

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**MEDIA AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN
GHANA: A CASE STUDY OF UPPER DENKYIRA EAST MUNICIPAL
ASSEMBLY**



BENJAMIN ODOOM

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA



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GHANA: A CASE STUDY OF UPPER DENKYIRA EAST MUNICIPAL
ASSEMBLY**



**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in
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**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE EDUCATION
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION
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MAY, 2025

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, Benjamin Odoom, hereby declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been duly identified and acknowledged, is entirely my original work. No part of this thesis has therefore been presented in any form to any institution for the award of any other degree.

Signature:

Date:

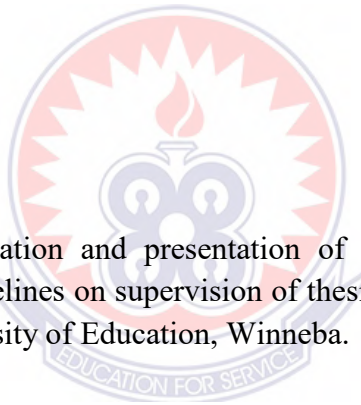
Supervisors Declaration

I certify that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis as laid down by the School of Graduate Studies, University of Education, Winneba.

Supervisor's Name: Prof. Gabriel Botchwey

Signature:

Date:



DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family for their unwavering support, love, and encouragement throughout this journey.



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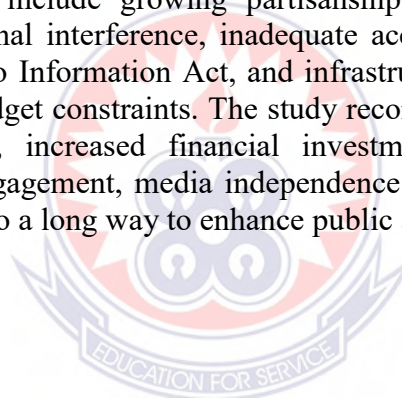
AFRC	-	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
B2B	-	Business to Business
CSO	-	Civil Society Organizations
DA	-	District Assembly
DACF	-	District Assembly Common Fund
DCE	-	District Chief Executive
DDP	-	District Development Plan
DRIP	-	District Road Improvement Program
ERP	-	Enterprise Resource Planning
FAD	-	Financial Administration Decree
GIFEC	-	Ghana Investment Fund for Electronic Communications
GSS	-	Ghana Statistical Service
ISP	-	Internet Service Providers
LGRD	-	Local Government and Rural Development
MCD	-	Municipal Coordinating Director
MCE	-	Municipal Chief Executive
MIS	-	Management Information System
MMDAs	-	Metropolitan Municipal District Assemblies
MTN	-	Mobile Telecommunication Network
NCA	-	National Communications Authority
NCS	-	New Computer Systems
NDC	-	National Democratic Congress
NDPC	-	National Development Planning Commission
NDPS	-	National Development Planning System

NLC	-	National Liberation Council
NPP	-	New Patriotic Party
PC	-	Personal Computer
PWD	-	Persons With Disability
RTI	-	Right to Information
SIM	-	Subscriber Identity Module
TOE	-	Technology-Organization-Environment
TV	-	Television
UDEMA	-	Upper Denkyira East Municipal Assembly



ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore how social media and radio are utilized to promote public accountability in local governance within the Upper Denkyira East Municipality, using the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) framework and the Media as a Watchdog theory as guiding lenses. A qualitative research design was adopted, and purposive sampling was used to select thirty (30) participants, including local government officials, journalists, and citizens. Primary data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, and thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data. The findings reveal that radio remains the most trusted and widely used medium for citizen engagement in the Municipality. Weekly radio programs on local stations such as Denkyiraman Radio serve as interactive platforms where officials communicate policies, receive feedback, and address public concerns. Despite institutional challenges such as financial constraints, local context, and poor internet infrastructure, citizens continue to leverage social media to raise concerns and compel action from local authorities. These platforms were found to significantly enhance transparency, citizen participation, and informal enforcement of accountability, especially in the absence of robust formal mechanisms. However, the study identifies several barriers to the effective use of media in fostering accountability. These include growing partisanship within the media landscape, political and institutional interference, inadequate access to information despite the passage of the Right to Information Act, and infrastructural limitations such as poor internet access and budget constraints. The study recommended that improvements to internet infrastructure, increased financial investment, strengthened institutional capacity for media engagement, media independence and strict adherence to RTI at the local level would go a long way to enhance public accountability.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter covers the background of the study and presents the statement of the research problem, research objectives and research questions. It also discusses the significance, scope and delimitation and organization of the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

Public accountability is a fundamental principle of democratic governance, guaranteeing that institutions and representatives of the government continue to answer to the people. One of the most significant drivers of public accountability in contemporary governance is the media, which serves as a conduit between the government and the citizens. Among the various forms of media, radio and social media have become dominant platforms for fostering transparency, engaging communities, and holding authorities accountable (Schiffrin, 2017). With the rise of digital media, real-time citizen participation in governance has become more pronounced, enabling direct interactions between officials and the public (Norris, 2018).

Media, conventional as well as new, is one of the important sources of knowledge and has proved itself a viable connection between the people and the government. It has also proved its importance in creating awareness among people about government responsibilities and their role in accountability. The daily talk shows, news and social media apps create continuous mechanisms to hold the government responsible for the policies, the political decisions, happenings, and their policies which have a profound impact on people's lives (Ullah & Shah, 2018). The media, often regarded as the

–fourth estate,” plays a crucial role in disseminating information, exposing corruption, and advocating for transparency in governance (Schiffrin, 2017).

With the advent of digital media, the landscape of accountability has evolved, enabling more citizen participation and real-time monitoring of government activities (Norris, 2018). Governments everywhere are under pressure to modernize and alter the way their bureaucracies interact with the public in the twenty-first century (Bonson et al., 2012). The use of e-government and social media is partly motivated by the need to improve accountability and openness while altering the previously passive position that citizens played as consumers or customers (Abdulkareem et al., 2022). Governments and its elected and public servant leaders now operate in a very different environment thanks to digital technology. An enormous amount of data and information is gathered, and when it becomes available, the concerns and insights it reveals can be shared even faster within the government and civil society, applying constant pressure (Lindquist, 2022).

Globally, radio and social media have been recognized as key pillars in ensuring transparency and accountability in governance. In democratic societies, investigative journalism through radio broadcasts has played an instrumental role in exposing corruption, influencing policy decisions, and ensuring that government institutions operate within the legal and ethical framework of governance (Hamilton, 2016). In many parts of the world, radio remains a trusted medium for news and public engagement, particularly in rural areas with limited internet penetration (McNair, 2018). In recent years, social media’s introduction has completely changed how people communicate about politics and engage as citizens across the globe. Approximately 4.9 billion people, or 69% of the world's population, actively use the

internet, according to Internet World Stats (2022). Trends indicate that there will be 196 million additional internet users, or a 4% annual growth in the number of users every year.

Over the past ten years, social media and communication platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter (X) have become dramatically more accessible throughout sub-Saharan Africa (Adeola et al, 2022). According to Statista (2022), in 2022, there were about 570 million internet users on the continent, more than double what there was in 2015. The majority of users are concentrated in Nigeria, the most populous nation in Africa. In 2022, they numbered more than 100 million, with Egypt having 76 million and South Africa having 41 million. An extended and deeper adoption of mobile internet is taking place in many African countries. The emergence of new communities of “networked individuals” outside of the conventional geographic localities have emerged. The ability of common people to independently obtain, analyze, and disseminate information has eliminated governments' exclusive control over information, empowering people to create alternative narratives and shape political discourse. The #EndSARS campaign in Nigeria served as an example of how online communities may hold officials responsible for wrongdoing (Gesah, 2021). Similarly, radio has remained the most effective mass communication medium in Africa because of its accessibility and low cost (Leketanyane et al., 2024). According to Ojebode and Akinwale (2019), community radio stations have become essential components of local accountability initiatives because they give voice to underrepresented groups and promote communication between the public and public servants.

There's nowhere this transition is more apparent than Ghana, where social media platforms have become indispensable instruments for advancing public accountability, especially in local governance (Dzisah, 2018). Ghana, a country known for its thriving democracy, has witnessed a sharp increase in the use of social media by its citizens (Spasov & Agbozo, 2019). In January 2023, 6.60 million Ghanaians, or roughly 19.5% of the nation's entire population, were active on social media. As per Datareportal (2023), the number of active mobile phone connections in Ghana at the start of 2023 was 43.88 million, signifying 129.8% of the total population of the country. Social media sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter have woven themselves into Ghanaian society, giving people never-before-seen possibilities to express their thoughts, obtain information, and participate in public debates. Social media has become a change agent in local governance, giving people the ability to demand openness, hold elected officials responsible, and actively engage in decision-making processes that impact their communities (Nutsugah et al., 2024).

Social media platforms function as online town squares where people may air concerns, exchange stories, and organize a group to take on issues related to local government. Social media has the power to democratize politics, promote greater transparency, and fortify democratic institutions at the local level by disseminating information and amplifying the voices of citizens (Ali, 2023). At the core of this change is the idea of public accountability, which refers to the duty of people in positions of authority to defend their choices, take ownership of their acts, and respond to the wants and demands of the populace. Some scholars (Shapiro, 1999; Benkler, 2006; Coleman & Blumler, 2009; as cited by Ceron, 2017) argue that social media has the potential to transform into an unrestrained public domain that facilitates direct communication between citizens and political elites. This direct interaction can

lead to increased transparency and accountability, ultimately fortifying the democratic system. Social media platforms give citizens the ability to keep an eye on government operations, report instances of corruption, and hold elected officials accountable (Adam & Fazekas, 2021). By giving citizens a forum to monitor government actions, social media can strengthen the bond between the governed and the government, increase public confidence in political institutions, and advance a transparent and responsive local government culture (Nutsugah et al., (2024). Social media can serve as a new instrumental function to ensure accountability in governance by raising awareness and providing a forum for collective decisions and actions, in addition to fostering political and social movements by offering opportunities for political speech, symbolic identification of collective actors, and information exchange (Usman, 2020).

Social media via the Internet has made new communications technology crucial tools for creating, coordinating, and executing global social movements and inspiring group action. Social media development opened doors for Web-driven social movements, or cyber activism, to change the field of collective action (Abbo Usman, 2020). Social media tactics were specifically employed to create unrestricted political spaces, publicize causes for obtaining international community support, mobilize and carry out collective actions, and cultivate a sense of community and collective identity among members of oppressed groups (Lim, 2017). By raising awareness and offering platforms for group decisions and actions, new communication techniques can serve as a new instrumental function to ensure accountability in governance, in addition to fostering political and social movements by facilitating political speech, symbolic identification of collective actors, and information exchange (Usman, 2020).

In Ghana, radio and social media play a critical role in local governance. Radio programs discussing municipal governance have provided avenues for residents to voice their concerns, while social media has enabled more immediate and interactive discussions on policy issues. However, challenges such as political interference in radio discussions, limited access to the internet, and misinformation on social media affect the effectiveness of these platforms in fostering accountability. The study aims to assess the extent to which radio and social media enhance public accountability in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality and provide recommendations for improving their role in governance.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Since the 1990s, many developing nations have increasingly adopted decentralization as a key component of good governance. These reforms have primarily focused on shifting authority, resources, and accountability from central governments to local government entities. This approach empowers communities to take an active role in managing their own affairs while ensuring their legal right to participate in policy decisions. As a result, decentralization fosters accountable and responsive governance, ultimately aiming to enhance citizens' well-being (Crook & Manor, 1997; Olowu & Wunsch, 2004; Oxhorn, Tulchin, & Selee, 2004; as cited by Naaikuur, 2020). Despite the progress made in decentralization, many developing countries continue to face significant communication challenges within their local governance structures. White (2008), in his review of major multi-country studies on decentralization across Sub-Saharan Africa, identifies communication breakdown as a fundamental issue undermining the effectiveness of decentralization. He argues that while many African nations have taken steps to decentralize decision-making to enhance government responsiveness to local needs, this has not necessarily translated

into improved service delivery. The primary reason for this, he notes, is the lack of effective communication between district or ward councils and local communities. This deficiency hampers productive dialogue, weakens community participation, and ultimately undermines transparency, accountability, and the responsiveness of government policies and initiatives (Naaikuur, 2020).

Public accountability in local governance is fundamental to democratic governance, as it ensures that government officials remain answerable to the citizens they serve. In Ghana, the media—particularly radio and social media—plays an essential role in fostering accountability by providing a platform for information dissemination, civic engagement, and public oversight of governmental actions (Adei & Ayee, 2017; Asamoah, 2019). Social media, in particular, has transformed the nature of government-citizen interactions by enabling real-time feedback, crowdsourcing for problem-solving, and direct participation in governance processes (Kavanaugh, Sandoval-Almazan, & Ubacht, 2020). Social media today gives public institutions new ways to quickly disseminate information, be transparent, promote themselves to enhance their public perception, and collaborate with citizens to create and perform public services. Central government is not the only organization that can benefit from social media. Innovative Internet-based technologies are used by local governments to supplement more conventional approaches in carrying out various tasks (Sobaci, 2016). Public engagement between the state and its citizens now has a venue thanks to social media. According to Andrews, Jarvis, and Pavia (2014), as citizens grow more technologically literate, so do their expectations from the government.

In recent years, governments across the world have embraced social media in various ways. The number of governments using social media increased from 71 in 2014 to

152 in 2018, according to the UN's E-government survey (United Nations, 2018). According to the United Nations (2020), 65% of its member states are now at a high or very high Electronic Government Development Index (EGDI). Public sector organizations have realized how important citizen connection, accountability and transparency and public participation are, especially considering social media's fast growth (Arshad & Khurram, 2020). People are becoming less apathetic toward governments and more demanding of them to be transparent and accountable. They anticipate being updated on government initiatives and involved in the creation of policies.

Similarly, radio, which remains one of the most widely accessible media platforms in Ghana, has traditionally served as a vital tool for civic engagement, particularly in rural communities where internet penetration is low (Nyarko, 2021). Thus, radio programs as well as good journalism are now potential platforms for the demand by citizens for local government services or public goods (Sajoko et al., 2023).

While a growing corpus of research has examined how social media affects political processes around the world (Abusamhadana et al., 2021), there is still a clear knowledge vacuum on how social media specifically promotes public accountability at the local governance level in Ghana. Most studies which have focused on the impact of social media in Ghana's local government system have neglected transparency and accountability. Ceron et al., (2017) contends that majority of studies on social media so far have focused on political parties and election campaigns. The existing body of literature on social media mostly focuses on the impact of social media on citizens' engagement and participation at the national and local level and how social media can ensure trust in our democracy. To be sure, Dzisah (2018),

assessed the various roles and contributions that the media, particularly social media, have played in the democratic journey of Ghana. He concluded that, imperatively, access to new communication technologies such as the Internet and mobile telephony are promoting democratic discourses and enhancing participation through social media platforms. Gyampo (2017) assessed the specific ways in which political parties in Ghana have deployed social media in advancing their interest, which raises the challenges encountered in the quest to tap the advantages of social media to capture political power. He argues that even though social media has broad advantages, it has severe challenges that undermines its effectiveness and nullifies any attempt to use it as a substitute to traditional media in Ghana. The study focused on political parties.

Asamoah (2019) examined E-governance in Africa's local governments by evaluating the websites and social media portals (Facebook and Twitter) of two municipal assemblies in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. He concluded that these platforms have provided new channels for information sharing between local authorities and citizens. However, despite favorable demographic characteristics, citizens in the study areas do not make good use of e-government options to interact with their local government officials. Mohammed, Gyimah & Adisa (2023) also looked at the drivers and challenges of social media usage in Ghana's local government administration. They looked at the type of social media platforms employed by Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in Ghana and the factors contributing to the adoption of social media utilizing the Technological-Organizational-Environment (TOE) framework. They observed that social media usage is on the increase amongst the MMDAs in Ghana, and most MMDAs use mainly two social media handles (Facebook and WhatsApp) to engage citizens, communities and firms. However, the study focused on the utilization of social media by MMDAs and the

factors that lead to its adoption but not on accountability. Secondly, the study does not speak to the impact of social media on public accountability on local government units.

Similarly, while radio remains the dominant source of information for most Ghanaians (Nyarko, 2021), its role in enhancing accountability within local governance structures remains underexplored. Naaikuur (2012), assessed Ghana's experience in participatory community radio broadcasting. The study concluded that attempts at creating truly democratic community radio stations can be fully realized by ensuring that the fundamental principles, which underpin the operation and democratic management of community radio stations, are implemented to benefit community members. Naaikuur, Diedong & Dzisah (2022) also assessed how-to-text on how community radio (CR) can be creatively used to address low civic involvement in policymaking in Ghana's local governance units. The study found that community radio in Ghana can serve as effective tools for mobilizing people to participate in policymaking in local governance through creative programming. The study concludes that the little evidence on innovative use of community radio to promote citizens' involvement in local governance policy-making processes is an issue which needs to be addressed to unleash the potential of community radio in local governance. Amadu and Alhassan (2018) also explored the relationship between community radio broadcast and community development in Northern Ghana, using the experiences of radio Gaakii in the Saboba district. They observed that the general programming style and format of Radio Gaakii's broadcast contents are practically aimed at responding to the felt needs of the communities it serves. Socio-cultural issues were found to be the primary concern of the listening community that the

Station has addressed most since its inception in 2011. The focus was not on how the radio enhances public accountability.

Nsude and Emeka (2023) investigated the role of the media in ensuring the accountability of public officials in Imo State from the audience's perspective. They concluded that the respondents perceived that the extent the media holds public officials accountable in terms of corruption is low; as such they perceived that the media role in holding public officials accountable is not enough despite the efforts by the media to hold them accountable especially as it has to do with corruption. They focused on the Nigerian experience.

From the above, there is a knowledge gap with respect to how social media and radio enhances public accountability which this study seeks to fill. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this knowledge gap by examining how social media and radio collectively enhance public accountability in local governance in Ghana, with a specific focus on the Upper Denkyira East Municipal Assembly. This study explores the extent to which local government officials use these platforms to respond to citizen concerns, promote transparency, and improve service delivery. By analyzing interactions on both social media and radio, this study provides critical insights into how local governance structures in Ghana can leverage traditional and digital media to strengthen public accountability.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how social media, and radio can enhance public accountability in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study will be:

1. to explore how local government officials in the Upper Denkyira East Municipal Assembly use social media and radio to engage with citizens.
2. to examine the role of social media and radio in promoting public accountability within the Upper Denkyira East Municipality.
3. to identify the challenges to the effective use of social media and radio to enhance public accountability.

1.5 Research Questions

1. In what ways do local government officials in the Upper Denkyira East Municipal Assembly utilize social media and radio to engage with citizens?
2. How do social media and radio platforms contribute to promoting public accountability in local governance within the Upper Denkyira East Municipality?
3. What are the challenges to the effective use of social media and radio to enhance public accountability in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study addresses a crucial gap in the existing research on media and local governance in Ghana. While much of the previous work has explored the influence of social media on elections and political campaigns, as well as the role of radio in fostering community development, there has been little focus on how these two platforms work together to promote public accountability at the local level. By offering empirical insights into their use within the Upper Denkyira East

Municipality, this study enriches academic discussions on decentralization, governance, and media engagement, particularly in the African context.

From a practical perspective, this study offers valuable guidance to local government officials and civil society organizations on effectively utilizing social media and radio to strengthen public accountability. By highlighting both the challenges and opportunities associated with these platforms, it provides concrete recommendations for enhancing government-citizen interactions. Local government authorities can apply the findings to refine their communication strategies, while civil society organizations focused on good governance can use the insights to better engage and mobilize citizens through media, fostering greater civic participation.

This study contributes to theoretical discussions on public accountability, media influence, and governance by examining how social media and radio enhance transparency and responsiveness in local government. While existing theories often consider traditional and digital media separately in shaping democratic processes, this research integrates both to demonstrate their collective role in fostering accountability within decentralized governance structures. By analyzing media-driven accountability mechanisms at the local level, the study provides new insights into how media platforms contribute to strengthening governance and improving service delivery.

1.7 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study examines the role of social media and radio in enhancing public accountability in local governance, with a specific focus on the Upper Denkyira East Municipality in Ghana. The study explores how these media platforms facilitate transparency, responsiveness, and citizen engagement in local governance processes.

The study focuses on three key groups: residents, officials of the municipal assembly, and journalists. The perspectives of residents are crucial in understanding how citizens engage with social media and radio to demand accountability and participate in governance. Municipal assembly officials provide insights into how local government authorities utilize these platforms for communication, information dissemination, and responsiveness to public concerns. Journalists, particularly those working with local radio stations and online media, offer perspectives on how the media serves as a watchdog, influencing government accountability and policy decisions.

In terms of delimitation, the study is confined to the Upper Denkyira East Municipality and does not extend to other municipalities or regions in Ghana. The study focuses on qualitative data collection through interviews and observations. By defining these boundaries, the study ensures a focused and in-depth analysis of how social media and radio influence public accountability in local governance in Ghana.

1.8 Organization of the Study

This research is organized into five chapters. The first chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the research problem, the research objectives and questions, significance of the study, scope and delimitation of the study as well as the organization of the study. Chapter Two presents a review of relevant literature and theoretical framework underpinning the study.

In Chapter Three, the methodology is covered. This includes research design, study setting, study population, sample size and sampling strategies, data collection tools, data collection processes, and data handling, among other topics. The chapter also covers ethical concerns and the trustworthiness of the study. Chapter Four will

concentrate on data analysis and discussions of the findings, while Chapter Five includes a summary, recommendations, and conclusion of the findings.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents both the theoretical and relevant literature reviewed about the study. This chapter is divided into two primary sections. Section one presents the theoretical framework while the second section reviews literature on the objectives of the study and other related topics. The empirical literature review is categorized under the following thematic areas: decentralization and local governance in Ghana, public accountability, mass media, mass media and public accountability, social media in Ghana, social media utilization by local governments as well as challenges of social media in Ghana among others.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.2 The Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) Theory (Tornatzky & Fleisher, 1990)

One of the theories that underpin this work is the Technology Organization Environment theory (TOE). The Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) model developed by Tornatzky and Fleisher (1990) served as the framework for this investigation. Tornatzky and Fleisher's *The Processes of Technological Innovation* (1990) provides an explanation of the technology-organization-environment (TOE) framework. In the book, the complete process of innovation is explained, from engineers' and entrepreneurs' conception of new ideas to users' acceptance and application of those ideas inside a company. One part of this process, which is how the firm setting affects innovation acceptance and implementation, is represented by the TOE framework.

The theory provides useful insights for comprehending the organizational components that affect how new technologies are adopted by an organization. According to the TOE, adoption and implementation are influenced by three primary components in an organizational environment. These include the technology context, the organizational context, and the environmental context (Erind, 2015). All three are said to have a direct impact on technological innovation and may facilitate or impede adoption and implementation (Baker, 2011).

Regarding the technological context, Tornatzky and Fleisher (1990) argue that organizations should take into account the features of the technical structure of their internal and external settings prior to implementing technological innovation. Technologies in the internal context refer to those that are already available and being used within the organization, whereas those in the external environment include those that are marketed but not yet utilized by the organization (Baker, 2012). Hekkert et al., (2007) argue that the technologies that an organization now uses have a big impact on the adoption process since they dictate how quickly and how much they can shift technologically. External technologies also influence innovation by establishing the limits of what is possible and showing businesses how technology may support change and adaptation. The technologies that a company currently uses play a significant role in the adoption process because they place restrictions on the extent and rate of technological change that a company can implement (Collins et al. 1988).

Innovation is also influenced by technologies that already exist but are not being used by the company. These innovations do this through defining the boundaries of what is feasible and by demonstrating to the company how technology can help them grow and adapt. Three categories of innovations occur within the group of inventions

existing outside the firm: innovations that produce discontinuous, synthetic, or incremental changes (Tushman and Nadler 1986). Incremental innovations bring forth new features or upgraded versions of already-existing technologies. The adopting organization will experience the least level of risk and change with these incremental advances. Examples include upgrading from one version of the enterprise resource planning (ERP) system to a newer one or switching from cathode ray tube (CRT) to liquid crystal display (LCD) computer monitors. Synthetic change is the result of innovatively combining preexisting concepts or technology in a novel way. It is a middle ground between moderate and radical change. One instance is the way in which academic institutions distribute course materials online. No novel technology is employed in the recording, storing, or transmission processes; therefore, course content is not inherently innovative. Thus, innovation is achieved by creatively combining pre-existing technologies. Known as “radical” innovations (Ettlie et al., 1984), innovations that result in a discontinuous change signify substantial deviations from existing technology or procedures. Examples include the supermarket industry’s adoption of bar-code scanning in the 1970s and 1980s, numerous organizations’ transition from mainframes to PCs in the 1980s, and the early 2000s start of cloud computing.

A measured pace of adoption is possible in industries that are defined by technological advancements that bring about incremental and even synthetic transformation. However, in order to preserve and improve their competitive position, businesses in industries where technological advancements lead to abrupt shifts must act quickly and decisively when it comes to adoption. Businesses must assess whether technologies are “competence-enhancing” or “competence-destroying” when assessing those that will bring about ongoing change (Pemer & Werr, 2023). When

businesses develop their expertise, competence-enhancing innovations allow them to adapt gradually, but competence-destroying breakthroughs make many forms of expertise and current technology old. Industry-wide changes are frequently brought about by these sporadic, competence-destroying inventions.

The term “organizational context” describes the features and assets of the company, such as the size of the company, the inter-employee linkages, the internal communication procedures, and the quantity of spare resources. Adoption and implementation decisions are impacted by this setting in several ways. First, internal mechanisms that cross organizational borders or connect internal subunits foster creativity (Tushman & Nadler, 1986; as cited by Agyemang, 2020). More widely, research has been done to determine how organizational structure affects the process of adopting innovations. Organizational structures that are organic and decentralized are linked to adoption (Wagner, 2012). These kinds of organizations facilitate both lateral and reporting-line communication, place an emphasis on teamwork, and provide some degree of employee responsibility flexibility.

Innovative ideas can also be encouraged or stifled by organizational communication procedures. In order to promote innovation, top management should establish an organizational environment that values change and supports ideas that advance the company’s primary goals and objectives. Again, organizational features like readiness and factors that drive strategic orientation directly affect implementation (Weiner, 2020).

The environmental context focuses on the elements of the organizational setting that influence the adoption and implementation of new technologies. The industry’s structure, the existence or lack of technological service providers, and the regulatory

landscape all constitute the environmental backdrop. Several approaches have been used to study industry structure. For example, fierce competition encourages innovation adoption (Mansfield 1968; Mansfield et al. 1977; as cited by Agyemang, 2020). Furthermore, strong companies in a value chain could spur innovation in other value chain participants (Fagerberg et al., 2018). It's suggested that companies in quickly expanding industries tend to develop more quickly in terms of the industry's life cycle. Nonetheless, innovative processes are not always obvious in developed or declining businesses (Tornatzky and Fleischer 1990). Some businesses take advantage of an industry's downturn to innovate by launching efficient programs or branching out into untapped markets. To cut costs, some businesses might decide not to invest in innovation. Innovation is influenced by the technological support system as well. Businesses that have to pay premium wages for skilled workers are frequently forced to innovate by introducing labor-saving technologies (Feng & Graetz, 2015). According to Bharati & Chaudhury (2006), the availability of consultants and other providers of technical services, as well as the availability of skilled labor, promote innovation. Lastly, the impact of government regulation on innovation might be positive or negative. Tight safety and testing regulations can also impede innovation across several industries. TOE holds that an organization's adoption of technology is influenced by the environment in which it operates. The environmental context includes the regulatory environment, the demographic characteristics of the masses, the presence or absence of technology service providers (Scupola, 2003).

The technology-organization-environment model is attacked by critics for not representing an integrated conceptual framework. Examples of scholars who have shared their views against the TOE model include Awa & Ojiabo (2016), who argued that TOE does not represent a well-developed theory, describing it as just a

taxonomy for categorizing variables”. Low et al., (2011) also highlighted that the TOE framework has no major construct in the model and in the variables in each context. According to Musawa & Wahab (2012), TOE is limited in its explanatory power of technology adoption. The TOE model has drawn criticism for its static character because it concentrates mostly on the early phases of technology adoption (Melville et al., 2004). Rogers (2003) highlights how the approach ignores elements at the individual level, such as user attitudes and perceptions.

Despite the criticisms levelled against the theory, it is still relevant in contemporary times and has underpinned many studies. Some of the studies underpinned by TOE model include enterprise resource planning (ERP) (Pan & Jang, 2008); business to business (B2B) e-commerce (Teo et al. 2006); knowledge management systems (KMS) (Lee et al. 2009) among others.

2.3 Situating the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) theory in the study

When it comes to the use of digitalization and, by extension, social media, the TOE model holds significant implications for policymakers. According to the hypothesis, local settings (environment), organizational traits, and technology all directly affect how new technologies are implemented (Agyemang, 2022).

Digital infrastructure and necessary technologies are essential for the effective use of social media. They serve as the cornerstone and base of social media. According to TOE, a company’s current technologies play a significant role in the adoption process since they place restrictions on the amount and rate of technological change that a company can implement (Baker, 2012; as cited by Agyemang, 2022). The existing technological infrastructure within the assembly, such as internet connectivity,

hardware, and software resources that support social media usage is important for the effective utilization of social media in the municipality. The information systems in place for managing and processing data related to public accountability such as systems for tracking citizen feedback, managing public inquiries, and monitoring social media interactions are very pertinent. Thus, technologies impose boundaries on the technical advancement of the assemblies. It is essential for policymakers to be aware of these variables and design strategies to address them for policies to be successful.

Programme outcomes may be influenced by the nature and characteristics of the assembly. Decisions on adoption and implementation are influenced by organizational context in a variety of ways. Adoption and use of social media platforms can be impacted by the current culture, which include elements like being open to public input and receptive to criticism. However, the organization's capacity to implement such innovations may be hampered by pervasive employee apathy, resistance to change, and indifference. Moreover, workers with inadequate knowledge of ICT and proficiency might not be able to accept such advancements. Therefore, to guarantee the success of policies, it is essential that policy actors pay attention to these factors.

One of the main features of the theory is that different local settings have an impact on organizations operating in them, either directly or indirectly. Social media platforms' adoption and efficacy in local governments are influenced by sociological and cultural factors. This covers the expectations, degrees of trust, and communication preferences of the populace. Therefore, extensive stakeholder engagement in the development and execution of social media programs is necessary for successful implementation.

The interaction of technology, organization, and environment in the context of social media and public accountability can be better understood by methodically examining these elements using the TOE model. This methodical approach will assist in recognizing obstacles, chances, and possible areas for development in the incorporation of social media into the local governance structure.

2.4 Media as a Watch-dog Theory

The watchdog theory of the media originates from the liberal democratic tradition, which underscores the media's crucial role in holding those in power accountable. Its roots can be traced back to early advocacy for press freedom by John Milton (1644) in *Areopagitica*, where he argued that an unregulated press was essential for the discovery of truth. The notion of the media as a check on government power was later reinforced by Edmund Burke (18th century), who famously referred to the press as the "Fourth Estate," highlighting its influence in democratic governance. The concept of the press as the fourth estate or an additional branch of democratic governance, tasked with overseeing the executive, legislature, and judiciary, is often credited to Edmund Burke (1729–1797). Advocates of liberal political theory contend that a free and independent press plays a crucial watchdog role, ensuring that the media remains insulated from both government influence and the pressures of market competition (Hachten, 1992; Curran & Gurevitch, 2005; McQuail, 2010; as cited by Asomah, 2020). This watchdog function positions the media as a guardian of public interest, responsible for monitoring those in power and safeguarding public resources, including government finances. Expanding on this idea of media surveillance, Walter Lippmann likened the press to a searchlight that continuously shifts its focus, illuminating various issues and exposing them to public scrutiny (Asomah, 2020).

Walter Lippmann (1922) further shaped the theory in *Public Opinion*, where he emphasized the media's responsibility to scrutinize government actions and inform the public, ensuring an engaged and well-informed citizenry. The theory gained further prominence through the work of Joseph Pulitzer (1904), who championed investigative journalism as a tool for exposing corruption and mismanagement in government and business. Denis McQuail (2010) later refined these ideas, linking the watchdog function of the media to broader concepts of press responsibility and democratic governance.

The main tenets of the watchdog theory revolve around the media's duty to monitor government activities, expose corruption, and promote transparency. The first tenet asserts that the media should serve as a check on power, ensuring that government actions align with public interest rather than self-serving motives (Brako and Asah-Asante 2018). Secondly, the theory holds that the press must engage in investigative journalism, uncovering unethical practices and holding leaders accountable for their decisions. Another key principle is the media's role in facilitating public debate, ensuring that diverse viewpoints are represented and that citizens are informed participants in governance. The theory also emphasizes media independence, arguing that for the press to function as an effective watchdog, it must be free from government interference and corporate manipulation. Furthermore, the theory suggests that the press should adhere to journalistic ethics, maintaining accuracy, fairness, and balance in its reporting to prevent misinformation and undue sensationalism (Peterson, & Schramm, 1963; Curran & Gurevitch, 2005; as cited by Asomah, 2020).

Despite its significance, the watchdog theory has faced considerable criticism. Scholars such as Herman and Chomsky (1988) argue that the media often fails to act as an independent watchdog due to corporate ownership and political influence, leading to biased reporting that serves elite interests rather than the public good. Others, including McChesney (2008), highlight the dangers of sensationalism, where media outlets prioritize profit-driven narratives over substantive investigative journalism. In the digital age, critics like Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) have pointed out the challenge of misinformation and fake news, which can undermine the credibility of watchdog journalism and make it difficult for the public to discern truth from propaganda. Additionally, Schudson (1995) and other scholars note that in some contexts, journalists face intimidation, censorship, and even violence, limiting their ability to hold power to account effectively. Despite these criticisms, watchdog theory remains a cornerstone of democratic governance, advocating for a free and responsible press as a key pillar of transparency and accountability.

The media-as-a-watchdog theory is pertinent to this study as it explains the oversight role of the media in addressing public accountability. Media organizations play a crucial role in promoting public accountability by expanding anti-corruption discourse, influencing public officials to act against corruption, and conducting investigative journalism to uncover corrupt practices (Brunetti & Weder, 2003; Arnold & Lal, 2012; Camaj, 2013; Rajak, 2014; as cited by Asomah, 2020). This theory, therefore, serves as a foundation for analyzing how the media contribute to transparency and accountability in governance.

2.5 Empirical Literature Review

This section provides a review of empirical literature about the study. According to Creswell (1994), literature review provides a framework for establishing the importance of one's study; it acts as a benchmark for comparing the results of one's study to other findings, and it presents results of other studies that are closely related to one's study. The empirical review for this study is organized under the following thematic areas; local government and decentralization in Ghana, public accountability, social media, prospects of social media in promoting public accountability, challenges of social media in Ghana among others.

2.6 Evolution of Decentralization

Decentralization, which involves shifting powers and responsibilities from higher to lower levels of authority—either within central government ministries (deconcentration), from the central government to local authorities (devolution) or nongovernmental bodies (delegation), and in some cases from the public to the private sector (deregulation and privatization)—has a long historical background (Rondinelli, 2017). In fact, many industrialized countries began implementing decentralization reforms in the late 1960s, following nearly twenty years of strong centralization and concentration of governmental power and functions. During the 1950s and 1960s, both industrialized and developing nations experienced a growing centralization of the financing and management of public services, infrastructure, and economic development initiatives. National governments assumed greater responsibility for economic expansion and public service provision for various reasons (Rondinelli, 2006). In North America and Western Europe, the influence of central bureaucracies increased due to their vital roles in mobilizing resources during World War II and their subsequent involvement in post-war economic and social reconstruction. The

effectiveness of centralized administration in these industrialized states served as a model for newly independent countries. In the post-colonial era, many governments in Africa and Asia viewed local authorities as remnants of colonial rule or as bases of ethnic and religious factions that could challenge national unity. As a result, consolidating power and resources at the central level became a key strategy for achieving nation-building and political stability.

Interest in decentralization began to rise in the 1970s and gained widespread momentum throughout the 1980s (Ansell & Gingrich, 2003). Growing disillusionment with centralized government planning drew attention to the inefficiencies of state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Critics contended that, for numerous reasons, ministries and SOEs in most developing countries lacked the organizational capacity to deliver services effectively or fairly at the local level. Central governments were largely preoccupied with managing macroeconomic policies and ensuring national political stability, devoting far less attention to local service provision and the upkeep of infrastructure and public services (Rondinelli, 2017). During the 1970s, development theories and strategies within international aid organizations began shifting from a focus on macroeconomic planning to an emphasis on addressing basic human needs, community development, equitable growth, and participatory planning. This transformation prompted stronger advocacy for transferring resources, responsibilities, and decision-making authority to local levels. International development agencies increasingly promoted decentralization as a key component of a “process approach” to economic and social progress—an approach that relied heavily on local community participation and self-help initiatives (Rondinelli, 2006).

By the late 1980s, many governments across Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, and parts of Asia that had traditionally depended on centralized planning and control were being replaced by more democratic and market-oriented systems. In Central Europe, for instance, the transition from socialist to market economies emphasized empowering the private sector, privatizing or dissolving state-owned enterprises, and restructuring by reducing and decentralizing extensive central government bureaucracies (Bird, Ebel & Wallich, 1995). During the 1980s and 1990s, decentralization of fiscal powers, administrative systems, and governance gained strong support from various groups seeking enhanced political representation or greater autonomy. Ethnic, religious, and political minorities in regions such as Belgium, Quebec, Wales, Scotland, Malaysia, the Baltic States, Mexico, the Philippines, India, Yugoslavia, and the former Soviet Union advocated for devolution or self-governance due to dissatisfaction with their level of political inclusion and the distribution of power (Rondinelli, 2006). In contrast, in countries like the United States, Great Britain, and Canada, the push for fiscal and administrative devolution was primarily championed by conservative leaders who opposed the growing influence and fiscal centralization of national governments and aimed to restore authority and responsibility to local communities (Rondinelli, 2017).

In many developing nations, decentralization became a key policy promoted by international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as part of structural adjustment programs aimed at restoring market efficiency, deepening democracy, and enhancing good governance (Rondinelli, 2006). Similarly, agencies like the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) supported initiatives to strengthen governance in developing countries by funding projects that empowered civil society organizations, democratic institutions, and

human rights groups (Rudner, 1996). In several Asian nations—including the Philippines, Nepal, and Bangladesh—decentralization became closely linked with democratization efforts following extended periods of authoritarian rule (Manor, 1999). Likewise, after the end of military regimes in Latin American countries such as Brazil and Argentina, newly elected state and local leaders, along with opposition movements, adopted decentralization as a vital mechanism for building and consolidating democratic institutions. In numerous African countries, demands for decentralization arose primarily from ethnic groups located on the political and economic margins. Increasing frustration with the inefficiency and poor performance of central government bureaucracies in delivering essential services to local communities further intensified the push for decentralization across the continent (Rondinelli, 2017).

2.7 History of Local Governance in Ghana

Although there was a distinct worldwide interest in decentralization in the 1980s, Ghana's decentralization program started more than 150 years before it spread as a trend and a style. For instance, according to Schmidt (2007) (p. 22), “Ghana is unique among developing countries in the longevity of its decentralized government, which was formally acknowledged in 1878” (Akotey, 2020). However, it is also significant to remember that the indigenous leaders of what was then the Gold Coast, now known as Ghana, established local government systems long before colonization (Crook, 1986). Every community under the Chiefs had an elder who collected taxes and oversaw communal harmony and peace. For this reason, the first colonial administrators chose to employ an indirect rule system in which the chiefs acted as a liaison between the colonists and the populace. Without this long-standing local system that guaranteed excellent relations between the chiefs and their subjects, it

most likely would have been exceedingly difficult for the colonial administrators to function efficiently (Baldwin, 2016). Stated differently, there were several eras in Ghanaian history when local governance emerged, most notably the pre-independence and post-independence periods (Aikins, 2011).

A number of significant developments had already been started prior to the official start of British colonial rule in 1874. These included the formation of the Accra Municipal Council in 1848 and the enactment of the Municipal Ordinance in 1859, which established municipalities in the nation's coastal towns (Ofei-Aboagye cited in Agyeman-Duah, 2008:238). Although there was a local government structure in place under the colonial administrators' reign, there was a desire to close the divide between the populace and the authorities (Spear, 2017). As a result, the 1948 Watson Commission and 1949 Coussey Committee's recommendations were put into practice, and Regional and District Commissioners were appointed and given some authority to enact bylaws and impose taxes on the populace. The 1961 Local Government Act was introduced by the prime minister, dividing the nation administratively into 104 districts, 139 local councils, 3 city councils, 1 municipal council, and 8 regional bodies. There were around 135 local government entities in existence in 1966 (Mahamadu, 2010). The National Liberation Council junta overthrew Nkrumah's government in February 1966 and established the Mills-Oddoi and Siriboe Commissions, which were established in 1967 and 1968, respectively. The commissions' suggestions led to the inclusion of chiefs who Nkrumah had previously removed from office because he believed they were dividing troops (Owusu, 1975: 180–182; as cited by Mahamadu, 2010). The NLC remained in place from 1966 until 1969, during which time elections were held. Dr. K. A. Busia's Progressive Party won those elections.

The military junta of the NLC handed over power to the Progress party under Busia's leadership after the 1969 elections. With respect to the 1971 Local Government Act 359, which was introduced in the latter stages of the Busia administration, the Progress Party's local government structure was three-tiered, as opposed to the four-tiered structure of the Nkrumah regime (Mahamadu, 2010). It consisted of the regional, district, and local councils, each of which was assigned various developmental responsibilities. A noteworthy distinction between the Busia and Nkrumah administrations was the Busia regime's granting of chiefs' substantial respect within the local government structure, which served as a counterbalance to their previous low status under the Convention People's Party rule (Herbst, 1993). Actually, on January 13, 1972, the National Redemption Council (NRC), headed by Lieutenant Colonel Ignatius K. Acheampong, terminated this constitutional regime before it could complete its four-year term. This was done in response to the rising cost of living that resulted from the devaluation of the Ghanaian currency.

The Single Hierarchy Model was introduced in 1974 with the goal of combining local and central government responsibilities at the local level. A new map of the nation was created, dividing it up into 65 district councils. A managerial type of local administration with a de-emphasis on the political roles of local government was prevalent from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s (Mahamadu, 2010). The primary strategy was regional planning and implementation, with an emphasis on regional development. Nevertheless, these arrangements were constrained by the failing macroeconomic and social contexts, the lack of human capacity, the incapacity to reach the district level, and the absence of sectoral coordination (Ofei-Aboagye cited in Agyeman-Duah: 239). On June 4, 1979, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), under the leadership of Flt. Lieutenant J.J. Rawlings overthrew this military

government due to severe living circumstances and suspected widespread corruption among military officials. After nearly three months of junta rule, elections were held to restore constitutional rule (Pieterse, 1982). The Peoples National Party (PNP) was led by Dr. Hilla Limann to victory, and he was thereafter given authority.

On December 31, 1981, under the guise of the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC), J. J. Rawlings returned with yet another coup. The Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) implemented the most comprehensive changes to local governance in Ghana during the 1980s, as is commonly accepted (Oluwatobi & Adekeye, 2022). The 1988 promulgation of PNDC Law 207 established the legislative framework and constituents of the local government system. According to the law, the assembly is now the highest decision-making body locally, with authority over legislation, implementation, rating, and planning. One hundred and ten assemblies were created by legislative instruments, including three (3) metropolitan, four (3) municipal, and one hundred and three (103) district administrations” (Mahamadu, 2010). For each Metropolitan Assembly, Municipal Assembly, and District Assembly, there are Metropolitan Chief Executives, Municipal Chief Executives, and District Chief Executives. The President appoints these Chief Executives, and the assembly's two-thirds vote confirms their appointment. The President of the Republic of Ghana appoints thirty percent of the assembly's members, with the remaining seventy percent being chosen directly by voters in the several electoral zones (Debrah, 2009).

A referendum on returning to civilian government was held in the early 1990s, and Ghanaians overwhelmingly voted in favor of it as a consequence of pressure from donor organizations, foreign development partners, and internal political pressure

from diverse parties and movements like the People's Movement for Freedom and Justice (Fobih, 2008). In actuality, the 1992 constitution, which saw Ghana return to multi-party democracy, was enacted and approved by then-Chairman Rawlings. This cleared the way for the 1992 presidential and parliamentary elections, which the National Democratic Congress (NDC), a party founded from the PNDC, won. Nothing new was added because the new constitution supported the PNDC local government arrangement and structure that was developed in 1988 and was incorporated in PNDC Law 207 (Mahamadu, 2010).

The local government system or structure was preserved when the New Patriotic Party came to power in 2000. According to Ofei-Aboagye (quoted in Mahamadu, 2010: 36), ~~in~~ 2003, twenty-eight (28) new assemblies were created out of existing authorities to facilitate political, social, and economic management.” In fact, throughout the NPP's tenure from 2000 to 2008—and for that matter, during the country's governance—a total of sixty (60) more Districts were created (Mahamadu, 2010).

To enhance the reforms pertaining to local governance and decentralization, the 1992 Ghanaian Constitution stipulates in Article 240 (1) and (2) that local government and administration shall be decentralized, with the functions, powers, and responsibilities as well as resources being transferred from central government to local government units for coordination (Honyenuga & Wutoh, 2019). Once more, the Constitution provides grassroots involvement in the processes of accountability and government from the top down and vice versa. To ensure the efficient and effective operation of the entire government machinery, the Local Government Act of 1993 (Act 462) and the Local Government Establishment Instrument of 1994 (L.I 1589) were also

promulgated and enacted with the aim of promoting and encouraging public participation in local governance and decision-making processes (Ferrazi, 2006).

General rules for institutional arrangements, the responsibilities of different institutions involved in decentralized administration, significant players, their roles and obligations, and resources are provided in Chapter 20 of the Constitution, which is dedicated to Decentralization and Local Governance (Agyemang, 2022). The legislative framework that local authorities would operate within was progressively established by other laws, including Act 455 (DACF Act), Act 479 (National Development Planning Commission Act), Act 480 (National Development Planning Systems Act), the legislative instrument 1589, and the establishing instruments of the various assemblies (MLGRD, 2010: as cited by Agyemang, 2022). Occasionally, governments have devised programs to further the decentralization process. Among them are the following:

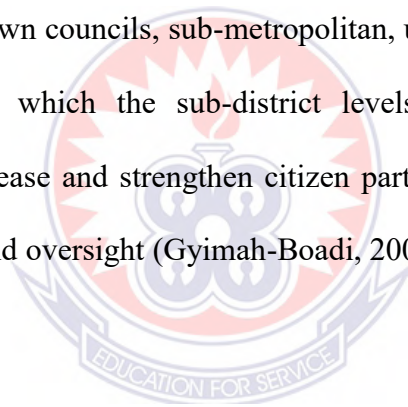
1. The development of an issues paper detailing progress, achievements and the way forward in 1999, after a decade of implementation.
2. The passage of the Local Government Service and Institute of Local Government Studies laws (Act 656 and 647, respectively)
3. The formulation of a national action plan in 2004;
4. The development of the functional organizational assessment tool (FOAT) to facilitate and harmonize performance assessment and the provision of a district development facility (DDF) to coordinate development resources to district assemblies in a way that rewards effective performance;
5. Initiatives to develop policy guidelines for managing decentralization, urban, rural, water and sanitation, local economic development, HIV/AIDS and gender;

6. The establishment of the Local Government Service Secretariat and various operational guidelines for the service;
7. The development of a plan to de-couple local government dimensions from the central civil service (MLGRD, 2010; as cited by Agyemang, 2022).

2.8 Structure of Ghana's Local Government System

Ghana's local government system dates to the British colonial administrators' indirect rule system of managing the indigenous population during the pre-independence era. The chieftaincy system served as the basis for governance under this system, with chiefs, queens, and other individuals descended from royalty serving as the primary leaders. Since then, the local governance system has experienced tremendously fast changes, as demonstrated by the passing of the PNDC Local Government Law 207 and other legislative instruments (L.I.), such as L.I. 1589, among others (Arkorful et al., 2021). The adoption of Ghana's 1992 constitution, which established the framework for the country's democracy and, in particular, gave decentralization more support, was the most significant of all these changes (Crawford, 2009). This is deeply rooted in the constitution's Chapter 20, Article 240, which refers to decentralization and local governance methods. Due to the constitutional architecture, local government is organized into three levels: regional, district, and sub-district levels. These structures are effectively connected to a superordinate national structure made up of 16 regional councils, which are led by the President and Parliament at the highest levels, as well as Ministries, Departments, and Agencies that collaborate closely with the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) and the Finance Ministry (Arkorful et al., 2021). The President's appointee, the regional minister, serves as the chair of the regional coordinating councils, which oversee the regional councils. Regional ministers and deputies, presiding members, district chief

executives, and two representatives from the regional house of chiefs make up the coordinating councils (Kpentey, 2019). Towns with a population of more than 250,000 are classified as metropolitan, and territories with a population of more than 95,000 are classified as municipalities. Smaller territories are governed as districts. Subject to the population of the area, the council members for district assemblies range in size from smaller to larger districts. However, it falls within the range of 20 and 130 (Inkoom, 2011). While 70% of the members of the Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) are chosen by universal adult suffrage, 30% are the executive president's candidates (Ayee, 2013). The chief executives of the MMDAs are appointed based on the approval of the two-thirds (2/3) majority of assembly members. Town councils, sub-metropolitan, urban, and zonal councils make up the tier levels at which the sub-district levels function. These institutions essentially aim to increase and strengthen citizen participation in local governance's planning, execution, and oversight (Gyimah-Boadi, 2009).



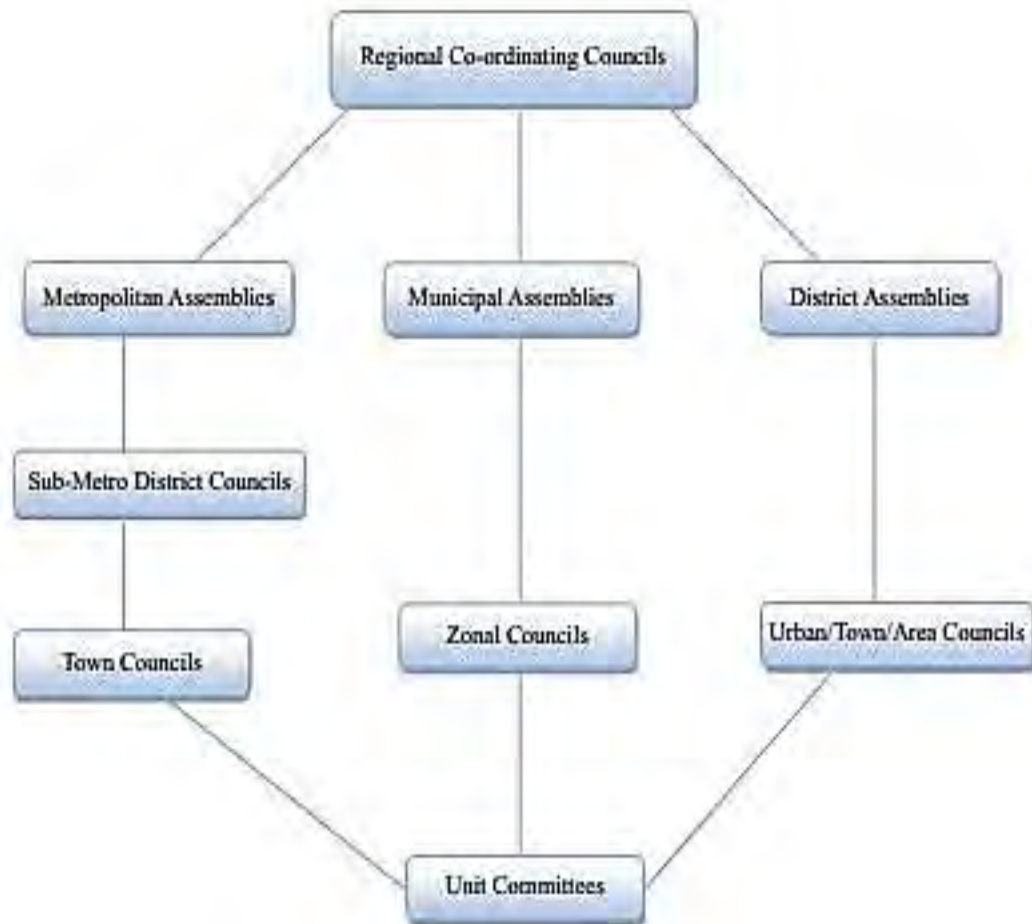


Figure 1. Structure of the new local government system in Ghana.

Source: Adopted from Honyenuga and Wutoh, (2018).

2.9 Reasons for Strengthening Local Governments

Strengthening local governments has become a defining feature of governance reform across the world. In both developed and developing contexts, decentralization is viewed as a means of improving public sector efficiency, deepening democracy, promoting inclusive development, and enhancing citizen participation. Scholars emphasize that decentralization, which entails transferring authority, resources, and responsibilities from central to local governments, responds to the growing complexity and diversity of modern societies (Kälin, 1999; Faguet, 2014; Shah, 2004).

Kälin (1999) argues that the call for decentralization in contemporary governance arises from the limits of centralized bureaucracies in addressing diverse local needs. Modern societies have become too complex to be effectively governed through rigid, top-down administrative structures. As populations grow and become more politically aware, citizens demand participation in decisions that directly affect them. Decentralization, therefore, provides a framework for redistributing authority, fostering inclusivity, and promoting local initiative. This reflects a broader shift from hierarchical to participatory and networked forms of governance, in which local governments serve as key nodes for democratic decision-making (Kälin, 1999; Manor, 1999).

A principal justification for strengthening local governments is the pursuit of efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery. The ‘decentralization theorem’, articulated by Oates (1972), posits that local governments can deliver public goods more efficiently because they are better positioned to identify and respond to community-specific needs. Similarly, Kälin (1999) observes that decentralization enables greater adaptability and innovation in administrative systems, allowing local authorities to design context-sensitive policies. Faguet (2014) and Shah (2004) reinforce this argument, noting that when local governments have sufficient capacity and fiscal resources, they can allocate resources more effectively and improve public satisfaction.

Another core reason for strengthening local governments is to deepen democracy and improve political accountability. Decentralization brings decision-making closer to citizens, enabling them to monitor government actions and hold leaders accountable (Manor, 1999; World Bank, 1999). Kälin (1999) highlights that decentralization

empowers citizens to participate actively in governance, thereby fostering transparency and building trust in public institutions. In this view, local governments act as platforms for participatory governance, where citizens can influence policy and service priorities through elections, consultations, and community engagement. However, scholars such as Prud'homme (1995) caution that without strong accountability frameworks, decentralization may lead to elite capture or local-level corruption.

Strengthening local governments also promotes local economic development by leveraging local knowledge and fostering innovation. Shah (2004) and Faguet (2014) contend that local governments are strategically positioned to identify comparative advantages, support small businesses, and promote infrastructural development tailored to local economic conditions. Kälin (1999) similarly argues that decentralization enables localities to design and implement development programs that reflect their unique socioeconomic realities. This approach transforms local governments into catalysts for growth, job creation, and sustainable development.

A further rationale for decentralization lies in promoting equity and reducing poverty. The World Bank (1999) and Shah (2004) assert that local governments can better target disadvantaged populations because they possess direct knowledge of local conditions. Kälin (1999) notes that decentralization allows for more equitable distribution of resources and participation across regions, helping to mitigate disparities between urban and rural areas. Nevertheless, the literature emphasizes the need for equalizing transfers and capacity-building support to prevent inequalities between resource-rich and resource-poor localities (Prud'homme, 1995).

In multi-ethnic and plural societies, decentralization serves as a mechanism for managing diversity and promoting national unity. Kälin (1999) emphasizes that devolving power to local levels can prevent conflict and enhance legitimacy by giving marginalized or minority groups a voice in governance. Similarly, Shah (2004) and the World Bank (1999) argue that local autonomy can channel regional or ethnic demands into democratic institutions, reducing tensions and fostering national integration. Strengthening local governments, therefore, contributes to political stability by accommodating diversity within a unified state structure.

From a governance perspective, strengthening local governments can improve transparency and reduce corruption. When authority is closer to the people, administrative procedures become more visible and easier to monitor (Faguet, 2014; Shah, 2004). Kälin (1999) also notes that decentralization promotes civic responsibility and social accountability, as communities directly oversee the use of public resources. However, scholars agree that these benefits depend on local institutional capacity, fiscal discipline, and the presence of robust oversight mechanisms (Prud'homme, 1995; Work et al., 2019).

2.10 Challenges of Decentralization and Local Government in Ghana

Decentralization is essentially the process of transferring power, resources and personnel from the central government to lower levels of government. However, while many African leaders embrace the idea in theory, they rarely actually implement it in practice. According to Fesler (1965; cited in Antwi-Boasiako (2010), decentralization is a term with a rich conceptual and empirical meaning that can be used to describe both dynamic processes and static facts. It can also be used to describe pure ideal-type and moderate incremental change when the rational theory of

decentralization is fully understood. Research has shown that since its inception, Ghana's decentralization program has faced numerous obstacles that have hindered its capacity to fulfill its role as the primary institution for local development and participation (Dzakaklo et al., 2023). Consequently, because MMDAs are unable to carry out the majority of their tasks effectively and efficiently, there is a broad dissatisfaction with decentralized local governance (Asante & Debrah, 2019). Below is a discussion of the main obstacles to Ghana's decentralization that have been identified.

The first problem is the excessive subservience of local governments to the central government. A review of Ghana's political history reveals that decentralization is a notion that governments have embraced to reflect the political philosophies of their leaders; yet, the way these rulers have actually put the concept into practice deviates from its theoretical foundation. Put another way, the many approaches to decentralization that are used generally differ from what is provided in the literature. In Ghana, a notable pattern has been the appointment of favorites by the president or the central government to head the Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs), whether they are military or civilian, with little involvement from the local voters (Antwi-Boasiako, 2010). The 1992 Constitution sets the stage for a subservient local government or DA system in Ghana. The sections that aim to give the central government control over the DAs are articles 242 and 243. The provisions tend to make the DAs tools or instruments of the central government; hence, the central government is the DAs' primary employer rather than the local community. Article 242(d) gives the president the authority to designate at least 30% of the district members; some assemblies have abused this authority to pick members who are close to the president or the government (Yeboah-Assiamah, 2016). As a result of the

current circumstances, these appointees find themselves torn between the locals they are supposed to represent and the appointing agent. As a result, the local units typically have very little autonomy and little ability to act independently. The result is a lack of initiative and creativity at the local level. Instead, the MMDAs' autonomy is stifled by the local government system's bureaucratic and centralist structure (Anafo, 2018).

Another challenge is the unfavorable provisions in the legal. As to the Local Government Act, Act 462, local residents cannot hold non-elected assembly members accountable or responsible, nor do they have direct authority over them. Section (9) of the Local Government Act emphasized this issue (Yeboah-Assiamah, 2016). According to Section 9(1), an elected member of a DA may have their mandate withdrawn by the electorate, pursuant to the constitution, through a procedure that is started by roughly 25% of the area's registered voters. However, such a process cannot be initiated against the appointed members of the assembly. Act 462's Section 10(6a) seems to put the president or central government in direct control of the District Assemblies' (DAs') operations. According to the clause, the president may provide broad assistance and direction to the Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) on a range of issues while they carry out their legal duties. A policy or initiative of the MMDA that the president or the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development disagrees with is referred to the Regional Coordinating Council, whose regional minister is also an appointee of the president. Additionally, without approval from the LGRD minister, Section 88 forbids the DAs from raising loans for more than twenty million cedis (old cedis) or two thousand Ghana Cedis at this time (Musah-Surugu & Yeboah-Assiamah, 2015). A more troubling aspect of the MMDAs' subordination to the central government is Section 43 of Act 462, which gives the

president the only authority to dissolve any DA that he deems to be in default (Agyapong, 2017; Agyemang, 2022).

More significant is the issue of financial challenges facing the DAs. Due to their limited financial resources, the majority of MMDAs in Ghana are unable to start and carry out developmental policies and programs (Debrah & Owusu-Mensah, 2022). Notwithstanding, Act 462's assignment of 86 tasks to local governments in Ghana, these obligations are out of proportion to the necessary funding. Rates, taxes, and levies, the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) established by Act 455, grants-in-aid under Article 252 of the Constitution, and five percent of the proceeds from the sale of stool land are the primary sources of funding for DAs (Yeboah-Assiamah, 2016). Most of the DAs solely or largely depend on the DACF. Usually, local governments experience a two- to three-quarter wait in receiving their principal source of funding, the DACF. Furthermore, strict fiscal control by the central government hinders MMDAs' capacity to raise funds from outside sources for self-development (Debrah, 2014; Boschmann, 2009; as quoted by Agyemang, 2022). The lack of promotion of fiscal decentralization can be attributed to the Ministry of Finance's unwillingness to execute composite budgeting efficiently (Oppong, 2020). Furthermore, Ghana's centralized fiscal laws, including the Local Government Act, the Financial Administration Regulation (FAR), the Financial Administration Decree (FAD), and the Financial Memorandum of Local and Urban Councils, 1961, do not encourage the separation of the DA budget from the central government's budget. These items remain in Ghana's decentralization legislative framework since they seem to favor the central authority (Yeboah-Assiamah, 2016). Debrah (2014) has also mentioned that a significant source of financial difficulties for several MMDAs in Ghana is their rural location.

In addition, the local government units do not have enough staff to increase their human resource capability for efficient local administration (Debrah, 2014; Ayee, 1992; as quoted by Agyemang, 2022). Both the Local Government Act of Act 462 and the 1992 Constitution have assigned 86 functions to local governments in Ghana, the majority of which are highly technical in nature. To properly carry out these tasks at the local level, this ideally calls for enough technical staff (Yeboah-Assiamah, 2016). Unfortunately, especially in rural regions, DAs face a shortage of competent and technically skilled staff. Additionally, nepotism and system politicization have pushed even the few individuals possessing the necessary skill set and competence to the background, packing local assemblies' offices and departments with people who, aside from being loyal party members, typically lack training or qualifications (Kpentey, 2019; Agyemang, 2022). This undermines the DAs' efficacy and efficiency.

In addition, the refusal of the central bureaucracy (ministries, departments and agencies) to cede power to the local government leadership also affects the effectiveness of local governments. As some academics have suggested, decentralization is seen as a tool for justifying government power, the bureaucracy is partly to fault for rejecting or adapting to the decentralization process too slowly (Treisman, 2007). Consequently, the leadership of decentralized departments and agencies is unwilling to fully integrate and instead prefers to retain authority over local government leadership (Ahwoi, 1992; Ayee, 1997; Crook, 1994; Mohan, 1996; cited by Yeboah-Assiamah, 2016).

The next challenge is corruption and lack of accountability in the activities of the DAs. Due in part to the fact that these officials answer more to the President than to MMDAs, the appointment of 30% of MDA members and the Chief Executives of

Metropolitan, Municipal, and Districts, as well as the vast powers of the central government, have tended to erode accountability at the local level (Ayee, 2018; Kpentey, 2019; Crawford, 2009; cited by Agyemang, 2022). According to Kpentey (2019), the selection of the DCE and regional ministers as the local government's executive body also goes against the idea of political participation, which permits people to elect their own leaders. The bottom-up reporting approach, which results in a lack of local accountability and transparency in the local governance system, is a major contributing factor to the corruption problem. According to Devas (2003), it is rare for both the general public and elected local officials to be able to thoroughly inspect how resources are being used. Rather, local government accounting systems are brittle and vulnerable to many forms of resource mismanagement and disagreement.

Another challenge is the lack of autonomy to initiate the district development planning process. The improvement of local communities' self-determination through the creation and acceptance of responsive services is a fundamental component of decentralization and local government (Strand & Næss, 2017). The National Development Planning (System) Act, Act 480, seems to put local governments in a secondary position when it comes to decentralized planning. According to the Act, the NDPC's guidelines and legislative instruments will govern the decentralized national development planning system. This clause largely contradicts Article 254 of the 1992 Constitution, which states that 'parliament shall take steps necessary for further decentralization of the administrative functions and projects of the Central Government but shall not exercise any control over the DAs that is incompatible with their decentralized status or otherwise contrary to law' (Yeboah-Assiamah, 2016). Section (11)(a) of the Act provides that NDPC shall determine the format and content

of development plans for the districts, ministries and sector agencies. The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) Act, Act 480 of 1994, significantly obstructs the idea of administrative responsibility because the president establishes the general framework for development planning, based on which the NDPC issues guidelines to MMDAs to make appropriate development plans by “filling in the blanks”; again, any final District Development Plan (DDP) is approved or disapproved by the NDPC, even if a plan was adopted overwhelmingly through a public hearing of all community members; Section (21) states that a “approved district development plan” refers to a plan approved for a district, a municipality, or metropolitan area by “the Commission,” not the people or community members.

2.11 The Concept of Accountability

A large portion of the scholarly literature on accountability is fairly disjointed since each author sought to define accountability in their own unique way. According to Bovens (2010) and Mulgan (2000), accountability is the obligation placed on people and/or organizations to take responsibility for their choices, actions, and policies and to bear the consequences of their choices, decisions, and actions. It is an essential component of governance because it guarantees that individuals in positions of authority are held to a high standard of justice and openness, and that they answer to the people they are supposed to represent (Bovens, 2010). Because of growing worries about corruption, inequality, and the misuse of power, accountability has gained importance in both academic and policy circles in recent years (Mulgan, 2000). Accountability is frequently used as a normative notion, a set of norms for judging public actors' behavior, especially—but not only—in American intellectual and political discourse. Being accountable is viewed as a virtue and a good characteristic of officials or organizations.

Accountability studies, therefore, frequently concentrate on normative concerns, i.e., criteria for and evaluation of public officials' real and active behavior (Considine 2002; Klingner et al. 2001; Koppell 2005; O'Connell 2005; Wang 2002; cited by Bovens, 2010). Furthermore, according to Acheampong et al., (2023), the terms accountability and answerability, transparency, responsibility, blameworthiness, responsiveness, liability, obligation, enforceability, and attributability have all been used interchangeably. The idea of accountability denotes a partnership between, at minimum, two categories of players: –a principal” who assigns –an agent” a duty or responsibility to further the interests of the principal (Acosta et al., 2010).

According to Richard Mulgan (2000), there are three main components to accountability: 1) –It is external, in that the account is given to some other person or body outside the person or body being held accountable” (Mulgan, 2000:555); 2) –It involves social interaction and exchange, in which the party calling for the account seeks clarification and answers, and the party being held accountable responds and takes the consequences” (Mulgan, 2000:555); 3) –It implies rights of authority, in that the party calling for the account is asserting that they have superior authority over the party being held accountable.” The term –superior authority” is introduced as a critical new element in our debate by this third part of Mulgan's definition. Mulgan contends that power is a prerequisite for accountability. We can only talk about responsibility when the observer is higher than the observed. Subsequent to this perspective, many writers contend that accountability is contingent upon the presence of a –principal-agent relationship” (Moreno, Crisp & Shugart, 2003; cited by Ackerman, 2005).

According to Lührmann et al. (2020); Mechkova et al. (2019), there are three primary categories or forms of accountability identified in the existing research, which are as

follows: (1) vertical accountability; (2) horizontal accountability; and (3) diagonal accountability. Vertical accountability, as described by Jacobs and Schillemans (2019), is a partnership between government agencies and the public that explains and defends their actions to the public while utilizing public funds. Vertical accountability refers to a principal-agent relationship wherein the citizens of a state, acting as the principal, hold governments, acting as the agents, accountable for their deeds. The ability of the public to hold their government and public institutions accountable through formal and informal means is another aspect of vertical accountability (Lührmann et al., 2020; Relly, 2012; So, 2014; cited by Ackerman, 2005). The concept of horizontal accountability pertains to the degree of mutual accountability among governmental entities operating at the same level. Furthermore, covered are oversight bodies that have the authority to request data and penalize public entities for inappropriate conduct (Lührmann et al., 2020; Mechkova et al., 2019; Schillemans, 2011). Horizontal accountability is the process by which different government branches' institutions hold one another responsible and keep an eye out for instances of power abuse (O'Donnell, 1998 as quoted in Acosta et al., 2013). Diagonal accountability frequently addresses non-state actors' contributions to accountability. To be more precise, civil society organizations, the media, and involved citizens can utilize a variety of tactics to keep their governments responsible (Gelber, 2017; Lührmann et al., 2020; Mechkova et al., 2019).

Furthermore, several research distinguish between other types of accountabilities, such as administrative, professional, social, political, and personal (Danhoundo et al., 2018; Tan & Egan, 2018; Thomann et al., 2018; cited by Acheampong, 2023). Thomann et al. (2018) states that public accountability is concerned with the socially mandated explanation and justification of street-level bureaucrats' acts to the general

public. Political accountability, according to Ferri and Zan (2018), is the process by which public and private institutions, as well as the media and civil society organizations, hold politicians accountable.

Tan and Egan (2018) state that administrative accountability is gauging managers' and public organizations' performance in relation to predetermined goals, requirements, and duties. According to Thomann et al. (2018), professional accountability is concerned with the laws, moral principles, and codes of conduct that govern public officials' behavior as well as their performance. Danhoundo et al. (2018) contend that social accountability not only holds the government responsible on a range of issues but also allows the public and civil society organizations to participate formally and informally in the governance process. Lastly, Tan and Egan (2018) argue that self- or personal accountability refers to the awareness and capacity of public officials to take responsibility for their actions and conduct in a way that aligns with their own moral and ethical values and views. Whatever nomenclature is employed, academics agree that it is a crucial component of any society, but democratic societies much more so. Furthermore, these research (Danhoundo et al., 2018; Hussain et al., 2018; Tan & Egan, 2018; Thomann et al., 2018; cited by Acheampong, 2023) concur that there may be conflicts between the various forms of accountability and that these conflicts may have an impact on the efficacy of public organizations and managers.

2.12 The Concept of Public Accountability

Public accountability has received maximum public attention and policy debates. Yet like other concepts in the social sciences, a precise definition for the term has remained elusive. This has attracted a lot of opinions from scholars on what public accountability means. As a fundamental tenet of democratic governance, public

accountability is necessary to guarantee the openness, reliability, and efficient operation of public institutions. The term “public accountability” describes the duty placed on people, groups, and governments to answer to the public for their choices, deeds, and resource usage (Ackerman, 2005). Public accountability is important because it deals with the legitimacy of account-giving procedures and their institutionalization (Bovens et al., 2005:5). According to the Citizens' Circle for Accountability (2008:2), it refers to the duty of authorities to elucidate in a transparent and just manner, both prior to and following the fact, how they are performing their duties that have a significant impact on the public. Those in positions of public trust are required to answer the public or their representatives about how they have used that trust.

Accountability refers to a particular set of social relations; it can be defined as the relationship between an actor and a forum, where the actor is required to defend and explain their actions, the forum has the authority to ask questions and make decisions, and the actor must deal with the repercussions of their actions (Nwokwu, 2018). Therefore, the actor might be an individual, a public organization, institution, or agency; in this study, the actor is commonly an official or civil servant; or it can be an organization that is accountable to the public. According to Strom (2000), the relationship between the forum and the actor frequently resembles that of a principal-agent relationship, with the forum acting as the principal of parliament and the minister acting as the agent, who is responsible for reporting to the forum on a regular basis regarding his performance in office. Bolaji (2007) went on to say that the important actor has a responsibility to update the forum on his behavior by supplying a variety of data regarding task completion, results, or procedures. There is more to account-giving than just spreading misinformation or instructing the masses. The

behavior that needs to be justified and explained can take many different forms, such as administrative fairness in the case of legal accountability or budgetary scrutiny in the case of financial responsibility. Bolaji (2009) identified various types of public accountability.

- a. public accountability based on the nature of the forum
- b. public accountability based on the nature of the actor
- c. public accountability based on the nature of the conduct
- d. public accountability based on the nature of the obligation

The classification of public accountability based on the nature of the forum talks about the question of whom the actor is accountable to. Strom (2000) identified different types of public or forum to include political, legal, administrative, professional and social accountability forums. Public Accountability based on the nature of the actor focuses on who should render account or who is the actor. To identify who the actor is possesses many problems as public policies pass through many hands before they are formulated. Laws, Decrees, acts of parliament and other public decisions are often made by committee and they cross many desks before they are implemented but, Brovens and Mark (2006) helped to solve the problem by discovering varieties of public accountability based on the nature of the actor viz corporate, hierarchical, collective and individual public accountability. Public Accountability based on the nature of conduct on the other hand looks at what information is to be provided. Public Accountability based on the nature of obligation also relates to the nature of the relationship between the actor and the forum, and to the question of why the actor has an obligation to render account. An actor renders account to the forum because he is obliged to do that (Nwokwu, 2018).

From the foregoing, public accountability can be defined as the obligation of public officials to provide explanations and reports on their actions, decisions, and budgetary commitments to the citizens and relevant authorities.

Despite the variations in terminology, Bovens (2007) claims that public accountability is a multifaceted idea that includes ideas like answerability, transparency, and enforceability. Transparency involves public access to information and the openness of governmental procedures. Answerability is the obligation placed on public servants to defend and explain their decisions to the public and the appropriate oversight organizations. The systems and penalties that may be used to make public servants answerable for their deeds are known as enforceability. Meijer (2014) argues that the institutional and legal structure that promotes public accountability is one of its most important components. This includes laws, rules, and guidelines that require information sharing, auditing, and the setting up of safeguards and balances. For example, by granting public access to official government documents and records, freedom of information laws plays a critical role in fostering transparency. Furthermore, a number of processes like judicial review, independent auditing, and parliamentary monitoring promote public accountability. Representatives chosen by the people scrutinize and probe the executive branch's actions as part of parliamentary oversight. Courts can evaluate whether government activities and judgments are lawful using judicial review. Mulgan (2000) asserts that independent auditing by organizations such as supreme audit institutions guarantee the efficient and effective use of public monies. In addition to these official mechanisms, the public, media, and civil society all actively participate in promoting public accountability. Watchdog groups and civil society organizations are essential in keeping an eye on government operations and promoting accountability and transparency. Investigative journalism,

public discourse, and information are all disseminated through the media, which also serves to inform the public and reveal wrongdoing. Holding public authorities responsible requires active participation from citizens through voting, public consultations, and civic involvement (Fox, 2015).

2.13 Mass Media

Mass media is a powerful tool for communication, information dissemination, and societal development. It serves as a platform for shaping public opinion, influencing governance, and ensuring accountability. The history of mass media is characterized by a transition from traditional communication methods to modern digital platforms (Adelabu et al., 2024).

The evolution of mass media can be traced back to Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the movable-type printing press in the 1450s, which revolutionized the production of books and newspapers (Briggs, Asa & Burke, 2005; World Bank, 2009; as cited by Asomah, 2020). This advancement laid the foundation for mass communication by making printed materials more accessible. In 1810, Friedrich Koenig further advanced the printing industry by introducing steam-powered printing presses, which significantly increased production capacity and contributed to the industrialization of print media (McLuhan, 1964; Briggs, Asa, & Burke, 2005; as cited by Asomah, 2020). The 19th century witnessed the emergence of new forms of communication technology, including radio and television, marking a major shift in the way information was disseminated to the public. In pre-colonial Africa, communication was primarily oral, relying on town criers, storytelling, and drumming to convey messages (Nyamnjoh, 2005). The invention of the printing press in the 15th century

led to the rise of print media, which became a dominant mode of mass communication in Europe and later in Africa (McQuail, 2010).

In Ghana, newspapers such as *The Gold Coast Independent* and *The West African Times* emerged during the colonial period, advocating for independence and social justice (Ansah, 1985). The advent of radio and television in the 20th century significantly enhanced the dissemination of information, broadening public access to news and discourse. The liberalization of the media landscape in the 1990s ushered in a period of rapid expansion, resulting in the emergence of numerous private radio stations, television channels, and digital media platforms (Gadzekpo, 2008). Today, the rapid advancement of digital media has transformed communication, with social media and online news portals playing a central role in information dissemination.

Mass media are organizations and technological tools that enable widespread communication, impacting social structures and public opinion (McQuail, 2010). Mass media, according to Schramm (1964), is a means of disseminating information to a variety of audiences via radio, television, and newspapers. In order to foster democracy and good governance, Dominick (2009) views the mass media as a vital instrument for establishing a connection between the public and governments. These mass media – which encompass all channels of communication such as television, newspapers, the Internet, and radio for disseminating information to a broader audience – are particularly important for shaping public opinion on local, national and global issues (Silverblatt, 2004; McQuail, 2010; Harcourt, 2016; as cited by Asomah, 2020).

For the purpose of this study, mass media will refer to radio and social media as key tools for promoting public accountability in local governance. Radio, through talk

shows and phone-in programs, allows citizens to engage with authorities and demand transparency. Social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp enable real-time interaction, fostering civic participation. This study will examine how these mediums enhance accountability in local governance.

2.14 Mass Media and Public Accountability

Accountability of government depends largely on the extent of media scrutiny of the political system. This is possible with the aid of an independent media that ensures open communication and plurality of ideas in the communicative space (Ahmed et al., 2019). Article 41, sections (e) and (f) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana state that the enjoyment of rights and freedoms is inherently linked to the fulfillment of duties and responsibilities. As such, every citizen is obligated to diligently pursue their lawful occupation and to safeguard public property by exposing and addressing the misuse and mismanagement of public resources. Article 162(5) states –All agencies of the mass media shall, at all times, be free to uphold the principles, provisions and objectives of this Constitution, and shall uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people of Ghana”. This constitutional provision implies that, beyond informing and educating the public and scrutinizing government actions, the media also has a responsibility to uncover and challenge the misappropriation of public funds. This role aligns with the media’s broader function in promoting transparency and combating corruption (Asah-Asante & Brako, 2014).

In democratic societies, the media are often regarded as the fourth estate or an unofficial branch of government, tasked with upholding accountability and promoting social justice (Stapenhurst & O’Brien, 2000; McChesney, 2008; as cited by Ahmed et al., 2019). A key aspect of this role is the fight against corruption. Scholars such as

Stapenhurst and O'Brien (2000) and Brunetti and Weder (2003) argue that independent and free media are essential in curbing corruption. Empirical evidence suggests that the media play a crucial role in investigating and exposing corrupt practices, providing platforms for discussions on corruption, raising public awareness, advocating for institutional reforms, and mobilizing citizens to demand political accountability (Stapenhurst, 2000; Stapenhurst & O'Brien, 2000; Brunetti & Weder, 2003; Arnold & Lal, 2012; Camaj, 2013; Gray, 2015; Phiri, 2008; Srivastava, 2016; Starke, Naab, & Scherer, 2016). Stapenhurst and O'Brien (2000) highlight that in various countries, including Italy and the United States, the media have been instrumental in exposing corruption, pushing for institutional changes, and shaping public opinion in favor of anti-corruption efforts. Stapenhurst (2000) highlights that the media's efforts in combating corruption lead to both measurable and less tangible impacts. The intangible effects, which are more challenging to quantify, include fostering a heightened sense of accountability and influencing the attitudes of both citizens and public officials towards addressing corruption. Conversely, the tangible effects are more evident and include prompting authorities to investigate reported corruption cases, repealing or amending corrupt policies, and establishing commissions of inquiry. Media exposure can result in the resignation of individuals implicated in corruption and the enforcement of sanctions by relevant state institutions (Asomah, 2020).

Furthermore, the media provides a platform for civic engagement, allowing citizens to express their opinions, participate in policy discussions, and demand accountability from public officials (Howard & Hussain, 2013). Kankam and Attuh (2024) highlights that community radio stations in Ghana broadcast youth-centered programs that significantly contribute to youth development. These stations provide platforms for

young individuals to engage with political authorities and participate actively in community affairs, thereby fostering inclusivity and informed citizenry. Amadu (2023) opined that radio stations encourage democratic processes at the local level through participatory programming and open access. This approach allows community members to discuss issues affecting their socio-economic lives and hold local authorities accountable. Naaikuur, Diedong, and Dzisah (2022) emphasizes the effectiveness of community radio in mobilizing citizens for policy-making participation in local governance. The study points out that through creative programming, community radio can overcome barriers such as linguistic inadequacies and financial constraints, thus promoting participatory governance. Girard (2007) emphasizes that community and local radio are powerful tools for fostering two-way communication between authorities and citizens, particularly in rural areas. These platforms allow local governments to explain policies and receive feedback, making them essential for participatory governance. Banda (2006) presents radio as the most accessible and impactful medium in Africa for fostering development and civic participation. He notes that institutional partnerships between radio stations and local government bodies lead to better governance outcomes. Nyamnjoh (2005) explores the participatory potential of media in African democracies, stating that regular and inclusive radio programming can serve as a “town square” for citizens, especially when literacy and access barriers limit the effectiveness of print or digital communication. Through radio talk shows, newspaper editorials, and social media platforms, the public can engage in discourse on governance issues, influencing decision-making processes (Gadzekpo, 2008). In Ghana, radio stations such as Joy FM and Citi FM, as well as online platforms like GhanaWeb, have played a

significant role in fostering public debate and exposing government inefficiencies (Opoku, 2023).

The media also ensures public accountability by scrutinizing electoral processes and monitoring the performance of political leaders. During elections, media outlets provide coverage of campaigns, report on electoral malpractices, and educate voters on their rights (Hutchings, 2021). Free and independent media reduce information asymmetry, enabling voters to make informed decisions based on candidates' track records and policy proposals (Besley & Burgess, 2002). In Ghana, media institutions have been instrumental in ensuring free and fair elections by providing unbiased coverage and acting as a check on electoral irregularities (Arthur, 2010).

Moyo (2011) argues that social media has revolutionized public accountability by allowing real-time engagement between citizens and government officials. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp have become powerful tools for exposing corruption, mobilizing public opinion, and demanding government action (Asomah, 2024). The rise of digital activism has further strengthened transparency, as citizens can instantly share evidence of government wrongdoing, making it difficult for officials to suppress information (Howard & Hussain, 2013). Social media platforms have become indispensable instruments that transcend mere communication, promoting political openness, citizen engagement, and accountability as societies grow more interconnected in the digital sphere (Purnama & Asdlori, 2023). Vanhommerig and Karre (2014), asserts that social media has democratized the flow of information, making it accessible to everyone. This accessibility allows citizens to organize, spread messages, and participate in public discussions on an equal footing with government institutions. Citizens have transitioned into “monitorial citizens” and

–armchair auditors,” actively engaging in monitoring government actions and holding public officials accountable through digital platforms. This new role enhances transparency and encourages greater civic participation. Plascencia (2015) argues that although there are traditional communication channels to denounce acts of corruption, the use of social networks such as YouTube or Facebook has proven to be more effective means of disseminating the act and penalizing the conduct.

Citizens can participate actively in political processes using social media platforms. Public conversation can be engaged in, concerns can be raised, and legislators can be held responsible for their actions through comments, discussions, and opinion exchange. In today's socially networked society, Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, and Valenzuela (2012) stress the value of considering fresh viewpoints and the advantages of using social media for information searching in terms of democratic engagement, accountability and social capital. Arshad and Khurram's (2020), study on the relationship between the quality of information provided by a government agency on social media and citizens' online political participation contends that there is a significant link between a government agency's provision of quality information on social media and citizens' online political participation. They argue that this relationship is mediated by perceived transparency, trust in the agency, and perceived responsiveness. Social media platforms function as forums for democratic discourse, enabling individuals to interact directly with elected officials and representatives of the government. Direct communication between policymakers and the public improves their response to the needs and concerns of the public, thus, improving political responsiveness and accountability (Firmstone & Coleman, 2015).

Despite these positive contributions, the media's role in enhancing public accountability is sometimes hindered by government interference, media ownership biases, and threats to press freedom (Nyamnjoh, 2005; Alhassan, 2004). In some cases, journalists face intimidation and legal restrictions that limit their ability to report on corruption and governance failures (Etokidem, 2020). Therefore, ensuring media independence and strengthening journalistic ethics remain critical for sustaining public accountability in democratic societies (Fengler et al., 2022).

2.15 Challenges to the Effective Use of Radio in Enhancing Public Accountability

Radio remains one of the most accessible mass media in many developing countries and is frequently credited with enabling public debate, exposing wrongdoing and mobilizing citizens to hold officials to account (Waisbord, 2000; World Bank, 1999). Yet a large and growing literature shows that radio's watchdog potential is constrained by a combination of political, legal, economic, institutional and technological factors.

State pressure, direct and indirect, remains a primary obstacle to radio's accountability role. International monitoring reports document a global decline in press freedom in recent years and highlight specific threats in many countries, including procedural harassment, politicized regulation and selective enforcement of media laws (Freedom House, 2023; RSF, 2023). Nyamnjoh (2005) documents how political actors in African contexts use both formal (licensing, regulatory sanctions) and informal (threats, access denial) levers to influence news content and produce self-censorship. Where regulators are not independent or are subject to political patronage, radio stations risk closure, loss of licenses or punitive fines that deter investigative reporting (Freedom House, 2023; RSF, 2023).

These pressures are exacerbated in politically polarised environments where media outlets are co-opted by political factions or constrained by institutional barriers (Norris, 2006; Waisbord, 2000). Norris argues that weak institutional checks and polarized political competition distort media incentives, shifting journalism from sustained watchdog investigation to episodic and partisan commentary. Waisbord's comparative work also shows that in contexts of weak press freedom and political capture, watchdog journalism becomes fragmented and reactive (Waisbord, 2000).

Ownership structures and internal newsroom governance critically shape editorial independence and the capacity to pursue accountability journalism. Karppinen (2013) reframes media pluralism as the distribution of communicative power and argues that concentration of ownership undermines the media's democratic role. Curran (2002) similarly emphasizes that commercial pressures and proprietorial politics influence news agendas and deter reporting that threatens owners' political/business interests. Empirical studies show that stations owned by political actors or large commercial groups tend to avoid stories that would jeopardize owners' relationships with authorities or advertisers (Alhassan, 2004; Karppinen, 2013). This structural problem produces predictable content outcomes: entertainment and soft-news programming displace investigative pieces, and when accountability stories do appear they are often selective, partisan or episodic rather than sustained (Curran, 2002; Karppinen, 2013).

Community and local commercial radio stations which have the strongest reach into rural and marginalized communities often lack the financial and human resources needed for in-depth accountability journalism (Mabweazara, 2012; Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006). Investigative reporting requires time, funds for fieldwork, legal support and experienced editors; when stations operate on thin budgets and low

wages, they prioritize cost-effective programming. Alhassan's (2004) study of Ghanaian media and other empirical analyses document chronic underinvestment in investigative capacity, which constrains radio's ability to gather and verify complex governance stories.

The rise of partisan media ecosystems and deliberate disinformation campaigns undermines public trust in news sources, including radio. Karppinen (2013) and Curran (2011) warn that when pluralism is measured only by outlet numbers rather than by the distribution of communicative power and editorial independence, the result can be polarized, partisan broadcasting that fragments the public sphere. When audiences perceive radio stations as partisan or unreliable, the stations' capacity to act as legitimating channels for accountability is weakened (Karppinen, 2013; Curran, 2011).

2.16 The Development of Social Media in Ghana

The rapid advancement of social media in the setting of digital communication has made it a noteworthy aspect of societal change, particularly in Ghana. Ghana's social media history is an engrossing trip that captures the evolution of technology, shifting communication patterns, and the dynamic interaction between the local and global domains. Since there was no data available prior to independence, social media use in Ghana was uncommon. When Ghana was rising to the global standard for information communication and technology following its independence in 1957, there was, nevertheless, a developing paradigm changes in the country's usage of communication technology (Shoopala, 2023). Ghana's social media history began with the internet's introduction in the 1990s, which was the first wave of digital connectivity (Nuhu, 2021). Ghana has advanced significantly in the field of information and

communications technologies (ICTs) since 1989 (Agyemang, 2022). Over the last thirty years, several governments have attempted to expand the nation's ICT infrastructure to preserve its position as one of the leading ICT countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Mathapoly-Cudjoe, 2015; Agyemang, 2022). In 1993, the Network Computer Systems Limited (NCS) registered 'GH.COM' as the first commercial internet service in Ghana with the help of Pipex International. Other internet service providers include Africa Online and Internet Ghana.

The National Communications Authority (NCA) was founded in December 1996 as the statutory authority responsible for licensing and regulating electronic communications activities and services throughout the nation (Mathapoly-Cudjoe, 2015; Demuyakor, 2021; Agyemang, 2022). The Ministry of Communications and Technology was founded in 2000 with the goal of spearheading Ghana's internet and e-government revolution by building a reliable telecommunications infrastructure and offering e-government services (Agyemang, 2022). The government's goal of transforming Ghana into an information-rich, knowledge-based society and economy through the development, deployment, and exploitation of ICTs within the economy and society included the introduction of the ICT for Accelerated Development (ICT4AD) policy in 2003 (Republic of Ghana, 2003). The National Communications (Act 769, Revision of the current National Communications Act, 1996), the Electronic Communications Act, and the Electronic Transactions Act were introduced in 2008 alone.

The Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) Registration Regulations, the Mobile Number Portability Regulations, and the Communications Regulations were all introduced in 2011. The National Cyber Security Policy & Strategy 2015, the Data Protection Act of

2012, the National Broadband Policy 2012, and the 2016 Electronic Communications Regulations are a few more ICT policy legislations introduced in the country (Agyemang, 2022). In Ghana, the National Communications Authority (2022) has listed seven major internet service providers: Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTN), Vodafone Ghana, Airtel Tigo, Surfline, Busy 4G and iBust, Teleda ICT. The most well-known of these are MTN, Vodafone, and AirtelTigo, which offer their clients both mobile and internet data subscription services (Ankapong, 2023). Online communities grew as the nation embraced the opportunities provided by the internet, setting the stage for the development of social media platforms. Ghanaians were first exposed to the idea of online communication through early platforms such as Friendster, MySpace, and Hi5, which prepared them for Facebook's revolutionary arrival in the late 2000s (Darko, 2021). Facebook quickly overtook other social networking platforms in Ghana thanks to its intuitive interface and wide range of features (Henry, 2023). Ghanaians embraced this online environment as a means of keeping in touch with friends, exchanging personal news, and engaging with the rapidly expanding worldwide online community. As mobile phones became more widely available, especially smartphones, users were able to interact with social media platforms while they were on the go, which significantly increased the popularity of these platforms (Penni, 2017). Ghana National Communications Authority (2022) reports that 70% of Ghanaians have a mobile phone subscription. As of January 2022, 16.99 million people in Ghana were using the internet (Kamar, 2022).

The emergence of WhatsApp as the go-to instant messaging app further cemented social media's place in Ghanaians' daily lives (Pindayi, 2017). With the rise of Twitter and Instagram in the 2010s, Ghana's social media scene expanded, providing users

with new channels for instant messaging, sharing visual content, and interacting with celebrities and influencers (Henry, 2023). A thriving community of regional creators emerged on YouTube, which became a major venue for both creating and consuming material. These creators added to the diverse array of digital content produced in Ghana (Sey, 2011). Social media's influence extended beyond interpersonal relationships to include activism and political environments. Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter have developed into effective instruments for political discourse, information sharing, and mobilization around elections and social movements (Asante, 2020).

Dzisah (2018), contends that access to new communication technologies, such as the Internet and mobile telephony, plays a crucial role in fostering democratic discourses and enhancing citizen participation through social media platforms. He argues that social media is a key feature in Ghana's evolving democratic landscape. Consistent with this is Bokor's (2014) claim that social media platforms empower citizens by stepping up their political activism and giving them the ability to actively influence the direction of local and national politics. Bokor focused on the role of digital media, including websites and social networking platforms, in accelerating the democratization process in Africa, particularly in Ghana. It contrasts the constraints of traditional media, like state-run channels, highlighting government censorship and its one-way information flow. In keeping with the promises of democracy, citizens are expected to use new media platforms widely as they become more accessible in order to promote transparent and effective governance.

According to Ofori et al. (2023) social media can improve public sector marketing management when used effectively. In order to satisfy changing public expectations in

the modern day, he underlined the significance of incorporating social media into public sector marketing strategy. In addition, Kolan (2018) revealed that the use of social media in Ghana is on the rise thus correlating with international trends. As seen by the #Fix-the-country campaign, Occupy Flagstaff House, and Drop that chamber, among other activities, informal, youth-led movements for democratic change are becoming more prevalent in Ghana (Owusu, 2023). Youths who want to bring specific public concerns that directly affect them to the attention of political, regional, and local authority officials are increasingly turning to social media as their primary platform for activism (Shoopala, 2023). In Ghana, there were 23.05 million internet users as of the beginning of 2023, equating to 68.2 percent of the population. In January 2023, 6.60 million people in Ghana used social media, making about 19.5% of the country's total population. According to Datareportal (2023), there were 43.88 million active mobile phone connections in Ghana in the beginning of 2023, which is 129.8% of the country's entire population.

Ankapong (2023) states that most Ghanaians think there is a divide on the internet between the rich and the poor, or between the literate and the non-literate. Social media requires time and resources to use, much like any other technology. A fundamental understanding of computers and mobile phones is necessary for using social media, yet most people do not have these skills. Amoah et al. (2020) contend that the size of the business and the ease of access to social media channels affect how successful social media marketing is for SMEs in emerging economies. Social media accessibility is hampered by inadequate infrastructure and expensive resource costs.

2.17 Social Media Utilization by Local Governments

The development of digital communication technologies in the twenty-first century has drastically changed the public administration environment, with social media platforms becoming more and more important for local governments as vital instruments for involvement, communication, and information sharing (McMillan & Morrison, 2006). Local governments' use of social media is a paradigm change in governance that offers formerly unheard-of chances for open dialogue, public engagement, and creative public service delivery. Local governments are realizing that to build genuine relationships with their constituents, they must make use of social media's power as societies grow more interconnected (McMillan & Morrison, 2006). The dynamics of contact between citizens and governments have been altered by the widespread use of platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others. The way information is exchanged, accessed, and consumed has changed significantly because of social media's widespread use.

Globally, local governments have embraced these platforms as dynamic means of sharing important information about public services, policy announcements, and real-time updates (McMillan & Morrison, 2006). These platforms' interactive features encourage a more inclusive and participatory type of government by enabling people to take a more active part in forming their communities (Haro-de-Rosario et al., 2018). According to Rexhepi et al., (2021), one important aspect of social media adoption by local governments is its capacity to promote citizen participation and engagement. Social media's revolutionary power gives people the ability to express their concerns, offer criticism, and take an active part in local conversations (Gainous et al., 2014). Because of this interactive quality, a more inclusive and participatory

governance model is enhanced, enabling citizens to take a more active part in forming their communities.

Social media is currently the main source of news for young people. They respond, participate, inform, and coexist primarily online. With time, social media has developed into a powerful instrument for political and civic engagement (Shoopala, 2023). Local governments can benefit greatly from social media use. Many of the communication hurdles that these governments have faced in the past are eliminated by the open, dialogic character of social media (Bertot & Jaeger, 2010). Constituent communication can be more focused, transparent, and regular. Governments have traditionally placed a great deal of reliance on traditional mass media to communicate with the public (Dixon, 2010). The emergence of blogs, podcasts, and social media platforms has given public leaders the ability to speak with their constituents directly, by passing the intermediaries of reporters and editors who may filter or gatekeep material (Smith, 2010; cited by Graham et al., 2013)). In view of this, local governments in Ghana have been adopting digital governance efforts more and more in recent years, realizing the potential of social media to improve engagement, transparency and communication (Aidoo, 2019).

Mohammed et al., (2023) study on the drivers and challenges of social media usage in Ghana's local government administration found that social media usage is on the rise among MMDAs in Ghana. He argued that most MMDAs primarily utilize two social media platforms, namely Facebook and WhatsApp, to engage with citizens, communities, and firms. In addition, Haro-de-Rosario et al. (2018), contends that Spanish people prefer Facebook to Twitter when it comes to interacting with their local government. Online openness, public mood, social media usage, and the

interactive nature of local government websites are all factors that affect participation. He underlined the importance of these elements in forming civic involvement and added to our knowledge of how various social media platforms affect it. Kahne et al. (2012), for instance, argues that youngsters who are stationed in the United States of America appeared to engage in more general civic activities when they spent time in online groups. They argue that interactions on social networks influence offline interactions. Young individuals who participated in “online participatory communities” related to their interests were exposed to a variety of perspectives and developed a greater interest in politics.

According to Aday et al. (2023), public sector organizations in Africa largely employ social media for citizen involvement and information distribution. These sites become essential in times of crisis, facilitating instantaneous contact. Furthermore, social media is essential for the provision of e-government services, democracy promotion, political discourse shaping, and civic involvement. In general, it improves public engagement in governance, government communication, and transparency. However, the study failed to consider a critical examination of potential drawbacks or challenges associated with social media use. Noh et al.'s (2019) study on social media use in South Korean local government asserts that there are notable differences in the influence and practical application of Facebook, even though most local governments utilize it for promotional objectives. The efficacy of social media use is influenced by variables such as population size, financial independence, degree of government, and purpose of use. The study offers insightful information about social media use, but it would be helpful to look more closely at the difficulties local governments have in implementing consistent and significant social media use. Furthermore, a deeper

investigation of citizen viewpoints and participation levels might improve the study's comprehensiveness.

A recent study by Zhang et al., (2017) on the assimilation of social media in local government indicates that the absorption of social media in local government agencies is influenced greatly by factors such as technology competence, top management backing, anticipated benefits, and citizen readiness. The best indicator of a government agency's adoption of social media is top management backing. Sharif, Troshani, and Davidson (2015) studied social media adoption in Australian local government organizations and discovered organizational, environmental, and technological aspects impacting adoption decisions by conducting interviews with 24 firms. For stakeholders in the public sector, the findings provide insightful information. However, the study focused solely on the adoption process rather than its impact on accountability. There is also the requirement for continuing research since social media is dynamic.

The adoption of social media by local governments in Ghana has been slow and not as good as the development in the corporate sector, despite the growing number of local government organizations using social media applications and government investment in terms of financing social media initiatives through organizational and financial resources (Sharif et al., 2013). When it comes to ICT initiatives, social media investment necessitates organizational changes in terms of people, culture, structure, and procedures to provide positive outcomes (Dadashzadeh, 2010; de Kool & van Wamelen, 2008; cited by Sharif et al., 2013). For social media projects to be successful, government institutions, according to Osimo (2008; cited by Sharif et al., 2013), must have a well-defined social media strategy. So, a methodical approach is

required to determine the critical factors that drive successful adoption to fully realize the potential of social media.

Scholars and practitioners have presented a range of studies (Khane et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2017; Rosario et al., 2017; Adae et al., 2023) and reports (Howard, 2012; Purser, 2012; cited by Sharif et al., 2013) on the use of social media to enhance engagements, transparency, communication and its many benefits. However, there is consensus among scholars that the adoption of social media across local government has not received enough attention (Sharif et al., 2013; Gao & Lee, 2017; Mohammed et al., 2023).

2.18 Challenges to the Effective Use of Social Media in Local Government

Due to their ability to facilitate open communication and collaboration, social media has been identified as the primary driver behind the recent transformation in public participation and engagement. Many government organizations are still unwilling to utilize social media despite the promises of improved openness and accountability, stronger citizen-government connections, and increased efficiency and effectiveness of government (Fashoro & Barnard, 2017). Hujran, Al-Debei, and Alhawsawi (2021) conducted a qualitative study in Saudi Arabia on the barriers to social media usage in the public sector. They argued that despite its transformative potential, risks such as privacy concerns, security issues, and a perceived lack of control over communication channels hinder social media implementation.

One of the biggest challenges to the successful implementation of social media in local governments is the issue of digital divide. Disparities in access to technology and varying digital literacy levels among citizens can create a digital divide, limiting the reach and impact of social media initiatives. The government may struggle to

ensure inclusive communication, leaving certain segments of the population underserved (Norris, 2001). The digital gap, according to Abusamhadana et al. (2021), is the difference between ICT-advantaged and -disadvantaged societies. The economic or affordability divide, according to the United Nations (2018), is the difference in wealth between rich and poor and how it affects the use of ICTs. According to Norris (2001), the economic divide can be broadly characterized as the difference in income between those who can afford a computer and other digital equipment, as well as internet access, and those who cannot. Disparities in access between urban and rural areas are caused by the uneven distribution of internet infrastructure, which makes the connection problem worse. This problem not only reduces the quantity and caliber of social media exchanges, but it also makes it more difficult to reach a larger audience, particularly in more rural or underdeveloped locations. The lack of dependable internet access in rural locations with lesser economic activity further isolates these populations from digital involvement (Heeks, 2002; Norris, 2001). In Ghana (Adu et al., 2018) and Indonesia (Rahman, 2014), the economic disparity had an impact on the success of e-government and social media implementation. Fashoro and Barnard (2017) state that as one of social media's goals is to include more voices in the democratic process, governments face a difficulty when it comes to the issue of the digital divide. Exclusion due to civic illiteracy should be prevented where the government can grant access to technology by teaching people about the legislative process, laws, and democratic processes.

Another challenge to the successful implementation of social media is the issue of financial constraints. Due to budgetary constraints, local governments may find it difficult to set aside funds for social media workers, infrastructure, and training. The implementation of comprehensive social media plans may be impeded by limited

resources, which could potentially impair the government's capacity to successfully communicate with the community (Ur Rahman et al., 2020). Research suggests that substantial financial investment is necessary for the effective application of digital communication tactics, including social media (Mergel, 2013). This money is required for the purchase of technology, the production of content, and continuous upkeep. Inadequate funding makes it difficult for organizations to keep up an interesting and dynamic web presence, which might result in a decline in public participation and accountability (Bonsón et al., 2012). Criado et al. (2013) highlights that financial resources are crucial for supporting digital initiatives in the public sector. Limited budgets can restrict the ability to produce high-quality content and maintain regular updates, leading to decreased citizen interaction and trust. Lack of staff or resources makes it difficult for many government organizations to handle several social media profiles (Criado & Villodre, 2022). Without enough resources, it can be difficult to create high-quality content, keep an eye on several platforms, and stay current with social media trends. Mohammed et al., (2023) asserts that government must invest in technological infrastructure and personnel training to fully achieve a more digitally driven local government administration.

Resistance to change also serves as another challenge to the successful implementation of social media. Moon (2002) asserts that traditional mindsets within local government structures may resist adopting social media, fearing issues related to efficacy, security, or a reluctance to embrace change. Resistance can slow the adoption process, preventing the government from harnessing the benefits of real-time communication and community engagement. According to Schwester (2009), another potential obstacle is a lack of support from politicians and senior bureaucrats. –Stop and go” social media advancement and sustainability issues are frequently the result

of warm support from high-level decision-makers. Underdeveloped social media networks are the outcome. In a similar vein, low public support could make it difficult to seek social media engagements.

Again, inadequate skilled personnel serve as another challenge to the implementation of social media. Assigning accountability for social media also presents a problem because government agencies may lack some necessary competencies (Mergel, 2012; as cited by Fashoro & Barnard, 2017). This is due to the fact that using social media platforms is a relatively new skill that some government workers may not have learned. Because social media is inherently fast paced, it presents a problem to government organizations, which are notorious for being bureaucratic and having sluggish workflows (Zheng, 2013; Fashoro & Barnard, 2017). Governments find it challenging to react and stay up to date with issues brought up by the public because of this inherent contradiction. Governments are expected to keep up with the quick changes that third-party platform providers make, and social media technologies are no exception. However, because of their bureaucratic structure and lack of funding for employee training, it is nearly impossible for them to do so (Mergel, 2012; Fashoro & Barnard, 2017).

In addition, Fashoro and Barnard (2017) assert that identifying current laws, rules, policies, and regulations may have an impact on how social media technologies are used. This problem arises from the government's lack of control and transparency over these instruments. Additionally, many laws, rules, policies, and legislation were not developed with social media in mind, thus governments may find it difficult to apply them for this reason (Picazo-Vela et al., 2012). These difficulties highlight the significance of creating customized plans for adoption in government contexts that

consider the particular requirements and limitations that local governments must adhere to (Cao et al., 2023).

2.19 Summary

Literature on media and public accountability has been discussed in this chapter. The relationship between mass media and public accountability was highlighted. It has been maintained that numerous interventions by different administrations have been made since independence to guarantee accountability, transparency, engagement, and participation in governance. All efforts to guarantee local accountability, openness, and engagement, however, have not produced particularly encouraging outcomes.

It is evident from all the relevant literature that has been reviewed thus far that the media and accountability are complex concepts with no one definition that is widely recognized. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that there is a working relationship between the media and public accountability. The review of literature indicates that more research is required to understand how social media and radio influence public accountability which this study adopts as its focus.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The study's methodological considerations and philosophical foundation are presented in this chapter. The research philosophy, research approach, research design, study area, study population, sample size and sampling technique, research instrumentation, data sources, data collection process, data analysis, and ethical issues are discussed in detail in this chapter.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the set of beliefs and assumptions that guide the way knowledge is developed, interpreted, and applied within a particular study. It defines the researcher's perspective on reality (ontology), how knowledge is acquired (epistemology), and the role of values in the research process (axiology) (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). Understanding research philosophy is crucial as it influences the choice of research methods, design, and data collection techniques (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It stands for the fundamental presumptions that influence how the researcher interprets the world. According to Tuli (2010), a researcher's philosophy dictates their viewpoint on a phenomenon and the methodology they should use. Creswell (2014) defines research philosophy as the underlying set of beliefs and assumptions that guide a researcher's approach to inquiry, shaping the choice of methods, research design, and interpretation of findings. He emphasizes that research philosophy influences how knowledge is constructed, how reality is perceived, and how data is collected and analyzed. Creswell further argues that every researcher has certain preconceptions and beliefs when conducting research. These preconceptions may stem from the knowledge and

realities the researcher comes across in his education, or they may be based on counsel from advisors and scholarly communities in which the researcher finds himself. Most research projects ignore philosophical paradigms, either on purpose or unintentionally. However, it is imperative that research paradigms be well defined and communicated. This is because research philosophies have a significant influence on research practices as well as offering a broad framework for placing specific studies. The kind of methodological options accessible and the corresponding judgments that must be made to guarantee the intended research outcomes—which must be dependable, verifiable, and valid—are mostly determined by the researcher's philosophical viewpoint (Klenke, 2016).

This study is grounded in interpretivism or interpretivist research philosophy. The interpretivist philosophy is predicated on the premise that understanding people's cultures can help us understand their perspectives, ideas, and meaningful meanings (Lewis, 2008). Because individuals perceive their environment and act accordingly, approaches to understanding the human and social sciences cannot be compared to those employed in the physical sciences (Hammersley, 2014). The interpretivist research philosophy, according to Kaplan and Maxwell (2005), aims to examine reality and comprehend social phenomena by means of diverse social constructions. Additionally, Babbie (2005) defines interpretivist research philosophy as a research paradigm that looks for patterns in various aspects of the social world through observation to explain a larger principle. Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) state that interpretative information systems research is based on the ontological assumption that the social world—that is, social relationships, organizations, and labor divisions—is not 'given. Instead, via human connection and action, the universe is created and reinforced. According to Creswell (2007), interpretivists also embrace a

relativist ontology in which an event can have multiple interpretations rather than being a fact that can be ascertained through a specific method. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of events and the discovery of complex issues and phenomena within the particular context in which the situation is embedded. Understanding the world as it is through people's subjective experiences is the interpretative paradigm's focus (Willis, 2007). According to the interpretivism school of social science, interpreting the meaning of evidence that can be gathered about a phenomenon requires an understanding of the attitudes, drives, and logic of the people involved in that social context (Hammersley, 2015). An interpretivist researcher should be aware that multiple interpretations of the data's findings are possible, so it is the duty of researchers to devise strategies for recognizing and comprehending the diversity of perspectives on the problems and circumstances in the various cultural contexts (Hammersley, 2012). According to Tuli (2010), the interpretivist paradigm can employ case studies, ethnographies, and narrative studies as techniques since they offer the detailed life experiences of the narrators, who are the social actors who shape their culture. Numerous academics and theorists attacked the interpretivist paradigm for its subjectivity in terms of participants' ideas, opinions, and viewpoints (Yanow, 2006). According to Yanow (2006), interpretivists have a strong sense of self and occasionally fail to see the influence that people's perceptions have on how they understand their own subjective views. For the purpose of this study, an interpretivist approach is most suitable, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the role of media in public accountability within local governance. Given that media influence is socially constructed and varies across contexts, qualitative methods such as interviews were employed to capture the perspectives of stakeholders and media practitioners. By adopting this approach, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how the

media, particularly social media and radio, shape public accountability in Ghana's local governance system.

3.2 Research Approach

The study adopts a qualitative research approach to examine the role of the media in enhancing public accountability in local governance in Ghana, with a focus on the Upper Denkyira East Municipality. Crossman (2021) defines qualitative research as a subset of social science research that focuses on studying a particular community or location, gathers and analyzes non-numerical data, and attempts to derive meaning from the data in order to better comprehend social life. Thus, contact between the researcher and the researched within the sociocultural setting of study participants can be considered a component of qualitative research (Kusi, 2012). Babbie (2010) asserts that intersubjective, ontological, epistemological, and methodological attitudes are assumed by the qualitative research approach. They also contend that the qualitative research approach is based on firsthand recollections and aims to provide rich, detailed descriptions of what it observes. Willig (2017) concurs, stating that the qualitative method enables the researcher to gain an insider's understanding of the subject.

Punch (2005) stated that understanding participants' interpretations of the social world is more important for qualitative researchers than forcing their perspective on them. A continuous comprehension of the meaning that participants assign to a social or human problem is the main goal of the qualitative approach (Creswell, 2014 as referenced in Kuupiel, 2021, p. 54). Qualitative research typically focuses on "subjective meanings and context" (Smith & Caddick, 2012, p. 61 as referenced in Kuupiel, 2021, p. 54). According to Adzahile-Mensah et al. (2017) and Ary, Jacobs &

Sorensen (2010), as referenced in Kuupiel, 2021, p. 54, “qualitative research emphasizes on quality.” In order to comprehend the phenomenon being studied from the viewpoints of individuals participating in the research, participants' information is gathered using a qualitative research approach (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010 as referenced in Kuupiel, 2021, p. 55). For that reason, the study chose people who could provide the research with rich information on their understanding or views about the utilization of media by the Upper Denkyira East Municipal Assembly, its impact on public accountability and the challenges encountered thereafter.

3.3 Research Design

According to Creswell (2017), a study design is a set of guidelines and protocols that encompasses the assumptions, techniques for gathering and analyzing data, and functions as a foundation for all investigations. To achieve the research objectives of this study, the researcher adopted the case study design to provide evidence of the understanding of media, its utilization by the Upper Denkyira East Municipal Assembly and the perceived impact on public accountability. The Centre for Innovation in Research and Teaching (2019) defines a case study as an in-depth, comprehensive analysis of one person or a small group of people. This research methodology enables the examination of a phenomenon within its context through the utilization of diverse data sources. This ensures that the subject is viewed via multiple lenses rather than just one, making it possible to identify and comprehend a wide range of event-related facets. This method has the benefit of allowing participants to share their tales while fostering a close working relationship between the researcher and them (Crabtree & Miller, 2023). The researcher will be able to comprehend the participants' behaviours better; due to the participants' ability to share their

experiences and explain their opinions through these stories (Lather, 1992; Robottom & Hart, 1993).

According to Gray (2021), a case study is an empirical investigation that investigates a phenomenon in depth and within its actual environment. The researcher can examine the phenomenon in context and gain additional understanding of it by using a case study. This was in line with the study's design in terms of the research questions and the utilization of various data collection methods. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, or their combination, can be used while conducting case studies (Berg, 2009, as referenced in Yajol, 2021, p.48). Case studies are the most ideal research technique when a researcher wants to investigate a phenomenon that is not well studied and is still in its early stages, according to Benbesat, Goldstein, and Mead (1987 as cited in Yajol, 2021, p.50).

3.4 Study Area

The Upper Denkyira East Municipality is one of the twenty-two (22) Administrative Districts of the Central Region which was established in 2007 by Legislative Instrument (LI 1877) from the then Upper Denkyira District. It was inaugurated in February 2008. The Administrative Capital is Dunkwa-On-Offin. The Municipality lies within Latitudes 5°. 30' and 6° 02' North of the Equator and Longitudes 1° W and 2° West of the Greenwich Meridian. It shares boundaries with Amansie Central District in the North, Assin North Municipality in the Southeast, Atti-Morkwa District in the South and Upper Denkyira West District in the North-West, Wassa Amenfi East in the West and Adansi South in the East. The Upper Denkyira East Municipality has a total land area of 501.9 Square Kilometres, which is about 5.19 percent of the total land area of Central Region

According to the 2021 population and housing census, the population of the municipality stands at 110,141 with 55,280 males and 54,861 females. The Economy of the Municipality can be classified as mainly agrarian. The main forms of economic activities in the Municipality are farming, mining and trading, banking. Agriculture activities are carried out in almost all the communities with the majority carried out in smaller towns. The nature of the vegetation found in the Municipality encourages and promotes agricultural activities thus helping to generate income from farming activities. Three Forest Reserves are located within the Municipality: Benso Benn, located at Imbraim at 155.40k m², Ben East, located at Opponso at 25.33k m², and Opon Mansi, located at Twifo Kyebi. The Municipality is fighting small-scale miners, commonly referred to as “Galamsey,” due to environmental destruction. Parts of the Municipality's enormous landmass and even parts of its forested sections have suffered from their operations. A further obstacle to the economy's transition to a green one is the problem of chainsaw operators cutting lumber illegally, both on and off reservations. Animals and other microbes are also becoming extinct because of it. According to the UDEMA composite budget for 2022, about 60% of the working population engages in farming.

The Municipality is 385.50 km long overall, of which 44.38 km are made up of bitumen and laterite roads. Unfortunately, most of the trunk roads are in poor condition, which makes traveling and transportation of products extremely challenging, particularly during the wet season. This has always had an impact on moving food from the growing centers to the markets. Merely 11.8 km of the 250 km of feeder roads in the municipality have a bitumen surface covering them. The remaining road network has surfaces made of rocky, gravel, or earth. This makes it

exceedingly challenging and time-consuming to transport food products from the farm gates to the marketing hub.

Educational facilities in the Municipality are scattered and range from Nursery to Training College. However, there are several communities that lack educational facilities, most of which are far from the Municipal capital. The Municipality has a total of 333 Educational Institutions made up of 122 KGs, 119 Primary Schools, 87 JHS, 5 SHS and 1 Nursing & Midwifery Training College. The reason for selecting the Upper Denkyira East Municipality as a study area is that the municipality presents a unique socio-political environment characterized by a blend of rural and semi-urban settings. The Municipality also meets Yin's (2014) criteria for case selection, including relevance to the research problem, availability of data, and feasibility of study. Additionally, the presence of local media outlets and active civic engagement ensures access to diverse perspectives, enhancing the credibility and triangulation of findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.5 Population of the Study

According to Wilson (2014), the total collection of cases from which a sample is taken is referred to as the research population. Finding the appropriate location and participants for the gathering of the necessary empirical data is crucial for any study, according to Sekaran (2019) and Creswell (2019). Population was defined as the totality of cases that satisfy a predetermined set of characteristics by Polite and Hungler (2004). As per Kay (1997), the total number of cases that one wants to create is the population of a study. In Yogesh's words from 2007, a population is any set of people who share one or more traits that the researcher is interested in. Reaching this goal necessitates the researcher locating those institutions and people –who matter”

and possess the authority and edge to interpret the empirical facts gathered (Adjorlolo & Ellingsen, 2013). Schein (1999, 2004) has therefore emphasized the significance of incorporating organization personnel throughout the study process, given that employees are the ones who will carry out the changes they have contributed to. In the context of this study, the population comprised all individuals in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality. The target population for this study comprises residents, assembly officials, and journalists within the Upper Denkyira East Municipality (UDEMA). This is because they can provide first-hand information for the study. The researcher ensured that the participants met the following inclusion criteria: Availability and willingness to participate and the understanding and experience of the participants about the phenomenon.

3.6 Sample Size

A sample is a group of respondents chosen for the study's purposes from a wider community, according to Willig (2013). Retzer (2003) defined a sample as a selection of a small subset of a population of a study. Since the entire population of the study can hardly be interviewed, the researcher will resort to interviewing a section of the population. In order to have a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study, Creswell (2016) argues that a sample might be a selection of limited small numbers that are typical of the larger population. A sample is characterized as a tiny portion of a larger population that is chosen based on the researcher's objectives and understanding of the population's constituents (Babbie, 2004). According to Marezyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger (2010), a sample is also a representative or a subset of the total population from which it was taken. According to Creswell (2005), choosing a greater number of interview subjects for qualitative research will lead to shallow viewpoints. A researcher's overall capacity to offer a comprehensive picture decrease

with each additional person or location (Kusi, 2012). Most scholars therefore recommend 15-30 interviews for case study research (Vasileiou et al., 2018; Boddy, 2016; Marshall et al., 2013; Agyemang, 2022). The appropriate sample size for a qualitative study, according to Mthuli et al, (2022), must be one that adequately answers the research questions. This occurs when no new or relevant data seem to emerge regarding a category. In other words, when theoretical saturation is attained. This confirms the ideas of Charmaz (2006) that a qualitative researcher must stop collecting data when the categories are saturated – when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new insights or reveals new properties. Therefore, in this study, a total of 30 informants were interviewed. This included five (5) officials of the Upper Denkyira East Municipal Assembly including the Municipal Chief Executive (MCE), one (2) member from the department of Management Information System (MIS), one (1) member from the communication department, one member from the Client Service Department, and the Municipal Coordinating Director (MD), fifteen (15) residents, and ten (10) journalists. The table below gives a fair idea of the sample size of the study.

Table 1: Sample Size

S/N	Class of Interviewee	Number of Interviewee (s)
1	Assembly Officials	5
2	Journalists	10
3	Residents	15
Total		30

The study called for more residents because they are the biggest stakeholders of the assembly, and they are directly affected by the actions and inactions of the assembly. They stand a greater chance of expressing the impact of media on public accountability in the municipality. The journalists were interviewed because they play a critical role in investigating and reporting on governance issues. Their firsthand experiences with information dissemination, investigative journalism, and interactions with government institutions provide a professional perspective on the media's role in fostering public accountability. By engaging journalists, the study seeks to understand the challenges and opportunities they face in reporting on governance and whether their work has led to tangible outcomes in promoting transparency and accountability. The assembly officials were selected because they are the policy makers at the local government level and are directly involved in the adoption and implementation processes. As policymakers and implementers of government initiatives, their experiences and opinions on media scrutiny, transparency measures, and public engagement provide insights into the institutional response to media oversight.

3.7 Sampling Technique

For this investigation, purposive sampling strategy was used. The decision to use purposive sampling is grounded in the study's qualitative approach, which aims to investigate in-depth viewpoints on how the media may help public accountability in local governance. Because the research questions were specific, it was crucial to choose participants who could offer rich, detailed, and contextually relevant data. Purposive sampling made it possible to carefully choose individuals who are either directly involved in or impacted by social media and radio's influence in governance, guaranteeing that the data gathered would be significant and relevant to the study's goals. Purposive sampling made sure that the qualities of the informants were chosen

according to what made them the most appropriate for the study. As noted by Patton (2002, p. 380), “samples in qualitative research are usually purposive.” This indicates that the reason for selecting participants is their propensity to produce important data regarding the subject of the study. In particular, the Management Information System (MIS) officer was selected because he oversees the municipality’s information systems, including the technical aspects of social media and other digital platforms. This role provides a technical perspective on the capabilities, limitations, and security concerns associated with the use of social media in local governance. The MIS officer can offer insights into how data is managed, how social media and radio platforms are integrated into the municipality's communication strategy, and how technological challenges are addressed. The Client Service Officer was included because he serves as the frontline liaison between the public and the Assembly. Citizens who visit the Assembly to make inquiries, lodge complaints, or seek redress often do so through this officer. Including this individual provides critical insights into how citizen grievances are communicated, received, and addressed—an essential component of accountability.

The Communication Officer was also included because he is directly responsible for managing the municipality's communication channels, including social media platforms. This role makes them a primary source of information on how radio and social media is utilized to disseminate information, engage with the public, and respond to citizen concerns. The Communication Officer’s perspective is essential for understanding the strategies employed by the municipality to communicate transparently and foster accountability through digital platforms. The Municipal Coordinating Director also plays a significant role in the administration of the municipality and is involved in implementing policies and programs. His position

gives him an overview of how the media might influence the implementation of governance policies, public service delivery, and interactions with citizens. The Municipal Coordinating Director's insights can help reveal the practical challenges and opportunities associated with using the media as a tool for public accountability within the municipal administration. The inclusion of the MCE was because he is the highest-ranking official in the municipality and is responsible for overseeing all aspects of local governance, including public communication and accountability mechanisms. The MCE's perspective is crucial because he can provide insights into how the media is used (or not used) at the highest level of local government to engage with the public and ensure accountability. His role places him at the center of interactions between the government and citizens, making him a key informant for understanding the strategic use of media in governance. The purposive sampling technique was also used to select the journalists because they play a critical role in shaping public opinion and holding government officials accountable by reporting on governance issues. Their use of radio and social media for sourcing news, disseminating information, and interacting with the public makes them important participants in the study. Journalists can provide an external perspective on how social media and radio are used by the municipality and its impact on public accountability, as well as the challenges faced in ensuring accurate and fair reporting through these platforms. Residents are the ultimate beneficiaries or stakeholders in local governance and public accountability. Their perspectives are crucial for understanding how social media and radio are perceived and used by ordinary citizens to hold their leaders accountable. Sampling residents allows the study to capture the grassroots level impact of social media on public accountability, including whether and how

residents engage with local government through radio and social media, and their experiences of responsiveness and transparency.

The inclusion criteria for selecting interviewees in this study ensured that participants have relevant knowledge, experience, or engagement with media and public accountability in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality (UDEMA). The criteria are as follows:

1. Residents

- Must be at least 18 years old.
- Must have lived in Upper Denkyira East Municipality (UDEM) for at least one year.
- Should have experience engaging with local media (radio or social media) on governance issues.

2. Assembly Officials

- Must be a current or past official of the municipal assembly.
- Should have at least one year of experience in local governance.

3. Journalists

- Must be actively working with a recognized media outlet (radio, television).
- Should have at least one year of experience in reporting.

3.8 Data Collection Instruments

Semi-structured interviews were employed to acquire qualitative data from participants to collect pertinent data for the study. Because it fits the case study design and represents the conceptual perspective supporting this research, this instrument was chosen. The researcher was able to comprehend issues from the perspectives of informants and gather sufficient high-quality information on the subject matter due to

the semi-structured interview, which also allowed informants unfettered opportunity to express themselves. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), one of the primary methods utilized in qualitative research for data collection is the interview. Mason (2002) similarly notes that qualitative interviews provide a way to get detailed knowledge about a subject and restrict the number of questions the researcher can ask. In addition to the interview guide, recorders (mobile phones), field notebooks and jotters were employed to gather data for the study.

3.9 Sources of Data

Data for the study were acquired from primary and secondary sources. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather primary data from participants, along with observation. Conversely, the study's secondary data came from textbooks, periodicals, papers, journals, electronic publications, etc. that were sourced from reliable sources.

3.10 Data Collection Procedure

The study used in-person interviews to collect its data. To obtain the necessary data from the field, the researcher used an introductory letter from the Department of Political Science Education to provide a brief overview of the study's objectives and request participants' consent. Face-to-face interactions with the participants were used to conduct the interviews. In conducting the interview, relevant questions were asked and response from interviewees were recorded when permitted. Both the English Language and Twi were used when necessary. The allocated time for each interview was between 30-45 minutes. The comments or conclusions of the interviewees during the interview were examined to get clarification on some of the responses of the participants. The researcher used his smartphone to record the interviews and filed notes were also taken during the interviews. This was, however, necessary to ensure

that the data gathered for the study were not lost or destroyed.

3.11 Data Analysis

Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) define data analysis as the process of analysing data and using logical and analytical reasoning to examine each component of the data supplied. According to Banerjee and Chaudhury (2010), the goal of data analysis is to produce knowledge that is both usable and helpful. The qualitative approach necessitates that data analysis start as soon as the interview does. The analysis of the field notes' data will improve comprehension of the diverse themes and categories that will surface (Amoah, 2020). All interviews conducted were transcribed. However, interviews conducted in the local dialect were first transcribed into the English Language by the researcher before transcription. The data in this study was analysed using thematic analysis by the researcher. After reading through the transcribed material to find recurring patterns, the research questions and study objectives were covered by comparing the emergent themes. Based on the research questions and study objectives, a coding frame was created that explains the relationship and link between the codes with frequency to bring out informant's accounts and perspectives. Based on newly developing themes found in the data, the study's conclusions were examined. Finally, the results were presented and discussed based on the identified themes.

3.12 Trustworthiness

The study was conducted with careful attention to the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability to ensure the reliability of the research findings. According to Guba (1981), credibility in research refers to the level of trustworthiness, reliability, or authenticity of data and its analysis. To uphold this

standard, the study adhered to ethical principles and professional conduct to maintain legitimacy. Data collection and analysis was conducted meticulously to ensure that similar results could be obtained if another researcher were to replicate the study under the same socio-cultural conditions, assuming all other factors remain constant. This approach aims to enhance the reliability of the research outcomes.

Guba (1981) further explains that this criterion pertains to the likelihood of arriving at the same conclusions under similar conditions. However, he also argues that while interpretivist researchers may not always produce identical results, they can still derive meaningful inferences influenced by their interpretation of human behavior, which is inherently dynamic, context-dependent, and subject to multiple perspectives. According to Kinunja and Kuyini (2017), the dependability of such interpretations relies on the researcher's ability to ensure that findings genuinely emerge from the data collected and analyzed.

To maintain objectivity and prevent biases or preconceived notions, the researcher took measures to uphold the confirmability of the findings. Throughout the data collection and analysis process, the researcher prioritized participants' perspectives and experiences over personal assumptions. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define transferability as the researcher's effort to provide sufficient contextual details, enabling readers to determine the applicability of findings to their own circumstances. In this study, thick description was employed, with participants' responses quoted verbatim in the findings analysis. Additionally, critical distance was maintained to prevent researcher bias and uphold the integrity of the study.

3.13 Ethical Consideration

Since this research is being done for academic purposes, quality control measures must be followed. Any sort of research involving humans must take ethical issues into account in order to safeguard the rights and welfare of research participants (Kimmel, 1996). Ethics deals with issues of right and wrong. While conducting research, ethical considerations are crucial. Letters introducing the researcher and outlining the significance of the work being done was carried with him. Before starting any one-on-one interviews, the participants' informed consent was obtained. To formally request the participants' approval, arrangements was made for ethical clearance from the School of Graduate Studies and an introductory letter from the Department of Political Science Education. In summary, the research adhered to the subsequent ethical concerns: obtaining participants' agreement, honouring differing opinions, maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of supplied data. This will lessen the likelihood of needless suffering, terror, and injury for informants.

3.14 Summary

This chapter discussed the general approach and specific techniques that were adopted to address the objectives of the study. These included the research setting, the reasons for the choice of the study area and how the study was carried out. Primary data was collected from 30 informants which included fifteen (15) residents, five (5) Municipal Assembly officials including the Municipal Chief Executive (MCE), and ten (10) journalists with the aid of an interview-guide. Respondents were sampled through purposive sampling technique. The method of data analysis was also captured in the chapter. Ethical issues concerning the study were also considered in the chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected and discusses the major findings of the study and how it interacts with literature and theory. The purpose of this study was to examine the role of radio and social media in influencing public accountability in local governance in Ghana with a specific focus on the Upper Denkyira East Municipality. The research sought to achieve the following objectives: to explore how local government officials in the Upper Denkyira East Municipal Assembly use social media and radio to engage with citizens; to examine the role of radio and social media in promoting public accountability within the Upper Denkyira East Municipality; and to identify the challenges and limitations to the effective use of radio and social media to enhance public accountability in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality.

Data was collected from thirty (30) informants, this comprised of fifteen (15) residents, ten (10) journalists, and five (5) assembly officials which included the Municipal Chief Executive (MCE), the Management Information System (MIS) Officer, the Municipal Coordinating Director (MCD), the Client Servicer Officer, and Municipal Information Service Officer. There were three sets of interview guides which were separately administered. One set was administered to the residents, another set for journalists and the other set was administered to the assembly officials. After examining the responses, the data gathered from the participants were transcribed and coded. Upon coding the vast amount of data, several themes and patterns emerged. The frequency and nature of radio engagement, citizen participation, use of social media, facilitating transparency, media-initiated

government response, media pressure and corrective action, institutional and bureaucratic constraints, political and institutional interference, infrastructural challenges, financial constraints and local context were some of the themes that predominated and persisted. The study concentrated on the opinions and experiences of its participants, with a particular focus on the impact of media on public accountability.

4.1 Findings Related to Research Questions

Following a thematic analysis of the qualitative data, the table below presents the major themes and sub-themes identified.

Table 2: Main themes and Sub-themes from thematic analysis of the qualitative data

Main themes	Sub-themes
1. Utilization of media for public engagement	Frequency and nature of radio engagement Citizen participation Use of social media
2. Media and public accountability	Facilitating transparency Media-initiated government response Media pressure and corrective action (enforceability)
3. Challenges to the effective use of media for public accountability	Partisanship Political and institutional interference Lack of cooperation Financial constraints Infrastructural challenges Local context

Field Report, 2025

4.2 Utilization of Media for Public Engagement

The purpose of this section was to explore how local government officials in the Upper Denkyira East Municipal Assembly use radio and social media in their engagement with citizens. The questions that were asked under this section focused on: frequency and nature of engagement; citizen participation; and use of social media. The findings show varied views about the assembly's utilization of radio and social media for engagement.

4.2.1 Frequency and nature of engagement

Radio remains a powerful and accessible medium for civic engagement, especially in local governance contexts where internet penetration may be low, and literacy levels vary. In the Upper Denkyira East Municipality, radio serves as a primary channel through which the Municipal Assembly communicates with residents. Based on the data gathered, it is evident that the frequency of radio engagement is high, consistent, and structured. A consistent finding across all responses is that the assembly engages with residents through radio on a weekly basis. Specifically, the assembly has a standing arrangement with Denkyiraman Radio to host programs every Monday morning. This weekly slot is used by various departments and officers of the assembly to communicate with the public. A response from the Municipal Coordinating Director and the acting Municipal Information Officer confirmed this.

The assembly engages with the public on radio more often. We have a program on Denkyiraman radio where every Monday, key officers of the assembly and heads of department engage the public (Assembly Official 2, UDEMA, March 2025).

The assembly engages with citizens on radio very frequently. The assembly has a contract with Denkyiraman radio where every Monday, we go there to engage the public and respond to concerns raised by them (Assembly Official 4, UDEMA, March 2025).

This indicates that radio engagements are not ad hoc or sporadic but are institutionalized into the assembly's communication structure. The regularity and predictability of the sessions suggest a deliberate effort by the assembly to maintain a consistent dialogue with citizens, which is a key feature of accountable governance. It is also important to underscore the fact that the assembly uses a timetable system to determine which departments go on air and when. This internal scheduling mechanism ensures that all functional units within the assembly are represented and could engage with the public on matters relevant to their operations. A response from another official of the assembly confirmed this:

The assembly has a timetable for engagements on radio. The timetable indicates which department must be at a radio station and at what point in time they must (Assembly Official 3, UDEMA, March 2025).

This structured approach points to a coordinated and organized communication framework, enhancing the efficiency and coverage of the assembly's engagements. It also allows for a diversity of voices and expertise to reach the public, enriching the quality of information shared.

The data further revealed that beyond frequency of radio engagement by the Assembly, the content and focus of radio engagement by the Assembly reveal a multidimensional approach to communication. The data indicates that the Assembly broadcasts a wide range of programs and announcements, all aimed at addressing the governance, developmental, and welfare concerns of residents. A response from some officials of the assembly confirmed this:

All the services provided by the assembly are broadcasted on radio during engagement. Issues of health, sanitation, birth and death among others (Assembly Official 3, UDEMA, March 2025).

.....We mostly go to the radio stations to do sensitization on HIV/AIDS, cholera, sanitation and even the budget of the assembly. We engage the public on environmental, health and safety issues (Assembly Official 5, UDEMA, March 2025).

The breadth of topics covered ranging from health, sanitation, and revenue mobilization to emergency alerts and civic services demonstrates the assembly's use of radio as a comprehensive governance tool rather than a mere announcement platform. This kind of engagement fosters a well-informed citizenry, enhances transparency, and builds public trust in local governance structures. The findings confirm the assertion by Banda (2006) who presents radio as the most accessible and impactful medium in Africa for fostering development and civic participation. He notes that institutional partnerships between radio stations and local government bodies lead to better governance outcomes.

4.2.2 Citizen engagement

The information gleaned from the interviews show that the Upper Denkyira East Municipality has a strong culture of public participation through radio platforms. Citizens express their opinions, ask questions, and demand accountability from public service providers and the local government through radio call-in shows. Participatory governance is put into practice through these activities, giving regular citizens the chance to have an impact on local policy and implementation. Some residents shared as follows:

I have. I quite remember last time, there was an issue concerning the assembly on radio about their engagement with the public in the municipality. I called-in and asked the Municipal Coordinator why they don't organize community engagements to find out from the

citizens what they really expect from the assembly. His response was that the assembly has considered it, but they are unable to do so because of financial challenges (Resident 4, March 2025).

Oh yes. I remember one time, on Solar FM, we were discussing how the assembly was using the DRIP machines. We realized individuals within the assembly were using the machines for their personal benefit instead of working for the public. It was not the best. The host called the Municipal Coordinator to respond to our claims and after that, that activity was halted (Assemblyman, UDEMA, March 2025).

I have also raised concerns about the charges given to us by Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG). There is no consistency in the charges. It keeps increasing every month even though your gadgets remain the same. I spoke about it on radio and the response I got was that they sometimes give estimated bills. How can you be giving me estimated bills every month and it keeps increasing? (Resident 8, March 2025).

..... I called-in and informed them about the need to also look at alternative source of livelihood for the young people who are into the galamsey. A lot of the youth here are into galamsey and the only reason they are there is because there is no job here for them. If the government wants to stop galamsey, then, they should be interested in coming out with policies that would create jobs for the youths (Resident 1, March 2025).

From the responses, it is evident that citizens do not only participate in discussions about broad developmental issues but also engage with sector-specific concerns like energy billing irregularities from the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG), misuse of public assets like DRIP machines, and the need for sustainable alternatives to galamsey. These examples illustrate how radio serves as a platform for grassroots voices to be heard on matters of local and national interest. This confirms the assertion by Banda (2006) that community radio stations serve as vital democratic spaces where marginalized voices can participate in decision-making processes. Radio thus becomes an important avenue for enhancing participatory governance, particularly in areas where traditional civic engagement mechanisms are limited.

Additionally, the data shows that participation extends beyond grievances and critiques. In addition, citizens participate in policy discussions and make helpful suggestions. For instance, in response to the issue of galamsey, a participant recommended that the government should not just focus on removing illegal mining but also promote the establishment of alternative employment for the youth. This indicates that residents are deeply aware of the systemic problems facing the neighborhood and are eager to contribute to finding a solution. Nyamnjoh (2005) supports this by emphasizing that radio encourages a culture of speaking and listening, where both citizens and government actors have roles to play in shaping governance outcomes. The interactive nature of radio call-ins fosters mutual respect and understanding between the governed and the governors, breaking down bureaucratic barriers.

2.2.3 Use of social media

The data collected reveals a multifaceted narrative regarding the use of social media by the Upper Denkyira East Municipal Assembly and its citizens, highlighting both its potential as a governance tool and the limitations in its current use. The most frequently mentioned platforms are Facebook and WhatsApp, with occasional references to a municipal website. The assembly utilizes these platforms to share updates on municipal activities, disseminate information about the Municipal Chief Executive (MCE), and provide responses to public concerns. Facebook, in particular, is noted as a key platform due to its wide accessibility in Ghana, while WhatsApp serves more as an internal engagement tool among assembly members and stakeholders. A response from the acting Municipal Information Service Officer, former Municipal Chief Executive and an Assemblyman confirmed this:

The assembly has an account on Facebook. We often use WhatsApp to engage the public as well. We also have a website where most of our events are shared (Assembly Official 3, UDEMA, March 2025).

The assembly has a website and an account on Facebook that we update the citizenry on the activities of the assembly (Assembly Official 1, UDEMA, March 2025).

.....Since I am an assembly member, we have a common platform on WhatsApp where all the assembly members in the municipality together with the officials of the assembly are. We normally share vital information there (Assemblyman, UDEMA, April 2025).

This finding confirms the notion that MMDAs in Ghana primarily utilize two social media platforms, namely Facebook and WhatsApp, to engage with citizens, communities, and firms (Mohammed et al., 2023).

The data further revealed a degree of inconsistency and fragmentation in the assembly's use of these platforms. Some officials acknowledged that the Facebook page had become inactive following the transfer of the officer in charge and the loss of login credentials. A new account has since been created, but its reach and engagement remain limited. This can be confirmed by a response from an official of the assembly:

.....We are not active on Facebook recently because the person who was managing the account has been transferred to a different place and we do not have the logins as well. We have created a new account but we are now growing it. It is not that active (Assembly Official 3, UDEMA, March 2025).

This is consistent with Effah and Boateng (2021) who argues that while social media adoption exists among Ghanaian local governments, their capacity to consistently engage with citizens is often constrained by staffing challenges, technical capacity, and poor coordination.

The data further revealed that despite institutional limitations, citizens in the municipality demonstrate notable levels of digital civic engagement, driven by both frustration with local governance and a sense of responsibility. The data suggests that social media platforms have become vital tools for everyday governance interactions, particularly in contexts where physical access to assembly officials or town hall meetings is limited. Facebook and WhatsApp are used not only to voice grievances but also to advocate for transparency and public dialogue. One respondent recalled using WhatsApp to raise concerns about sanitation and receiving a timely response, while another recounted documenting illegal mining activities on Facebook, which drew significant public and media attention. Responses from some residents confirmed this:

Recently, there was a sanitation problem in the municipality, and nobody was doing anything about it. I raised concerns on it on Facebook and WhatsApp platforms and the assembly responded to it by addressing it (Resident 5, March 2025).

I do engage in discussions on social media because I am a responsible citizen and I pay my taxes every month. I pay more than GHS 100 every month. I must be informed about everything that goes on in the country. So, I follow those platforms to be informed about government decisions and actions (Resident 4, March 2025).

.....I remember way back in 2019 when illegal mining was rampant in the municipality, I used to take pictures of these activities and post them on my Facebook page and the response was massive (Resident 2, April 2025).

A particularly compelling example is the internal WhatsApp group used by assembly members and officials, which acts as a shadow forum for governance deliberations. This was confirmed by a response from a resident who also serves as an assemblyman:

Like I mentioned, we have a common platform on WhatsApp where all the big men at the assembly are on. As assembly members, we meet only three times a year. So, most of our discussions are done on the platform. We normally use the platform to raise concerns about issues of accountability and misappropriation. I remember when the issue of the Council of State election came up, it was through WhatsApp that the coordinating director of the assembly posted a letter from the Regional Coordinating Director requesting two members from our assembly to represent the entire assembly. This became a banter. The coordinating director unilaterally picked two members to represent the assembly without prior approval from all the assembly members. Through advocacy on the platform, we were able to rectify that anomaly (Assemblyman, UDEMA, April 2025).

This is consistent with Bertot, Jaeger and Grimes (2010) who argue that social media platforms can foster transparency and accountability in government by providing citizens with avenues to express concerns and demand responses.

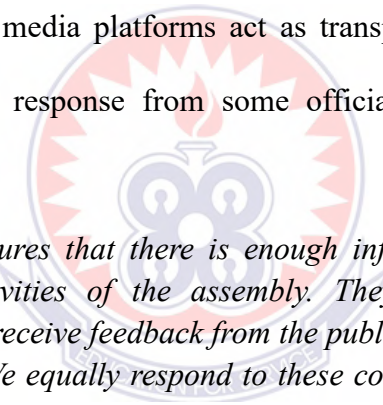
4.3 Media and Public Accountability

This section sought to address the second objective of the study. The objective sought to examine the role of radio and social media in promoting public accountability in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality. Thus, participants were asked about how radio and social media have helped to ensure public accountability in the municipality. Emerging themes from the interviews were: facilitating transparency; media-initiated government response; and media pressure and corrective action (enforceability).

4.3.1 Facilitating transparency

The data reveals that both radio and social media play a pivotal role in fostering transparency in local governance within the Upper Denkyira East Municipality. These media platforms serve as crucial intermediaries between the assembly and the citizens, allowing for the flow of information, the solicitation of public feedback, and the demand for accountability. Transparency, in this context, is not limited to the

passive provision of information but is characterized by ongoing dialogue, scrutiny, and civic engagement, facilitated by these communication channels. Through the interviews, I realized that the presence of the media ensures that information about the assembly's activities is made available to the public in a timely and accessible manner. Through regular updates, call-in segments, and interactive forums, citizens can stay informed about developmental projects, policy decisions, and financial allocations. Radio was identified as a key channel for public engagement, where officials provide explanations, respond to questions, and give accounts of their stewardship. This aligns with the view that transparency is enhanced when citizens have access to relevant, timely, and understandable information, as posited by Meijer (2013), who notes that media platforms act as transparency-enablers in democratic governance systems. A response from some officials of the assembly and some residents confirmed this:



The media ensures that there is enough information in the system about the activities of the assembly. They provide us with the opportunity to receive feedback from the public on their concerns and expectations. We equally respond to these concerns via the media as well. It enhances trust and harmony between the assembly and the public (Assembly Official 4, UDEMA, March 2025).

I think radio and social media have helped in ensuring that there is transparency in the dealings of the assembly. This is because the journalists here sometimes come to the assembly to ask us questions about things they do not understand. We also go to the radio stations to give an account to the public about our activities and achievements. Radio has provided us with the opportunity to have an interaction with people and to disseminate information to those who need it (Assembly Official 5, UDEMA, March 2025).

Sometimes something happens and the radio takes it up and call government officials to respond to it. No government official wants his name to be mentioned in the media in a negative way. So, when concerns are raised about things in the municipality, they are quick to

come out and respond to them. The media provides the platform for information to be given on time (Resident 2, April 2025).

To some extent, I think it has made government officials more accountable. Because, when the assembly's budget is prepared, they invite quite a number of journalists to come for the budget reading and see for themselves allocations made for each sector or community. On that score, you can say that the assembly is transparent. The officials are also aware that if they fail to live up to expectations and the money that has been given to them by the central government to undertake projects is not well accounted for, it will be discussed on radio and social media and pressure will be on them. So being aware of all these things, there is pressure on them to do what is right (Resident 4, April 2025).

The comments suggest that the media environment generates a reputational incentive for transparency. Government officials are wary of negative publicity, particularly when issues gain traction on radio discussions or social media platforms. One respondent explicitly mentioned that no official wants their name associated with wrongdoing on air, which creates a form of pressure that drives responsiveness and responsible governance. This confirms the assertion by Roberts (2006) that transparency often operates through a logic of “exposure,” where the potential of being seen or discussed acts as a deterrent to misconduct and an incentive for ethical behavior. The use of media during significant administrative processes—such as the reading of the assembly's budget in the presence of journalists—is another illustration of transparency through deliberate openness. This practice was highlighted as a way of building public trust, as it exposes the assembly's resource allocations and financial priorities to public scrutiny. The awareness among officials that budgetary mismanagement could become a subject of media critique underscores how radio and social media operate as informal but effective tools of financial oversight. This is consistent with McQuail (2010) who argues that the media serves as a fourth estate

that monitors the three branches of government by informing the public and ensuring transparency in public affairs.

4.3.2 Media-initiated government response

The findings reveal that both traditional radio and newer social media platforms serve as powerful catalysts for government action in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality. Through sustained public pressure and citizen-led advocacy, these media platforms have increasingly influenced the responsiveness of the local assembly, compelling officials to address pressing community concerns and instances of suspected administrative opacity. A journalist in the interview recounted:

Yes, there have been so many instances. I remember last year; we were able to get the assembly to work on sanitation issues in the municipality through social media pressure. We took pictures of refuse dumps and dust areas in the municipality and sent them to the MCE for proper action to be taken. Also, when the assembly gave Dunkwahene a permit to build on the Boys School Park, it was through media advocacy and pressure that got the assembly to sit with the youths concerned who were against that decision to restore calm. Due to this, Dunkwahene called for a press conference to also address the public on the issue (Journalist 2, April 2025).

Another Journalist had this to say:

..... Of course, in recent times, the government was not focusing on sports in the municipality. There was no investment in sports infrastructure and other things in the municipality. And through social media and radio, we put pressure on the MCE and the assembly, and some level of progress was made. We now have a youth development center and AstroTurf in the municipality now (Journalist 7, April 2025).

The comments demonstrate a form of bottom-up accountability, where the media becomes a megaphone for public voice and concern, compelling leaders to act not because of formal institutional requirements, but due to visible public scrutiny and pressure. These incidents reflect a growing sensitivity of local authorities to media

narratives and public sentiment expressed through media channels. The fact that the Dunkwahene had to call a press conference and that the assembly responded to sanitation complaints shows that media-triggered public discourse can create reputational risks or legitimacy concerns for leaders, prompting them to respond to maintain public trust and political stability. This is consistent with Norris (2010) who argues that media acts as a “public sentinel,” exposing wrongdoing, amplifying citizen voices, and compelling leaders to respond due to the fear of reputational damage. He further posited that officials would act when under public scrutiny to maintain legitimacy. This was corroborated by a response from some assembly officials:

Last year when the construction of the Dunkwa market began, we received complaints from citizens on radio and Facebook about the people behind the construction and the amount involved. Some even threatened to go on demonstration if the assembly does not release the contract details of the project. The assembly had no option than to take our time to explain and provide relevant information about it to the public (Assembly Official 4, UDEMA, March 2025).

When the District Road Improvement Programme (DRIP) machines came, the instruction was that it was not supposed to be used for private purposes. However, due to financial challenges, the assembly decided to hire it to private individuals to generate income for its maintenance. The radio stations started talking about it and even called our Coordinating Director to answer some questions. Through the pressure from the public on radio and WhatsApp platforms, the assembly decided to park the machines (Assembly Official 5, UDEMA, March 2025).

The comments reflect the media’s significant role in triggering government transparency and corrective action in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality. In both cases — the Dunkwa market construction and the misuse of DRIP machines were not internal oversight mechanisms, but citizen pressure expressed through media platforms that led the assembly to act. This underscores the increasing power of the media, especially local radio and WhatsApp groups, as tools for public accountability.

This aligns with the Media as a Watchdog Theory, which posits that the media acts as an independent observer that scrutinizes the actions of government and pressures them to operate transparently and ethically. As Norris (2010) asserts, media functions as a “public sentinel,” compelling leaders to explain, justify, or correct decisions when they are placed under public scrutiny. This is also corroborated by a response from some residents:

..... I will go back to the PWD (Persons with Disabilities) case again. Sometime came when many of the PWDs thought that the money earmarked for them was being used by the assembly for other purposes. This became very hot on radio programs in the municipality. Due to the pressure from the media, the MCE called a meeting with the PWDs to resolve it (Resident 8, March 2025).

I remember one time, on Solar FM, we were discussing how the tractors and other machines belonging to the assembly were being used for other purposes. We realized individuals within the assembly were using the machines for their personal benefit instead of working for the public. It was not the best. The host called the Municipal Coordinator to respond to our claims and after that, that activity was halted (Resident 10, March 2025).

The comments above demonstrate how investigative journalism and real-time public engagement, especially through radio call-ins and on-air interviews, can uncover administrative malpractice. The host’s direct call to the Municipal Coordinator and the subsequent halting of the activity shows a clear causal link between media scrutiny and administrative action. This aligns with the assertion that the media serves as a check on power by exposing corruption, mismanagement, and inefficiency, thereby compelling public officials to act in the interest of accountability and transparency (Norris, 2010; McQuail, 2010). As Meijer (2013) argues, in the digital era, transparency is no longer just about institutions choosing to disclose information, it is

also about how public visibility, often driven by media narratives, forces institutions to account for their actions.

4.3.3 Media pressure and corrective action (enforceability)

The study revealed that the media's role as an informal enforcement mechanism in local governance is strongly evidenced in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality, where radio and social media platforms have successfully compelled public officials to take corrective actions even in the absence of formal institutional sanctions. This dynamic reflects the enforceability aspect of public accountability as defined by Bovens (2007), which involves the presence of mechanisms, formal or informal, through which public officials can be held to account for their actions and inactions. In this context, media platforms function as watchdogs that scrutinize public sector behavior and amplify citizen concerns. According to the data gathered, when assembly officials were accused of mismanaging or inappropriately utilizing DRIP machines which were intended for public benefit, intensive coverage on local radio stations and sustained citizen discussions on WhatsApp created a groundswell of public criticism. As a result, the assembly was compelled to halt the misuse by parking the machines. Similarly, when Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) suspected that their allocated funds were being diverted or mismanaged, it was through radio discussions and media advocacy that the issue gained visibility and provoked a swift response from the Municipal Chief Executive (MCE), who convened a meeting to clarify the disbursement and restore public trust. This is evidenced from the response below:

..... A typical example is the PWD case I spoke about earlier. In the past, Persons with Disabilities in the municipality were not getting the needed help from the assembly. Our portion of the DACF was not coming to us. We complained at the assembly, but nobody did

anything about it. It took the intervention of the media before the MCE called for a meeting with us. Their excuse was that they did not know the number of PWDs in the municipality and that they usually use the money to buy equipment for PWDs who come to the assembly. (Resident 8, March 2025).

A participant from the Assembly stated similarly:

.....I remember just a few months back, there was an issue with the DRIP machines that was brought to the assembly by the Nana Addo government. The assembly started using it for private purposes even though we were not supposed to. People started agitating on radio and the vehicles were parked (Assembly Official 5, UDEMA, March 2025).

The comments above illustrate a bottom-up accountability mechanism where public actors are held responsible not because of formal audits or legal procedures, but due to reputational risk and public legitimacy pressures generated by media coverage. This aligns with Roberts (2006), who argues that the media create “public arenas of accountability,” where government actors are compelled to respond to citizen demands out of a desire to maintain public confidence and avoid embarrassment or damage to their political capital. Roberts posits that in these arenas, “visibility is a kind of power,” whereby public exposure through the media imposes a performance discipline on officials. Moreover, this pattern of media-induced responsiveness is consistent with the Watchdog Theory of the Media, which views the media as an essential institution for ensuring governmental transparency and integrity (McQuail, 2010). The media's investigative and interrogative role empowers citizens by arming them with information and providing platforms for collective voice, thereby closing the accountability loop between citizens and government. This informal enforcement also mirrors what Meijer (2013) calls “media-induced accountability”, where public organizations adapt their behavior in anticipation of or in response to media exposure. According to Meijer, the expectation of being watched and the fear of reputational

damage can be as powerful as formal institutional checks in encouraging transparency and good governance. In effect, the actions of the assembly in response to media pressure in Upper Denkyira East underscore the pragmatic function of media in governance systems where formal mechanisms of enforcement may be weak, slow, or underdeveloped. It demonstrates how public discourse, when amplified by the media, becomes a mobilizing force, compelling local authorities to adopt corrective measures to avoid public backlash, loss of credibility, and political fallout.

4.4 Challenges to the Effective Use of Media for Public Accountability

This section sought to address the third objective of the study. The objective is to identify the challenges to the effective use of radio and social media to enhance public accountability in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality. Thus, participants were asked about some of the challenges they face in using radio and social media to demand accountability from the local government. Emerging themes from the interviews were: Partisanship; Political and institutional interference; lack of cooperation from government officials; financial constraints; infrastructural challenges; and local context.

4.4.1 Partisanship

A recurring concern raised by participants in the study is the growing partisanship within the media landscape, which is increasingly viewed as a critical barrier to the media's role in promoting public accountability in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality. The comments reveal a widespread perception that most radio stations and by extension, the journalists working within them are politically affiliated or sympathetic to political parties. This undermines the neutrality, objectivity, and credibility of the media, which are essential elements for effective accountability

practice. Partisanship in the media dilutes its watchdog role by compromising its independence and impartiality. Instead of objectively scrutinizing the actions and decisions of public officials and serving as a platform for truth and transparency, partisan-aligned media outlets are perceived to prioritize political loyalty over journalistic integrity. As one participant lamented:

The attitude of some media personnel and their involvement in politics too has become a challenge. Some of the media men are now politicians and are interested in doing the bidding of their party rather than being objective and candid (Resident 15, April 2025).

Another participant also had this to say:

The biggest challenge with the media today has to do with partisanship. The media is gradually losing its credibility. It is hard to have a journalist who is objective and credible enough. They have all become politicians and their interest now is to defend their pay masters rather than fighting for the common good. Out of the four radio stations here, we know those who belong to party A or B. How can we trust them to be objective? (Resident 14, April 2025)

This statement captures the erosion of public trust in the media as a reliable source of information, a situation that is particularly detrimental in local governance contexts where citizens heavily rely on radio and other local platforms for news and civic education. This is consistent with McQuail's (2010) critique of partisan media, where he argues that the influence of political interests on media content can distort public discourse, fragment the information environment, and ultimately weaken democratic accountability. When journalists and media houses function as mouthpieces for political actors, they are less likely to investigate wrongdoing or amplify citizen concerns, especially if those concerns implicate their political allies. Similarly, Meijer (2013) highlights the danger of “selective accountability” in politically polarized media spaces, where only opposition figures are held accountable while allies of the

media owners or their affiliated parties are shielded. Another resident who shares a similar view had this to say:

The media today has become too partisan. It is now difficult to know who is telling the truth (Resident 11, March 2025).

Another resident also shared this:

The major challenge affecting the media is partisan politics. It seems like every radio station in the country is affiliated with a political party. So, it prevents them from being objective and effective in holding the government accountable (Resident 7, March 2025).

The major problem is personal interest and friendship. Some of the media men are friends with government officials so they sometimes kill some stories just to protect their interest and friendship (Resident 13, April 2025).

The comment above suggests that some of the media men intentionally deny the public access to crucial information, undermine transparency, and reinforce a culture of impunity among public officials because of their affiliations with them. Moreover, partisanship within the media contributes to the deprofessionalization of journalism, as some journalists become more interested in political patronage than the ethical demands of their profession. The dual identity of “journalist-politician,” as mentioned by a participant, blurs the line between media advocacy and political propaganda. This dynamic renders media platforms less credible as independent actors capable of holding power to account, and more as extensions of political machinery, thereby weakening their legitimacy as watchdogs. This challenge also speaks directly to Bovens’ (2007) conception of public accountability, particularly in relation to transparency and answerability. If the media is compromised by partisanship, it can no longer ensure that government officials are adequately questioned, nor can it consistently make information available to the public. The result is a diminished

capacity for the media to trigger public debate, mobilize civic action, or demand explanations from duty bearers.

4.4.2 Political and institutional interference

The data revealed that one of the most troubling challenges to the effective use of media for public accountability is political and institutional interference. This interference manifests through direct threats, editorial censorship, management pressure, and the targeting of journalists, which together constitute a formidable constraint on media independence and its capacity to expose wrongdoing or demand transparency from public officials. Participants recounted a pattern of threats from political party sympathizers and officials, especially when media content is perceived to criticize or expose individuals in positions of power. This reveals how the media's accountability role is often met with hostile resistance from those who hold political authority. This is corroborated by a response from a journalist:

We receive threats from party faithful and sympathizers all the time. Sometimes they feel that when you criticize the activities of a big man in their party, it will make their government or party unpopular. Hence, they feel emboldened to silence you by those threats. Some of these politicians even go to the extent of calling us themselves to demand that we stop discussing them on our station. They will tell you that if you don't stop, they will make sure that you lose your job (Journalist 2, April 2025).

This is also corroborated by a response from a resident:

Government interference. People like Captain Smart and Ahmed Suale for instance, were attacked by government officials for doing their job. Some of these attacks affect media freedom and prevent journalists from investigating government officials (Resident 9, March 2025).

The data suggests that politicians and their sympathizers often threaten journalists and demand that stories critical of their parties or leaders be dropped, suggesting an

environment where free expression is curtailed by fear. This aligns with Freedom House (2023) and Reporters Without Borders (RSF, 2023), both of which highlight how media freedom in many democracies including Ghana is increasingly under threat from political interference. Such hostile responses not only endanger journalists but also curtail investigative reporting, especially on sensitive or high-profile issues.

Another layer of interference arises from within the media houses themselves editorial decisions influenced by management's political interests or fear of retaliation. Participants noted how certain stories are blocked or killed due to pressure from top management, who may have political affiliations or fear backlash from government actors. Some journalists stated as follows:

There is also a problem with management control and interest. Sometimes certain stories are forced to die due to pressure from the management and the fear of their media house being targeted by politicians (Journalist 4, April 2025).

I remember a friend of mine who used to work with us here lost his job because he posted something on his WhatsApp status which our boss felt was making his party unpopular (Journalist 6, April 2025).

There are some of the issues that management stops us from airing them on the platform because they feel they are high profile cases and hence, pressure will be on them. I remember some years back, we made a story, but even before that, we called the assembly for clarification, but they refused to respond. We went ahead to air the issue, and they called our management to put pressure on them (Journalist 1, April 2025).

This confirms the findings of Karppinen (2013) and Curran (2002), who argue that media ownership and internal governance structures significantly influence editorial independence. In such cases, the media's ability to fulfill its watchdog function is compromised not just externally through political pressure, but internally through organizational dynamics. When editorial decisions are dictated by proximity to power

rather than journalistic standards, the public is denied access to critical information, undermining transparency and democratic accountability. By obstructing media investigations, manipulating editorial content, and threatening journalists with job loss or violence, political actors and media management prevent the media from effectively fulfilling its public mandate. This is consistent with Norris (2006) and Waisbord (2000) who argue that in politically polarized environments, media outlets are often co-opted or constrained by institutional barriers, political patronage, or lack of access to credible information. In such contexts, watchdog journalism becomes reactive and fragmented, rather than proactive and sustained.

4.4.3 Lack of cooperation

The study revealed that despite the passage of the Right to Information Act (RTI) in Ghana, many journalists and media practitioners report ongoing difficulties in accessing public information, especially from the Assembly. These challenges are not only procedural but also relational, manifesting in the poor attitudes of officials, institutional bottlenecks, and a culture of secrecy within local government structures. Several participants remarked that public officials regularly refuse to share requested records or data, especially when it concerns matters of public interest. This reluctance significantly undermines the transparency and answerability cornerstones of public accountability. Some journalists described how certain assembly employees purposefully ignored questions or requests for clarification. In other instances, authorities claim they are not liable to the media because “internal auditors ensure things are done well,” using the existence of internal audit processes to undermine the media's function as external watchdogs.

Furthermore, there were reports of hostile human relations between the media and certain government employees, which further inhibits free communication and deters journalists from reporting on administrative errors or demanding clarification. In a setting where public scrutiny and investigative reporting depend on access to reliable information, this lack of collaboration undermines the media's efficacy and protects public officials from accountability. Some residents shared in the interviews as follows:

The problem with the media is that it is always difficult for them to access information from government agencies. State institutions always feel reluctant to give out information to the media. This makes it difficult for them to do their work (Resident, 12, April 2025).

Bureaucracy at the Assembly is one of the issues preventing the media from effectively doing their job as the watchdog to government. Sometimes, you will request information from the assembly, and you would be made to move to about four or five offices before getting it. There are days you would be asked to go and come back later for it. There is too much bureaucracy at the assembly. Some of the officials at the Assembly have bad human relations. They are so unwelcoming to the media. They see the media as their enemy; hence, they do not want to open up to them anytime they go for information (Resident 2, March 2025).

A journalist also had this to say:

Getting access to information from the assembly is also a challenge. Even though the right to information bill is passed, its implementation has not been that successful at the local level. Most local government officials feel reluctant to release information to journalists. Getting accreditation to their programs is even a challenge (Journalist 3, April 2025).

This goes directly against the spirit of the RTI law, which was designed to democratize access to information and enable citizens and consequently the media to take a more active role in monitoring governance. The law is essentially ineffectual at the local level due to its limited implementation and absence of enforcement

mechanisms. Without the full cooperation of public officials, the media cannot fulfill its role as an accountability agent, and the public is kept in the dark about how decisions are made, or public funds are used. This is in line with what Bovens (2007) characterizes as a breakdown in the accountability components of transparency and answerability. Even though officials are institutionally required to answer for their acts, the feedback loop between the public and the government is blocked when they refuse to interact with the media. It also supports Meijer's (2013) claim that for accountability to be achieved in the information age, public actors must be ready to participate in the "account giving" process in addition to having access to information.

4.4.4 Financial constraints

The study revealed that one of the major obstacles to realizing social media's potential for accountability in the Upper Denkyira East Municipal Assembly is money. The municipality faces constraints in maintaining an active online presence and investing in targeted engagement methods due to limited financial allocations for digital communication projects. This restriction affects the volume and frequency of outreach, online presence, and content production activities meant to raise public awareness and engagement. Sufficient financing is necessary to finance ongoing maintenance, content creation, and promotional efforts to effectively use social media platforms. Without enough funding, the municipality will find it difficult to compete with the wide online landscape for residents' attention. The quotes below capture this challenge:

Also, there is the issue of money. To be active on social media, you would need more money, time and other resources. You would need money to procure cameras, content creation, data and other things. There are not enough resources allocated to take care of this.

Sometimes, we use our personal money to buy data to engage people online for the assembly (Assembly Official 3, UDEMA, March 2025).

And there is also the issue of resources. We need better cameras, good internet connection and data to stay online and engage the people on social media. You cannot use any normal camera to take pictures and post online. People will not even take us seriously. All of these come with money (Assembly Official 4, UDEMA, March 2025).

This finding is consistent with Mergel (2013) who argues that successful implementation of digital communication strategies, including social media, requires significant financial investment. The purchase of technology, the production of content, and continuing upkeep all require this expenditure. According to Bonsón et al. (2012), insufficient funding makes it difficult for organizations to keep up an interesting and dynamic online presence, which can result in lower public participation and less accountability.

4.4.5 Infrastructure challenge

The data reveals that the assembly's effective use of social media to enhance public accountability and facilitate communication between governments and citizens is significantly hampered by infrastructural challenges. All the officials of the assembly interviewed alluded to the poor internet connectivity as a challenge to the assembly's presence on social media. Poor internet connectivity impedes the assembly's ability to engage with citizens, disseminate crucial information, and foster transparency and accountability in local governance. The unreliable internet infrastructure in the municipality means that even when the assembly makes efforts to post updates or interact with the public, these efforts are often thwarted by slow or unstable internet connections. This challenge prevents the timely posting of updates about the assembly's activities, decisions, and public announcements, leading to a gap in communication that can affect public awareness and participation. An official of the

assembly underscored this challenge by stating that “poor internet connection” significantly hampers the assembly's ability to engage actively on social media.

You know, we are in the digital world now. Everything now is digitalized. And without good internet connection, you cannot engage actively on social media. This is a challenge we have discussed internally and I'm sure the leaders will find solutions to it (Assembly Official 3, UDEMA, March 2025).

Another official of the assembly also echoed these concerns:

Network connectivity in the municipality is very poor. For the assembly to effectively engage the public on social media and provide them with the necessary information and services, we will need a strong and stable internet connection. At the moment, we don't have it. It is even worse in the rural communities. It is only MTN that is sometimes stable. The rest is very bad (Assembly Official 4, UDEMA, March 2025)

This poor internet connectivity not only affects the frequency and quality of social media interactions but also limits the assembly's capacity to reach a broader audience, especially in more remote or economically disadvantaged areas. The uneven distribution of internet infrastructure exacerbates this issue, as rural areas with lower economic activity tend to have even less reliable internet access, further marginalizing these communities from digital engagement. This finding is consistent with Bertot, Jaeger, and Grimes (2010) who asserts that, without reliable internet access, the potential of social media and other digital tools for enhancing transparency and accountability is significantly undermined.

The study further revealed that the poor internet connectivity in the municipality affects the assembly's ability to engage with citizens in real time. The assembly's inability to properly reach a larger audience is impacted by its connectivity issues. Unreliable internet connectivity implies that a small percentage of citizens can interact with social media information, which distorts comments and makes it more

difficult for the assembly to fully assess and resolve community concerns. The study also found that rural locations are disproportionately affected by poor connectivity, as internet access there is much less dependable. The assembly's capacity to interact with and reach the people living in these places is hindered by the digital gap, which makes inequality worse. Internet problems make it difficult for rural residents, who might already have limited access to information, to participate in online forums or get updates. This further marginalizes these communities. A participant had this to say:

You know, network connectivity in the municipality is very poor. It is only the towns within Dunkwa that have strong internet connection. And you know the assembly is not only about those in Dunkwa but also the surrounding communities. Communities with bad internet connections find it difficult to engage the assembly on social media. I think the assembly's activities on social media can be effective if there is good internet connectivity (Resident 8, March 2025).

Another Assembly Official also added:

Network connectivity in Ghana is generally poor. However, it is much poorer in communities where economic activities are very low, and our municipality is no exception. Having a poor internet connection frustrates one's level of activeness on social media. To be active on social media, you would need a strong internet connection to do so. At times, there are issues that need urgent public update but due to poor network, it takes longer time to upload and post on social media. Sometimes, we get frustrated and stop. So, since the internet connection is not so good here, we usually use the radio stations to engage our people (Assembly Official 1, UDEMA, March 2025)

Criado et al. (2013) claim that the digital gap makes inequality worse by preventing those living in places with inadequate internet connectivity from accessing information and participating in society. This gap is reflected in the studies' finding that rural areas have greater difficulties because of sporadic internet connectivity, which further marginalizes these people (Criado et al., 2013). The uneven distribution of internet infrastructure, particularly impacting economically disadvantaged and rural areas, aligns with the environmental challenges outlined in the Technology-

Organization-Environment (TOE) framework, highlighting how external conditions influence the adoption and use of technology for public administration (Criado & Villodre, 2022).

4.4.6 Local context

The interviews also revealed that the local context of the Upper Denkyira East Municipal Assembly significantly influences the effectiveness of social media use for public accountability and citizen engagement. Several factors unique to the local context shape the assembly's challenges and opportunities in leveraging digital platforms. First, the local's preference for traditional media at the expense of social media. Second, due to the poor internet connection and the digital divide between those in the rural areas and the towns. Poor internet connectivity, particularly in rural areas, severely limits the assembly's ability to communicate effectively with residents. According to the interviews, reliable internet access is concentrated in urban areas like Dunkwa, whereas rural communities suffer from significantly poorer connectivity. This disparity in internet infrastructure hinders the assembly's ability to reach and interact with residents in remote areas, thus affecting the overall efficacy of social media.

...usually, they prefer listening to the radio stations or Tv stations for information about the government or local government. This makes it difficult to rely so much on social media as a medium of communication with the local people. It is not everybody who is educated and technologically savvy to use social media (Assembly Official 2, UDEMA, March 2025)

Again, there's this perception that information about the assembly on social media does not carry much weight as compared to information they receive on radio and community engagements (Assembly Official 3, UDEMA, March 2025)

Some residents had this to say:

When you are dealing with people in largely rural areas, certainly the radio would be mostly preferred. Social media depends largely on internet connectivity, but radio transcends that. So, radio is the ideal form of communication in our municipality (Resident 8, March 2025).

I prefer the radio because majority of our people do not follow social media activities due to bad network, illiteracy and cost of data, but the radio, everybody can understand the things that go in there and there is enough public education there as well (Resident 4, April 2025).

The comments highlighted how some people view radio as a more reliable and powerful medium than social media. The limited connectivity in rural areas exacerbates the digital divide, preventing many residents from accessing and engaging with online content. This issue aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the importance of infrastructure for effective e-governance. Research indicates that in areas with low levels of digital literacy and infrastructure, traditional media frequently has a greater influence (Mergel, 2013). For example, Bonson et al. (2012) discovered that in many locations, particularly those where digital media use is still increasing, conventional media continues to play a significant role in public communication efforts. This finding asserts Tornatzky and Fleisher (1990) argument that an organization's ability to adopt and implement technologies is influenced by the interplay between technological, organizational, and environmental factors.

4.5 Summary

The chapter presented the results of the study. The chapter also discussed the findings of the study and highlighted how they interact with the literature and theories of the study. The discussion revealed the views of residents, journalists and officials of the Upper Denkyira East Municipal Assembly on the assembly's utilization of radio and social media for public engagement. Their responses were categorised under the

following themes: frequency and nature of radio engagement; citizen participation; and use of social media. The discussion also revealed the impact of radio and social media on public accountability in the Municipality. Some of the contributions of radio and social media to public accountability in the municipality include facilitating transparency; media-initiated government response; and media pressure and corrective action. Partisanship; political and institutional interference; lack of cooperation; financial constraints; infrastructural challenges; and local context were revealed as a bane to the effective utilization of media for public accountability.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The main purpose of the study was to explore how social media, and radio can enhance public accountability in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality. The specific objectives were to: explore how local government officials in the Upper Denkyira East Municipal Assembly use social media and radio to engage with citizens; examine the role of social media and radio in promoting public accountability within the Upper Denkyira East Municipality; and identify the challenges to the effective use of social media and radio to enhance public accountability. A purposive sampling technique was used to select thirty (30) participants. Using an interview guide, primary data was gathered, and thematic analysis was employed for the analysis. This chapter presents a summary of the research findings and the conclusions drawn based on these findings. The final part makes recommendations based on the research findings.

5.1 The Main Findings of the Study

In the quest to answer the research questions in chapter one which guided the study, the following findings were revealed. The major findings are categorically grouped under the research questions that guided the study as follows:

5.1.1 Media utilization for public engagement

1. On the nature and frequency of radio engagement, the study revealed that radio remains an important communication tool for the Upper Denkyira East Municipal Assembly, offering consistent and structured engagement with citizens. The assembly holds weekly sessions every Monday on Denkyiraman Radio, involving various departments to address public concerns. This regular

schedule is supported by an internal timetable system that ensures broad departmental participation. Such coordination reflects a deliberate strategy to sustain dialogue and promote accountability. The content of these radio programs is diverse, covering health, sanitation, revenue, and civic education, indicating a multidimensional communication approach. Through this, the assembly educates and informs residents, enhances transparency, and builds trust.

2. On citizen's participation, the study revealed that radio is a vital tool for citizen engagement in Upper Denkyira East Municipality. Residents actively participate in radio call-in shows to express opinions, ask questions, and hold local authorities accountable. This form of engagement reflects a functioning model of participatory governance, where ordinary citizens influence local policy and implementation.

The interviews showed that citizens use radio to raise a variety of concerns, including:

- Lack of community engagement initiatives by the assembly,
- Misuse of public resources (e.g., DRIP machines),
- Irregular and excessive electricity billing by ECG,
- The need for alternative employment opportunities for youth involved in galamsey.

These engagements go beyond complaints, as citizens also offer constructive suggestions, such as proposing job creation policies to address illegal mining. The data highlights that radio provides a democratic space for marginalized voices, especially in areas where internet access and traditional civic channels

are limited. It facilitates open dialogue between citizens and officials, promotes accountability, and strengthens trust in local governance.

3. The findings show that social media, particularly Facebook and WhatsApp, is increasingly being used in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality as a tool for governance and public accountability. The Municipal Assembly uses these platforms to share updates and respond to public concerns, although challenges such as staffing issues, technical limitations, and the loss of login credentials have led to inconsistencies in their usage. Despite these institutional weaknesses, citizens actively use social media to voice grievances, demand accountability, and stay informed about local governance matters. Residents shared examples where their posts and discussions on social media prompted responses and actions from the assembly, such as addressing sanitation problems and exposing illegal mining. A notable aspect is the internal WhatsApp group used by assembly members and officials, which functions as a key platform for deliberations and decision-making, especially when physical meetings are infrequent. Overall, the data shows that while the assembly's institutional use of social media is limited by structural challenges, citizens are leveraging these platforms to engage actively with local governance. This affirms the idea that social media, even when inconsistently adopted by institutions, can still promote transparency, civic participation, and accountability when used effectively by the public.

5.1.2 Impact of media on public accountability

1. The study revealed that the media significantly enhances transparency in local governance in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality. These platforms act as bridges between the assembly and citizens, enabling the flow of timely and

accessible information, encouraging public feedback, and promoting accountability. Rather than being passive, transparency here involves active dialogue and scrutiny. The study revealed that regular radio programs, social media updates, and call-in segments help citizens stay informed about development projects, policy decisions, and financial matters. Radio is noted for facilitating direct interaction between officials and the public. Participants emphasized that officials are more responsive due to the fear of negative media exposure, which pressures them to act ethically.

2. The findings show that in Upper Denkyira East Municipality, both traditional radio and social media have become vital tools in holding local authorities accountable. Through public pressure and media advocacy, citizens and journalists have successfully influenced the assembly to respond to issues such as sanitation, misuse of equipment, and lack of transparency in public projects. Notable examples include media-driven interventions that led to action on sanitation concerns, the suspension of private use of DRIP machines, and the assembly's public engagement over financial decisions. These cases reflect a shift toward bottom-up accountability, where media platforms amplify community concerns and compel local leaders to act—not because of formal oversight structures, but due to fear of public backlash and loss of credibility.
3. The study revealed that the media's role as an informal enforcement mechanism in local governance is strongly evidenced in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality, where radio and social media platforms have successfully compelled public officials to take corrective actions even in the absence of formal institutional sanctions. According to the data gathered, when assembly officials were accused of mismanaging or inappropriately utilizing DRIP

machines which were intended for public benefit, intensive coverage on local radio stations and sustained citizen discussions on WhatsApp created a groundswell of public criticism. As a result, the assembly was compelled to halt the misuse by parking the machines.

5.1.3 Challenges to the effective use of media for public accountability

1. Growing partisanship within the media landscape was revealed as a significant barrier to the effective use of the media for public accountability. The comments reveal a widespread perception that most radio stations and by extension, the journalists working within them are politically affiliated or sympathetic to political parties. This undermines the neutrality, objectivity, and credibility of the media, which are essential elements for effective accountability practice. Partisanship in the media dilutes its watchdog role by compromising its independence and impartiality.
2. The data revealed that one of the most troubling challenges to the effective use of media for public accountability is political and institutional interference. This interference manifests through direct threats, editorial censorship, management pressure, and the targeting of journalists, which together constitute a formidable constraint on media independence and its capacity to expose wrongdoing or demand transparency from public officials. Participants recounted a pattern of threats from political party sympathizers and officials, especially when media content is perceived to criticize or expose individuals in positions of power.
3. The study further revealed that despite the passage of the Right to Information Act (RTI) in Ghana, many journalists and media practitioners report ongoing difficulties in accessing public information, especially from the Assembly.

These challenges are not only procedural but also relational, manifesting in the poor attitudes of officials, institutional bottlenecks, and a culture of secrecy within local government structures.

4. The study identified that the assembly has serious budgetary difficulties that make it difficult for it to use social media. The capacity to produce high-quality content, successfully promote social media channels, and keep an active online presence is all impacted by inadequate finance.
5. The study also identified infrastructural issues as a challenge to the assembly's effective use of social media. Inadequate internet access significantly limits the assembly's capacity to interact with locals and post information online, particularly in rural areas. The frequency and quality of social media interactions are restricted by this unstable connection, which also makes communication gaps worse.
6. The study found that prevailing local conditions also affected the assembly's use of social media for public accountability. The success of the assembly's social media presence is influenced by the local context, which includes a preference for traditional media and a notable digital divide. Rural residents, who have less reliable internet access, face challenges in engaging with the assembly's online content, which impacts overall public engagement and accountability.

5.2 Conclusions

The findings show that radio remains a key communication tool, with weekly programs that allow citizens to engage local officials on issues like health, sanitation, and governance. Social media, especially Facebook and WhatsApp, is also increasingly used by citizens and officials to share information, raise concerns, and

demand action, despite challenges like poor internet access and limited institutional capacity.

The media was found to play a vital role in promoting transparency, encouraging citizen participation, and enforcing accountability, sometimes even leading to corrective action by the assembly. However, challenges such as media partisanship, political interference, poor access to information, and infrastructural constraints limit their effectiveness. To maximize the potential of these platforms, there is a need for strategic investment in media infrastructure, capacity building for local government communicators, and safeguarding journalistic independence from political influence. Strengthening these elements will go a long way in deepening participatory democracy and enhancing accountability at the local level in Ghana.

5.3 Implications

This work has several implications. The implications are categorized into two main areas: theoretical and practical implications.

5.3.1 Theoretical implications

This study contributes meaningfully to the application and contextual relevance of the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) framework and the Media as a Watchdog theory within the field of local governance and public accountability, particularly in Africa. The study expands the application of the TOE framework beyond its traditional use in technology adoption by private sector firms and large institutions and situates it within the public sector at the local government level in a developing country. It demonstrates that: technological factors (internet connectivity, and digital tools like WhatsApp and Facebook) significantly influence the capacity of local assemblies to adopt and effectively utilize social media platforms for

governance; organizational factors such as internal coordination, staff capacity, budget constraints, and institutional will strongly affect the successful use of social media; and environmental factors (local preference for radio over social media) either facilitate or constrain the social media's role in enhancing accountability.

This study reaffirms and extends the media as a watchdog theory by showing how the media plays complementary roles in holding local government accountable, even in contexts with limited formal oversight mechanisms. The findings reveal that: the media in Upper Denkyira East function as informal accountability mechanisms, filling gaps left by weak institutional checks; citizens, through radio, act as active participants in the watchdog process—shifting the theory from a purely journalist-centered model to a more participatory model of civic oversight; and despite institutional constraints, fear of public exposure and media-driven criticism pushes local officials to respond to issues like mismanagement and corruption. This demonstrates that in settings with fragile formal accountability structures, the watchdog role of the media is more effective when it is both citizen-driven and media-led, highlighting the importance of community-based journalism and participatory media in governance processes. Moreover, the theory is further contextualized to account for the challenges of partisanship, political intimidation, and access to information, which can undermine the media's independence and credibility in watchdog roles, particularly in politically polarized environments. The study shows that while social media is shaped by institutional and environmental readiness (as framed by TOE), radio remains a powerful tool for civic oversight and accountability, affirming and expanding the watchdog role of traditional media.

Another important finding is that even though radio predates social media, people prefer to use that to engage the local government more than social media. This implies that latest technology may not necessarily turn out to become the most preferred technology by users. Other mediating factors remain important for technology adoption.

5.3.2 Practical implications

In terms of its practical contribution, the findings highlight the need for local governments to adopt formal communication strategies that prioritize consistent use of both radio and social media. This includes assigning dedicated staff, providing digital skills training, and ensuring secure, uninterrupted access to social media platforms. Radio should continue to serve as a vibrant space for community dialogue. Interactive programs must be sustained and broadened to include all departments and marginalized groups, empowering citizens to voice concerns and influence decision-making. Additionally, effective media engagement requires adequate investment. Local authorities and partners should improve internet access, especially in rural areas, increase budgetary support for media activities, and promote digital literacy among staff and citizens. To ensure accountability, the independence and credibility of local media must be protected. This includes safeguarding journalists from political intimidation, enforcing ethical standards, and strengthening the professional capacity of media practitioners. The insights from this study can, therefore, help policymakers create and carry out regulations that facilitate the efficient use of radio and social media for public accountability.

5.4 Recommendations

Taking the findings of the study into consideration, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. The study recommends that the Upper Denkyira East Municipal Assembly should strengthen institutional capacity for media engagement. They should prioritize the development of a well-resourced and functional communications department responsible for managing both radio and social media interactions. This unit should be equipped with: skilled personnel trained in public communication, social media management, and community engagement; adequate tools such as reliable internet access, modern IT equipment, and content creation resources; and a comprehensive media communication strategy that outlines goals, content plans, and crisis communication protocols.
2. Given that radio is widely accessible and trusted in the municipality, the Assembly should formalize and expand radio engagements to other radio stations. They should establish a formal partnership with local stations to host regular and diversified programs with scheduled slots for various departments. They should also ensure all radio sessions are interactive, allowing community members to call in, text, or send WhatsApp messages to express concerns and receive real-time feedback.
3. To reduce partisanship and political interference in media reporting, there should be the need to safeguard media independence and professionalism. The National Media Commission, Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), and local NGOs should hold quarterly stakeholder dialogues between journalists, political party representatives, and civil society to build mutual understanding and reduce tension. Journalists should be offered certified training programs

on investigative journalism, RTI application procedures, and ethical standards to build their confidence and professionalism. The Assembly should also avoid selective invitations to politically sympathetic journalists and adopt an open-door policy for all accredited media outlets.

4. The study recommends that the government of Ghana through the Ghana Investment Fund for Electronic Communications (GIFEC) should prioritize investments in expanding and improving internet infrastructure in rural and underserved areas of the municipality. Enhanced connectivity will support better engagement and information dissemination via social media. The government should also encourage partnerships with Internet Service Providers (ISP) to improve service quality and affordability in rural areas. Offering incentives for ISPs to expand coverage and invest in infrastructure could help address connectivity challenges.
5. The government of Ghana should provide financial assistance to local government bodies for digital initiatives. Financial support can help cover the costs associated with social media management and digital engagement, ensuring sustained and effective online presence. The assembly should also explore partnerships with organizations that are into digital governance for financial support and investment in local technologies.
6. The study recommends that there should be enforcement of the Right to Information Act (RTI) at the local level. The Assembly should appoint a dedicated RTI Officer responsible for processing requests, educating staff, and ensuring compliance. Periodic community forums and radio discussions should be organized to sensitize citizens on how to file RTI requests and what kind of information they are entitled to. Effective enforcement of RTI will

reduce secrecy, discourage corruption, and build a culture of openness and proactive disclosure.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

The following recommendations are made for further studies:

1. The study focused on the Upper Denkyira East Municipality, one of the MMDAs in Ghana. The study therefore suggest that future research could adopt a comparative approach to assess how different metropolitan, municipal, or district assemblies across Ghana utilize media platforms to promote public accountability. This would provide broader insights into regional disparities, best practices, and institutional innovations in media engagement within local government.
2. The study was approached qualitatively. As such, the views of few participants in the municipality were sought. Therefore, further research could conduct large-scale surveys involving citizens, media practitioners, and assembly officials to statistically measure the extent of media influence on public accountability. Such a study could quantify the impact of media exposure on citizen trust, participation, and perceived transparency in local governance.
3. Considering the findings on partisanship and interference in the media landscape, the researcher recommends that more research might look into how political affiliations and media ownership patterns impact local media outlets' independence and watchdog function, particularly in decentralized government systems.
4. Future studies could look at how the RTI Act is being implemented across different district assemblies and whether it has enhanced access to information

and media reporting. This could include a focus on barriers to information flow and compliance levels at the sub-national level.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY AREA

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

INTRODUCTION

This is an interview guide in partial fulfilment of the award of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Political Science Education. The purpose of this study is aimed at gaining a better understanding of the impact of radio and social media on public accountability in local governance in Ghana. Your collaboration is therefore needed to warrant the success of the study. The research is purely for academic purposes, hence, any information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Thank you for the acceptance to participate in this research.

ASSEMBLY OFFICIALS

Personal Details:

Date:.....

1. Name..... Phone No.....

2. Position/Occupation.....

3. District.....

4. Region.....

A. Use of Radio in Citizen Engagement

5. How frequently does the assembly engage with residents through radio programs?

.....
.....

6. What type of programs or announcements are broadcasted via radio?

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7. Do residents actively participate in radio call-in programs related to governance?

.....
.....

B. Use of Social Media in Citizen Engagement

8. What social media platforms does the assembly use to engage citizens?

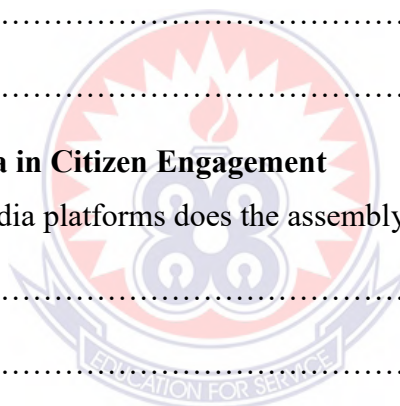
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.....

9. How frequently does the assembly post updates or respond to citizen concerns on social media?

.....
.....

10. What type of governance-related information is shared on social media?

.....
.....



C. Comparing Social Media and Radio for Citizen Engagement

11. Which platform—**social media or radio**—reaches a **wider audience** in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality? Why?

.....
.....

12. Which of the two platforms receives more public engagement and feedback?

.....
.....

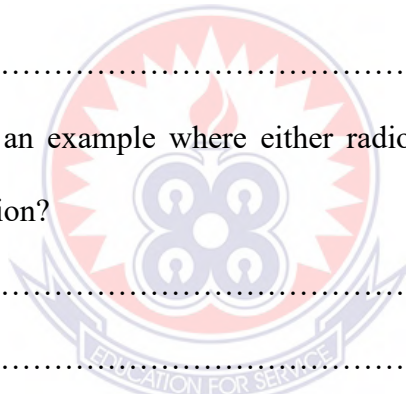
D. Role of Media in Public Accountability

13. How do social media and radio facilitate transparency in your administration?

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14. Can you share an example where either radio or social media led to direct government action?

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.....



15. How do these platforms influence decision-making within the assembly?

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.....

E. Challenges in Using Social Media and Radio for Accountability

16. What challenges does the assembly face in using radio for public engagement?

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17. What challenges does the assembly face in using social media for public engagement?

.....
.....

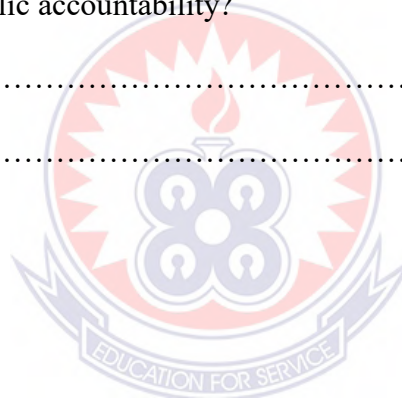
F. Recommendations and Way Forward

18. What improvements can be made to enhance the effectiveness of radio in ensuring public accountability?

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.....

19. What improvements can be made to enhance the effectiveness of social media in ensuring public accountability?

.....
.....



APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY AREA

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

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Thank you for the acceptance to participate in this research.

JOURNALISTS

Personal Details:

Date:.....

1. Name..... Phone No.....

2. Position/Occupation.....

3. District.....

4. Region.....

A. Role of Radio in Promoting Public Accountability

5. How do local journalists and media houses use radio to monitor and report on local governance issues?

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.....

6. What governance programs are aired on radio, and how often do they discuss public accountability?

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.....

7. What role do investigative journalism and citizen call-ins play in holding local authorities accountable through radio?

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.....

B. Role of Social Media in Promoting Public Accountability

8. How do journalists use social media to investigate and report on governance issues?

.....
.....

9. How does social media help in mobilizing public discussions on accountability?

.....
.....

10. Have there been instances where social media pressure led to local government action?

.....
.....

D. Challenges in Media Coverage of Governance

11. What challenges do journalists face in covering public accountability issues on radio?

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.....

12. What challenges do journalists face in covering public accountability issues on social media?

.....
.....

E. Recommendations for Enhancing Accountability through Media

13. How can radio be made more effective in promoting public accountability?

.....
.....

14. How can social media be made more effective in promoting public accountability?

.....
.....



APPENDIX C

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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Thank you for the acceptance to participate in this research.

RESIDENTS

Personal Details:

Date:.....

1. Name..... Phone No.....

2. Position/Occupation.....

3. District.....

4. Region.....

A. Use of Radio in Local Governance

5. Do you listen to radio programs discussing governance issues in Upper Denkyira East Municipality? Why or why not?

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6. Have you ever participated in a radio call-in program to ask questions or express concerns about governance?

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.....

7. Do you feel that your concerns raised on radio programs are addressed by the assembly?

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.....

B. Use of Social Media in Local Governance

8. Do you follow local government social media pages or engage in discussions on governance issues? Why or why not?

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.....

9. Have you ever used social media to raise concerns or demand accountability from public officials?

.....
.....

10. Do you feel that government officials respond adequately to social media complaints?

.....
.....

C. Comparing Social Media and Radio for Engagement

11. Between radio and social media, which one do you prefer for engaging with local government? Why?

.....
.....

12. Which platform do you think government officials are more responsive on—radio or social media?

.....
.....

D. Impact of Media on Public Accountability

13. Do you think radio and social media have made government officials more accountable? Why or why not?

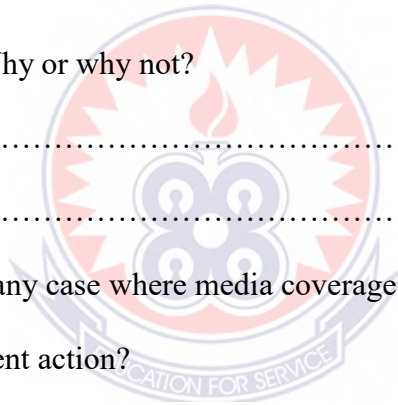
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14. Can you recall any case where media coverage (either radio or social media) led to government action?

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.....

15. What are the biggest challenges preventing media from being an effective watchdog in local governance?

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E. Recommendations and Way Forward

16. What suggestions do you have to improve the assembly's engagement with citizens on radio?

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.....

17. What suggestions do you have to improve the assembly's engagement with citizens on social media?

.....
.....



APPENDIX D

INTRODUCTORY LETTER



24th March, 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MR. BENJAMIN ODOOM

This is to introduce to you **Mr. Benjamin Odoom**, MPhil student from the Department of Political Science Education, University of Education, Winneba. He is undertaking a study on the topic: **Media and Public accountability in local governance in Ghana: A case study of Upper Denkyira East Municipality.**

This researcher needs your help by way of volunteering information on this subject to enable him to complete his research. Please, the research is purely for academic purposes and all information is treated as confidential.

Kindly give him the necessary assistance he may need.

Yours faithfully,


Ms. Magdalene Nyarko
For: Ag. HOD, Political Science

