the politicization of local governance in Ghana has led to the exclusion of certain groups, particularly women and marginalized communities, from decision-making processes. Thus, political interference creates an environment of mistrust and apathy among citizens, leading to limited civic engagement. When communities perceive that their voices are not heard or that decisions are made based on political considerations, they are less likely to participate in local governance processes such as town hall meetings, elections, and community development initiatives (Ayee, 2013). This means that when political interference leads to a perception that local participation has little impact on decision-making, citizens may become apathetic or disillusioned. This disincentive for civic engagement contradicts the core principles of Participatory Theory, which rely on citizens' active and meaningful involvement in shaping their communities.

According to most of the respondents, especially the general citizenry, while the incumbent party usually tries to propagate its interest by politicizing local government interventions, the opposition parties, also intending to gain political points, oppose some important local government developments from the incumbent party. Political interference is expected, given that the actions of the local government are mostly influenced by the central government's ideas and political parties rather than the people dictating the dynamics of development in the local government setup. Partisanship is consolidated by the fact that the political heads of the local government level, the District/Municipal/Metropolitan Chief Executives (MMDCEs), are by constitution chosen by the president and, for that matter, the party in power. According to some assembly respondents, this sets the tone of reactions and directions of cooperation among members of the assembly and citizens from different parties or non-partisan actors. Some of the key areas where partisanship affects the otherwise non-partisan setup at the assembly include the

election of a Presiding Member (PM)* and the disbursement of the MP Common Fund. Meanwhile, the Participatory Theory highlights the importance of social capital (including trust, networks, and collaboration) in fostering effective local participation. Political interference can disrupt these social ties by creating divisions within communities along political lines. This polarization weakens collective action and reduces the willingness of citizens to engage in local development initiatives. Below are the words of a respondent who agrees with the participatory theory:

> […] *Yes, there exists political division within the district assembly. All the assembled members belong to one or the other political party. This becomes more evident when voting for the presiding member. The members get divided on party lines and even begin calling each other names. In fact, I can say that this contributes to poor accountability in the assemblies (*Participant 12, 2022*).*

Another respondent added:

> […] *We came here for another election to elect the PM. However, it is unfortunate that the same results are observed after more than three rounds of elections. Even before the commencement of the election, the district coordinator met various party members of the assembly privately to help smoothen the processes and elect a PM for the district. Where party-line divisions exist in the assemblies, accountability becomes a serious challenge (*Participant 10, 2022).

The above responses agree with Amanor (2009), who opined that politicization of local governance undermines accountability mechanisms in local governance. For example, when MMDCEs are appointed based on political loyalty rather than merit, they may prioritize the interests of the central government or ruling party over the needs of local communities. This absence of accountability shrinks citizens' preparedness to participate in governance processes, as they perceive their contributions as having little impact. This

*The Presiding Member is a member of a principal council that has been designated to carry out functions related to chairing its meetings and proceedings at the district assembly.

contradicts the tenets of Participatory Theory, which stresses the importance of accountability in governance. However, political interference can weaken accountability mechanisms by shielding local officials from scrutiny if they are aligned with powerful political actors. This lack of accountability discourages citizens from engaging in governance, as they perceive their efforts to hold leaders accountable as futile.

Other respondents opined that although one cannot take partisan politics completely out of governance at any level, the excessive partisan participation at the Ahafo-Ano Southeast district affects service delivery because intervention policies get stuck along partisan lines in ways that it is mainly the assembly members of the incumbent party that are able to attract development projects to their communities within the district. Political interference often leads to the unequal distribution of resources, with development projects and funds being allocated based on political considerations rather than community needs. This patronage system discourages active participation from communities that feel marginalized or excluded from development opportunities (Ninsin, 2010). For instance, communities that do not support the ruling party may receive fewer resources, further entrenching political divisions. As if to agree with Nisin, a participant captured it better in the following words:

> *Yes, the nature of politics within the district makes even service delivery a political affair. Mostly, even service delivery is influenced by party politics. Those 'whose' government is in power are the ones who are able to secure projects and services for their communities for the success of their aligned political party (Participant 8, 2022).*

Apart from the challenge of broader distribution of resources and development, partisanship also breeds silence and mediocrity from members of the party in government based at the local assembly. That is, while opposition party members could sabotage local government development through various forms of opposition, the respondents indicated that incumbent party members also fail to hold the government representatives to account for fear of being tagged as exhibiting anti-party behavior, which has consequences including being victimized or expelled from the party. As one respondent stressed:

> *They are party sympathizers, so whenever there is something that is going to ruin my government, I am not going to say anything bad about it. Also, even when*

> *opposition policies are good, I will not credit them so that they won't gain praise but rather criticize them (Participant 6, 2022).*

A respondent raised an important angle on the issue when he emphasized the role of traditional leaders. He indicated that:

> *Traditional authorities, who play a significant role in local governance in Ghana, are often sidelined due to political interference. The central government's dominance in decision-making processes reduces the influence of traditional leaders* (Participant 9, 2022).

Meanwhile, Bob-Milliar (2012) has stated that traditional leaders are seen as key mediators between local communities and government institutions. Therefore, marginalizing traditional authorities undermines their ability to mobilize community participation and foster inclusive governance.

As if to criticize the role of traditional leaders, a participant argued in the following words:

> *Mostly, traditional cultural norms emphasize hierarchical social structures, where authority is concentrated in the hands of elders, leaders, or elites. This can discourage ordinary citizens, especially women, youth, and marginalized groups, from actively participating in governance, as they may feel their voices are less valued or respected. This may result in a belief that societal outcomes are predetermined or that individuals have little power to effect change. This can lead to apathy and disengagement from governance processes* (An interview with a civil society representative, 2022).

Besides, the politicization of local-level governance unreasonably affects women and marginalized groups, who are often excluded from decision-making processes due to ingrained patriarchal and political structures. For example, women's participation in local governance is often hindered by political patronage systems that favor male candidates (Tripp, 2010). This exclusion limits the diversity of perspectives in governance and undermines inclusive development.

Most of the respondents, therefore, agreed that partisan influence in local government setups leads to elite capture of political participation at the local level, weakening meaningful

participation and resource allocation, as partly reflected in the literature (see Cheema, 2007; Crook & Severrison, 2001; Be-ere, 2022).

In addition to partisan interference, there is the challenge of unidirectional channels of communication. Unidirectional communication undermines the principles of decentralization by limiting grassroots participation, reducing accountability, marginalizing vulnerable groups, and narrowing the nature of engagements in the assembly. Unidirectional communication, where information flows only from authorities to citizens without feedback mechanisms, can have several practical implications. Thus, the nature of communication between local authorities and citizens plays a significant role in determining the success of decentralization efforts. It often reflects a top-down approach, where local authorities dictate policies and decisions without actively seeking input from grassroots communities. This can lead to a lack of ownership and engagement among citizens. Grassroots participation becomes passive, as citizens are reduced to mere recipients of information rather than active contributors to decision-making processes. Policies and programs designed without grassroots input may not address local communities' actual needs or priorities, leading to ineffective or irrelevant interventions. This is so because when citizens feel excluded from decision-making, they may resist or undermine local government initiatives, reducing the overall success of decentralization efforts. Again, unidirectional communication often overlooks the voices of marginalized groups, such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities, who may already face barriers to participation. The lack of inclusive communication can exacerbate existing inequalities, as the needs of the most vulnerable are not adequately represented in local governance. Finally, Grassroots communities possess valuable local knowledge and insights that could enhance the effectiveness of policies and programs. Unidirectional communication fails to leverage this potential. The absence of effective channels of dialogue between local authorities and citizens stifles opportunities for collaborative problem-solving and innovation.

A participant has this to say regarding how unidirectional communication disconnects citizens from government:

> *Unidirectional communication creates a disconnect between governments and citizens, stifling grassroots participation and perpetuating governance challenges, particularly in our part of the globe. Why do I say so? I say so*

> *because when communication is one-way, citizens may not fully understand policies, programs, or their rights due to insufficient explanation or context. Without opportunities for clarification or dialogue, misinformation or apathy can spread, leading to disengagement from governance* (Participant 2, 2022).

Touching on the multicultural and linguistic aspects, a participant said the following:

> *Diverse cultures and languages exist in Ghana and, in fact, many African countries. Unidirectional communication often fails to account for these differences, leading to messages that are inaccessible or irrelevant to certain groups. This exclusion limits the ability of grassroots communities to engage meaningfully in governance* (Participant 4, 2022).

Explaining why sometimes the district assemblies spend money to provide infrastructural projects such as markets and yet abandoned by the citizens indicated that:

> *Policies designed without grassroots input are often hardly suitable to local needs, leading to resistance or failure in implementation. When citizens are not consulted, they are less likely to support or comply with government initiatives, undermining governance outcomes* (Participant 9, 2022)

This explains the low levels of participation associated with the various channels of communication in the assembly. From the functionaries' point of view, meetings are usually organized, but not specifically to collate the views of the public but rather to inform them of some decisions taken by a few members either linked to the highest political authority or with some kind of influence. According to most of the assembly member participants, the low level and skewed participation run through all the mechanisms of engagements, where party or elite members are either present or whose views are being considered. This points to tokenism, with grave implications for broad participation, accountability, and transparency within the district, which was earlier observed in some parts of Ghana (see Ayee, 2013).

This means that while the long-standing partisan interferences hamper the functioning of the local government system, emerging dynamics are intricately related to the old challenges. While the assembly fails to utilize growing technology to increase participation, the citizens also indicate their inability to acquire smartphones and/ or other electronic devices and internet

bundles to participate in e-deliberations. This has a great implication for the growing digitization of governance, especially in the post-pandemic era. It also suggests that Ghana's digitization drive has the potential to be impeded by existing partisan structures and also exclude the meaningful participation of great numbers of the Ghanaian populace.

Conclusion

The article aimed to examine how political decentralization has contributed to citizen participation in local governance in Ghana, focusing on the Ahafo-Ano Southeast district of the Ashanti region. The study reveals that political interference and unidirectional communication remain significant barriers to grassroots participation in local governance. Notwithstanding efforts to promote decentralization and community involvement, these challenges persist, undermining the effectiveness of participatory governance structures. Political interference often skews decision-making processes in favor of partisan interests, marginalizing the voices of ordinary citizens. Similarly, unidirectional communication, where information flows only from local authorities to the community without adequate feedback mechanisms, limits the ability of citizens to engage meaningfully in governance. These findings underscore the need for systemic reforms to address these entrenched issues and foster inclusive, transparent, and participatory local governance.

For decades, decentralization has gained enormous attention in the literature on political science and development studies. Most of the debates establish a positive relationship between decentralization and economic development, claiming that effective local governance guarantees grassroots participation, accountability, and efficient service delivery. However, other related bodies of literature have called attention to important challenges affecting the promise of decentralization, some of which include non-representative participation, partisan interference, and the lack of resources and influence to participate in local governance processes in some settings.

In most of the related debates, participation has been the recurrent theme because it is linked to emancipatory development and legitimate governance processes, through which citizens determine the path for their development, aided by the structural and resource support of the central government. This aligns decentralization with democratic participation. This article engaged the literature on decentralization in Ghana and found that participation is also important

in Ghana's decentralized governance structure. However, the literature suggests that decentralization in Ghana is hampered by partisan control of the processes of engagements and distribution of resources at the local level.

Contributing nuance to the existing debates, this article provides three-tier empirical knowledge of the challenges of participation in decentralization in Ghana through the case of the Ahafo-Ano Southeast district. First, the study has established the proportions (in terms of percentages) depicting the low-level participation across all the mechanisms of participation at the local government level, which is lacking in previous studies. Second, the article has pointed out new dimensions of the local challenge of partisanship in decentralization, helping to know how old problems are reproduced. Third, the article has added a new voice to the issue of low-level participation in Ghana's decentralization in the contemporary governance era by drawing attention to the limited use of technology to engage citizens and assembly staff. Broadly, therefore, this study extends the conversation on the challenge of participation in local governance by adding new dimensions to old problems and revealing important emerging dynamics with implications for centralized governance in Ghana and the Third World.

The state needs to establish clear legal and policy frameworks to minimize political interference in local governance. This could include stricter enforcement of anti-interference laws and the creation of independent oversight bodies to monitor and address partisan influence in decision-making processes. Empower local governance structures like District Assemblies to operate autonomously and prioritize community interests over political agendas. Implement bidirectional communication strategies that encourage active dialogue between local authorities and community members. This could involve using digital platforms to facilitate real-time feedback and engagement. Finally, train local government officials in effective communication and community engagement techniques to ensure citizens feel heard and valued.

There is a need for stakeholders to make a conscious effort to improve information flow from district assemblies to citizens and vice versa. As the data indicated, town hall meetings are still very popular with the citizens. Frequent hall-meeting interactions would not only improve awareness of the day-to-day activities of the local government but also serve as an important loop for feedback. This way, the tokenism system, where decisions are only made to inform citizens of what actions have been taken without their involvement, can be changed. Access to

information will make local citizens active in accessing the district assemblies' activities to ensure local development aimed at citizens' wants.

In short, the emerging dynamics in long-standing challenges in local governance participation in Ghana's local governance system create significant barriers to participation by eroding local autonomy, fostering exclusion, undermining accountability, and perpetuating resource inequality. Addressing these challenges requires strengthening decentralization, promoting transparency, and ensuring that local governance structures are inclusive and representative of all community members. Specifically, it is critical to address the challenges posed by unidirectional communication and enhance grassroots participation in decentralization by promoting Two-Way Communication by establishing platforms for dialogue, such as participatory budgeting sessions, where citizens can voice their opinions and contribute to decision-making. Furthermore, feedback mechanisms should be strengthened by creating accessible channels for citizens to provide feedback, report grievances, and hold local authorities accountable, such as hotlines and suggestion boxes. Educate grassroots communities about their rights and responsibilities in local governance, empowering them to participate actively in decision-making processes. Ensure that inclusive communication strategies reach marginalized groups using culturally appropriate and accessible methods.

References

Ahwoi, K. (2010). Rethinking decentralization and local government in Ghana proposals for amendment. Institute of Economic Affairs. https://media.africaportal.org/documents/crs-6.pdf.

Agyemang-Duah, W., Kafui Gbedoho, E., Peprah, P., Arthur, F., Kweku Sobeng, A., Okyere, J., & Mengba Dokbila, J. (2018). Reducing poverty through fiscal decentralization in Ghana and beyond: A review. *Cogent Economics & Finance*, 6(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/23322039.2018.1476035.

Alam, M., & Koranteng, R. (2015). *Decentralization in Ghana.* (A. R. Koranteng, Munawwar (ed.); Issue January 2011). Commonwealth Secretariat. www.thecommonwealth.org.

Alumu, A., & Hassan, A. (2019). Challenges of Decentralization of Primary Education in Bukedea District in Uganda. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education*, *2*(1), 1–14.

Amanor, K. S. (2009). "Local Governance and Sustainable Development in Ghana: The Role of Traditional Authorities." *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, 41(59), 1-29

Amusa, H., &Mabugu, R. (2016). The contribution of fiscal decentralization to regional inequality: Empirical results for South African municipalities. *Economic Research Southern Africa (ERSA) Is…, April. https://econrsa. org/system/files/publications/working_papers/working_paper_597. pdf*.

Asante, R., & Debrah, E. (2019). The pitfalls and prospects of decentralization in Ghana. *Politics, Governance and Development in Ghana*, *235*.

Ayee, J. R. (1996). The measurement of decentralization: the Ghanaian experience, 1988-92. *African Affairs*, 31–50.https://www.jstor.org/stable/723724.

Ayee, J. R. (1997). The adjustment of central bodies to decentralization: The case of the Ghanaian bureaucracy. *African Studies Review*, *40*(2), 37–57.

Ayee, J. R. (2000). decentralization and good governance in Ghana. *Unpublished paper of May*.

Ayee, J. R. (2008). The balance sheet of decentralization in Ghana. In *Foundations for local governance* (pp. 233–258). Physica-Verlag HD. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-7908-2006-5_11.

Ayee, J. R. A., & Ninsin, K. A. (2015). Decentralization and local governance in Ghana: Progress, challenges, and the way forward. *Institute for Democratic Governance* (IDEG).

Ayee, J. R. (2013). The political economy of the creation of districts in Ghana. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, *48*(5), 623–645.https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909612464334.

Azfar, O., Kahkonen, S., Lanyi, A., Meagher, P., & Rutherford, D. (1999). *Decentralization, governance, and public services: The impact of institutional arrangements*. Centre for Institutional Reform and the Informal Sector. https://tinyurl.com/kmv8mve3

Balunywa, W., Nangoli, S., Mugerwa, G. W., Teko, J., & Kituyi, G. M. (2014). An analysis of fiscal decentralization as a strategy for improving revenue performance in Ugandan local governments. *Journal of Research in International Business and Management*, *4*(2), 28–36. https://mubsir.mubs.ac.ug/handle/20.500.12282/3085

Baral, N., & Heinen, J. T. (2007). Resources use, conservation attitudes, management intervention and park-people relations in the Western Terai landscape of Nepal. *Environmental conservation*, *34*(1), 64-72.http://doi.org/10.1017/S0376892907003670.

Bardhan, P. (2002). Decentralization of governance and development. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *16*(4), 185–205.http://dio.org/ 10.1257/089533002320951037.

Be-ere, S. (2022). Decentralization and Pro-poor Participation in Ghana: Unmasking the Barriers to Inclusive Grassroots Development. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 1–28.https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-022-09371-y.

Blair, H. (2000). participation and accountability at the periphery: Democratic local governance in six countries. *World Development*, *28*(1), 21-39.https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(99)00109-6.

Bob-Milliar, G. M. (2012). Public participation in local governance: A case study of Ghana. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 6(3), 1-15.

Campbell, T. (2003). *The quiet revolution: decentralization and the rise of political participation in Latin American cities*. University of Pittsburgh Pre.

Cheema, G. S. (2007). Devolution with accountability: Learning from good practices. In G. S. Cheema & D. A. Rondinelli (Eds.), *Decentralizing governance: Emerging concepts and practices* (pp. 170–188). Brookings Institution Press.

Clegg, N., & Greg, C. (2010). Decentralization and the Localism Bill: An essential guide. HM Government, 978(1), 4098.

Crook, R. C., &Sverrisson, A. S. (2001). *Decentralization and poverty-alleviation in developing countries: A comparative analysis or, is West Bengal unique*? (IDS Working Paper, No. 130). Institute of Development Studies.

Devas, N., & Grant, U. (2003). Local government decision-making—citizen participation and local accountability: some evidence from Kenya and Uganda. *Public Administration and Development: The International Journal of Management Research and Practice*, *23*(4), 307-316.https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.281.

Dzakaklo, Hlovor, and Dah (2023). "Unpacking decentralization failures in promoting popular participation in the Ketu South Municipality of Ghana"**.** *Heliyon*.

Ekpo, A. H. (2007). Decentralization and service delivery: A framework. A working Paper.

Faguet, J., & Shami, M. (2021). The incoherence of institutional reform: decentralization as a structural solution to immediate political needs. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *57*(1), 85–112. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-021-09347-4

Falleti, T. M. (2021). *Decentralization and subnational institutional change in Latin America*. Oxford University Press.

K.S. Fridy (2019). "Challenges to decentralization in Ghana: Where do citizens seek assistance?" Afrobarometer Working Paper No. 179.

Haynes, J. (1991). The PNDC and political decentralization in Ghana, 1981–91.*The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 29 (3): 283–307. https://doi.org/10.1080/14662049108447616.

Hilmer, J. D. (2010). The state of participatory democratic theory. *New political science*, *32*(1), 43-63.https://doi.org/10.1080/07393140903492118.

Hindriks, J., & Lockwood, B. (2009). Decentralization and electoral accountability: incentives, separation, and voter welfare. *European Journal of Political Economy*, *25*(3), 385–397. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2009.01.004.

Holum, M. (2022). Citizen Participation: Linking Government Efforts, Actual Participation, and Trust in Local Politicians. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 1–11.https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2022.2048667.

Hope, K. R. (2000). Decentralization and local governance Theory and the practice in Botswana.*Development Southern Africa*, *17*(4), 519–534. https://doi.org/10.1080/03768350050173912

Houdret, A., &Harnisch, A. (2019). Decentralization in Morocco: a solution to the 'Arab Spring'? *The Journal of North African Studies*, *24*(6), 935-960.https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2018.1457958.

Howlett, M. (2011). Policy implementation in developing countries: The case of Ghana. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 77(4), 1–20.

Hyden, G. (2017). The decentralization experience in Africa: beyond donor-driven approaches. *Africa Review*, *9*(1), 98–114.

Julius, K. (2021). *Decentralization and Primary Health Care Service Delivery in Local Governments in Uganda: A Case Study of Kabale Municipality* (Doctoral dissertation, Kabale University).

Kumar S (2002). *Methods for Community Participation: A Complete Guide for Practitioners*. New Delhi

Kundishora, P. (2009). An overview of decentralization and local governance in Eastern and Southern Africa.MacKinnon, D. (2015). Devolution, state restructuring and policy divergence in the UK. *The Geographical Journal*, *181*(1), 47–56.

Manor, J. (1999). *The political economy of democratic decentralization*. The World Bank.https://doi.org/10.1596/0-8213-4470-6.

Manor, J. (2011). Perspectives on decentralization. *Swedish International Centre for Local*

Democracy, Working Paper, *3*, 1–26. http://www.icld.se/pdf/ICLD_wp3_printerfriendly.pdf.

Mohammed, A. K. (2016a). An assessment of the impact of local government fragmentation in Ghana. *Public Organization Review*, *16*(1), 117–138. https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11115-014-0299-2.

Mohammed, A. K. (2016b). Decentralization and participation: Theory and Ghana's evidence. *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, *17*(2), 232–255https://doi.org/10.1017/S1468109916000050.

Muriu, A. R. (2012). *Decentralization, citizen participation, and local public service delivery: a study on the nature and influence of citizen participation on decentralized service delivery in Kenya*. https://publishup.uni-potsdam.de/files/6337/master_muriu.pdf

NDPC, & UNICEF. (2022). *2021 District League Table Report. 93.*

Ninsin, K. A. (2010). The role of communication in local governance: A case study of Ghana. *Ghana Journal of Development Studies*, 7(1), 1-15.

O'Flynn, J., &Wanna, J. (2008). *Collaborative Governance: A new era of public policy in Australia?*https://doi.org/10.26530/oapen_458884.

OECD. (2019). Innovative citizen participation and new democratic institutions: Catching the deliberative wave. OECD Publishing.

OECD. (2019). *Fiscal decentralization and inclusive growth*. OECD Publishing.

Olatona, J. B., & Olomola, P. A. (2015). Analysis of Fiscal Decentralization and Public Service Delivery in Nigeria. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, *6*(9), 107–120. https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JEDS/article/download/22618/23288.

Pastor, P. (2014). Responding to decentralization acrobatics in Tanzania: subnational actors examined. *The African Review: A Journal of African Politics, Development and International Affairs*, 154–184.

Ribot, J. C. (1999). Decentralization, participation, and accountability in Sahelian forestry: legal instruments of political-administrative control. *Africa*, *69*(1), 23–65. http://doi.org/10.2307/1161076.

Riedl, R. B., &Dickovick, J. T. (2010). Comparative assessment of decentralization in Africa: final report and summary of findings.

Rodriguez-Pose, A., & Gill, N. (2020). Does decentralization foster regional development? Evidence from a large panel of European regions. *Regional Studies*, 54(1), 109–123.

Rondinelli, D. A. (1981). Government Decentralization in Comparative Perspective: Theory and Practice in Developing Countries. *International Review of Administrative Sciences, 47*(2), 133–145 https://doi.org/10.1177/002085238004700205.

Rosenbaum, A. (2013). Decentralization and Local Governance: Comparing US and global perspectives. *Administrative Culture*, *14*(1), 11–17 https://www.ceeol.com/content-files/document-151076.pdf.

Saavedra-Costas, P. A. (2009). *A study of the impact of decentralization on access to service delivery*. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/pmap_diss/40/.

Shen, C., Xing, Z., & Zou, H. (2014). Fiscal decentralization and public services provision in China. *Annals of Economics and Finance*, *15*(2), 1037–1063. http://aeconf.com/Articles/May2014/aef150104.pdf

Smoke, P. (2020). Decentralization in developing countries: A review of the literature. Public *Administration and Development*, 40(2), 62–75.

Smoke, P. (2015b). Managing public sector decentralization in Developing Countries: Moving beyond conventional recipes. *Public Administration and Development*, *35*(4), 250–262https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.1736.

Smoke, P. (2015a). Rethinking decentralization: Assessing challenges to a popular public sector reform. *Public Administration and Development,* 35 (2): 97–112. https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.1703.

Stoyan, A. T., &Niedzwiecki, S. (2018). Decentralization and democratic participation: The effect of subnational self-rule on voting in Latin America and the Caribbean. *Electoral Studies*, *52*, 26-35.https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2017.12.001.

Stoyan, A. T., &Niedzwiecki, S. (2018). Decentralization and democratic participation: The effect of subnational self-rule on voting in Latin America and the Caribbean. *Electoral Studies*, *52*, 26-35.

Sujarwoto, S. (2012). Participatory governance and public service delivery in Indonesia: Case studies from Yogyakarta and Bandung. PhD thesis, Universitas Gadjah Mada.

Tshukudu, T. T. (2014). Decentralization as a Strategy for Improving Service Delivery in the Botswana Public Service Sector. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, *4*(2), 40-48. http://doi.org/10.5296/jpag.v4i2.5719.

UN-Habitat. (2022). Localizing the SDGs: The role of cities and regions. UN-Habitat.

Swaminathan, A. (2019). *Decentralization and local governance in India*. Routledge.

Wagana, D. M., Iravo, M., Nzulwa, J., &Kihoro, J. M. (2016). Effect of financial and political decentralization on service delivery in county governments in Kenya. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business & Social Sciences*, *6*(6). https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v6-i6/2199.

World Bank. (2021). *Decentralization and service delivery.* World Bank Publications.

World Bank (2004), *World Development Report 2004: Making Services Work for Poor People*, New York: Oxford University Press.

World Bank. (2001). *World Development Report 2000–2001: Attacking poverty*. Oxford University Press.