

Explaining Sudden Incumbent losses: Evidence from Ghana's Election

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DOI: [10.36347/sjahss.2019.v07i10.003](https://doi.org/10.36347/sjahss.2019.v07i10.003)

| Received: 04.10.2019 | Accepted: 11.10.2019 | Published: 21.10.2019

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Abstract

Original Research Article

Since the emergence of constitutional governance in the fourth Republic, Ghana has undergone several elections successfully with peaceful political turnovers. Each sitting president for the past years has served two successful terms of office. However, in the 2016 general election, the incumbent president suffered a huge defeat to the main opposition party in an attempt to seek for reelection. The results through the use of expert interview and content analysis showed that poor performance of the incumbent government especially with regards to economic issues may be the main reasons for the outcome while ethnicity played little roles in relative terms.

Keywords: Election outcome, incumbent losses, performance, political parties, Ghana, government, voters.

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INTRODUCTION

In Ghana, the political space is dominated by the two major parties New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC) who are believed to be aligned with ethnic groups in the country where Akans vote for NPP and Ewes vote for NDC. Voting in Ghana has followed a particular pattern where each sitting president rules for a period of 8 years. J.J Rawlings of the NDC ruled from 1992 to 2000, John Kuffuor of NPP took over till 2008. Atta Mills of NDC ruled close to the fourth year before he met his untimely death. By constitutional provision, the vice president (in this case, John Mahama) completed the remaining 6 month's term of his predecessor. The NDC then presented John Mahama as their new candidate for the 2012 election, which he eventually won by defeating Akuffo Addo. However, his attempt to seek for a re-election in 2016 was disastrous, as he lost massively to the opposition candidate, Akuffo Addo.

By convention, one would have expected that the sitting president will obviously win the 2016 election as has always been the case in the history of Ghana's elections and in many Africa elections. What has been the sudden change considering some elements of traditional nature of the society? Subsequently, considering Ghana as a young democracy, is it possible that the factors that cause defeat to incumbent presidents in advanced democracy could possibly explain Ghana's case. The current study seeks to determine whether the motivations behind election outcomes in younger democracy like Ghana may somehow be consistent with those of advanced

democracy by explaining and examining the possible causal factors that necessitated the loss of the sitting president.

Although studies have been conducted on election outcomes in Ghana, little attention has been paid to reasons that could account for sitting presidents losing power. This study seeks to fill this gap by identifying the various factors that contributed to the outcome of the 2016 election in Ghana by posing the following questions: What factors were responsible for the 2016 election outcome in Ghana? Which of these factors dominated and why? The results showed that poor performance of the incumbent especially economic factors possibly accounted to the defeat. The findings of this study would inform the existing and successive governments on major issues that are important to electorates which by extension drives policy formulation and implementation for national development.

Theories Explaining Voting Behaviour Retrospective Voting model

This theory explains that all things being equal, when the government or the incumbent do a good job they will be reelected. After elections, the people expect that the promises made by the politicians are duly fulfilled. Lockerbie [1] added that we should evaluate the retrospective voting model by asking voters if the past actions and policies has affected them. This approach explains the fact that, voters vote on how well a regime has performed. Hoffman & Long [2] indicated that the retrospective approach is concerned

with the economic indicators, safety and the general wellbeing of the voters. This means that if the incumbent performs poorly especially in the areas of the economy, the electorates vote the government out, replacing them with an alternative leadership. In other words, a satisfactory performance from the incumbent guarantees the fact that it will be retained to rule. In Ghana voters go to the polls.

Prospective Voting models

Apart from the fact that voters choose candidates based on their past performance, they are very much concerned with the future outcomes, which are known as the prospective voting (Hoffman & Long [2]). In this model, voters are very much concerned with the policies and programmes that the parties are able to present in their manifestos and who will be able to manage the economy very well. When voters realize that a particular party is more attractive especially with its policy directions, they do not hesitate to choose that candidate. Lockerbie [1] clearly point out that we need to critically evaluate this model to understand from the view point of voters which of the parties in the election is more likely to properly manage the economy better in the future.

The Psychosocial Theory

This theory is a combination of the sociological and psychological theory which tries to explain the change of priority Campbell *et al.* [3]. This theory explains the reasons for change in priority by voters despite the fact that some voters belong to some groups in the form of family ties, religion, and clans, ethnic and party affiliations. In essence, under what condition are they likely to change their priorities?

The sociological perspective of the electoral choices is based on origin. Some scholars indicated that ethnicity for example has a high ability to predict the choice of electorates in multiethnic and emerging democracies. According to Hoffman and Long, p 129, "strong assertions of identity and expectations of patronage or policy favoritism" are two main criteria that can link ethnicity and the voter choice. In the former, the candidate is chosen on the basis of showing him solidarity as a member of the group. They elect their own in order to escape the likeness of unfavorable governance from a candidate of another ethnic group. On the latter criteria, in order to benefit directly from patronage or club goods, voters on the other hand prefer to select a candidate from their own ethnic groups. This includes clientelism, where candidates try to use various incentives in the form of positive and negative enticements such as jobs to get votes Mares and Young [4].

This study will not argue from only the sociological perspective because it has some limitation, because if voters make their choice based on the sociological outlook, then outcomes of elections should

be stable for a very long time, in countries where some ethnic groups for example are larger than others. Hence, this study will combine it with the psychological dimension of voting behavior where individuals want to be identified with group such as political party. Party identification is noted to be one of the high rate predictors of electorate choice of candidates because voters identify themselves with the party's ideology or branding, hence are likely to vote for the candidate with which they identified. However, based on the instrumentalism approach in which identity being fluid, endogenous, individuals shift easily from the party to another if the party is not adhering to its ideological principles. These two dimensions of explaining voter choice gives us a broader explanation.

Economic Voting in Advanced Democracies

Several studies show that voters in many advanced democracies look at economic indicators as the influencing factor of their choice of a particular candidate. Fiorina [5] analyzed economic retrospective voting using logit model of US presidential voting in the 1972 and indicated voters are interested on issues that relate to declining rate of unemployment and sound economic policy, people's income and the business condition. Lewis-Beck *et al.* [6] indicated that prior to the 1996 presidential election in the United States, 57% of the voters who sees the economic situation like employment and inflation in the country as good said they were going to support the candidature of Clinton.

To determine the economic understanding of the popularity of presidents in France, Lafay [7] used macroeconomic variables such as inflation, income and unemployment showing a statistically significant economic effect on the popularity of the president emphasizing economic voting in French democracies.

Similarly for Britain, Goodhart & Bhansah [8] in an attempt to understand the major macroeconomic variables and the trends in election modelled the popularity of the government measured from a public opinion time series. The results of the data revealed that there was strong government support with the level of unemployment and inflation which also confirms Sanders [9] findings and a cross sectional survey conducted by Paldam, & Nannestad [10] between 1987 and 1996 in Denmark.

Election Outcomes in Ghana

It has been suggested that many African voting patterns are based on ethnic lines. Hoffman and Long indicated that, Ghana is a typical example of such line of voting. Ghana is somehow a traditional society where majority of Akan's (mostly from Ashanti Region) vote for the NPP whereas the Ewes (mostly from the Volta Region) votes for the NDC. These two ethnic groups are strongly attached to these parties largely because, the NPP evolved from the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) which was formed prior to

independence. Most of these founding fathers were Akan. NDC on the other was founded by JJ Rawlings who is Ewe himself.

However, survey evidence conducted by Linberg & Morrison [11], revealed that voting based on ethnicity or clientelism is not important to voters in Ghana. Instead, voters made their choice based on the performance of the candidate as well as assessing the expected performance of the candidate and the voters make the decisions based on the extent of the available information to them. The information can be in the form of the party's manifesto and the party's ideological principles.

Also Harding [12] analyzed Ghana's 2004 and 2008 elections and came to the conclusion that voters in the rural areas are likely to be influenced by the provision of the public goods.

As a result of the above descriptions, the following hypotheses are stated.

Hypotheses

H1: Economic issues are dominant in the determination of the electoral outcome over political issues.

H2: The performance of the incumbent government influenced the election outcome relative to manifesto (policy declaration).

H3: Ethnicity issues are prevailing in the determination of the electoral outcome.

Research Design

The study adopted a mixed method where content analysis and expert interview was used. As stated by Krippendorff [13] for example, a good way in drawing inferences and making replication in research is by using content analysis.

This study employed Newspapers and Radio stations in Ghana and analyzed to allow a wide range of views. The newspapers are distributed across the country and read by large cross section of the people especially middle and upper income groups. They are distributed to offices, libraries, rural and urban settings and often discussed on Televisions and radios stations every morning (Mondays to Friday). Similarly, radio transcriptions were chosen because almost everyone listened to radio in Ghana regardless of ones' status. This is much advantageous than for example Television since there are cross section of the people who live in very remote areas and have no access to electricity power let alone watching Television.

Newspapers are from Daily graphic and Daily Guide whereas Joy news, Citi news and Peace FM are popular radio stations in Ghana. Although the Daily Graphic is the state media for example, it remained to be the highest circulated printed and online news

agency in the country due to the quality of their news coverage.

Daily Graphic and Daily Guide are in the top 5 newspapers in Ghana which are public and private owned respectively hence justify why they are selected for this study. Similarly, the private news agencies such as Joy news and City News are major credible and reliable source of private news agencies in Ghana Graham *et al.* [14]. These stations chosen are well noted for professionalism, independent and not affiliated to any political party. A Data from Geopoll's Media Measurement Service cited from CitiFmonline [15], responsible for rating media audience indicated that Joy news, Peace FM and Citi news are in the top 5 radio stations in Ghana. These radio stations although they are situated in Accra; they have other affiliated radio stations across the country- all the 10 regions of the country. Hence, their news coverage reaches a large segment of the population in the country.

I analyzed 77 articles: 16 articles from Daily Graphic, 17 from Daily Guide, 19 from Joy News, 20 articles from Citi and 5 articles from news agency in Peace FM. Although, this sample does not cover the views of the entire Ghanaian electorates, the results of the expert interview revealed that these were the same issues that were dominant in the 2016 election.

Admittedly, content analysis adopted is faced with some limitation such as under coverage bias where articles that were published in news agencies excluded the voters that were not captured in the various media publications, posing problem of inadequate representation which by itself undermines the internal validity. Hence, I chose news agencies that received a lot of prestige and relatively high audience to minimize any of such potential biases.

To develop causal explanation, I applied views from the realist's perspective where well developed and properly detailed theories make good causal inference explanation by using well-tested theories on voting behavior especially in matured democracies. These factors has been empirically studied in advanced democracies, and used to make causal inference to explain reasons why incumbent president either win or are voted out.

Also, the possibility that the state media may be bias in favor of the government with even their information posing validity problem was checked after a critical analysis of the private news agencies. It was realized that similar views were shared by both, hence there could not be biases. Further, for most content analysis, the source of data, how the researcher states the actor's role, interpretations given by the researcher may be biased. Hence, I engaged in triangulation which involves the usage of multiple sources and methods. I included expert interview to the study in order to show

more details and explanatory factors and verify results from the content analysis.

Additionally, I counted the collated codes at least twice making me transparent as much as possible and remove any possibility of missing codes, hence the outcome of this study is to a large extent internally and external valid.

Data Collection Procedures of Content Analysis

To be able to identify the articles that aided this study, I employed 'Advanced Google Search' with key word "election". This sample selection focused not only on articles that were discussing the main issues that were in my topics such as (unemployment, corruption scandals and rampant outage of electricity power), but other relevant explanatory factors that were not in my initial topics. This approach helped me to figure out other issues such as social and welfare issues and infrastructure issues. The time frame for my analysis focused on 6 months prior to the election and 6 months after election to get more reliable results which also helped to understand what was important before and after the election.

The first row of the procedures used identified a total of about 550 articles. In order to reduce the final sample to a relatively manageable size, the search was then restricted to various articles that contain the word: "vote", "elect", "presidential", "voting", "election" and "party", hence this procedure reduced the sample to 200 articles. This final sample must focus on the issues of the 2016 general election in Ghana. Therefore, there was an initial reading of articles that were finally identified to ascertain whether they were indeed about the election. In choosing the final sample, articles that contain the main keywords but have nothing to do with the topic were excluded.

The topics coded were unemployment, demonstrations (protest), infrastructure, frequent power outage (Dumsor), teacher training and nursing allowance, social and welfare issues, ethnicity, corruption and personality. I coded citations based on the various actors expressing their opinions which include industry (businesses), government officials, general public, opposition parties, the editors and Civil Society.

Voices represented

Business (industry): voices of individual or opinion of business people.

Civil society organization: Independent groups and social movements in the form of trade union, think tanks and pressure groups.

Editor: Views that were expressed by the writer of the articles.

Government: Statements from president, vice-president and government officials.

Opposition parties: Views expressed by the presidential candidates, vice and opposition officials.

Public Opinion: Views that is shared by the individual citizens other than the actors listed here.

Brief definitions and descriptions on the topics as used in this study

Topics Meaning/Description

Corruption: Corruption allegations and it's perception that were associated to the government officials.

Unemployment: Lack of jobs and the poor enabling environment for the creation of jobs in the country.

Power outage: The frequent unexpected and persistence "on and off" experiences of electricity power Ghana.

Infrastructure: Inadequate, poor conditions of facilities in the form of bad roads, hospitals among others.

Ethnicity: Issues of ethnical, tribal affiliations and origin.

Demonstration (Protest): Protests made against the government mostly on issues such as poor roads and lack of job opportunities for graduates.

Training Allowance: Policy declaration by opposition to reintroduce allowances to teaching and nursing training students.

Social welfare: Social intervention policy proposals that were made especially free education.

Personality: Charisma, personal qualities and leadership traits associated with presidential candidates and their running mates.

DATA COLLECTION

To gather evidence in verifying the results from the content analysis, I gathered opinion from a pool of experts. A total of 12 invitation letters were sent of which 10 informants formally responded. The informants includes 4 Members of Parliament (MP), 4 experts in academia (lecturers) and 2 party executives-one each from both NPP and NDC. To identify the members of parliament, a snowball sampling technique was used. Thus, I contacted one Member of Parliament who also helped to identity other parliamentarians. The informants from the academia and the party executives were purposively selected. The medium of communication was done through phone calls and then recorded. Ethical consideration was taken to account in

the course of the conversation that guided all the processes of the interview. Prior to the interview, the informants were told that the conversations were going to be recorded and alphabets will be used to represent their names. They were also told that the purpose of the interview was solely for academic purpose and that their responses will be treated with absolute confidentiality. This assurance provided the informants to be very opened in the interview. The recorded phone calls were then transcribed and discussed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results from Content Analysis

What factors influence the 2016 Election Outcome in Ghana?

These variables used for this analysis are somewhat not mutually exclusive. The classification was done based on the issues that were raised in the articles analyzed. For example [¹] social and welfare issues [²] corruption and [³] personality are classified as Political issues. In terms of economic, there are issues of infrastructure, unemployment, protest, training allowance and power outage. Protest or demonstration was classified as economic because, in the articles analyzed people protested based on poor roads, unemployment issues as well as the frequent outage of power. These variables are purely based on economic issues. Finally, ethnicity was classified as an ethnic issue.

¹ Free secondary education was a major political campaign the opposition party made whereas the government think they rather needed to create an enabling environment and embark on this policy progressively. This was political ideological differences.

² This was also political because, the perceptions of the corruption were due to various amount of scandals that many government officials were involved in. This is not about businesses paying bribes.

³ The charismatic nature of the candidate and how the public perceive each of them hence making it a political issue.

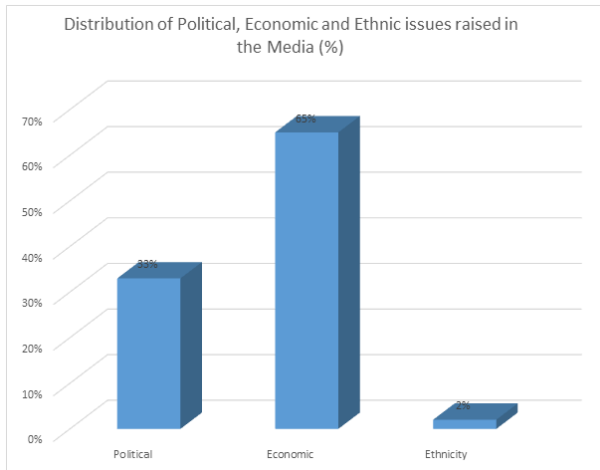


Fig-1: Distribution of Political, Economic and Ethnic issues raised in the Media

Also, results from figure 1 revealed that 33% of political issues were being mentioned in the media whereas 65% of economic issues were being raised and just 2% of ethnic issues were being mentioned. The data shows a significant difference of 32% between economic and political issues being raised in the media. This result suggests that economic issues such as unemployment, infrastructure, frequent power outage and teaching and nursing training allowance may have played important roles in the election compared to political issues. This also gives us an idea that Ghanaian voters may have been paying more attention to economic issues than political issues.

Theoretical Classification of Issues

This section also classifies the issues based on the three theories used in the study namely prospective voting model, retrospective model and psychosocial theory. Again, some of the issues are not mutually exclusive. Prospective classification was based on the future expectations whereas the retrospective was done on the past performance and then finally on psychosocial dimensions. Prospective classifications include ⁴social and welfare issues [⁵], training allowance and [⁶] personality [⁷]. Retrospective on the other hand contains issues such as infrastructure, unemployment, protest, corruption and power outage.

⁴ As said earlier, this was social intervention policy that both parties intend to implement, especially opposition advocating for free secondary education if they win power.

⁵ This policy ever existed but was cancelled by the government. However in the articles analyzed, the opposition was seen promising to restore all of these allowances for them to empower the students financially. This has been one of their major campaign promises.

⁶ Again, the personal qualities, how the candidates branded themselves going to the election, including their health, past political track records, charisma, and ability to influence the public making it prospective

⁷ In the article analyzed, the government was accused of performing poorly when it comes infrastructure development, unemployment, corruption cases and the way it handled the power situations in the country-hence retrospective.

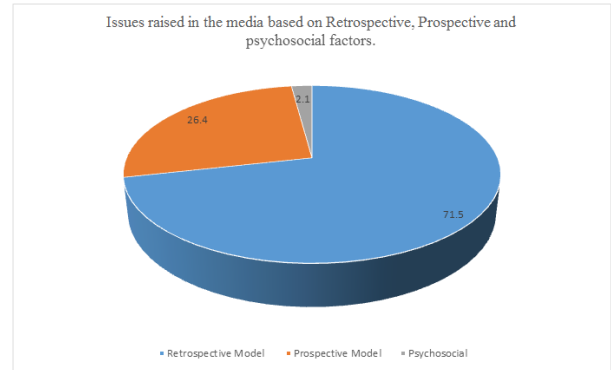


Fig-2: Issues raised in the media based on Retrospective model, Prospective and psychosocial factors

The figure 2 above shows how the issues mentioned in the media were categorized according to prospective, retrospective and psychosocial explanations. Current findings revealed clearly that 71.5% issues mentioned were based on the retrospective factors, 26.4% of prospective factors and 2.1% of the psychosocial factors. The retrospective factors were based on the past performance of the government. Information from the articles indicates that there were issues of increasing rate of unemployment, unstable electricity supply, increasing rate of corruption scandals and poor road networks among others. The prospective factors were based on the future outlook especially on manifestos (policy declaration) and personality of the candidates. For instance, there were declarations such as restoration of nursing and teacher training allowances. Lastly, only 2.1% of psychosocial factors were being mentioned. As a result, we could realize that despite the fact manifestos could have mattered in the election outcome, it may not be great enough compared to the poor or past performance. Thus, this result to some extent suggests that voters in Ghana may have been more tuned to retrospective voting behavior where they probably analyzed the past performance of the incumbent president and the government in general.

What are the dominant factors that influenced the 2016 election outcome?

The table shows issues that were more dominant before and after the election

Table-1

Before the election	After the election
Unemployment	Social & welfare issues
Social & welfare issues	Unemployment
Infrastructures	Corruption
Corruption	
Training Allowance	
Ethnicity	
Frequent power outage (Dumsor)	

In the output given above, the issues that were mentioned most in the news agencies prior to the election were unemployment, social and welfare issues, infrastructures, corruption, training allowance, ethnicity, frequent power outage whereas after the election, the most pertinent issues were social and welfare issues which includes provision of free secondary education, unemployment and corruption. Prior to the election, government was urged to construct roads especially the eastern corridor road that links

various parts of the country and failure to do so will lead to voting against the government. However, after the election, some of these issues were not dominant in the media. This also somehow suggests that during election periods, voters usually see this period to get what they need from the government and hence place various demands on them. After election there is relatively low pressure of voters' demand on government.

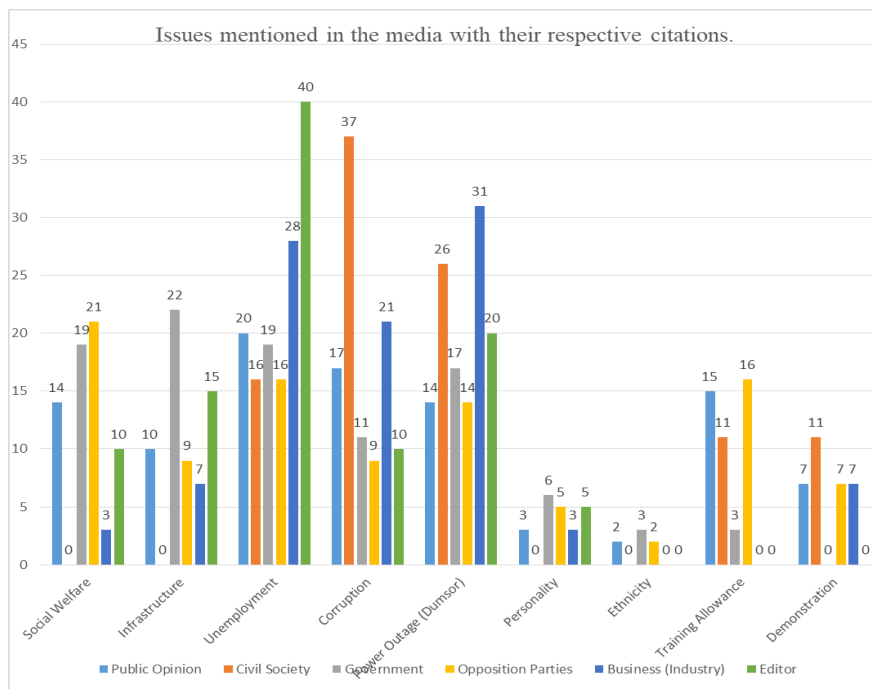


Fig-3: Issues mentioned in the media with their respective citations

As could be seen the most discussed issue has to do with unemployment. This result somehow is consistent with early studies used in some of the advanced countries such as Fiorina [5], Lewis-Beck [6] and Lafay [7] where voters prefer to vote for the incumbent government when macroeconomic fundamentals such as unemployment issues are good.

Unemployment being the most dominant issue mentioned in the press is quite clear due to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) bail out the country went into which came with conditions including freezing public sector employment. Then frequent energy crisis became a major issue. As seen, 31% of business was cited on the frequent power outage as a major issue, followed by 26% of civil society organizations, 20% by the editor, 17% of government officials, and 14% each for the general public and opposition parties. Some industry players complained on how the frequent power outage was affecting their business which is consistent with voting behavior in advanced democracies analyzed by scholars such as Fiorina.

Corruption was the third important issue with civil society with 37% cited, business with 21%, then 17% for public opinion, government, editor and opposition had 11%, 10% and 9% respectively. There were a number corruption scandals and this could have made the government unpopular such as \$600 million AMERI power deal, rebranding of 116 states buses amounting to GHC 3.6 Million. Also, there were 21% social and welfare issues that were mentioned by the opposition parties, followed by the government officials of 19%, 14% by the general public, 10% by the editors and 3% by the businesses. It is not surprising that the opposition parties dominated in this because of the promises made by opposition party to implement free secondary education.

Other issues were concerns over infrastructure, teacher and nursing training allowances, demonstration, personality and ethnicity. We see clearly that in relative terms, ethnicity could not be a major issue during the period and its role in the election may have been minimal. Despite the fact it may play role as some previous researchers made us understands, its role in the 2016 election is minimal in relative terms. Hence, this reject my third hypothesis which suggested that

ethnicity issues were prevailing in determining the electoral outcome but confirmed position by scholars such as Lindberg that ethnic voting is not the major issue in Ghana.

Also, with respect to the comparisons across groups, there are clearly different priorities evident from the topics being discussed. It is evident that business or industry players cared much more about power outages than the populace. Similarly, the

populace cared much more about social welfare issues indicating that different groups placed different priorities on different issues. Notwithstanding, it is also evident that although different groups had different priorities there were alignment on issues which seemed to mattered most such as unemployment, corruption and even power outage. For example, unemployment and corruption as issues were recorded relatively higher for all major stakeholders.

Presentation and Analyses from Interview

Demographic Characteristics (Table 2 Statistical Descriptions of informants)

Variables	Categories	frequency	M	SD	Range	
					Min	Max
Gender	Male	6				
	Female	4				
Total		10				
Age			44.1	8.92	30	63
Ethnic	Akan	3				
	Ewe	3				
	Mole Dagbani	2				
	Ga	1				
	Nankani	1				
Total		10				
Religion	Christians	7				
	Muslims	3				
Total		10				

Note: M= mean, SD= Standard Deviation, Min= Minimum age, Max= Maximum age
Source: Field data, 2019

Informants, age and their profession

Codes(Respondents)	Profession/Position	Age
A	Party Executive(immediate past), NDC	50
B	Teaching(Senior Lecturer)	43
C	Member of Parliament, NDC	38
D	Member of Parliament, NDC	30
E	Teaching(Senior Lecturer-former)	63
F	Teaching(Lecturer)	38
G	Teaching(Senior Lecturer)	45
H	Member of Parliament, NPP	39
I	Member of Parliament, NPP	47
J	Party Executive, NPP	48
M		44.1
SD		8.92

From the Table 2, the total informants were 10. Out of these, 6 of the informants are males whereas 4 of them are females. The respondents ages ranges from 30 to 63 years. As could be seen from the table, average age is 44.1 with a standard deviation of 8.92. There were 3 Akans, 3 Ewes and 2 Mole Dagbani ethnic group and one person each from the Ga- Adangbe and Nankani tribe.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS FROM THE INFORMANTS

Do you think policy declaration (manifesto) matters in the 2016 election?

The first question was to understand from the experts if issues of policies were important in the 2016 election. From the responses given, seven out of ten experts think that policies were very important in the

elections. Two experts partially agreed. These views were that the performances of the incumbent government were very bad to the extent that even without those policies, the opposition would still have won the election. Similarly, one of the experts does not think policies in the election played any role at all. In the interview, there were statements from the experts such as the one made by informant 'I' that, "the NDC lost policy directions" and the many policy declarations made by NPP influenced some sections of the public. Also, experts A for example felt that despite the fact that Ghanaians were fed up with the regime, free education policy declarations made by the opposition had a great influence on some voters. Overall, issues of manifesto or policy declaration to some extent influenced the election outcome which validates the results obtained from the content analysis.

Do you think that the past performance might have accounted for the defeat of the incumbent president?

All ten experts agreed that the past performance of the incumbent government was the major issue that affected the election outcome. There were a number of reasons that accounted for this outcome which includes unemployment, corruption, high cost of living, arrogance among the appointees of government and they do not seem to be sensitive to the plights of the people. It is also important to know that, from the expert 'A' (a national executive of the party at the time) felt that, there was a disconnection between the government and the party (NDC) itself. This also created some disunity among them; hence the president did not get the full support he had from the 2012 election from his own party. This was clearly explained by experts B, that there was neglect of the grassroots members and foot soldiers. The results here do not just validate the content analysis but also enrich it, as it provided more information such as the disconnection of the government from the party and arrogance among the president's appointees.

Are issues of ethnicity, religiosity and other forms of party identification important in the election outcome?

In order to understand the role of ethnicity and religiosity influence in the election, 6 out of the 10 experts think these were not important in the election. Unlike the previous elections where Voltarians and Northerners were noted for voting for the NDC, in 2016 The NPP had significant amount of votes share from these regions manifesting in even in parliamentary election. Three experts agree partly whereas only one of them thinks ethnic issue was a very important factor of the electoral outcome. The information from all the informants indicated that ethnic or religious issues played little roles in comparisons. In reference to the results obtained from the content analysis which revealed that ethnicity accounted for only 2%, we can conclude with the expert's view that ethnicity issues were very minimal in the election.

Is it possible that some voters might have shifted their support to the opposition largely due to certain politicians leaving the party?

Although elite splits mostly applies to competitive authoritative regimes, the idea here is to understand if there was any elite defection or if any minor parties aligned themselves. Some of the experts opined that there were some elements of elite splits but it could not have influenced the election outcome. This was in reference to the Former first Lady, Nana Konadu Agyemang Rawlings who left the part to form her own party (National Democratic Party). Notwithstanding, this incident happened even prior to the 2012 election, but the NDC still won that election hence could not have affected the 2016 election outcome in any large degree. Nevertheless, the fact that there was a disconnection between the NDC government and the party itself is prima facie evidence of an elite split hence will need further research.

CONCLUSION

Results from the content analysis and experts interview revealed that poor performance by the government in some areas such as increasing rate of unemployment, corruption, the frequent power outage were seen as influencing factor in the 2016 elections in outcome in Ghana. This study shows that just like most advanced democracies, electorates in Ghana voted on economic issues with relatively insignificant ethnic issues. Additionally, there was a disconnection between the party leadership and the government itself which all contributed to the defeat of the president. The current finding also revealed that the low performance by the government gave a clear chance for the opposition to win even if they had no credible manifesto. Also, issues of policy declaration and promises made were important.

Politicians should begin to take their citizens seriously especially when it comes to providing them with their basic needs. Providing an enabling environment for job creation should be prioritised by all politicians to improve living standard. Also, government and politicians should be in touch with party grassroots members especially by involving them in decision making. The findings of the study also inform the existing and successive governments on major issues that are important to electorates which drives policy formulation and implementation for national development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My greatest appreciation to my esteemed advisor at the Higher School of Economics; Professor Marques II, Israel for his immense support, motivation and guidance towards the completion of this term paper. Also, my sincere acknowledgement to my uncle Seyram Toklo for the various support he gave me during the period and finally to the authors whose works were referenced.

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