



UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE IN GHANA: A CASE OF ASIKUMA-
ODOBEN-BRAKWA DISTRICT IN THE CENTRAL REGION**



**A thesis submitted to the school of graduate studies in partial fulfilment of the
requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy**

(Social Studies Education)

**Department of Social Studies Education Faculty
of Liberal and Social Sciences Education**

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

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DECLARATION

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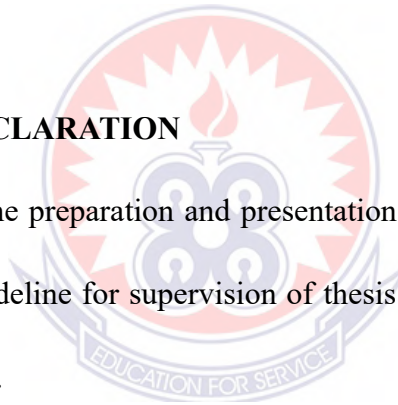
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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in according with the guideline for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.



PROF. VINCENT ADZ AHLIE-MENSAH

Signature:

Date:.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my lovely wife (Joyce) and children (Ewura-Esi and Nana Efuah) who in diverse way helped me to complete this research work.



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ABSTRACT

This study examines the factors influencing public perceptions of judicial independence and their impact on trust in legal outcomes and justice delivery in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. This study specifically sought to assess public awareness of judicial independence, measure levels of trust in the judiciary, identify perceived challenges to judicial independence, and examine how these perceptions influence trust in court decisions. Judicial independence is a cornerstone of democracy, yet public trust in the judiciary is often shaped by various socio-political and economic factors. A review of existing literature highlights how judicial independence is perceived differently across contexts, with factors such as political influence, economic status, and legal awareness playing key roles. The study adopted a mixed-method approach, employing an explanatory sequential mixed-method design, which involved collecting and analyzing quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data to provide deeper insights. A structured questionnaire was administered to a sample population, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with judicial personnel and selected community members. The main findings indicate that age and employment status do not significantly influence perceptions of judicial independence, while education level shows a borderline significance. However, income level has a statistically significant impact on public perceptions, suggesting that lower-income individuals perceive the judiciary as less independent. Qualitative findings further reveal concerns about political interference, resource constraints, and inconsistencies in legal processes as key issues affecting trust in the judiciary. This study is justified by the limited district-level empirical evidence on public perceptions of judicial independence in Ghana. By focusing on a specific local context, the research contributes to bridging the gap between national constitutional guarantees and grassroots perceptions, thereby enriching scholarly discourse and informing policy reforms aimed at strengthening judicial legitimacy. The study concludes that strengthening judicial transparency, improving legal education, and addressing socio-economic disparities are essential for enhancing public trust in judicial independence. Recommendations include policy reforms to safeguard judicial autonomy, public sensitization on legal rights, and institutional efforts to reduce political influence in the judiciary.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Judicial independence is critical to the maintenance of the rule of law. An independent judiciary provides a balance and check upon the authority of the other branches of government and thereby prevents arbitrary government action. Whether elected or appointed, judges need to possess a certain degree of independence in order to foster the rule of law.

As justice is served through the judiciary that is made up of judges, it means that the judicial power is enforced only through the court of law represented by the judge, the sole carrier of all those powers.

This chapter introduces the problem under investigation on public perception of judicial independence in Ghana. It provides background information. Moreover, it presents the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, delimitation of the study, and the organization of the whole study.

1.2 Background to the Study

Judicial independence is a core principle and value of the judiciary, as expressed in Article 6(1) ECHR in Europe. It originated in Anglo-American political and judicial systems, with England's Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the United States Constitution enshrining the concept in 1789 (North, & Weingast, 1989). This development defines and maintains judicial independence in both countries.

Judicial independence is crucial for fostering public confidence in the justice system and is a key component of democracy and the rule of law. The United Nations Human Rights noted, “The independence of the judiciary shall be guaranteed by the State and enshrined in the Constitution or the law of the country. It is the duty of all governmental and other institutions to respect and observe the independence of the judiciary”. Llano (2013, p. 113). Grootelaars and Bos (2022, p. 257) claim that “the independence and impartiality of the judge are an integral part of the procedural justice attained by the courts”.

No state can do without a judiciary, but that does not mean that the judiciary is aligned with the population and appreciated by it (van Dijk, 2019). It is generally believed that a high degree of judicial independence is necessary for people to appreciate and trust the courts. After all, the fair and effective resolution of disputes requires an independent and impartial adjudicator, irrespective of the parties and interests involved. In turn, trust is seen as necessary for courts to be able to function, if only to incite people to bring their disputes to court, to cooperate with the court and to accept judgments willingly. The causal relationship between judicial independence, trust and reliance on the courts puts a sharp focus on judicial independence as it is perceived by the population and all segments thereof. Courts may be fully independent, but if the population does not recognize this independence, the causal relationship is disrupted. Judicial independence is the concept that the judiciary should be independent from the other branches of government. That is, courts should

not be subjected to improper influence from the other branches of government (executive and legislature) or private or partisan interests.

According to Sagar (2021, p. 77), “All the rights secured to the citizens under the constitution are worth nothing, and a mere bubble, except guaranteed to them by an independent and virtuous judiciary”. Judges are allowed to do their work without any fear of interference from any of the other arms of government or any quarters whatsoever. By judges’ independence, it is meant that they ensure impartiality in the administration of justice.

Cameron (2010, p. 25), claims “it is a truth universally acknowledged that the constitution of a modern democracy governed by the rule of law must effectively guarantee judicial independence”.

Archibald Cox (2010), explains three reasons for judicial independence:

- To guard against abuse of executive power,
- To halt legislative erosion of fundamental human rights, and
- To provide assurances to the public that judges are impartial and fair in their decision-making processes.

The two components of judicial independence below concern the externalizations of judicial work. And they are of course vital if courts and judges are to work free from external pressures.

- Institutional independence, the judiciary must enjoy some organizational insulation, in a sphere of operation independent of other branches of government (www.researchgate.net), and
- Decisional independence, individual judges must be able to make their decisions on the facts and the law without pressure or interference (www.quimbee.com).

According to Zikria & Roofi (2020, p. 77), “An independent judiciary is an indispensable requisite for a free society under the rule of law”. What exactly is meant by the concept of judicial independence? It is a concept that suggests that judges ought to be free from influence by the other branches of government, as well as from political, social, economic, or other influences. For the British, judicial independence meant that judges should be free from the influence of the King or Parliament (www.studysmarter.co.uk). In Ghana, judicial independence means that judges should be free from influence by the executive or legislature (www.judicial.gov.gh).

Judicial independence also means that judges should be free from influence by the people (Hanych, Smekal & Benák, 2022). Of course, judges are bound to follow the law, which the people may revise or amend through their representatives in the legislature. Naturally, judges should make their decisions according to the law, but otherwise should not be influenced by what the executive, the legislature, or even the people might think. Under this view, the ideal judge is a person who is learned in the

law and who is independent, so that he or she will be guided in decision-making solely by legal knowledge and judicial experience (Jayus, 2020, p. 16045).

Courts exist to assist people to resolve their differences, conflicts or dispute and it is noted that they are not influenced by any of the two arms of government.

In the exercise of the judicial power of, Ghana, the Judiciary, in both its judicial and administrative functions, including financial administration, is subject only to this Constitution and shall not be the subject to the control or direction of any person or authority. Neither the President nor Parliament nor any person acting under the authority of the President or Parliament nor any other person whatsoever shall interfere with Judges or judicial officers or other persons exercising judicial power, in the exercise of their judicial functions; and all organs and agencies of the State shall accord to the courts such assistance as the courts may reasonably require to protect the independence, dignity and effectiveness of the courts, subject to this Constitution (Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992, p. 49).

In granting judges independence, their judicial authority must be exercised impartially. Judicial independence brings with it the responsibility to administer the law impartially: “The job of a judge is to figure out what the law says, not what he wants it to say. There is a difference between the roles of a judge and that of a policy maker... judging requires a certain impartiality” (Clarence, 2018, p. 42).

There is a widespread understanding supported by empirical evidence that independence is necessary for the judiciary to gain the confidence of society and that a high level of confidence bolsters the legitimacy of the judiciary in the sense of its license to operate (Van Dijk, 2021, p. 9).

Confidence and legitimacy are seen as essential for the courts to fulfil their function. Concerning impartiality, “Once again, what is at stake is the confidence which the courts in a democratic society must inspire in the public, and first and foremost in the parties to the proceedings” (Van Dijk, 2021, p. 12).

Lenaerts sees independence and impartiality as necessary for court rulings to enjoy authority and legitimacy (Lenaerts, 2020). In these wordings independence and impartiality are instrumental to achieving the confidence in and authority and legitimacy of the courts.

Larkin states that “A judicial independence argument also contains the correlated argument that a perception of judicial independence and propriety must be maintained” (2001, p. 65). Judicial authority, legitimacy, and effectiveness are influenced by public support and respect for the judiciary. Public respect for the institution is crucial for voluntary compliance with the law, as it prevents the perception of bias and unfairness. The public believes in unequal treatment in the justice system, leading to a lack of confidence in the legal system. Independence supporters argue that election systems can create perceptions of influence and corruption, while political campaigning and fundraising create the impression that judicial decisions are exchanged for votes. Judicial accountability to the electorate is unnecessary, as judges apply but do not make law. This reduces the need for representation and democratic accountability, as courts are legally prohibited from having constituents.

The Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa district is one of the 261 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in Ghana, and forms part of the 23 MMDAs in the Central Region. The population of Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District, according to the 2021 Population and Housing Census, is 126,993 representing 4.4 percent of the region's total population. Like other parts of Ghana, the people of Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa district depend on the judiciary to provide them with fair and impartial justice. However, the district, like many other parts of Ghana, has experienced some challenges with the delivery of justice, such as delays, corruption, and political interference, according to the Judicial Service of Ghana annual report 2017-2018.

The perception of the public towards the independence of the judiciary is critical to the success of the justice system and the democratic governance of Ghana. Public perception of the judiciary can influence the legitimacy and credibility of the justice system, affect the public's willingness to use the courts and impact the country's socio-economic development. Therefore, it is important to investigate the public perception of judicial independence in Ghana, particularly in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa district, to understand how the public views the independence of the judiciary and the factors that shape these perceptions. Therefore, this study seeks to address the gap.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Politics in Ghana has gradually become the very climate of Ghanaian society. It pervades every sphere of daily activities. This has raised several questions as to

whether the various provisions of the 1992 constitution, which seeks to guarantee the independence of the Judiciary, are or have been up to the task of insulating the Judiciary from political influence and interference or if these provisions are defeated by other provisions of the constitution or the recent trend of affairs. Under the concept of judicial independence, one fundamental principle is the fact that the Judiciary must be isolated or free from political influence, interference or inclination. However, the constitution does not ensure a strict insulation of the Judiciary from political interference, influence and inclination (Owusu-Dapaa, 2011, p. 531)

Despite constitutional safeguards, concerns about the independence and impartiality of the judiciary in Ghana have been raised. Political interference, corruption, and delays in the delivery of justice have been identified as key challenges to judicial independence in the country (Global Integrity, 2017; Ghana Integrity Initiative, 2019). These challenges can undermine public trust in the judiciary, and threaten the legitimacy of the justice system.

Carlton Jr (2001), claims “the public perceives our courts as impartial and fair”. The public expects the executive and legislative branches to be biased toward an agenda and the groups that support it. But if the public ever perceives that the court bases its decisions on factors other than the evidence, the laws, and the constitution, it will lose its respect for the law. And when the public loses its respect for the law, we lose the centripetal force that binds us to our nationhood. Public perception of the independence of the judiciary is a critical factor in sustaining public trust in the justice

system. If citizens do not believe that the judiciary is independent, impartial, and free from political interference, they may be less likely to seek redress through the courts or to comply with court decisions. This, in turn, can lead to a breakdown of the rule of law, and threaten the stability and legitimacy of democratic governance.

According to Pérez (2018), “Judicial independence is the guiding constitutional principle behind the design of the judiciary”. Indeed, the notion that courts must be free from external pressure lies at the core of the justification of the power to adjudicate that is accorded courts and distinguishes them from the power exercised by other public authorities such as the legislative or the executive powers.

Notwithstanding, other values, such as accountability and transparency, are extremely important for judicial legitimacy. Independence is thus regarded as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the legitimacy of courts.

In recent years, Ghana’s judiciary has been at the centre of public debate and scrutiny, particularly following widely publicised allegations of judicial corruption, concerns about political influence in judicial appointments, and criticisms regarding delays in the administration of justice. Such national-level controversies have generated broader discussions about the credibility, transparency, and independence of the judiciary as an institution. While these issues are often examined from a national or institutional perspective, less attention has been paid to how they shape perceptions at the local community level. Understanding whether and how these national concerns influence public trust within specific districts, such as Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa, is essential for

assessing the lived experience of judicial independence beyond constitutional guarantees.

The Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa (A.O.B.) district provides an ideal case study for examining public perception of judicial independence in Ghana. As a diverse district with a circuit court and a magistrate court, it is likely that residents of the district have had varying experiences with the judicial system, and may hold different beliefs and attitudes towards judicial independence. The court is accessible in the A.O.B. district, but unfortunately, the populace in the district do not perceive their presence, according to the Judicial Service of Ghana annual report 2017-2018.

Understanding these attitudes and beliefs is important for promoting judicial independence and enhancing public trust in the justice system.

Despite the constitutional guarantees of judicial independence under the 1992 Constitution and the existing scholarly discussions on political interference, corruption, and judicial reforms in Ghana (Owusu-Dapaa, 2011; Ghana Integrity Initiative, 2019), there remains limited empirical research examining how ordinary citizens at the district level perceive judicial independence and how these perceptions influence trust in court decisions. Much of the existing literature focuses on constitutional provisions, institutional reforms, and national-level assessments, with little attention to localized community experiences and perceptions. This gap creates a disconnect between the formal legal guarantees of judicial independence and the actual confidence reposed in the judiciary by citizens. It is therefore necessary to

undertake an empirical investigation within the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District to determine how residents perceive judicial independence and how such perceptions affect trust in the justice delivery system.

This study focuses on public perceptions of judicial independence, respect for judicial independence and the trust of the general public at Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa district in the judiciary.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate and understand the public perception of judicial independence specifically within the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District in Ghana.

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To evaluate the extent to which the residents of the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District are aware of the concept of judicial independence.
2. To measure the level of trust the public has in the judiciary system within the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District
3. To analyze the perceived challenges and threats to judicial independence as reported by the residents of the district.
4. To examine how public perceptions of judicial independence affects trust in court decisions in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What is the level of public awareness of judicial independence among the residents of the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District?
2. What is the level of public trust in the judiciary system among residents of Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District?
3. What are the perceived challenges to judicial independence as reported by the residents of the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District?
4. How does public perception of judicial independence affect trust in court decisions in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District?

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study aims to investigate the public's perception of judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa district, providing insight into how the public perceives the judiciary's independence, which is vital in promoting transparency and accountability.

Public trust in the justice system is critical in ensuring the legitimacy of the judiciary.

More specifically, the anticipated findings of this study will provide practical guidance to key stakeholders. For policymakers, evidence on the factors shaping public perceptions such as political interference, socio-economic influences, or delays in justice delivery may inform the design of targeted legal reforms and public education initiatives. For the Judicial Service, insights into areas where public confidence is weak can guide institutional improvements aimed at strengthening

transparency, accountability, and service efficiency. Legal practitioners may also benefit from a clearer understanding of public attitudes toward judicial impartiality, which can enhance professional conduct and public engagement strategies.

The study's findings can add to the existing literature on judicial independence in Ghana, providing a deeper understanding of the challenges that the judiciary faces in upholding its independence and impartiality.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study

This study focused on public perceptions of judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District of Ghana. It targeted individuals aged 18 and above and judicial personnel within the district, excluding other legal professionals like lawyers and prosecutors. The study used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews.

The research was limited to perceptions within the district, without assessing judicial independence at the national level. Additionally, data collection was restricted to a specific timeframe, meaning findings reflect current perceptions but may not capture long-term changes. Despite these delimitations, the study provides valuable insights into judicial independence and public trust in the district.

While the study is delimited to the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District and does not attempt to assess judicial independence at the national level, the findings provide valuable insights into how institutional dynamics are experienced at the community

level. Although generalisations should be made with caution, the district-level analysis offers a useful foundation for comparative studies in other regions of Ghana. The study therefore serves as an important starting point for understanding how national judicial structures translate into local perceptions and lived experiences.

1.9 Definition of Terms

Judiciary: The judiciary is the system of courts that adjudicates legal disputes/disagreements and interprets, defends, and applies the law in legal cases.

Judicial independence the ability of courts and judges to perform their duties free of influence or control by other actors, whether governmental or private.

Judicial impartiality: is a principle of justice holding that decisions should be based on objective criteria, rather than on the basis of bias, prejudice, or preferring the benefit to one person over another for improper reasons.

Law: It is a source of authority that is applicable beyond any particular case- a constitution, statutes, or, to the extent relevant in the particular legal system, judicial precedent.

Rule of law: According to Black's Law Dictionary "rule of law" means legal principles of day to day application, approved by the governing bodies or authorities and expressed in the form of logical proposition.

Trust: A trust is a legal relationship in which the holder of a right gives it to another person or entity who must keep and use it solely for another benefit.

1.10 Organization of the Study

This study is structured into five chapters, each covering essential aspects of the research on public perception of judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District.

Chapter One provides an introduction to the study, outlining the background, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance, delimitation, and organization of the study. This chapter establishes the foundation for the research by defining the key issues related to judicial independence.

Chapter Two presents a review of relevant literature, discussing theoretical and empirical studies on judicial independence. It also explores concepts such as trust in the judiciary, factors influencing judicial autonomy, and public awareness of the judiciary's role. Additionally, this chapter includes the theoretical and conceptual framework guiding the study.

Chapter Three details the research methodology, explaining the explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach used. It describes the research design, study population, sample size determination, sampling techniques, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations.

Chapter Four presents the results and discussion of the study. It includes quantitative findings from survey data, inferential statistical analysis, and qualitative insights from interviews. The findings are discussed in relation to the research objectives and existing literature, highlighting key themes such as public awareness, trust in the

judiciary, perceived challenges, and the impact of judicial independence on legal outcomes.

Chapter Five provides the summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations. It highlights key insights from the study and offers recommendations for improving public awareness, strengthening judicial independence, and enhancing trust in the judiciary. The chapter also suggests areas for future research to build on the findings of this study.

1.11 Summary

This chapter discussed the problem and spelt out its context, the background to the study and the statement of the problem. Objectives of the study and research questions were also stated. Also covered in this chapter are the significant of the study, some definition of terms related to the study, limitations and delimitations of the study. The organization of the study was also well elaborated on.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Judicial independence is a cornerstone of a functional legal system and a fundamental aspect of the rule of law and democratic governance. It ensures that judges can make decisions free from external pressures and influences, maintaining the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary. This literature review explores the definitions, principles, theories, and significance of judicial independence.

2.2 Theories of Judicial Independence

This concept is rooted in the principles of separation of powers articulated by Nna, & Dukor, (2023), emphasizing the need for an autonomous judiciary to prevent the concentration of power and protect individual liberties. Contemporary scholars such as Neudorf, (2017) and Ariel, (2018) have expanded on these foundational theories, advocating for institutional, decisional, and personal independence to safeguard judicial integrity.

Key principles underpinning judicial independence include impartiality, accountability, and transparency. Impartiality requires judges to decide cases based solely on legal principles and evidence Kotby, (2023), while accountability mechanisms ensure judicial actions align with legal norms without compromising autonomy (Cox, (2020). Transparency in judicial processes fosters public trust and confidence in the judiciary's impartiality and fairness (Geyh, (2023).

Empirical evidence underscores the critical role of judicial independence in sustaining democratic institutions and societal stability. Countries with independent judiciaries demonstrate better economic performance through enhanced contract enforcement and property rights protection (Marciano, Melcarne & Ramello, 2019). Moreover, independent courts contribute to political stability by adjudicating disputes and upholding the rule of law, thereby mitigating conflicts (North et al., 2009).

Despite its importance, judicial independence faces challenges globally. Political interference, often through executive control of judicial appointments and budgetary allocations, poses significant threats (Verner, 2020). Judicial corruption also undermines independence, eroding public trust in the judiciary's ability to administer impartial justice (Transparency International, 2017). Social and cultural pressures further complicate judicial independence, particularly in contexts where communal norms or hierarchical structures influence judicial decision-making (Dressel et al (2017).

To strengthen judicial independence, legal reforms, institutional strengthening, and international support are essential. Legal frameworks should enshrine protections against political interference and ensure judicial autonomy (Oseko, 2012). Institutional reforms should enhance judicial capacity and procedural fairness, while international partnerships can provide critical support in upholding judicial integrity and independence (Akpuokwe, et al 2024).

Widner (1999, p. 83) discusses judicial independence in the context of common law Africa using an ethnographic perspective. 130 lawyers, judges, and magistrates from Tanzania, Uganda, Botswana, and Kenya who were all members of their respective countries' bar organisations were interviewed by Widner (1999, p. 83). According to empirical research by Widner (1999), 3.2% of lawyers in Botswana, 73.9 % in Tanzania, and 78.9 % in Uganda think their judiciaries are more autonomous now than they were 10 years ago. These figures could, in course, suggest that Botswana has historically had a more independent judicial system than Tanzania and unquestionably Uganda, which had lower starting points. Theoretically, according to Widner's (1999, p. 83) interviewees, judicial independence begins as a compromise between the justices and the executive, who is primarily concerned with its legacy. Senior justices also work to develop relationships with the junior justices and the local media to ensure that the public supports an independent court.

Prempeh (1997, p. 46) notes that despite the involvement of numerous military dictatorships, the Ghanaian judiciary has managed to remain astonishingly intact. Ironically, as that author points out, the Supreme Court justices were able to sidestep the embarrassing problem of formally endorsing the arbitrary legislation and judicial rulings of the military governments by setting up their own parallel system of courts. On the other hand, the official courts were frequently in danger and very unimportant.

Luna (2015) examined the evolution of judicial independence using automated content analysis of judicial opinions. Other authors have investigated other

approaches to understand judicial independence, including Bayesian ideal-point estimate, regression analysis, and citation analysis, to name a few. Contrary to previous empirical studies, it is found that the Court matches a greater cohesion of the other government branches with more independent behavior, thereby improving the effectiveness of the system of checks and balances.

Li (2017) examine how the judicial committee and the concept of “supervision” operate to enable and constraint judicial independence in the People’s Republic of China. Chinese legal reforms have shifted from substantive changes in economic laws to domestic structural changes in the court system. These reforms include open trials, adversarial advocacy, and judicial independence. The writer analyzes the tension between law and predictability, focusing on the Chinese's use of supervision and predicting future legal reforms in China.

Ginsburg (2022) describes judicial independence as the movement, almost worldwide, toward a realization that people's liberty and their prosperity depend in part upon strong judicial institutions. According to the writer, Judicial independence also means that a judicial institution is functioning fairly, honestly, and effectively at a cost that people can afford; after all, the courts are simply a means to an end. Judicial independence is a means toward a strong judicial institution. The strong judicial institution is a means toward securing the basic goals of people: human liberty and a reasonable level of prosperity.

Burbank (2008) argue that the main cause of the poisonous state of inter-branch relations involving the federal judiciary, as of the frequent and strident attacks on courts federal and state are strategies calculated to persuade the public that courts are part of ordinary politics and thus that judges are policy agents to be held accountable as such. Criminal courts have not received similar attention despite the influence of their everyday decisions on people's lives and their perception of the judicial system.

Ciocchini (2017) argue that developing a comparative approach for criminal courts in the Global South is needed to help understand the role they play in the development of the rule of law and democratic life. Mocan et. al., (2018) investigate the extent to which perceived quality of judicial institutions has an impact on individuals' propensity for criminal and dishonest behavior and on their views regarding the acceptability of dishonesty and law-breaking. Ristawati et. al., (2020) aim to briefly find out whether the MKRI decisions on the particular issue of economic and social rights show the tendency of judicial populism and defending judicial independence. Pérez (2020) map the actors that might provide appropriate constraints following a checks and balance approach to the institutional design of international courts. Other influential work includes Jayasurya (2010), Gaylord (2011).

2.3 The sources of Judiciary Independence

Landes and Posner (1975) is the first positive analysis of the determinants of the independence of the supreme or constitutional courts. They contend that an independent judiciary is an institutional instrument intended to strengthen the

durability of adopted legislation, starting from an interest-group model of governance.

Legislators have an ex ante incentive in granting judges independence because the current worth of legislative "deals between legislators and interest groups is positively connected with the durability of such accords. They might achieve this by lengthening the terms of judges' appointments and shielding their compensation from political influence. Landes and Posner's argument is based on the observation that independent judges rarely overturn or declare legislation illegal because they tend to read statutes in terms of the intent of the enacting legislature rather than the current one. Legislative agreements become more durable and valuable in the present because the Court will take the original intent of the legislation into account even after the adopting legislators have left office. The primary testable limitation of models like Landes and Posner's (1975) ones applied to supreme or constitutional courts is that their independence is inversely associated with the longevity of the legislative contracts. As a result, there will typically be little time between the passing of the law and the court's declaration of constitutional illegitimacy. This is because when the court is relatively dependent, the standing legislation will have a low degree of durability. On the other hand, the standing legislation will last longer if the court is more independent. As a result, the Court's independence increases with the length of time between the passage of a legislation and its decision.

The models proposed by Landes and Posner as well as other theories along the same lines, such as Crain and Tollison (1979) and Salzberger (1993), are found to be

supported in a wide range of contexts and samples by Anderson, Shugart, and Tollison (1989), Spiller and Gely (1992), Boudreaux and Pritchard (1994), Gorini and Visco Comandini (1998), and others. The biggest flaw in interest group models of judicial behaviour is their inability to explain how the interactions between the judiciary and the legislative and executive branches of government commonly referred to as "checks and balances" in constitutional theories cause or limit the independence of the judicial power. The Supreme Court and the legislative branch are the only two agents in Landes and Posner's (1975) model, but the fact that the President appoints the justices and does so in order to influence future legislation proves that the relationship between the executive and the legislative branch does have an impact on the Court's operation. Recent developments in the political economics models on the separation of powers and political accountability have made it possible to analyse this relationship. The key study in this topic is by Person, Roland, and Tabellini (1997), but they only take into account the legislative and executive branches and treat the judiciary as a silent partner.

By building on Person, Roland, and Tabellini's (1997) reasoning, Padovano, Sgarra, and Fiorino (2003) develop a theory explaining how judicial independence improves political responsibility and ensures the effectiveness of the checks and balances system. The basic idea is that in parliamentary democracies the independent judiciary makes the collusive agreements between the executive and the legislative unstable, again favouring the electorate. In presidential democracies, on the other hand, the

independent judiciary uses its information advantage relative to voters to force the government to keep the extraction of rents (or the preservation of information) below the level ensured by the electoral control. Instead, a tolerant judiciary merely takes part in the rent-sharing process. The ability of the legislative and executive departments to influence judge selection and career pathways is related to judicial independence by the writers. The judiciary's independence is higher the less likely such a possibility is. This model, when applied to constitutional courts, predicts that a court that is comparatively more autonomous in the manner mentioned above will be more likely to reject the constitutional legitimacy of legislative acts passed by the other two arms of the government.

Predictions similar to those of Padovano, Fiorino, and Sgarra (2003) are given empirical support by Salzberger and Fenn (1999) and Salzberger (2003) in their investigations of the English Courts of Appeal and the Israeli Supreme Court, respectively. They discover that the qualities of the institutional framework in which the courts function as well as aspects that protect individual judges' independence have an impact on the court's decisions. The judges' age, immunity from wage reductions, and rigid arrangements regarding tenure appear to be the most important aspects of individual independence, whereas the presence of special procedures for the appointment and promotion of judges, as well as the system for allocating cases to judges, are the institutional characteristics to have the greatest explanatory power. Breton and Fraschini (2003) assert that the Italian Constitutional Court is as

autonomous as any other comparable court of democratic countries with regard to the Italian instance. They report the jobs that the Court's Presidents and Vice-Presidents took after their terms ended and assess their "political" nature as the basis for this assumption, but they do not offer any statistical evidence to support it. According to Tsebelis (2000, 2001), the decision-making of the "veto players" affects how the judiciary acts. This phrase describes the group of political actors who must concur in order to put a legislative measure into effect. The veto players model predicts a two-step sequential game when used to describe legislative creation (Tsebelis, 2001). The Court decides whether to change the status quo through a sentence of constitutional legitimacy given a legislative status quo that results from an agreement between the legislative veto players (depending on the institutional setting, they may additionally be the executive and legislative branches, the political parties, or others). The game is over if the Court imposes a sentence that is contained within the Pareto set of the participants in the legislative veto. Instead, if the court's ruling falls outside the Pareto set, the players alter the outcome of the ruling by coming to an agreement on a fresh proposal that modifies the current state of the law. Since the likelihood that the Court's decision will be the final outcome of the game depends on the size of the Pareto set of the players with legislative veto, the Court plays an essentially passive role in this model with little possibility for checks and balances. Justices may become more active and autonomous from other political entities as a result of the legislative veto players' inability to change the status quo. This model predicts that if the fragmentation and/or ideological polarisation of the legislative veto players increase,

we will see a higher proportion of sentences that are unconstitutional.

Using information from the Italian institutional and political framework, Santoni and Zucchini (2001) validate the theory of Tsebelis (2001), paying particular attention to the interaction between the Parliament and the Constitutional Court. Two things stand out about their main conclusions: first, they show that the Court's introduction in 1956 is associated with lower legislative output and a lower likelihood of policy changes. This finding, however, can also be explained by the fact that the Christian Democrats held the vast majority of parliamentary seats during the first two legislatures, which end roughly at the same time. Second, Santoni and Zucchini (2001) demonstrate that the number of veto players (political parties) in the Italian Parliament as well as the ideological disparities among them both have a growing impact on the Court's level of intervention, which is used as a proxy for judicial independence. They define judicial independence as a function simply of the effective number of parties in the Parliament and of the power struggle that takes place among them, which is the analysis' most glaring theoretical flaw. As it is not based on structural aspects of the Court's independence, including tenure duration, the processes used to appoint the justices, their ages, and the like, this is at most a circumstantial approach of catching such independence. These qualities, as we shall see, change over time. The veto players model is tested empirically by Santoni and Zucchini (2001) without comparing its predictions to those of other, competing theories of judicial independence. Due to this, it is impossible to assess the veto players model's relative explanatory power, and

their conclusions are subject to the danger of observational equivalence with those of other hypotheses.

Furthermore, the Italian Constitutional Court's jurisprudence has not been consistent, having been impacted by exogenous phenomena like the need to concentrate on pre-Republican legislation, cases of ministerial impeachment, and the need to handle the backlog of cases at various points in its operation. A more accurate empirical analysis should take a wider range of theoretical contributions into account and focus on the relationships' consistency across times. The empirical studies of Ramseyer and Rasmusen (1997) and Hansen (2002) are related to the theory underpinning the veto players model, even if they do not directly test it. Ramseyer and Rasmusen (1997) emphasise the significance of the stability of the veto players as defined by the level of electoral market competition. They contend that judicial independence results from a high rate of political turnover by contrasting the political systems in Japan and the United States. A party will eventually come under close control of judicial officials if it anticipates remaining in power for several consecutive parliamentary terms. Judges, on the other hand, will be comparatively better protected from political pressures in environments where politicians confront competitive electoral markets and a high possibility of government change. In a similar spirit, Hansen (2002) looks at how judges are chosen and kept in office in every American state. He demonstrates how more political competition and more contrasts between political platforms are related to the most independent judicial systems.

2.4 Public Perception and Trust in the Judiciary

Public perception and trust in the judiciary are fundamental for maintaining the rule of law and ensuring the effective administration of justice. This literature review delves into the various factors influencing public trust in the judiciary, the impact of judicial independence, the role of transparency and accountability, comparative analyses across different jurisdictions, empirical findings, and specific studies relevant to understanding these dynamics in different contexts, including Ghana.

Procedural fairness, as discussed by Grimes (2017), is a key determinant of public trust in the judiciary. The perception that judicial processes are fair and unbiased can enhance the legitimacy of judicial institutions. Grimes, M. emphasizes that when individuals perceive the procedures by which decisions are made as fair, they are more likely to accept and trust those decisions, regardless of the outcome. This concept of procedural justice includes elements such as neutrality, respect, voice (opportunity to be heard), and transparency in judicial processes.

The competence and impartiality of judges are critical to public trust. Gibson and Caldeira (2019) argue that public perceptions of judicial competence defined as the ability of judges to make well-reasoned and legally sound decisions enhance the legitimacy of judicial institutions. Impartiality, or the absence of bias, is equally important. When judges are seen as impartial arbiters who apply the law consistently and without favoritism, public confidence in the judiciary is strengthened.

Perceptions of corruption within the judiciary can significantly undermine public trust.

Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer (2013) highlights how corruption perceptions affect trust in judicial systems worldwide. When the judiciary is perceived as corrupt, individuals are less likely to trust judicial outcomes, leading to a diminished sense of justice and rule of law. Studies by Rose-Ackerman (2017) suggest that anti-corruption measures, ethical standards, and robust accountability mechanisms are essential to maintaining judicial integrity and public trust.

Feld and Voigt (2015) provide empirical evidence showing that judicial independence correlates positively with public trust. They argue that when the judiciary is seen as independent, citizens are more likely to believe in the impartiality and fairness of judicial decisions.

Political interference in judicial matters can erode public trust. Ramseyer and Rasmusen (2010) examine how political influences on judicial appointments and decision-making processes impact public perceptions. Their findings suggest that in environments where the judiciary is subject to political control or influence, public trust diminishes. This is particularly relevant in contexts where the separation of powers is weak, and judicial decisions are perceived as extensions of political will rather than independent judgments.

Various empirical studies support the notion that judicial independence enhances public trust. For instance, Hayo and Voigt (2023) analyze data from multiple countries and find that greater judicial independence is associated with higher levels of public trust in the judiciary. This relationship holds true across different legal traditions and

political systems, underscoring the universal importance of judicial independence for maintaining public confidence.

Transparency in judicial processes is essential for building and maintaining public trust. Walker (2021) highlight how transparent judicial procedures, such as open court sessions and public access to court records, can demystify the judicial system and foster trust. Transparency allows the public to scrutinize judicial actions and decisions, thereby increasing perceptions of fairness and accountability.

Effective accountability mechanisms are crucial for ensuring judicial integrity and public trust. Voigt and El-Bialy (2013) discuss various accountability measures, including judicial review boards, ethical oversight bodies, and disciplinary procedures for judges. These mechanisms help to prevent judicial misconduct and corruption, thereby reinforcing public confidence in the judiciary. When judges are held accountable for their actions, it demonstrates a commitment to upholding ethical standards and the rule of law.

In the African context, public trust in the judiciary is influenced by historical legacies, political culture, and institutional reforms. Fombad (2007) compares public trust in the judiciary in South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana, noting that countries with a history of judicial independence and ongoing reforms to enhance transparency and accountability tend to have higher levels of public trust. For example, South Africa's post-apartheid judicial reforms have significantly improved public perceptions of judicial independence and integrity.

2.5 Challenges to Judicial Independence

One of the most significant challenges to judicial independence is direct political interference. This can take the form of pressure from the executive or legislative branches to influence judicial decisions. Larsson and Naurin (2016) highlight how political influences on judicial appointments and decision-making processes can undermine judicial independence. They argue that in systems where the executive has significant control over judicial appointments, there is a higher risk of judges being influenced by political considerations.

Indirect political pressure also poses a threat to judicial independence. This includes legislative actions that alter the structure or functioning of the judiciary, such as changes in judicial tenure, salary, or jurisdiction. Janover (2021) discusses how legislative bodies can indirectly pressure the judiciary by threatening to reduce budgets or alter the scope of judicial authority. These actions can create an environment where judges feel pressured to conform to political expectations to secure their positions and resources.

Corruption within the judiciary is a critical challenge that undermines judicial independence. Harding (2021) explains how corruption can pervade judicial systems, leading to biased decisions and eroding public trust. Judicial corruption can manifest in various forms, including bribery, favoritism, and manipulation of case outcomes. Such practices compromise the integrity of the judiciary and make it susceptible to external influences.

Systemic corruption, where corruption is entrenched in the broader political and administrative system, also impacts judicial independence. Transparency International (2013) emphasizes that in countries with high levels of systemic corruption, the judiciary is often not immune. Judges may be coerced or incentivized to engage in corrupt practices, thereby compromising their independence and impartiality.

Inadequate funding and resources are significant barriers to judicial independence. Financial constraints can limit the judiciary's ability to function effectively and independently. Weinstein-Tull (2020) discusses how underfunding can lead to delays in judicial processes, inadequate facilities, and insufficient support staff. These issues can hinder the judiciary's ability to operate independently and effectively, as judges may become reliant on external sources of funding or support, potentially compromising their impartiality.

A lack of qualified and experienced judges is another challenge to judicial independence. Hammond (2016) highlights the difficulties faced by judiciaries in developing countries in attracting and retaining competent judges. Inadequate training and professional development opportunities can also affect the quality of judicial decisions and the overall independence of the judiciary.

Institutional weaknesses within the judiciary itself can pose significant challenges to judicial independence. These include structural issues such as unclear jurisdictional boundaries, lack of clear procedures, and weak enforcement mechanisms. Gutmann and Voigt (2020) argue that strong institutional frameworks are essential for

maintaining judicial independence. Without clear and robust institutional structures, the judiciary is vulnerable to external influences and internal inefficiencies.

Weak procedural safeguards can also undermine judicial independence. For instance, the absence of transparent and merit-based procedures for judicial appointments, promotions, and removals can lead to politicization of the judiciary. Ginsburg (2003) discusses how procedural weaknesses, such as lack of transparency in judicial appointments, can lead to the appointment of judges who are beholden to political actors, thereby compromising their independence.

Regional studies highlight how specific contextual factors influence the challenges to judicial independence. For instance, Fombad (2018) examines judicial independence in several African countries and identifies common challenges such as political interference, corruption, and lack of resources. He notes that these challenges are often exacerbated by historical legacies and ongoing political instability. Similarly, in Latin America, Khan (2021) discusses how political transitions and weak institutional frameworks have hindered efforts to strengthen judicial independence.

In Ghana, challenges to judicial independence include political interference, corruption, and inadequate resources. Abotsi (2020) notes that while judicial reforms have been implemented to enhance independence, persistent issues such as political pressure on judicial appointments and budgetary constraints continue to pose significant challenges. The study highlights the need for further reforms to strengthen institutional frameworks and ensure adequate funding for the judiciary.

In Eastern Europe, post-communist transitions have posed unique challenges to judicial independence. Smith (2022) examines the judiciary in countries like Poland and Hungary, noting that while efforts have been made to establish independent judicial systems, political interference remains a significant challenge. The study highlights how political actors continue to exert influence over judicial appointments and decisions, undermining efforts to establish truly independent judiciaries.

2.6 Judicial Independence in Ghana

Judicial independence is a fundamental aspect of democratic governance and the rule of law. In Ghana, this principle is enshrined in the 1992 Constitution, which seeks to ensure that the judiciary operates free from undue influence by the executive and legislative branches. Judges are appointed by the President based on recommendations from the Judicial Council and subject to parliamentary approval. This process is intended to reduce executive influence and promote merit-based appointments (Appiagyei-Atua, 2000). Additionally, the judiciary's budget is a charge on the Consolidated Fund, which theoretically shields it from political manipulation. The Judicial Council, which includes representatives from various legal and governmental bodies, plays a crucial role in maintaining judicial standards and ethics (Agyemang-Badu, 2017).

Ghana's legal and judicial systems have undergone significant transformations since the colonial era. During colonial rule, the judiciary was primarily an extension of the colonial administration, with limited autonomy (Asare, 2009). Post-independence

Ghana saw several political upheavals, including military coups that affected judicial independence. The 1992 Constitution, established after the return to democratic governance, represents a milestone in the effort to ensure judicial independence. Articles 125 to 161 of the Constitution specifically address the judiciary's role, structure, and independence, emphasizing the separation of powers and the judiciary's autonomy (Constitution of Ghana, 1992).

Despite constitutional safeguards, several challenges threaten judicial independence in Ghana. Political interference remains a significant concern, particularly regarding judicial appointments, promotions, and dismissals. Instances where the executive branch has attempted to influence judicial decisions have been documented, raising concerns about the judiciary's ability to remain impartial (Ayee, 2008). Furthermore, inadequate funding and resources continue to hamper the judiciary's effective functioning, making it vulnerable to external pressures and reducing its capacity to deliver timely justice (Senah, 2013).

Judicial corruption is another critical issue that undermines judicial independence. Reports of bribery and corruption within the judiciary have surfaced, leading to a perception that the judiciary is not entirely impartial or trustworthy. Transparency International (2017) highlights instances of corruption within the judiciary, noting that such practices erode public trust and confidence in judicial institutions. This is compounded by the lack of adequate mechanisms to address corruption and enforce accountability within the judiciary (Atuguba, 2007).

2.7 Impact of Judicial Independence on Legal Outcomes and Justice Delivery

The concept of separation of powers, as articulated by Montesquieu (1748), is fundamental to understanding judicial independence. Montesquieu's doctrine argues for a distinct separation between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government to prevent any one branch from gaining unchecked power. Judicial independence ensures that the judiciary can act as an effective check on the other branches, maintaining the balance of power and protecting individual liberties.

Theories of legal positivism and natural law provide contrasting views on the role of judicial independence. Legal positivism, as advocated by Kaufman (2023), emphasizes that judges should interpret and apply laws strictly as written, without incorporating personal moral judgments. In contrast, natural law theorists like Lon Fuller (1969) argue that judges should consider broader moral and ethical principles when making decisions. Judicial independence is crucial in both frameworks: for positivists, to ensure impartial application of the law, and for natural law proponents, to allow judges the freedom to interpret laws in a just and equitable manner.

Research has shown a strong correlation between judicial independence and economic growth. Feld and Voigt (2015) conducted a cross-country analysis demonstrating that nations with independent judiciaries tend to experience more stable and higher economic growth rates. An independent judiciary fosters a reliable legal environment that upholds property rights and contract enforcement, which are essential for economic development and investor confidence.

The link between judicial independence and corruption has been explored in various studies. Huchhanavar (2023) argues that judicial independence is vital for reducing corruption, as an autonomous judiciary can hold public officials accountable without fear of retribution. Garoupa and Magalhaes (2020) support this view, finding that countries with higher levels of judicial independence have lower levels of corruption. This relationship underscores the role of an independent judiciary in promoting transparency and accountability in governance.

Judicial independence is also critical for the protection of human rights. Nzau and Edgell (2019) found that countries with independence judiciaries are more likely to uphold civil liberties and political rights. This is because an independent judiciary can check the abuse of power by the executive and legislative branches, ensuring that laws and policies do not violate fundamental human rights.

The fairness and impartiality of legal proceedings are significantly enhanced by judicial independence. Navarrete and Castillo-Ortiz (2020) shows that judicial independence is associated with higher perceptions of fairness in the legal system. Judges who are free from external pressures can make decisions based on the merits of each case, leading to more just and impartial outcomes.

Judicial independence contributes to the consistency and predictability of legal outcomes. Epstein, Sadl and Weinshall (2021) argues that an independent judiciary can develop and adhere to legal precedents, leading to more consistent and predictable judicial decisions. This predictability is crucial for maintaining public trust in the

legal system and ensuring that similar cases are treated alike, fostering a sense of legal certainty.

Judicial independence can enhance the efficiency of legal processes by reducing delays and ensuring timely justice. Jeuland (2018) highlights that in jurisdictions with high judicial independence, courts are more likely to have streamlined procedures and effective case management practices, leading to faster resolution of cases. This efficiency is vital for maintaining public confidence in the judiciary and ensuring access to justice for all citizens.

An independent judiciary is more likely to promote accessibility and transparency in the justice system. Transparency International (2013) emphasizes that judicial independence can lead to more transparent court proceedings and decisions, making the legal system more accessible to the public. Greater transparency enhances public understanding of judicial processes and promotes accountability, which are essential for fostering public trust and confidence in the judiciary.

Public trust and confidence in the judiciary are closely linked to perceptions of judicial independence. Van Dijk (2021) found that when the public perceives judges as independent and impartial, they are more likely to trust judicial decisions and view the judiciary as a legitimate institution. This trust is essential for the effective functioning of the legal system, as it encourages public compliance with judicial decisions and supports the overall stability of the legal order.

2.8 Case Studies of Judicial Independent

A case study is a qualitative research method that provides an in-depth analysis of a specific subject, such as an individual, group, or event, within its real-life context. It is widely used in social sciences, business, education, and healthcare to explore complex issues in detail (Yin, 2018).

Case studies are characterized by their context-specific nature and use of multiple data sources, such as interviews, observations, and documents (Creswell, 2013). They can be classified into various types, including exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, intrinsic, instrumental, and multiple case studies, each serving different research purposes.

The main advantages of case studies include rich, detailed data collection and methodological flexibility. However, they also face limitations, such as lack of generalizability and potential researcher bias (Stake, 1995). Despite these challenges, case studies remain a valuable tool for understanding complex social and behavioral phenomena when designed rigorously.

2.8.1 Judicial Independence in the United States

The United States provides a robust example of the impact of judicial independence on legal outcomes and justice delivery. Ginsburg and Garoupa (2009) examine the role of judicial independence in the U.S. federal judiciary, highlighting its importance in upholding the rule of law, protecting minority rights, and maintaining checks and balances within the government. They argue that the U.S. Supreme Court's

independence has been crucial in landmark decisions that have shaped the nation's legal and social landscape.

2.8.2 Judicial Independence in India

India's judiciary is another important case study. Despite facing challenges such as political pressure and corruption, the Indian judiciary has maintained a significant degree of independence. Sen (2014) explores how judicial independence has enabled the Indian courts to promote social justice, protect fundamental rights, and ensure accountability of the executive and legislative branches. The study underscores the judiciary's role in addressing issues such as poverty, discrimination, and environmental protection.

2.8.3 Judicial Independence in Ghana

Ghana's experience with judicial independence highlights both the challenges and potential of maintaining an autonomous judiciary in a developing country. Appiah-Thompson (2021) discusses the obstacles faced by the Ghanaian judiciary, including political interference and limited resources. Despite these challenges, efforts to strengthen judicial independence have led to improvements in the judiciary's ability to deliver fair and impartial justice. The study emphasizes the importance of ongoing reforms to enhance judicial independence and promote the rule of law in Ghana.

2.8.4 Judicial Independence in Latin America

Latin American countries provide a varied landscape of judicial independence with significant lessons. Oliveira (2020) discusses how judicial reforms in countries like

Argentina, Brazil, and Chile have aimed to enhance judicial independence and reduce political interference. These reforms have included measures such as merit-based appointment systems, increased judicial budgets, and the establishment of judicial councils. The impact of these reforms has been mixed, with some countries achieving greater judicial independence and improved legal outcomes, while others continue to struggle with entrenched political influences.

The gap in the literature reviewed lies in the absence of specific research on how residents of the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District in Ghana perceive judicial independence. Existing studies largely focus on theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence from broader contexts, overlooking localized perspectives and experiences regarding judicial autonomy. This gap underscores the need for targeted investigations using mixed-method approaches to understand community attitudes toward judicial independence in Ghanaian society.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

Social Trust Theory which was propounded by Francis Fukuyama (1995) provides a useful lens through which to examine how individuals perceive public institutions, particularly in contexts where formal structures like the judiciary exist, but public confidence in those structures may be lacking. At its core, the theory posits that trust in institutions is developed through consistent, transparent, and fair interactions, and it is maintained when these institutions are perceived as reliable, impartial, and inclusive (Blind, 2006).

In societies where institutional practices are perceived as opaque, slow, or unjust, social trust tends to decline, even if legal frameworks formally guarantee fairness or independence (Rothstein & Stolle, 2008). Citizens are more likely to trust judicial systems when they believe those systems are accessible, equitable, and free from political or economic manipulation. Conversely, when people believe that wealth, political power, or social status influence court outcomes, their trust in the justice system deteriorates.

This theory is particularly relevant to the current study, which assesses public perception of judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. Despite the constitutional guarantee of judicial independence in Ghana, the study revealed that a significant proportion of respondents (58%) expressed low trust in the judiciary, and 68% had limited awareness of what judicial independence entails. Qualitative findings further indicated that participants viewed the judiciary as susceptible to political influence, slow in delivering justice, and inaccessible to low-income individuals due to high legal costs.

By applying Social Trust Theory, the study interprets these findings as manifestations of eroded institutional trust. The theory supports the conclusion that ensuring judicial independence on paper is not sufficient; the public must also perceive the judiciary as transparent, impartial, and responsive to their needs. In essence, the theory links the observable attitudes in the district to broader patterns of trust and legitimacy in public institutions.

Thus, Social Trust Theory provides a robust conceptual foundation for understanding how structural and experiential factors influence public attitudes toward the judiciary, and why those perceptions persist even in a democratic context where legal safeguards exist.

Other theoretical perspectives could also have been employed to examine judicial independence and public confidence in the judiciary. For instance, Institutional Theory emphasizes the role of formal structures, rules, and norms in shaping institutional legitimacy and performance. Similarly, Legitimacy Theory focuses on the extent to which public institutions are perceived as appropriate, just, and deserving of support. Procedural Justice Theory also highlights the importance of fairness, neutrality, and transparency in shaping citizens' trust in legal authorities. While these theories offer valuable insights into aspects of institutional functioning and legitimacy, Social Trust Theory is particularly suitable for this study because it directly centers on the relationship between citizens' perceptions and their level of trust in public institutions. Given that this study specifically investigates how perceptions of judicial independence influence trust in court decisions within the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District, Social Trust Theory provides the most appropriate and focused explanatory framework.

2.10 Empirical Studies

Empirical studies on judicial independence have examined public perceptions, trust in the judiciary, political influences, and challenges faced by the judicial system. This

section reviews relevant studies conducted in Ghana, Africa, and other global contexts to provide a comparative understanding of judicial independence and its impact on governance.

2.10.1 Public Perception of Judicial Independence

Several studies have explored how the public perceives judicial independence. A study by Ayee (2016) in Ghana found that public trust in the judiciary is influenced by political affiliations, media coverage, and experiences with the legal system. The study revealed that while some Ghanaians view the judiciary as independent and fair, others believe it is subject to political interference, particularly in high-profile cases. Similarly, Boateng (2020) found that lack of public legal education and judicial transparency contributes to negative perceptions of judicial independence in Ghana.

In a broader African context, Mwangi (2018) examined judicial independence in Kenya and found that historical political interference has shaped public distrust in the judiciary. The study highlighted that reforms, such as judicial appointments based on merit and financial autonomy for the judiciary, have gradually improved public confidence. However, concerns about corruption, case delays, and executive influence remain prevalent.

Globally, Grootelaars and van den Bos (2022) investigated judicial independence in European democracies. Their findings suggest that trust in the judiciary is higher in countries where judicial appointments are transparent and courts have strong institutional autonomy. However, they also found that public perceptions of judicial

independence are shaped by personal experiences with the legal system, showing that citizens who have had negative experiences are more likely to distrust the judiciary, regardless of its actual level of independence.

2.10.2 Trust in the Judiciary and Factors Influencing Public Confidence

Trust in the judiciary has been widely studied, with researchers emphasizing the role of judicial transparency, fairness, and accessibility. Suleiman (2017) conducted research in Nigeria and found that public confidence in the judiciary is strongly linked to perceptions of fairness in case outcomes. The study revealed that when citizens believe court rulings are biased or influenced by external actors, their trust in the legal system declines.

In Ghana, Ofori (2019) found that judicial corruption was a significant factor undermining trust in the judiciary. The study showed that many citizens believe that wealthy individuals and political elites can manipulate court decisions, leading to skepticism about the fairness of judicial processes. Similarly, Global Integrity (2017) ranked Ghana's judiciary moderately independent but noted that public trust fluctuates depending on the perceived political neutrality of judges.

In the United States, Tyler (2006) found that trust in the judiciary is shaped more by procedural fairness than case outcomes. The study suggested that when people believe judges follow fair procedures, they are more likely to accept court rulings, even when the outcome is unfavorable. This finding aligns with Lenaerts (2020), who argued that judicial transparency and accountability mechanisms enhance trust in the judiciary.

2.10.3 Challenges to Judicial Independence

Several studies have highlighted corruption, political interference, and lack of financial autonomy as major challenges to judicial independence. Zikria and Roofi (2020) examined judicial independence in South Asia and found that weak separation of powers, political influence in judicial appointments, and financial dependence on the executive undermine judicial autonomy. The study recommended constitutional reforms to strengthen judicial independence.

In Ghana, Owusu-Dapaa (2011) analyzed the 1992 Constitution and found that while the constitution provides safeguards for judicial independence, certain provisions allow for executive influence, particularly in the appointment of judges. This study reinforced findings by Ghana Integrity Initiative (2019), which reported that political influence in judicial processes remains a concern, especially in cases involving government officials.

A study by Cameron (2010) in South Africa found that delays in case processing and lack of resources for the judiciary weaken public trust. The study suggested that investing in judicial infrastructure, improving case management, and reducing backlog cases can enhance judicial efficiency and independence.

2.10.4 Influence of Judicial Independence on Legal Outcomes

Empirical studies suggest that perceptions of judicial independence affect public acceptance of legal outcomes. Carlton Jr. (2001) found that when people believe

judges base decisions on legal principles rather than political or personal biases, they are more likely to accept court rulings.

Similarly, a study by Pérez (2018) found that countries with strong judicial independence tend to experience lower levels of legal disputes outside formal courts, as citizens trust the judiciary to deliver fair rulings. The study also found that when judicial independence is weak, people are more likely to seek alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, including informal settlements and community-based arbitration.

2.10.5 Summary of Empirical Findings

The empirical studies reviewed suggest that judicial independence is crucial for public trust and effective legal governance. Key findings from the literature include:

Public perception of judicial independence varies based on political context, judicial transparency, and case experiences.

Trust in the judiciary is influenced by corruption, political interference, case delays, and fairness in court rulings.

Challenges to judicial independence include political influence, financial constraints, and inefficient judicial processes.

Judicial independence affects public acceptance of legal outcomes, with stronger judicial autonomy leading to greater compliance with court rulings.

These empirical studies provide a comparative perspective on the factors shaping

judicial independence and reinforce the need for transparency, judicial accountability, and legal reforms to strengthen public confidence in the judiciary.

While the reviewed empirical studies provide valuable insights into judicial independence, political interference, accountability, and public trust across various jurisdictions, most of them focus on national-level institutional assessments and broad governance indicators. There is limited empirical research examining how citizens at the district level perceive judicial independence and how such perceptions influence trust in court decisions within specific local contexts in Ghana. This gap is significant because public confidence in the judiciary is often shaped by localized experiences with courts and justice delivery mechanisms. The absence of district-level empirical evidence therefore justifies the present study in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District.

The reviewed empirical studies can be more clearly understood when organised around the core variables of the present study. First, several studies highlight varying levels of public awareness and understanding of judicial independence, often linked to education and socio-economic status. Second, a consistent finding across jurisdictions is that political interference, corruption, and procedural delays significantly reduce public trust in the judiciary. Third, differences across countries frequently reflect variations in institutional capacity, transparency mechanisms, and reform efforts. Finally, empirical evidence suggests a strong relationship between citizens' perceptions of judicial independence and their willingness to trust and comply with court decisions. However, despite these broad patterns, few studies have examined

these variables simultaneously within a localized district context in Ghana using a mixed-methods approach, thereby reinforcing the need for the present study.

2.11 Empirical Studies on Judicial Independence and Public Trust in Ghana

In Ghana, studies and institutional reports have examined judicial independence, corruption, public trust, and access to justice. Reports by bodies such as the Ghana Integrity Initiative and Global Integrity highlight concerns about political influence, delays in adjudication, and limited public confidence. Empirical studies show that trust in the judiciary is shaped by perceptions of transparency, fairness, and efficiency.

Although the 1992 Constitution guarantees judicial independence, scholarly discussions note tensions between these constitutional provisions and concerns about accountability and integrity. Most existing studies focus on national or structural issues, with limited attention to community-level perceptions. This gap justifies district-level research, such as the study in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District, to examine how national judicial dynamics are reflected in local public perceptions.

2.12 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study presents a visual representation of the factors that influence public perception of judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. The framework emphasizes a multifaceted approach, integrating both institutional and individual-level influences that shape how the public interprets the autonomy and impartiality of the judiciary.

As depicted in the framework, public awareness plays a central role in shaping perceptions of judicial independence. When citizens are informed about the functions of the judiciary and the principles guiding its independence, they are better equipped to evaluate its performance critically. Trust in the judiciary also contributes significantly, as confidence in the legal system reinforces belief in its ability to operate without external influence.

Furthermore, the framework highlights perceived challenges, such as political interference, corruption, and undue delays in case processing. These issues often erode public confidence and lead to doubts about the judiciary's ability to function independently. When such challenges are perceived to be widespread or systemic, they diminish public belief in the rule of law.

Demographic characteristics including age, sex, educational attainment, marital status, and income level are also acknowledged as influential factors. These characteristics may affect individuals' exposure to the justice system, their access to legal information, and their expectations of judicial performance. For instance, more educated individuals may have a better understanding of judicial processes and, therefore, different perceptions than those with limited formal education.

Additionally, the framework considers judicial service delivery, including aspects such as fairness, transparency, and timeliness of court proceedings. The efficiency and

quality of services delivered by the courts directly influence how citizens assess the independence of the judiciary.

Collectively, these elements interact to shape the public's overall perception of judicial independence. The framework avoids the traditional classification of variables (such as independent, dependent, or mediating variables) to provide a holistic and flexible understanding of the dynamics involved. It serves as a foundational guide for examining the empirical data collected in the study and for interpreting how various factors contribute to public attitudes toward the judiciary.

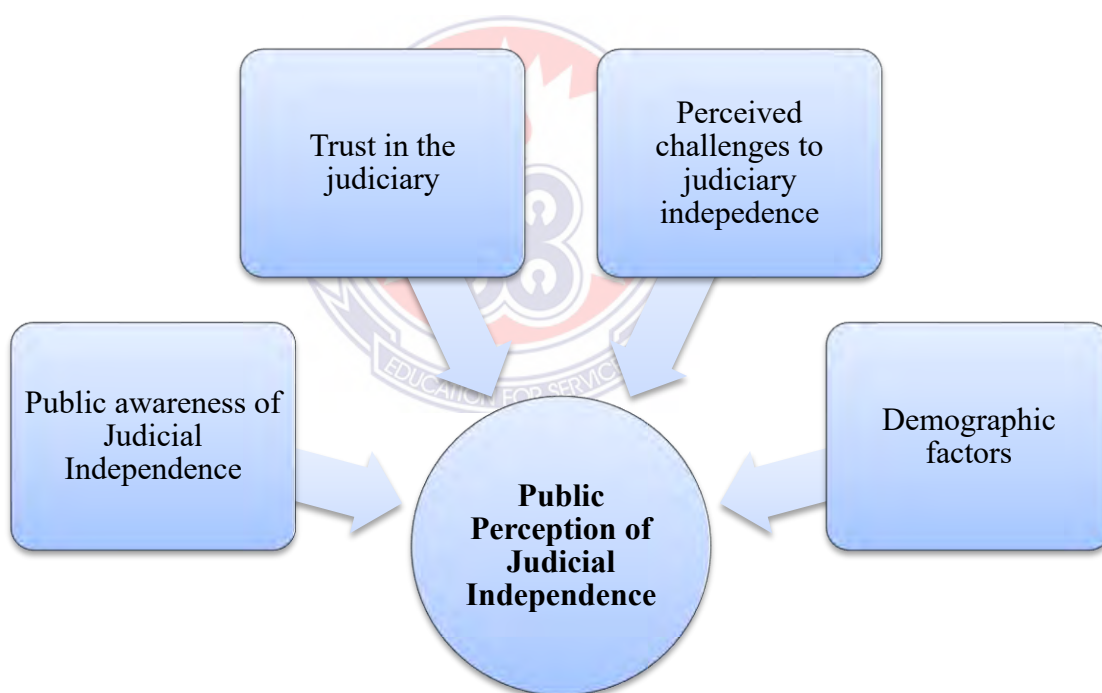


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Developed by the researcher based on a synthesis of relevant literature and theoretical insights

In conclusion, figure 2.1 shows the conceptual framework developed by the

researcher for this study (2024). These are the four main factors identified in the conceptual framework that influence public perception of judicial independence: public awareness, trust in the judiciary, perceived challenges to judicial autonomy, and demographic characteristics. Each of these elements plays a significant role in shaping how individuals in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District view the independence and impartiality of the judiciary. Public awareness informs citizens' understanding of judicial processes, while trust reinforces confidence in legal outcomes. Perceived challenges such as political interference and corruption erode faith in the system, and demographic factors such as education, age, and income affect how people engage with the justice system. Taken together, these components form a comprehensive lens through which judicial independence can be assessed, making the framework a vital tool for guiding analysis and interpretation throughout the study.

The conceptual framework of this study is therefore grounded in the identified gaps within the literature. Drawing from existing theoretical and empirical discussions, the framework links public awareness of judicial independence, perceived challenges such as political interference and corruption, and socio-demographic factors to levels of public trust in the judiciary. By applying these relationships within the specific context of the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District, the study moves beyond general institutional analysis and provides localized empirical evidence on how judicial independence is perceived and how such perceptions influence confidence in judicial outcomes.

2.13 Summary

The chapter began with a brief introduction. In the preceding paragraphs, various scholarly works that relate to topic was reviewed to draw comparison as well as identifying the various gaps in the field. This review was manly concentrated on judicial independence and source of judicial independence. Later, various theories which relates to the research was explained with their relevance to the work.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlined the research methodology used to examine judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. It discussed the research approach, design, target population, sample size determination, sampling techniques, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations. The chapter justified the methodological choices with reference to established research frameworks and empirical studies.

3.2 Research Approach

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of judicial independence. The choice of this approach was driven by the nature of the research questions, which required both statistical measurement and in-depth exploration. A single-method approach would have been insufficient, as some aspects of the study demanded quantitative assessment (e.g., "What is the level of public awareness of judicial independence?"), while others required qualitative inquiry to understand underlying motivations and perceptions (e.g., "Why do some individuals perceive the judiciary as lacking independence?").

The quantitative component of the study provided measurable data on public awareness and perceptions of judicial independence, allowing for statistical analysis

of key relationships (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This phase captured patterns across a larger population, ensuring the generalizability of findings. However, quantitative data alone could not explain the reasons behind these perceptions. Therefore, the qualitative component was necessary to explore the contextual and experiential factors influencing judicial independence. Through in-depth interviews, the study gained insights into institutional challenges, political influences, and the role of public legal education in shaping perceptions.

The integration of both methods enhanced the validity of findings through triangulation, ensuring that results were not solely reliant on a single data source (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). The explanatory sequential design further strengthened the study by first identifying broad trends through surveys and then using qualitative data to provide a deeper understanding of those findings. By using both quantitative and qualitative methods, the study offered a more nuanced and holistic analysis of judicial independence, addressing both the "what" and "why" aspects of the research problem.

3.3 Research Design

An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed for this study. This approach involves the collection and analysis of quantitative data in the first phase, which is then followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data to explain or build upon the initial results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The design was chosen to allow the researcher to first identify broad trends, patterns, and relationships from

the quantitative data collected through surveys and then use in-depth interviews to explore the underlying reasons, perspectives, and contextual factors that shaped those responses.

The decision to use this design over other mixed-methods approaches such as convergent or exploratory sequential designs was driven by the nature of the research questions and objectives. The aim was not simply to compare or merge results from two strands (as in the convergent design), nor was it to begin with qualitative exploration before testing patterns quantitatively (as in exploratory sequential designs). Instead, this study sought to begin with measurable indicators of public perception on judicial independence, and then follow up with qualitative insights from judicial personnel to explain or elaborate on those findings. In this way, the explanatory sequential design provided a logical flow from what is happening to why it is happening.

The advantage of this design lies in its ability to strengthen the interpretation of findings. The initial quantitative phase provided statistical evidence of significant relationships such as between income level and perceptions of judicial independence while the qualitative phase gave voice to the nuanced experiences of judicial personnel that helped explain those patterns. This enhanced the validity and depth of the study. Additionally, it allowed the researcher to develop interview questions that were grounded in the quantitative results, ensuring targeted and relevant qualitative data collection.

However, one disadvantage of the explanatory sequential approach is that it can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, as the second phase depends on the completion and analysis of the first. Furthermore, integrating data meaningfully requires careful planning and interpretation to avoid inconsistencies between findings.

Despite these challenges, the sequential mixed-methods design was more suitable for this study than other types because it supported a structured yet flexible process for uncovering both the breadth and depth of public and institutional perspectives on judicial independence. The use of the survey first, followed by interviews, enabled the researcher to build a coherent narrative that linked empirical patterns with real-world explanations.

Although other mixed-method designs such as the convergent parallel design and the exploratory sequential design could have been considered, the explanatory sequential design was deemed most appropriate for this study. A convergent design, which involves collecting quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, would not have allowed for the qualitative phase to specifically explain and deepen the interpretation of the quantitative findings. Similarly, an exploratory sequential design, which begins with qualitative exploration before quantitative measurement, is typically suitable where little is known about a phenomenon. However, existing literature already establishes key variables relating to judicial independence and public trust. Therefore, the present study required first identifying measurable patterns and relationships through quantitative data, followed by qualitative inquiry to explain and contextualise

those findings within the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. This sequential logic aligns with the objectives of examining levels of awareness, trust, and perceived challenges before exploring the reasons underlying those perceptions.

While the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design offers significant strengths, including the ability to establish generalisable patterns through quantitative data and subsequently provide contextual depth through qualitative inquiry, it also presents certain methodological challenges. One potential limitation is sequencing effects, where findings from the quantitative phase may unintentionally shape or constrain the focus of the qualitative inquiry. Additionally, integrating quantitative and qualitative findings can be methodologically demanding, particularly in ensuring coherence between statistical trends and thematic interpretations. To mitigate these challenges, the study ensured that the qualitative interview guide was carefully developed based on key quantitative findings without limiting participants' ability to introduce new perspectives. Furthermore, integration was achieved through a systematic comparison of quantitative results and qualitative themes during the interpretation phase, thereby enhancing validity and ensuring that the findings were complementary rather than isolated. By addressing these potential limitations, the study strengthens the rigour and credibility of its methodological approach.

3.4 Target Population

The target population consisted of all individuals aged 18 and above residing in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. According to the 2021 Ghana Population and

Housing Census (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021), the district had a total adult population of 74,973. The inclusion of individuals aged 18 and above was based on the legal voting age in Ghana, ensuring that respondents had some level of engagement with legal and judicial matters. In addition to the general population, seven personnel from the Judicial Service of Ghana in Asikuma were interviewed to provide expert perspectives on judicial independence, institutional challenges, and political influences.

3.4 Inclusion Criteria

To enhance the validity and experiential relevance of the study, clear inclusion criteria were established for both the quantitative and qualitative phases.

For the quantitative survey, participants were required to:

1. be 18 years of age or older;
2. be permanent residents of the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District for at least one year;
3. have previously accessed or directly engaged with judicial services within the district, either as litigants, complainants, defendants, witnesses, or observers; and
4. provide informed consent to participate.

The requirement that respondents must have accessed judicial services was included to ensure that perceptions of judicial independence were informed by lived experience

rather than purely speculative opinion. This criterion strengthened the reliability of responses concerning court processes, fairness, delays, and institutional trust.

For the qualitative phase, key informants were selected based on professional engagement with the judicial system within the district. This included judicial personnel, legal practitioners, and selected community leaders with demonstrable familiarity with court operations. Participants were required to have served or engaged with the judicial system for a minimum period sufficient to provide informed and reflective insights.

These criteria ensured that participants possessed adequate experiential and contextual knowledge necessary to address the research objectives meaningfully.

3.5 Sample Size Determination

The sample size for the quantitative component was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table. For a population of 74,973, the appropriate sample size was 382 respondents. The Krejcie and Morgan table was widely used in social science research because it provided statistically valid sample sizes based on population estimates, using a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5% (Singh, 2007). For the qualitative component, a purposive sample of seven key informants from the Asikuma Judicial Service was selected to provide in-depth insights into judicial operations and perceptions of independence in the district. Purposive sampling was suitable for qualitative studies as it ensured the inclusion of

knowledgeable participants who could provide relevant information (Patton, 2015).

3.6 Sampling Techniques

The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique. Stratified random sampling was used to divide the population into strata based on sex, age groups, and occupation to ensure representativeness. This approach minimized bias and enhanced generalizability (Kumar, 2011). After stratification, respondents were selected randomly to ensure that each individual had an equal chance of participation, thereby reducing selection bias (Cochran, 1977). Purposive sampling was used for selecting judicial personnel in the qualitative component, as they possessed specialized knowledge on the research topic (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013).

3.7 Operationalisation and Measurement of Variables

Table 3. 1: Operationalisation and Measurement of Variables

Research Objectives	Key Variable(s)	Data collection Method	Instrument	Types of Analysis
Assess public awareness of judicial independence	Awareness level, knowledge of constitutional provisions	Survey	Questionnaire (Likert scale items)	Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentage, mean)
Determine level of public trust in the judiciary	Trust in courts, confidence in judicial decisions	Survey	Questionnaire	Descriptive and inferential statistics
Identify perceived challenges to judicial independence	Political interference, corruption, delays, resource constraints	Survey and interview	Questionnaire and interview Guide	Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis
Examine how perceptions influence trust in court decisions	Perceived fairness, independence, transparency	Survey and interview	Questionnaire and interview Guide	Correlation/Regression and Thematic analysis

Source: Field Data, 2025

For clarity and methodological transparency, the key variables used in this study were operationally defined and measured as follows:

Sex: Sex was measured as a categorical variable based on self-identification by respondents. It was coded as 1 = Male and 2 = Female.

Education Level: Education was measured categorically based on the highest level of formal education completed by respondents. The categories included: No formal education, Basic education (Primary/JHS), Secondary education (SHS), and Tertiary education.

Income Level: Income was measured using self-reported monthly income grouped into predefined ranges to ensure respondent comfort and response accuracy. The categories reflected locally relevant income brackets within the district context.

Awareness of Judicial Independence: Awareness was measured using structured questionnaire items assessing respondents' knowledge of constitutional provisions relating to judicial independence and the role of the judiciary. Responses were analysed using descriptive statistics, and awareness levels were classified as high, moderate, or low based on response patterns.

These operational definitions ensured consistency in quantitative analysis and enabled the examination of relationships between demographic characteristics and perceptions of judicial independence.

3.8 Data Collection Methods

Data collection involved both structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The quantitative aspect of the study employed a structured questionnaire to gather data on respondents' demographic characteristics, perceptions of judicial independence, and trust in the judiciary. Perceptions and levels of trust were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, adapted from Norris's (2017) institutional trust framework. To ensure inclusivity, the questionnaire was administered in two formats: face-to-face interviews were conducted with respondents who could not read or write, while a Google Form was created and shared with literate participants. This dual approach enabled broader community participation and ensured that individuals across different literacy levels within the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District were represented in the study.

For the qualitative component, semi-structured interviews were conducted with judicial service personnel (with five years and above working experience) to explore their perspectives on judicial independence, political influences, and institutional challenges. These interviews allowed for flexibility in questioning, enabling the researcher to probe deeper into key issues (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Depending on participant availability, interviews were conducted in person, following a one-on-one engagement format. To ensure privacy and encourage open discussions, interviews took place in the offices of participants or other secure locations within judicial premises for those without offices. These settings were carefully selected to provide a

confidential and non-threatening environment, allowing participants to speak freely without fear of external influence or surveillance. The researcher respected the participants' perspectives, allowing them to elaborate on their experiences and even ask follow-up questions for clarification.

Additionally, open-ended questions were used to encourage in-depth responses, enabling participants to discuss various aspects of judicial independence based on their lived experiences. This approach fostered a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and dynamics within the judicial system while ensuring that the participants' views were fully explored.

Data adequacy for the qualitative phase was determined through the principle of data saturation. Interviews were conducted until no new themes, patterns, or significant insights were emerging from participants' responses. As interviews progressed, recurring themes regarding political interference, public trust, and institutional challenges became consistent, indicating that thematic saturation had been achieved. At this point, further data collection was deemed unlikely to generate substantially new information, thereby ensuring both adequacy and methodological rigour in the qualitative component of the study.

The data collection instruments were designed to correspond directly with the research questions of the study. The structured questionnaire captured quantitative data on demographic characteristics, levels of awareness, trust in the judiciary, and

perceived challenges to judicial independence, thereby addressing the first three research questions. The semi-structured interviews further explored participants' explanations of these perceptions and examined how such perceptions influence trust in court decisions, thereby addressing the fourth research question. This structured alignment ensured that each dataset contributed directly to answering specific components of the research problem.

3.9 Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize public perceptions of judicial independence. Inferential statistical techniques, such as chi-square tests, were applied to examine associations between demographic variables and judicial perceptions, while regression analysis was used to determine significant predictors of public trust in the judiciary.

The chi-square test was used as the main inferential statistical technique because most of the study variables were categorical, including demographic characteristics (sex, age group, education, income) and Likert-scale perception responses. The test is appropriate for examining relationships between categorical variables and determining statistical significance. Since the study aimed to assess associations between demographic factors and perceptions of judicial independence and trust, the chi-square test provided a suitable non-parametric method without requiring a normal distribution.

Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework. First, I familiarized myself with the data by thoroughly reading and re-reading the transcriptions to gain an in-depth understanding. Next, I generated initial codes by identifying key phrases and recurring ideas within the responses. These codes were then examined to search for common themes, grouping similar patterns together. After identifying themes, I reviewed them to ensure they accurately captured the meaning of the data and refined them as necessary. I then defined and named the themes to clearly represent the core ideas emerging from the analysis. Finally, I compiled the findings into a structured report, ensuring that the themes provided meaningful insights into the research objectives.

By manually transcribing and analyzing the data, I ensured a detailed and reflective engagement with the responses, allowing for a nuanced interpretation of participants' perspectives.

Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings occurred at the interpretation stage. Quantitative results identified patterns and significant relationships regarding awareness, trust, and perceived challenges, while qualitative themes were used to explain and contextualise these findings. For example, where statistical associations were found between socio-economic factors and perceptions of judicial independence, interview data clarified how political interference, procedural delays, and resource constraints influenced these views. This approach ensured coherence and strengthened the study's explanatory power.

3.10 Alignment between Research Objectives and Methodology

This study ensured methodological alignment by systematically linking each research objective to specific data collection instruments and analytical procedures. Objective One, which sought to assess public awareness of judicial independence, was addressed through structured questionnaire items measuring respondents' knowledge levels and analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages. Objective Two, which examined levels of public trust in the judiciary, was operationalised through Likert-scale perception items and analysed using descriptive statistics as well as inferential tests to determine relationships between demographic variables and trust levels.

Objective Three, which explored perceived challenges to judicial independence, was investigated using both survey items and semi-structured interview questions directed at key informants. Quantitative responses were analysed descriptively, while qualitative interview data were subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and explanations. Objective Four, which examined how perceptions of independence influence acceptance of judicial outcomes, was analysed using chi-square tests to determine statistical associations between perception variables and trust-related outcomes.

By explicitly linking each objective to corresponding instruments and analytical techniques, the study ensured internal methodological coherence and strengthened the validity of its findings.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Conducting research on judicial independence involves several ethical challenges, particularly in ensuring participant trust, maintaining confidentiality, and protecting collected data. This study followed strict ethical guidelines to safeguard participants' rights and well-being throughout the research process.

The first ethical consideration was securing access to participants and ensuring their voluntary participation. Before data collection began, formal permission was obtained from relevant authorities, including legal professionals, community leaders, and potential respondents. A letter of introduction from the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), was presented to establish credibility and legitimacy. Participants were approached respectfully, and the study's purpose was clearly explained to foster trust and encourage openness.

Confidentiality was a top priority in this study. To maintain privacy, several steps were taken. Firstly, all responses were anonymized no personally identifiable information, such as names, addresses, or professional roles, was recorded in the final dataset. Instead, each participant was assigned a unique identification code. Secondly, data security measures were implemented to protect sensitive information. All interview recordings, transcripts, and survey responses were stored in password-protected files, accessible only to the researcher. Any hard copies of documents were kept in a locked cabinet and were securely destroyed (burnt) after data analysis was completed. Additionally, all interviews were conducted in private, non-public

locations to prevent unauthorized persons from overhearing discussions. Care was taken to ensure that no documents or notes were left unattended or exposed to third parties.

The study also ensured ethical conduct during interviews and discussions. Participants were never coerced or pressured into answering sensitive questions, and they had the right to decline to answer any question they found uncomfortable. To prevent biased responses, all questions were framed in a neutral and objective manner. The researcher maintained a professional and respectful approach, creating a comfortable environment that allowed participants to express their views freely and without fear of judgment.

Data management followed strict ethical protocols. Hard copies of research materials were kept in a locked facility and disposed of securely once they were no longer needed. To further ensure confidentiality, no unauthorized individuals were given access to the collected data.

Participants were assured that the research adhered to ethical best practices and was conducted in a manner that respected their dignity, rights, and personal data protection. By following these ethical principles, the study maintained the integrity of its findings while ensuring that participant trust and privacy were preserved.

3.12 Limitations of the Study

This study, while providing valuable insights into public perceptions of judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District, is subject to certain limitations.

One key limitation is response bias, as some respondents may have provided socially desirable answers rather than their true perceptions, particularly on sensitive issues related to judicial independence. This could affect the accuracy and reliability of the findings. Additionally, limited access to judicial personnel posed a challenge, as only seven key informants were interviewed. While their insights were valuable, a larger number of judicial personnel could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of institutional challenges.

Gaining access to judicial officers was particularly difficult. The researcher faced multiple delays and had to reschedule meetings several times with the Judicial Service in the district. Initially, the magistrate indicated that ethical codes prohibited judicial staff from granting an interview unless official permission was granted by the Supreme Court in Accra. This posed a significant barrier to data collection. It was only after the researcher carefully explained the academic purpose of the study and emphasized the confidentiality and integrity of the research process that access was eventually granted. This prolonged negotiation process limited the amount of time available for interviews and may have impacted the depth and variety of judicial perspectives captured.

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research methodology, including the research approach, design, population, sample size determination, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach with a sample size of 382 respondents for the quantitative component and seven key informants for the qualitative aspect. Ethical considerations were strictly observed to ensure the integrity of the study.

Another limitation is time constraints, which restricted the possibility of conducting a longitudinal study to assess changes in public perceptions over time. The study provides a snapshot of judicial independence at a particular point, but perceptions may evolve due to socio-political changes. Furthermore, while the sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, the findings may not be entirely generalizable to other districts in Ghana, as judicial independence issues may vary across regions.

The study also faced challenges related to non-response and incomplete data, as some participants either did not complete the questionnaire or were unavailable for interviews. This may have reduced the robustness of the data-set. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data, which is subject to personal biases and may not always reflect the actual state of judicial independence in the district.

Despite these limitations, the study provides significant insights into public awareness and perceived challenges to judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa

District. Future research could address these limitations by expanding the sample of judicial personnel, employing a longitudinal approach, and conducting comparative studies across multiple districts to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

The study relied primarily on self-reported data, which may be influenced by personal biases, social desirability effects, or individual experiences that do not necessarily reflect the objective state of judicial independence. However, to mitigate this limitation, the study employed methodological triangulation through the integration of quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews. The qualitative phase allowed for deeper probing and clarification of responses, thereby enhancing the credibility and validity of the findings.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study on public perception of judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. The study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, beginning with the collection and analysis of quantitative data, followed by qualitative data to provide a deeper understanding of the findings. The chapter is structured into different sections, beginning with the demographic characteristics of respondents, followed by quantitative findings on public awareness, trust in the judiciary, and perceived challenges to judicial independence. Inferential statistical analysis is conducted to examine relationships between demographic characteristics and perceptions of judicial independence. The qualitative findings from interviews with judicial personnel further explore themes related to public awareness, trust, and challenges to judicial independence. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provides a comprehensive understanding of how public perceptions are shaped. The chapter concludes with a summary of key findings.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study involved a diverse group of respondents from the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District to ensure a representative sample of the population. The demographic characteristics analyzed include sex, age, religion, education level, marital status,

employment status, and income level. These characteristics provide important context for understanding public perceptions of judicial independence.

Table 4.1: Sex Distribution of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	241	63.1%
Female	141	36.9%
Total	382	36.9%

Source: Field Data, 2024.

The Table 4.1: sex distribution of respondents, as shown, indicated that male participants (241) outnumbered female participants (141), representing 63.1% and 36.9% of the sample respectively.

This distribution showed that men participated in the study more actively than women. The higher male representation reflected broader patterns of civic engagement within the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District, where men tended to be more involved in legal and governance-related matters. Social structures and cultural norms shaped participation patterns and placed men in more dominant positions when it came to discussing public institutions and issues of judicial independence.

The lower female representation suggested that women had less involvement in public discourse on legal issues, possibly due to time constraints, traditional roles, or limited exposure to civic education. These factors contributed to their under-representation in the study.

The findings underscored the need to promote inclusive participation by encouraging and empowering women to engage more actively in legal and institutional matters to ensure diverse and representative public perspectives.

Table 4.2: Age Group Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
15 – 20	49	12.8%
21 – 25	43	11.3%
26 – 30	50	13.1%
31 – 35	98	25.7%
36 – 40	47	12.3%
41 – 45	51	12.3%
46 and above	44	11.5%
Total	382	100%

Source: Field Data, 2024.

The findings from the Table 4.2 shows that a wide range of age groups, offering a diverse perspective on perceptions of judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. The 31–35 age group recorded the highest participation with 98 respondents, representing 25.7% of the sample. This was followed by the 41–45 and 26–30 groups, contributing 13.4% and 13.1% respectively. These figures reflected strong representation from young and middle-aged adults, who were likely to be more active in employment, family responsibilities, and community affairs areas often influenced by legal systems.

The 15–20 age group made up 12.8%, while the 21–25 group formed 11.3%, indicating meaningful involvement from younger participants. These groups are likely in school or early career stages, yet still engaged enough to share perspectives on judicial independence. The 46 and above age category had 11.5% of respondents, the

lowest among the groups, suggesting relatively lower participation from older individuals.

In summary, the majority of participants fell within the productive and socially active age ranges, which strengthened the study's insights into how the population most affected by legal decisions viewed judicial independence in the district.

Table 4.3: Religion Distribution of Respondents

Religion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Pentecostal	127	33.2%
Charismatic	66	17.3%
Orthodox Christian	103	27.0%
Muslim	43	11.3%
Traditionalist	12	3.1%
Other	31	8.1%
Total	382	100%

Source: Field Data, 2024.

From Table 4.3 above, respondents in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District revealed a strong Christian majority. Out of the total 382 participants, 127 identified as Pentecostals, accounting for 33.2%, making it the most represented denomination in the study. This was followed by Orthodox Christians (including Catholics and mainline Protestants), who numbered 103, representing 27.0%, and Charismatics with 66 respondents, or 17.3%.

These figures collectively showed that Christianity dominated the religious landscape, comprising over three-quarters of the sample. This reflects national trends in Ghana, where Christianity is the most practiced religion.

Muslims made up 11.3% of the respondents, indicating a notable minority presence. Traditionalists, with 12 respondents (3.1%), and Other faiths, with 31 individuals (8.1%), completed the religious composition.

The dominance of Christian denominations particularly the Pentecostal movement highlighted the influence of religious beliefs on civic and social attitudes, which may extend to how individuals perceive justice, fairness, and institutional independence within the judiciary. The religious makeup provided important context for interpreting the broader perceptions of trust, fairness, and transparency within legal institutions across diverse faith backgrounds.

Table 4.4: Educational Background of Respondents

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No Formal Education	1	0.3%
Primary	12	3.1%
JHS	78	20.4%
SHS	110	28.8%
Tertiary	181	47.4%
Total	382	100%

Source: Field Data, 2024.

From Table 4.4, the study revealed that the majority of respondents had attained at least secondary-level education. Out of a total of 382 participants, 130 individuals

(34.0%) had completed Senior High School, making it the largest educational group. This was followed by 123 respondents (32.2%) who had acquired Tertiary education, indicating that a significant portion of the sample had advanced academic qualifications.

In addition, 91 respondents (23.8%) had attained Junior High School education, and 38 individuals (9.9%) had completed Primary education. Notably, a very small proportion only 1 respondent (0.3%) had no formal education at all.

This distribution suggests that the respondent population was generally well-educated, with over two-thirds having completed at least secondary school. The presence of only one individual without formal education indicates limited participation from those with low or no literacy levels.

These findings suggest that public perceptions of judicial independence in the district were likely shaped by a relatively informed population. Higher educational attainment is often associated with greater awareness of legal systems, the rule of law, and democratic governance. Therefore, it can be inferred that respondents with higher education levels were more likely to understand and critically engage with the concept of judicial independence.

The results emphasize the importance of public education and civic engagement in promoting legal literacy and trust in judicial institutions.

Table 4.5: Marital Status Distribution of Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Married	184	48.17%
Not married	109	28.53%
Cohabiting	42	10.99%
Separated	25	6.54%
Divorced	22	5.76%
Total	382	100%

Source: Field Data, 2024.

Table 4.5 presented the marital status distribution of respondents in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. The findings revealed that a significant proportion of respondents (48.17%) were married. Others were not married (28.53%), cohabiting (10.99%), separated (6.54%), or divorced (5.76%).

The dominance of married individuals indicated that many respondents had engaged with the judiciary through personal or family-related legal matters such as property disputes, inheritance issues, custody battles, or divorce proceedings. These direct encounters with the justice system influenced how respondents evaluated judicial independence within the district.

Those who were separated or divorced also represented individuals who had interacted with legal institutions due to marital dissolution, which may have shaped more critical or experiential perspectives. In contrast, respondents who were not

married or cohabiting had less legal exposure to family law matters, potentially relying on broader public discourse or media coverage to form their perceptions.

Overall, marital status played a critical role in shaping views on judicial independence. Respondents' social and familial responsibilities, along with their varying levels of exposure to the judicial system, contributed to their trust or skepticism regarding the fairness, autonomy, and credibility of judicial processes in the district.

Table 4.6: Employment Status Distribution of Respondents

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Employed	268	70.16%
Unemployed	114	29.84%
Total	382	100%

Source: Field Data, 2024.

Table 4.6 presented the employment status distribution of respondents in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. A majority of the respondents (70.16%) reported being employed, while 29.84% were unemployed.

This distribution highlighted the economic diversity within the district. The high proportion of employed individuals suggested that a substantial segment of the population had access to steady income, which likely facilitated greater interaction with legal institutions, including access to legal representation and the ability to pursue legal recourse when needed.

Conversely, unemployed respondents often faced economic challenges that limited their engagement with the judicial system. Limited financial resources potentially influenced their perceptions of the judiciary, particularly concerning the affordability and accessibility of justice. For these individuals, perceptions of judicial independence were likely shaped by concerns about whether the system adequately served those without economic means.

Overall, the employment status of respondents played a crucial role in shaping their experiences and attitudes toward the judiciary. The disparity in economic standing between employed and unemployed groups underscored broader issues of equity and access within the justice delivery system in the district.

Table 4.7: Income Level Distribution of Respondents

Income Level (Monthly)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below GhC 1000	98	25.65%
GhC 1001 – GhC 3000	162	42.41%
GhC 3001 – GhC 5000	83	21.73%
Above GhC 5000	39	10.21%
Total	382	100%

Source: Field Data, 2024.

Table 4.7 presented the monthly income levels of respondents, providing insight into the economic makeup of the population studied. A majority of respondents (162 individuals, representing 42.41%) earned between GhC 1,001 and GhC 3,000. This group fell within the lower to middle-income category and reflected the dominant

income range in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District, a largely semi-urban and rural area.

Another 98 respondents (25.65%) reported monthly earnings below GhC 1,000, placing them in the low to very low-income bracket. These two groups together accounted for 260 respondents, or 68.06% of the total sample, highlighting a population for whom cost could be a barrier in accessing legal services or navigating the judicial system.

On the higher end, 83 respondents (21.73%) earned between GhC 3,001 and GhC 5,000, while 39 respondents (10.21%) reported incomes above GhC 5,000. These individuals belonged to the upper-middle and high-income categories and were more likely to afford legal representation, court-related costs, and associated legal expenses.

The data suggested that income level had a direct impact on how respondents experienced and perceived the justice system. Those in higher income brackets likely had greater access to legal information and services, while those in lower income groups may have felt marginalized or under-served by the formal justice system.

These findings underscored the need for policies that promote equal access to justice, such as expanding legal aid services, reducing court costs for low-income individuals, and increasing public awareness of legal rights and processes.

4.2.1 Conclusion

The demographic characteristics of respondents suggest that factors such as sex, age, education, and income levels may shape how individuals perceive judicial independence and trust in the judiciary. By analyzing these characteristics, the study provides deeper insights into public engagement with the judiciary in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District.

4.3 Quantitative Findings on Judicial Independence, Trust, and Perceived Challenges

The study examined respondents' perceptions of judicial independence, trust in the judiciary, and perceived challenges in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire, with responses recorded on a Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). The findings provide insights into how the public perceives judicial autonomy, integrity, and the effectiveness of the legal system in their district.

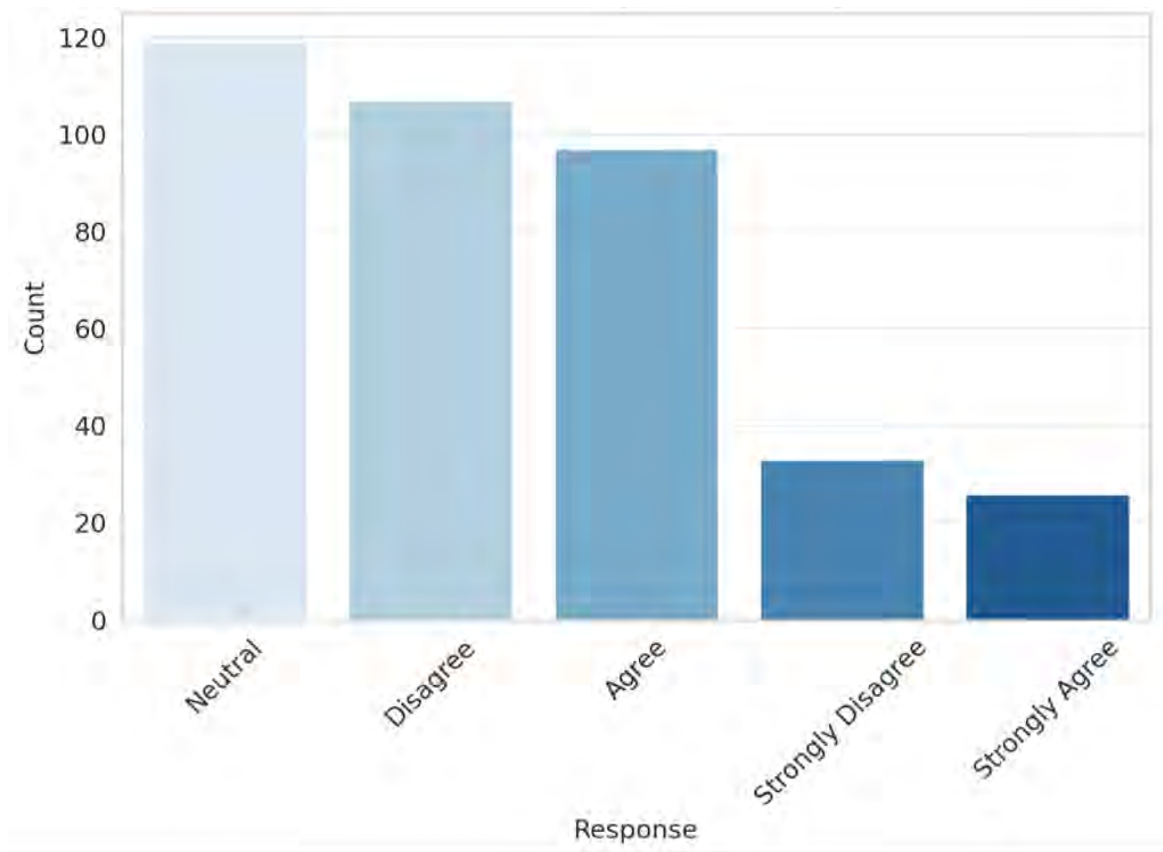


Figure 4.1: Public Awareness of Judicial Independence

Source: Field Data, 2024.

Figure 4.1 shows the assessment of public awareness of judicial independence which reveals a diverse range of responses, highlighting varying levels of understanding among the respondents. A small proportion of the population, 6.8% (26 respondents), strongly agreed that they were aware of judicial independence, while an additional 25.4% (97 respondents) agreed. This suggests that approximately 32.2% of the surveyed individuals have some level of knowledge regarding judicial autonomy, indicating that a segment of the public understands the judiciary's role in maintaining fairness and impartiality.

However, a significant portion of respondents, 31.2% (119 individuals), remained neutral. This neutrality may indicate a lack of exposure to discussions on judicial independence or uncertainty about what it entails. It is possible that these individuals have heard of the concept but do not fully grasp its implications for justice delivery and governance.

On the other hand, a notable 28.0% (107 respondents) disagreed that they were aware of judicial independence, while 8.6% (33 respondents) strongly disagreed. This means that 36.6% of the surveyed individuals more than one-third of the population do not consider themselves knowledgeable about judicial independence. Such a high percentage suggests a significant gap in legal awareness and public education regarding the judiciary's role in society.

The findings highlight the need for increased legal literacy campaigns and public sensitization efforts. The high percentage of neutral and negative responses suggests that discussions on judicial independence may not be a common topic in public discourse, which could lead to misconceptions and misinformation. A lack of awareness can contribute to low trust in the judiciary, as individuals who do not understand its role may be more susceptible to perceptions of bias, corruption, or political interference.

To address this, stakeholders such as government agencies, civil society organizations, and legal institutions should implement targeted educational programs. These

programs should focus on simplifying legal concepts, engaging communities in discussions about the judiciary, and ensuring that the public understands the importance of an independent judicial system. Media platforms, including radio, television, and social media, can also play a crucial role in disseminating information on judicial independence, particularly in rural areas where access to legal education is limited.

In conclusion, the study's findings underscore a critical need for improved legal education and awareness campaigns. While a little over one-third (32.2%) of the respondents are aware of judicial independence, the large proportion of individuals who are either neutral or unaware suggests that more efforts are required to bridge the knowledge gap. Enhancing public understanding of judicial independence is essential in fostering trust in the legal system and ensuring active civic engagement in matters of justice and governance.

The finding that public awareness of judicial independence remains low in the district is consistent with previous studies in Ghana which indicate limited civic knowledge about constitutional structures among citizens. Similar findings have been reported in national-level surveys that demonstrate gaps in public understanding of judicial processes and institutional autonomy. However, the relatively low awareness levels observed in the district suggest that these knowledge gaps may be more pronounced at the local level, possibly due to limited access to civic education programmes and reduced exposure to institutional communication.

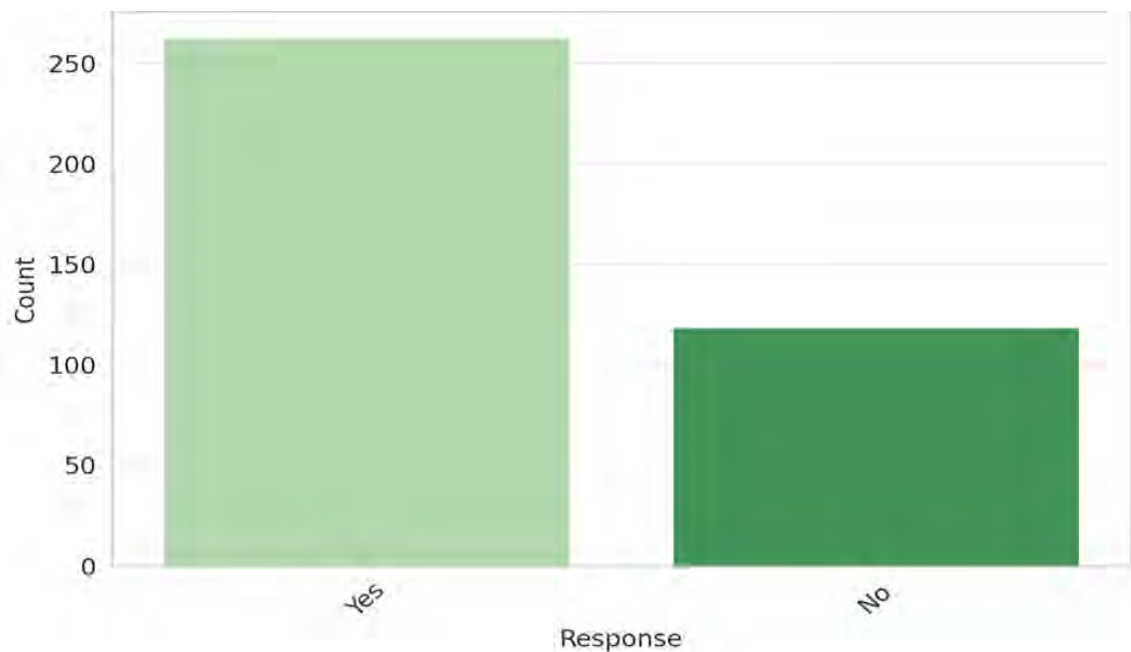


Figure 4.2: Perceptions of Judicial Independence

Source: Field Data, 2024.

Respondents were asked whether they believed that judicial independence exists in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. From figure 4.2, the findings indicate that the majority of respondents, over 250 (68.8%), believe the judiciary operates independently, while approximately 120 (31.2%) respondents disagreed. This suggests that while a significant proportion of the population trusts in the autonomy of the judiciary, a notable segment remains skeptical.

The high number of respondents affirming judicial independence may reflect confidence in the legal system's ability to function without undue influence from external forces, such as political authorities or interest groups. This perspective could be influenced by recent judicial reforms, public trust in judicial officials, or personal experiences with the legal system. However, the substantial minority who disagree

indicates that concerns about political interference, corruption, or case outcomes perceived as biased still persist among some members of the community.

This skepticism is particularly important because perceptions of judicial independence can significantly influence public confidence in legal institutions, willingness to seek legal redress, and overall trust in the rule of law. If individuals perceive the judiciary as compromised, they may be less likely to rely on legal mechanisms for dispute resolution, potentially leading to an increase in informal or extrajudicial means of settling conflicts.

The diagram visually illustrates this divide, with a clear majority expressing confidence in judicial independence while a significant minority remains unconvinced. These findings highlight the need for continued judicial transparency, stronger oversight mechanisms, and public education on judicial processes to further strengthen trust in the judiciary. Efforts such as community engagement programs, anti-corruption initiatives, and ensuring merit-based judicial appointments could help address concerns and improve public perception of judicial independence in the district.

The significant relationship between income level and perceptions of judicial independence aligns with empirical literature suggesting that socio-economic status influences institutional trust. Studies conducted in other African contexts have similarly found that economically disadvantaged groups tend to express lower trust in

formal institutions due to perceived barriers to access and fairness. However, while many national studies focus primarily on political influence and corruption, this study highlights income disparities as a particularly salient factor at the district level, thereby adding nuance to existing scholarship.

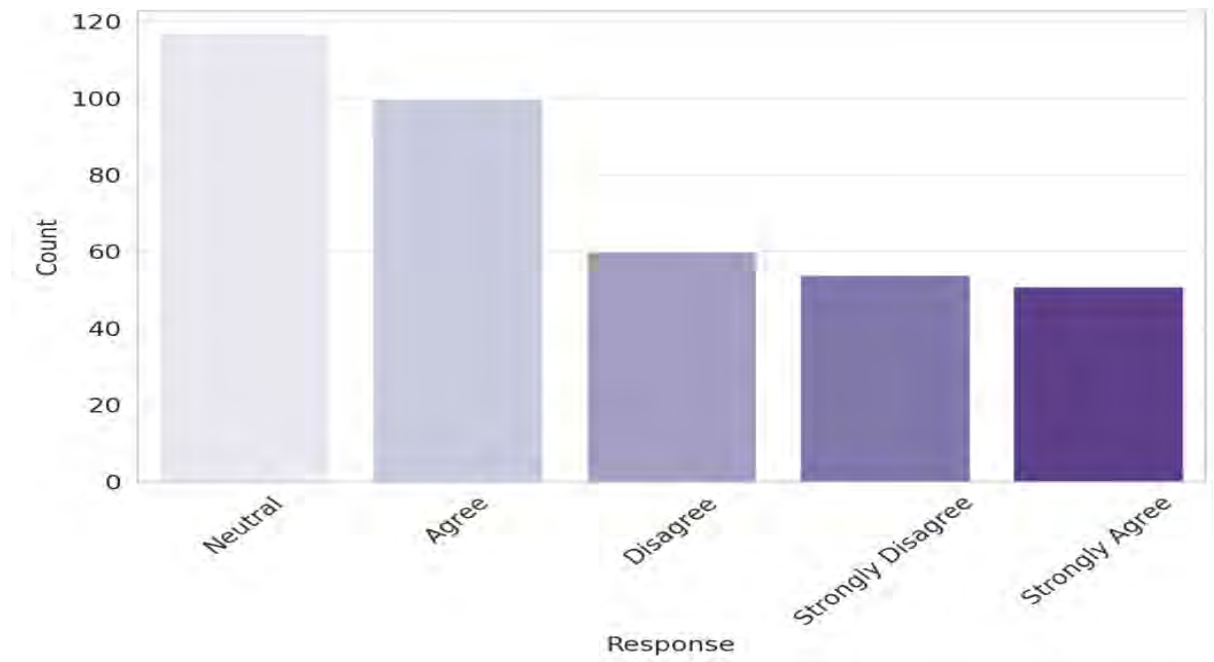


Figure 4.3: Trust in the Judiciary

Source: Field Data, 2024.

The study examined the level of public trust in the judiciary within the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District, uncovering a wide spectrum of perceptions among respondents. Figure 4.3 shows that, a modest 5.8% (22 respondents) strongly agreed that they trust the judiciary, while 26.2% (100 respondents) agreed, bringing the total share of respondents expressing trust to 32.0%. This indicates that nearly one-third of the sampled population maintain a positive outlook on the integrity and effectiveness of the judicial system in the district.

However, the largest portion of respondents, 30.6% (117 individuals), selected a neutral position, reflecting uncertainty or indecision about their trust in the judiciary. This neutrality could stem from limited direct interaction with the courts, insufficient public education about the judiciary's role, or mixed experiences and information received through social or media channels. The neutral stance also points to a segment of the population that could be swayed positively or negatively depending on future reforms or developments in the justice sector.

On the other end, 23.0% (88 respondents) disagreed, and 14.4% (55 respondents) strongly disagreed that they trusted the judiciary, totaling 143 individuals (37.4%) who lack trust in the institution. This is a significant proportion, and it raises concerns about perceived systemic issues within the judicial system. Such mistrust may be rooted in experiences of prolonged case processing times, perceived or real instances of corruption, political interference, or lack of transparency in judicial decisions.

The findings reveal that public trust in the judiciary is not as solid as one might hope in a democratic setting that relies heavily on the integrity and independence of its legal system. For the judiciary to gain the confidence of the people, efforts must be made to address these concerns. This includes speeding up court processes, ensuring visible and consistent anti-corruption enforcement, educating the public about judicial procedures and standards, and enhancing the transparency of judicial appointments and decision-making processes.

Moreover, the large share of neutral respondents presents an opportunity. These individuals could potentially develop a higher level of trust in the judiciary if they witness reforms that increase transparency, fairness, and efficiency. Engaging the public in legal literacy programs and community-based justice education initiatives could also help shift perceptions positively.

In conclusion, while a third of respondents express trust in the judiciary, an even greater number are either doubtful or disillusioned. This signals an urgent need for judicial reforms and proactive public engagement strategies to build and maintain trust. By addressing the concerns raised and improving the visibility of judicial accountability, stakeholders can work toward strengthening confidence in the legal system, which is crucial for upholding the rule of law and sustaining democratic governance.

The identification of political pressure, corruption, case delays, and resource constraints as major challenges mirrors findings from both Ghanaian and international studies reviewed in Chapter Two. Prior research consistently indicates that perceived political interference and inefficiency undermine institutional legitimacy. Nonetheless, this study reveals how these broader structural concerns are experienced concretely within a local district context, where delays and informal settlements appear to directly shape day-to-day perceptions of fairness and autonomy.

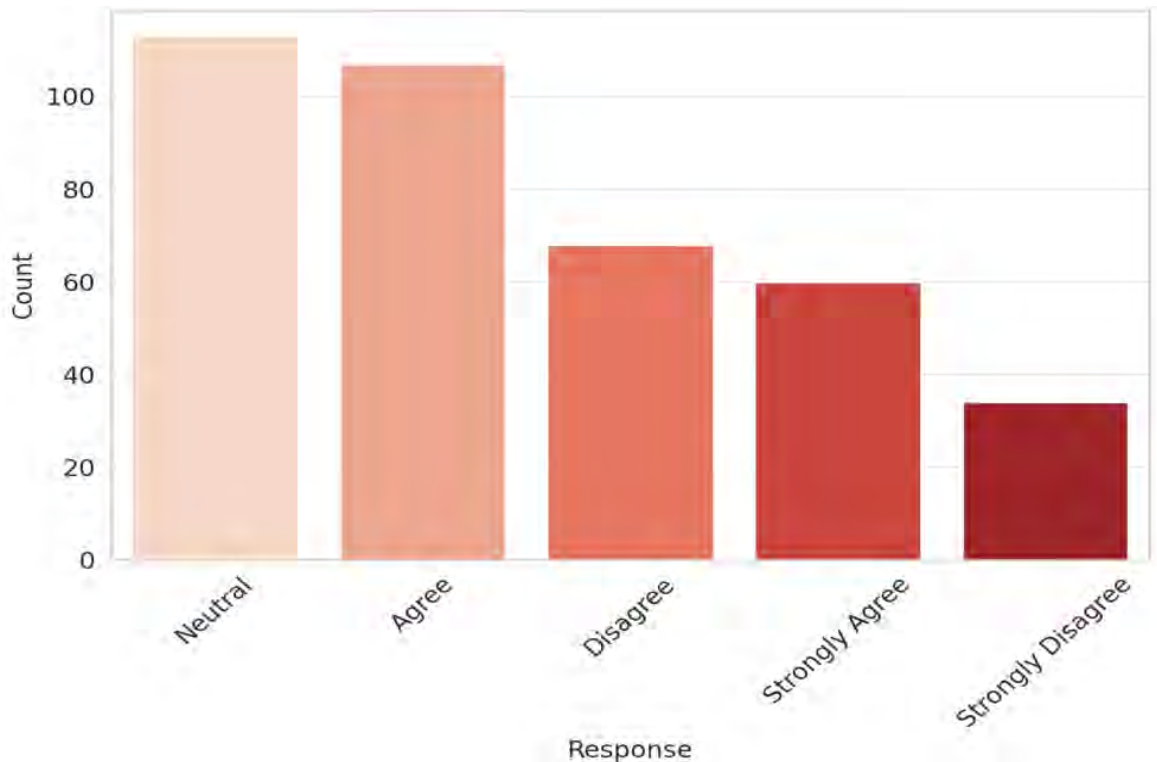


Figure 4.4: Perceived Challenges to Judicial Independence

Source: Field Data, 2024.

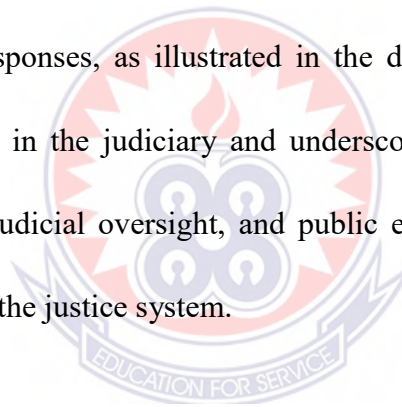
The study explored perceived challenges that threaten judicial independence in the district, with a focus on corruption within the judiciary. Figure 4.4 indicate that the highest number of respondents (over 110) remained neutral, suggesting a significant level of uncertainty regarding the extent of corruption in the judiciary.

Similarly, a large portion (over 100 respondents) agreed that corruption influences judicial decisions, reinforcing public concerns about the integrity of legal processes. Additionally, around 65 respondents disagreed, **while** about 60 respondents strongly agreed with the perception of corruption in the judiciary. Meanwhile, approximately

30 respondents strongly disagreed, indicating that a minority of participants believe corruption does not significantly affect judicial rulings.

These findings suggest that while there is notable concern about corruption, a considerable number of people remain unsure about its influence on legal outcomes. Public skepticism or lack of awareness about judicial transparency may contribute to this neutrality. The presence of both agreement and disagreement highlights a divided perception, indicating the need for further public engagement on judicial accountability and transparency.

The distribution of responses, as illustrated in the diagram, visually represents the varying levels of trust in the judiciary and underscores the need for stronger anti-corruption measures, judicial oversight, and public education on legal processes to enhance confidence in the justice system.



The finding that perceptions of judicial independence influence acceptance of court decisions strongly supports Social Trust Theory and aligns with existing empirical research demonstrating that trust in institutions affects compliance with legal outcomes. Similar conclusions have been reached in studies conducted across Africa and other democratic systems. However, by examining this relationship at a district level, the study provides localized empirical evidence that strengthens and contextualizes broader theoretical claims about institutional legitimacy and public trust.

4.3.1 Distinction Between judicial Independence and Access to Justice

Although judicial accessibility and judicial independence are conceptually distinct, the findings of this study indicate that public perception often links the two. For many respondents, difficulties in accessing justice such as high legal costs and procedural delays are interpreted as signs of systemic bias or unequal treatment, thereby indirectly affecting perceptions of independence. While accessibility barriers do not necessarily indicate executive interference or compromised judicial autonomy, they shape experiential trust in the institution. In this sense, accessibility functions as a mediating factor influencing how independence is perceived, even if it is not a direct determinant of structural autonomy. Recognizing this distinction strengthens the analytical precision of the study while preserving the integrity of its conceptual focus.

4.4 Inferential Statistical Analysis

Table 4.8: Chi-Square Test Results for Demographic Factors and Perceptions of Judicial Independence

Demographic Factor	Chi-Square Value (χ^2)	p-value	Interpretation
Age	3.27	0.347	Not Significant. Age does not influence belief in judicial independence.
Education	5.87	0.084	Borderline Significant. Higher education may slightly influence belief in judicial independence.
Employment Status	4.32	0.229	Not Significant. Employment status does not affect perceptions of judicial independence.
Income Level	15.62	0.001	Significant. Income level strongly influences perceptions of judicial independence.
Sex	1.54	0.46	Not Significant. Sex does not significantly influence public perception of judicial independence.

Source: Field Data, 2024.

The chi-square test results in Table 4.8 highlight how different demographic factors influence public perceptions of judicial independence. To determine whether demographic factors influence perceptions of judicial independence, chi-square tests were conducted. The results indicate the following key findings:

The relationship between age and belief in judicial independence was not statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.347. This suggests that individuals across different age groups hold similar views regarding judicial autonomy.

The relationship between education and belief in judicial independence was borderline significant, with a p-value of 0.084. This implies that education may slightly influence perceptions of judicial independence, as individuals with higher education may have a better understanding of judicial processes.

The analysis found no significant association between employment status and belief in judicial independence, as indicated by a p-value of 0.229. This suggests that both employed and unemployed individuals share similar views on whether the judiciary operates independently.

A statistically significant relationship was found between income level and belief in judicial independence, with a p-value of 0.001. This indicates that individuals with different income levels perceive judicial independence differently. People in lower-income brackets may feel disadvantaged in the legal system, leading to a perception that judicial decisions are influenced by financial status or external interests.

The chi-square test results are presented in Table 4.4.1, which summarizes the relationships between demographic characteristics and belief in judicial independence.

The findings suggest that while age, education, and employment do not strongly influence perceptions, income level plays a critical role in shaping public opinion on judicial autonomy.

Age and Judicial Independence ($p = 0.347$)

The results showed no significant relationship between age and belief in judicial independence. This suggests that views on judicial autonomy remain relatively consistent across different age groups, indicating that generational differences do not shape how individuals perceive the judiciary's independence.

Education and Judicial Independence ($p = 0.084$)

The borderline significance of education suggests that individuals with higher levels of education may have a slightly better understanding of judicial processes, which could influence their perceptions of judicial independence. However, the relationship is not strong enough to make a conclusive claim.

Employment Status and Judicial Independence ($p = 0.229$)

The analysis found no significant association between employment status and belief in judicial independence. This implies that both employed and unemployed individuals perceive judicial autonomy in similar ways, suggesting that economic participation alone does not alter trust in the judiciary.

Income Level and Judicial Independence ($p = 0.001$)

The significant relationship between income level and belief in judicial independence

indicates that financial status plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion. Lower-income individuals may feel excluded from fair legal processes, leading to skepticism about the judiciary's impartiality. This aligns with Transparency International (2017), which found that economic disparities influence public confidence in judicial systems.

Sex and Judicial Independence ($p = 0.46$)

The results showed that sex does not have a statistically significant influence on public perception of judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District ($p > 0.05$). The results indicated that both male and female respondents expressed similar levels of awareness and trust in the judiciary. This implies that sex is not a determining factor in shaping how people perceive the independence of the courts. Rather, other variables such as income level, educational background, or access to legal services may have a greater influence.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that while factors like age, education, employment status and sex do not strongly impact perceptions of judicial independence, income level is a critical determinant. Lower-income groups may perceive the judiciary as biased in favor of wealthier individuals, raising concerns about fairness and accessibility in the legal system.

4.4.0 Qualitative Findings from Interview Transcripts

The qualitative component of this study involved interviews with judicial personnel in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District to gain deeper insights into public awareness, trust in the judiciary, challenges to judicial independence, and the influence of judicial independence on legal outcomes. Thematic analysis was employed to identify

recurring patterns in the responses. The key themes that emerged include awareness and understanding of judicial independence, trust in the judiciary, challenges to judicial independence, and the influence of judicial independence on legal outcomes. These themes are interconnected, as illustrated in Figure 12, 13, 14, and 15 which provides thematic maps of the qualitative findings.

4.4.1 Awareness and Understanding of Judicial Independence

The interviews revealed that public awareness of judicial independence is generally low in the district. Several respondents highlighted that many people lack a clear understanding of the judiciary's role and the extent of its independence. One judicial officer explained that:

“Most individuals in the district believe that judges take direct orders from politicians or other influential figures, leading to misconceptions about the legal system.” (JO7)

Another interviewee pointed out that:

“The lack of public education on judicial independence has contributed to misinformation. Some community members assume that judges can be influenced to rule in favour of those with wealth or political connections, even when legal procedures are followed. The low level of awareness affects public confidence in the judiciary, as some people believe that court decisions are predetermined rather than based on evidence and legal principles.” (JO3)

The findings suggest that enhancing public education on the judiciary's independence could improve public perceptions and trust. Judicial outreach programs, legal literacy campaigns, and community engagement initiatives may help bridge the knowledge gap.

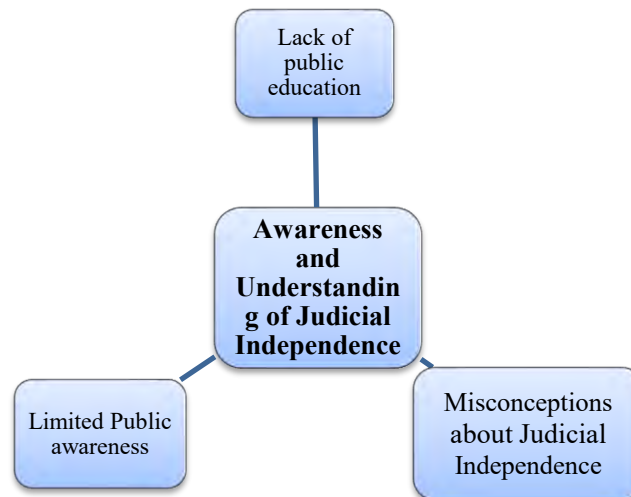


Figure 4.5: Factors Influencing Awareness and Understanding of Judicial Independence

Source: Field Data, 2024.

The figure 4.5 above highlights the main factors contributing to the low level of public awareness and understanding of judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. Interviews with respondents revealed that misconceptions about the judiciary are widespread, largely due to inadequate public education and limited access to accurate legal information.

A key concern expressed by both judicial officers and community members was the belief that judges take direct instructions from politicians or influential figures. This misconception has led to a perception that court rulings can be influenced by external interests, including wealth and political power, regardless of legal procedures.

The lack of structured public education on the judiciary's role and its independent nature has further deepened these misunderstandings. As a result, confidence in the

judicial system remains fragile, with some individuals assuming that legal outcomes are predetermined rather than based on objective legal reasoning.

Addressing this issue requires the implementation of targeted legal literacy campaigns, judicial outreach programs, and broader community engagement efforts. These initiatives could play a critical role in bridging the knowledge gap and fostering greater trust in the judicial system.

In conclusion, these are the three main contributors to the low level of public awareness of judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District: persistent misconceptions about the judiciary's operations, insufficient public legal education, and restricted access to accurate judicial information. These interconnected challenges have created a climate of misunderstanding and skepticism, where many individuals doubt the impartiality of court decisions and the autonomy of judges. Overcoming these obstacles will require deliberate efforts such as sustained civic education campaigns, increased public engagement by the judiciary, and targeted outreach initiatives to foster informed understanding and restore public confidence in the justice system.

4.4.2 Trust in the Judiciary

The interviews revealed mixed levels of trust in the judiciary among the local population. While some respondents expressed confidence in the judicial system, others raised concerns about political interference, corruption, and delays in case

proceedings. One judicial officer noted that:

“People tend to trust the judiciary when rulings align with their expectations but question its independence when outcomes are unfavorable to them.” (JO4)

A recurring concern was the public perception that judges are politically affiliated with ruling governments. One respondent explained that:

“Because the Chief Justice is appointed by the President, some people assume that the judiciary automatically serves the interests of the government. This perception, even if unfounded, reduces trust in the courts and creates skepticism about their impartiality.” (JO1)

Additionally, some respondents emphasized that:

“Trust in the judiciary is influenced by economic factors. Wealthier individuals who can afford legal representation tend to have more confidence in the system, whereas lower-income individuals may feel disadvantaged due to the high cost of legal services.” (JO5)

Addressing financial barriers to justice could help improve public trust in the judiciary.”

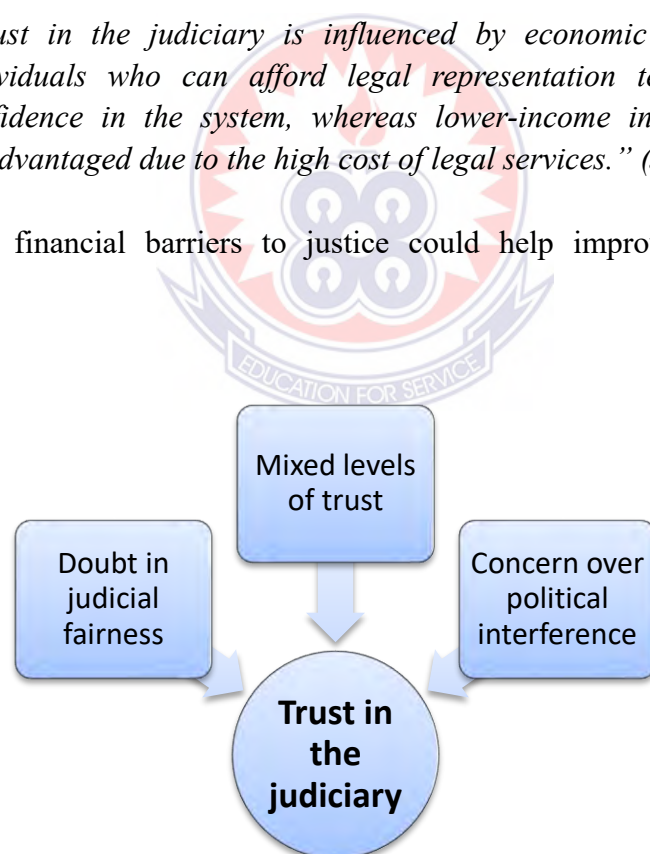


Figure 4.6: Factors Influencing Trust in the Judiciary

Source: Field Data, 2024.

The diagram above presents the major themes that emerged from interviews regarding public trust in the judiciary within the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. At the core of the illustration is “Trust in the Judiciary,” which is shaped by three interrelated factors.

Firstly, respondents expressed mixed levels of trust. While some individuals maintained confidence in the judicial system, others were skeptical, particularly when court rulings did not align with their expectations. This conditional trust appeared to depend on personal experiences or perceived fairness of outcomes.

Secondly, concerns over political interference were prominent. Several participants highlighted that the appointment of judicial leaders, especially the Chief Justice, by the President, created a perception that the judiciary served political interests. This belief undermined perceptions of the judiciary’s independence and impartiality.

Lastly, there were doubts about judicial fairness, particularly in relation to economic inequality. Many respondents felt that wealthier individuals had better access to legal services and, as a result, were more likely to receive favorable outcomes. This perception led to feelings of disadvantage and exclusion among lower-income groups.

Collectively, these three main themes illustrate that public trust in the judiciary is influenced not only by institutional performance but also by socio-political and economic perceptions. Addressing these issues through increased transparency, public

legal education, and improved access to affordable legal services may help rebuild and strengthen trust in the judicial system.

4.4.3 Challenges to Judicial Independence

The qualitative findings highlighted multiple challenges that threaten judicial independence in the district. The most frequently mentioned issues included political pressure, corruption, out-of-court settlements, and delays in court proceedings.

Several respondents described political interference as a major threat to judicial independence. One judicial officer explained:

“That in some cases, local political figures attempt to influence court decisions, especially in cases involving government officials or influential community members. Although judges strive to maintain neutrality, external pressure can sometimes undermine their autonomy.” (JO2)

Corruption was another widely discussed issue. Some respondents acknowledged that a few members of the judiciary have engaged in corrupt practices, which has damaged public confidence. One interviewee cited a case:

“A judge was dismissed due to misconduct, emphasizing the importance of holding judicial officers accountable.” (JO6)

Another challenge highlighted in the interviews was the prevalence of out-of-court settlements, particularly in cases involving family disputes or chieftaincy matters. One respondent explained that:

“Some community leaders prefer to resolve disputes outside the formal court system to maintain family harmony and prevent divisions. While this practice may be beneficial in some cases, it reduces the public’s reliance on the judiciary and creates the perception that legal rulings can be bypassed.” (JO3)

Delays in court proceedings were also identified as a major issue. Some respondents pointed out that:

“Case backlogs and resource constraints often prolong legal processes, making it difficult for individuals to obtain timely justice.”(JO4)

Improving judicial efficiency by increasing staffing and modernizing court processes could help address this challenge.

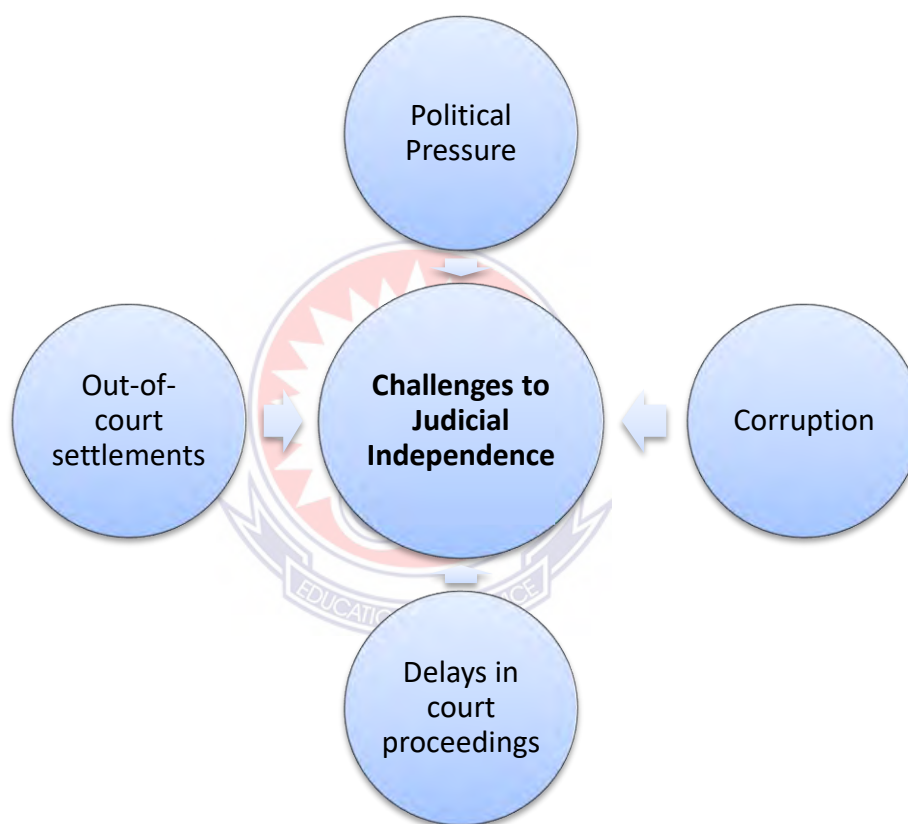


Figure 4.7: Challenges to Judicial Independence

Source: Field Data, 2024.

The diagram above (Figure 4.7) presents the major challenges to judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District, as revealed through

qualitative interviews. Four key themes emerged: political pressure, corruption, out-of-court settlements, and delays in court proceedings.

Political pressure was consistently identified as a significant threat. Respondents indicated that local political actors occasionally attempted to influence judicial decisions, particularly in cases involving government officials or influential community members. Such actions were seen to compromise the neutrality of judges and undermine public trust in the legal system.

Corruption within the judiciary was another area of concern. Although not widespread, instances of misconduct among judicial officers had been observed. Respondents pointed to cases where judges were dismissed for unethical behavior, emphasizing the need for greater accountability and integrity in the system.

Out-of-court settlements were noted as a common alternative to formal legal processes, especially in family-related and chieftaincy disputes. While such informal resolutions may help maintain social cohesion, they also diminish public reliance on the formal judiciary and create a perception that legal outcomes can be circumvented.

Delays in court proceedings were highlighted as a persistent issue. Respondents cited case backlogs, limited staffing, and inadequate resources as contributing factors. These delays not only hinder access to timely justice but also discourage individuals from pursuing legal redress through the formal system.

In summary, these four main challenges reflect both systemic and socio-cultural factors that affect the independence and effectiveness of the judiciary. Addressing them will require targeted reforms, improved resource allocation, and public sensitization on the importance of an independent judiciary.

4.4.4 Influence of Judicial Independence on Legal Outcomes

The interviews also explored how perceptions of judicial independence influence public views on legal outcomes. Many respondents agreed that when people perceive the judiciary as independent, they are more likely to accept court rulings as fair and just. However, when judicial independence is questioned, people tend to view legal decisions with skepticism and may refuse to comply with court orders.

One respondent said:

“I recalled a case between local chiefs and the district assembly, where the court had to mediate between traditional authorities and government representatives. The case involved a dispute over a refuse dump, and despite the court’s efforts to ensure fairness, some community members still believed that political influence played a role in the ruling.” (JO5)

Another interviewee emphasized that:

“Judicial independence is essential for maintaining social stability, as it helps prevent disputes from escalating into conflicts. When people trust the judiciary, they are more likely to seek legal solutions rather than resorting to mob justice or informal dispute resolution mechanisms.” (JO2)

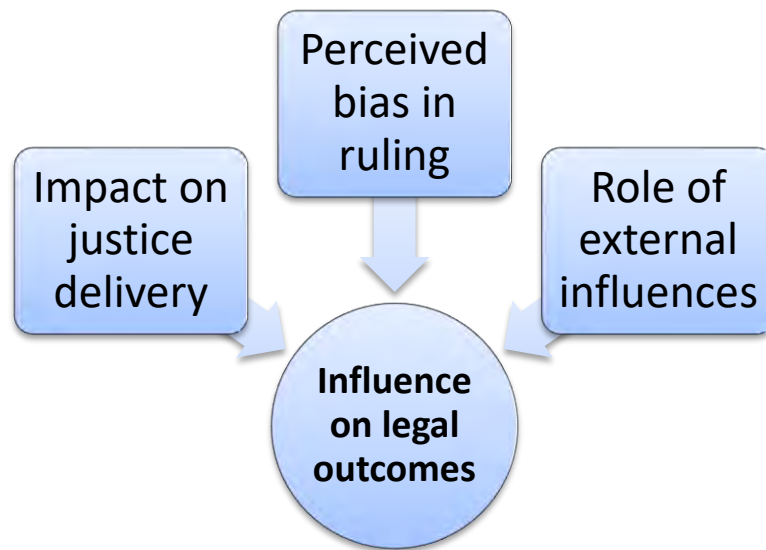


Figure 4.8: Influence of Judicial Independence on Legal Outcomes

Source: Field Data, 2024.

The figure 4.8 presents three major themes that emerged from the qualitative interviews, illustrating how public perceptions of judicial independence affect the acceptance of legal decisions. At the core of the diagram is the central idea that judicial independence directly shapes legal outcomes, both in terms of how they are perceived and how they are implemented within society.

One of the most prominent themes is the *role of external influences*. Many respondents noted that political pressure and the involvement of powerful individuals often compromise judicial autonomy. Instances were cited where local political figures attempted to sway court decisions, particularly in cases involving government officials or high-ranking community members. Even when the judiciary made efforts to remain neutral, public suspicion lingered, suggesting that the perception of undue influence can significantly affect the legitimacy of judicial decisions.

Another important theme is the *impact on justice delivery*. Delays in court processes, limited resources, and the increasing tendency to resolve disputes outside the formal legal system were frequently mentioned as challenges. Respondents explained that in cases such as family or chieftaincy disputes, community leaders sometimes preferred informal mediation to avoid social tensions. While this might help preserve harmony, it also reduces public reliance on the judiciary and contributes to the belief that formal legal mechanisms can be sidestepped.

The third theme involves perceived bias in rulings. Several participants expressed doubts about the impartiality of court outcomes, especially in matters where there were clear economic or political disparities between the parties involved. These perceptions contribute to a broader sense of injustice and discourage individuals from fully engaging with the legal system.

Overall, the findings underscore that public trust in the judiciary is intricately linked to its perceived independence. When people believe that the judiciary operates free from external interference and delivers fair and timely decisions, they are more likely to respect and comply with legal rulings. Conversely, when judicial independence is questioned, skepticism and resistance tend to follow. Therefore, reinforcing judicial autonomy, enhancing efficiency in legal processes, and addressing perceived biases are essential steps toward improving legal outcomes and maintaining public confidence in the justice system.

4.5 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provides a deeper understanding of public perception of judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. The quantitative data revealed that 68.8 percent of respondents believe that judicial independence exists, but the qualitative findings suggest that many individuals do not fully understand the concept or how the judiciary operates. The 31.2 percent who disagreed with the existence of judicial independence may hold this view due to misconceptions, lack of public education, or negative experiences with the legal system.

Public trust in the judiciary, as reflected in the survey results, was mixed, with only 26.2 percent of respondents expressing confidence in the courts. The qualitative interviews provided further context, indicating that concerns over political influence, corruption, and economic disparities contribute to skepticism.

The quantitative analysis also revealed a significant relationship between income level and belief in judicial independence, with lower-income individuals being more likely to doubt judicial autonomy. The qualitative findings support this, as several interviewees noted that the cost of legal services and access to quality representation influence public perceptions of fairness.

Similarly, concerns about corruption and political interference, which were highlighted in the survey, were strongly supported by the qualitative data. Judicial personnel confirmed that attempts to influence court decisions do occur, reinforcing

the survey results, which showed that 43.7 percent of respondents believe corruption affects judicial rulings.

4.6 Discussion of Findings in Relation to Existing Literature

The findings of this study provide crucial insights into public perceptions of judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District, aligning with and, in some cases, diverging from previous studies.

4.6.1 Public Awareness of Judicial Independence

The study found that public awareness of judicial independence was relatively low, with only 25.4% of respondents indicating familiarity with the concept. But what does this low awareness signify? At its core, it reflects a gap in civic education and public engagement, which ultimately affects how citizens perceive and interact with the judiciary.

This finding aligns with Ofori's (2019) study in Ghana, which attributed low public awareness of judicial independence to a lack of legal education. When citizens are not adequately informed about how the judiciary functions, its role in upholding democracy, and the mechanisms ensuring its independence, they are more likely to develop misconceptions about its impartiality and effectiveness.

Similarly, Mwangi (2018) found a comparable trend in Kenya, where limited civic education led many citizens to perceive the judiciary as an extension of the executive rather than as an autonomous institution. In both Ghana and Kenya, this lack of

awareness creates a vulnerability to political rhetoric and misinformation, making the judiciary appear less independent than it may actually be.

However, the findings contrast with Grootelaars and van den Bos (2022), who found that in European democracies, higher levels of judicial transparency correlate with greater public awareness. This divergence suggests that judicial institutions in Ghana may not be engaging with the public as effectively as their European counterparts.

Unlike in many European countries, where judicial decisions and court processes are widely accessible through media, public reports, and digital platforms, Ghana's judiciary may still be perceived as an elite institution, detached from ordinary citizens. This lack of engagement limits public understanding and reinforces skepticism about judicial independence.

If public awareness of judicial independence remains low, it weakens the judiciary's legitimacy because citizens who do not understand the judiciary's role are more susceptible to believing that it is politically controlled or corrupt. This, in turn, reduces public trust and confidence in legal institutions.

To address this issue, judicial institutions in Ghana must adopt stronger public engagement mechanisms, such as: expanding civic education programs in schools and communities, enhancing judicial transparency through regular public communication and accessible case reporting and leveraging media platforms to demystify legal processes and highlight judicial independence.

Without these efforts, judicial independence will remain a concept known only in legal circles, rather than a practical reality understood and valued by the general public.

4.6.2 Perceptions of Judicial Independence

The study revealed that 68.8% of respondents believe in judicial independence, while 31.2% expressed skepticism, citing concerns about political interference and corruption. At first glance, this majority perception might suggest that judicial independence is largely upheld in Ghana. However, the key issue is not the majority who believe in judicial independence but the significant minority—nearly one-third of the population who do not. This skepticism is crucial because judicial independence is meant to be an absolute principle; ideally, the entire population should have confidence in it. The fact that 31.2% do not believe in judicial independence suggests that a considerable portion of Ghanaians have experienced or perceived the judicial system as biased, ineffective, or subject to external influence.

This aligns with Ayee's (2016) findings, which indicate that political affiliations and high-profile cases significantly shape public perceptions of judicial autonomy in Ghana. Similarly, Ramseyer and Rasmusen (2010) argue that public trust in judicial independence is often linked to how judges are appointed, a concern that was echoed in the qualitative interviews in this study. Several respondents noted that judicial appointments, particularly at higher levels, are often viewed as politically motivated, raising doubts about whether judges can make rulings free from external pressure.

Nevertheless, the study's findings contradict Hayo and Voigt's (2023) cross-country analysis, which demonstrated that judicial independence tends to be perceived more positively in nations where judges enjoy strong financial and institutional autonomy. Ghana's judiciary, while legally independent, faces persistent challenges such as political influence, corruption, and resource constraints, which undermine full public confidence in its autonomy. The study's mixed perceptions suggest that judicial independence in Ghana exists more as a legal principle than an undisputed reality, with external factors whether real or perceived continuing to shape public trust.

Another important insight from the study is that those who have had direct experiences with the judiciary are more likely to question its independence, while those who have never engaged with the legal system tend to believe in it. This suggests that distrust in judicial independence often stems from personal encounters with the justice system, where individuals or their relatives feel they have been denied justice, faced delays, or encountered biased rulings. This reinforces the argument that while judicial independence may be constitutionally upheld, its practical implementation remains uneven, necessitating reforms to enhance transparency, accountability, and public trust in the judiciary.

4.6.3 Trust in the Judiciary

The study exposes a critical paradox: while 68.8% of respondents believe in judicial independence, only 26.2% trust the judiciary. This significant gap suggests that judicial independence, though acknowledged as a constitutional principle, is not

perceived as fully operational in practice. The public may recognize that the judiciary is meant to function independently, but their lived experiences suggest otherwise. This reinforces the idea that judicial independence in Ghana is largely formalistic rather than substantive it exists in law but is not fully reflected in the delivery of justice.

This skepticism aligns with Global Integrity's (2017) report, which noted that Ghana's judiciary is moderately independent, but public trust fluctuates based on perceptions of political neutrality. Suleiman (2017) also found that in Nigeria, citizens were more likely to distrust the judiciary when they perceived judicial decisions as influenced by political or economic actors. In Ghana, this study's findings similarly indicate that perceived political interference and corruption undermine confidence in judicial outcomes. Even when judicial independence is constitutionally protected, the mere perception of bias or external influence is enough to erode trust.

However, these findings challenge Tyler's (2006) research in the United States, which argues that procedural fairness enhances trust in the judiciary, regardless of case outcomes. Tyler's study suggests that as long as court processes are transparent, people will trust the judiciary even when rulings do not favor them. Yet, in Ghana, transparency appears insufficient to build trust, as many respondents remain neutral or distrustful of the judiciary despite believing in its independence. This may indicate that in contexts like Ghana, public trust in the judiciary is shaped not only by legal procedures but also by broader socio-political realities, such as corruption, delays in justice delivery, and elite influence.

The contradiction between belief in judicial independence and lack of trust in the judiciary suggests a deeper crisis of legitimacy. It is possible that those who have never interacted with the judicial system assume it is independent, while those who have engaged with the courts whether as litigants, witnesses, or observers are more likely to distrust it due to perceived injustices or inefficiencies. The neutrality of 30.6% of respondents further indicates that many people are uncertain about whether the judiciary truly functions independently, suggesting a lack of visible accountability and transparency.

To bridge this gap, judicial independence must go beyond legal guarantees and be demonstrated through consistent impartial rulings, reduced political interference, and increased transparency in court processes. Without these reforms, the public may continue to view judicial independence as a mere theoretical construct, rather than a functional reality that guarantees fair justice for all.

4.6.4 Perceived Challenges to Judicial Independence

The study identified political interference, corruption, out-of-court settlements, and delays in court proceedings as major threats to judicial independence. But why do these factors matter? Their significance lies in the fact that they do not just challenge the theoretical notion of judicial independence; they actively compromise its practical application, shaping public perception and trust in the judiciary.

Political interference, in this context, refers to situations where power holders or influential figures manipulate judicial processes to secure favorable outcomes. This

aligns with Owusu-Dapaa's (2011) analysis of Ghana's 1992 Constitution, which despite guaranteeing judicial independence contains provisions that allow the executive branch to exert influence over judicial appointments. This means that judicial independence is constitutionally protected but institutionally vulnerable.

The qualitative findings of this study reinforce this issue, as judicial personnel acknowledged that political pressure occasionally influences judicial outcomes, particularly in high-profile cases. Similarly, Zikria and Roofi (2020) found that in South Asia, political influence over judicial appointments and financial dependence on the executive limited the autonomy of judges, making it difficult for them to make rulings based purely on legal merit.

Corruption within the judiciary does not only refer to direct bribery; it encompasses any action that distorts judicial impartiality, including ethnic favoritism, political affiliations, and personal relationships influencing case rulings. When judges are seen as susceptible to external influences, the perception of judicial independence is eroded even if the legal framework remains intact.

This study found that corruption was a key public concern, reinforcing earlier findings by Cameron (2010) in South Africa, which indicated that perceptions of corruption weaken public trust in the judiciary. Even if the judiciary operates independently on paper, the public's belief that judges may be swayed by political figures, money, or personal ties undermines confidence in judicial fairness.

Out-of-court settlements and delays in court proceedings further weaken public trust

in the judiciary by making the justice system seem either ineffective or biased. When cases are settled outside the courtroom, it often suggests that parties lack confidence in the courts to deliver fair and timely justice.

Moreover, delays in legal proceedings whether due to inefficiencies, bureaucratic hurdles, or deliberate stalling create the perception that the judiciary serves the interests of the powerful rather than ordinary citizens. This aligns with Cameron's (2010) findings in South Africa, which showed that judicial efficiency is a key determinant of public trust. If justice is delayed, it is often seen as justice denied, and over time, these inefficiencies erode the perceived independence of the judiciary.

While judicial independence is enshrined in Ghana's legal framework, its practical effectiveness is compromised when political interference, corruption, and inefficiency shape judicial outcomes. This study's findings suggest that judicial independence in Ghana is more of an ideal than a fully realized reality.

To strengthen judicial independence, reforms should focus on minimizing executive influence in judicial appointments, enhancing financial autonomy for the judiciary, and increasing transparency in case proceedings. Without addressing these challenges, judicial independence will continue to be a constitutional promise rather than a functional reality.

4.6.5 Inferential Statistical Analysis and Income Levels

The chi-square test revealed a significant relationship ($p = 0.001$) between income level and perceptions of judicial independence, with lower-income individuals

expressing greater skepticism. But why does this relationship exist? The core issue is economic access to justice that is, whether individuals, regardless of their financial status, feel they can navigate the legal system fairly and effectively.

This study's findings align with Transparency International's (2017) research, which found that wealthier individuals tend to have greater confidence in the judiciary because they can afford competent legal representation and navigate bureaucratic processes with ease. On the other hand, lower-income individuals, who often struggle to afford legal fees, bribes, or prolonged legal battles, tend to distrust the system not necessarily because the law is biased, but because access to fair proceedings feels unequal.

The qualitative responses in this study reinforce this: lower-income respondents frequently cited the cost of legal services and the inaccessibility of quality representation as barriers to justice. This suggests that their skepticism is not just a perception but an experience-based reality.

However, these findings contrast with Pérez's (2018) study on judicial perceptions in some European countries, where income level had minimal impact on trust in the judiciary. The key difference? Robust legal aid systems in those countries ensure that financial status does not determine access to justice.

In Ghana, the legal aid system exists in principle but remains inadequate in practice, often constrained by limited funding, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and a lack of awareness among the public. As a result, lower-income individuals are more likely to

believe that justice is reserved for the wealthy not because judicial independence is absent, but because they feel excluded from its benefits.

This study suggests that judicial independence in Ghana is not just a legal or institutional issue but also a socioeconomic one. If lower-income individuals perceive that they cannot access the judiciary fairly, then public trust will remain skewed in favor of wealthier groups, reinforcing existing inequalities.

To address this, legal aid services must be expanded and made more accessible to ensure that judicial independence is not just a concept known to the people but a practical reality that benefits all citizens, regardless of income level. Without such reforms, the judiciary risks being viewed not as an impartial institution, but as a system that serves the privileged at the expense of the disadvantaged.

4.6.6 Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study have several important implications for the understanding and application of Social Trust Theory in the context of judicial institutions in Ghana.

First, the study confirms that institutional trust is not solely built on formal guarantees, such as constitutional provisions for judicial independence. Rather, trust depends heavily on how individuals experience and perceive the justice system in their everyday lives. This supports the foundational claim of Social Trust Theory that public confidence in institutions is shaped by perceived fairness, transparency, accessibility, and responsiveness, not just legal formality.

Second, the study shows that socioeconomic factors, such as income level, strongly influence how judicial independence is perceived. Respondents from lower-income groups expressed higher levels of distrust in the judiciary, citing delays, high legal fees, and perceived bias in favour of the wealthy. This highlights the relevance of Social Trust Theory in explaining how inequality and systemic barriers weaken institutional legitimacy, especially among marginalized populations.

Third, the presence of low public awareness (68%) and low trust levels (58%) suggests that even where formal structures are in place, the absence of civic engagement and transparent communication can erode institutional trust. This reinforces the idea that trust must be actively maintained through interaction and accountability, rather than assumed through formal legal guarantees.

Finally, the qualitative findings particularly the perceived political influence on court decisions and lack of transparency further validate the theory's premise that perceived impartiality is critical to sustaining public confidence. The judiciary must not only be independent but also appear independent in the eyes of the public to be trusted.

In sum, the study expands the application of Social Trust Theory to a rural Ghanaian legal context, demonstrating that public trust in the judiciary is both socially constructed and context-dependent. The findings underscore the need for a justice system that is not only legally autonomous but also visibly fair, inclusive, and accessible to all citizens.

4.6.7 Distinction Between Judicial Independence and Access to Justice

While issues such as high legal fees, procedural complexity, and case delays were frequently mentioned by respondents as factors shaping their perceptions of the judiciary, it is important to conceptually distinguish between judicial independence and access to justice. Judicial independence primarily refers to the autonomy of the judiciary from external interference, particularly from political actors, the executive branch, or private interests. It concerns impartial decision-making, security of tenure, and freedom from undue influence.

In contrast, access to justice relates to the ability of citizens to effectively utilize judicial services, including affordability, procedural simplicity, timeliness, and geographical accessibility. Although access-related barriers do not necessarily imply a lack of judicial independence, they significantly influence public perception of the judiciary. For many citizens, institutional trust is shaped not only by formal autonomy but also by lived experiences within the justice system.

Therefore, while this study identifies cost, delays, and procedural barriers as influential factors affecting public trust, these should be interpreted primarily as access-to-justice concerns rather than direct indicators of compromised judicial independence. However, because public perception often merges these institutional dimensions, both independence and accessibility collectively shape overall trust in the judiciary.

4.7 Influence of Sampling on Findings

The use of stratified random sampling significantly shaped the robustness of the data analysis. By dividing the population into distinct strata based on sex, age, and occupation, the study ensured a more balanced representation of the community.

This stratification allowed for comparative analysis across groups. For instance:

- Trust in the judiciary was found to be lower among younger respondents and low-income earners, highlighting how perception differs by demographic strata.
- Among occupational strata, informal workers expressed less confidence in judicial processes compared to public sector employees.
- Sex analysis also revealed subtle differences, with women reporting slightly lower awareness of judicial independence than men.

The use of stratified sampling therefore enhanced the credibility of the results by minimizing sampling bias and ensuring that findings could reflect the diverse perspectives within the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. It also strengthened the basis for identifying patterns and associations between socio-demographic characteristics and perceptions of judicial independence.

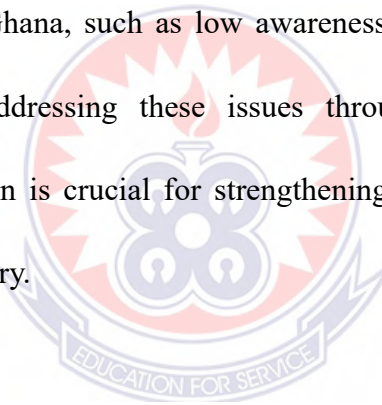
4.8 Summary

The study found that public awareness of judicial independence is low, with many misconceptions about the judiciary's role. Trust in the judiciary is mixed, influenced by concerns over political interference, corruption, and economic barriers. Key

challenges identified include political pressure, corruption, out-of-court settlements, and case delays, all of which impact public confidence.

Perceptions of judicial independence influence acceptance of legal outcomes, with higher trust leading to greater confidence in court rulings. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings highlights the need for public education, stronger anti-corruption measures, and judicial reforms to enhance transparency and trust in the legal system.

The study aligns with existing literature on judicial independence but also reveals challenges specific to Ghana, such as low awareness and skepticism among lower-income individuals. Addressing these issues through institutional reforms and increased legal education is crucial for strengthening judicial autonomy and public confidence in the judiciary.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of key findings, conclusions, and recommendations based on the study on public perceptions of judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. The study sought to assess public awareness and trust in judicial independence, identify perceived challenges, and examine the factors influencing perceptions of judicial autonomy. The chapter also provides recommendations for strengthening judicial independence and improving public trust in the judiciary. Lastly, suggestions for future research are discussed.

5.2 Summary of the Research

This mixed method research sought to investigate and understand the public perception of the judicial independence, specifically within the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa of Ghana. The main objectives were to;

1. evaluate the extent to which the residents of the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District are aware of the concept of judicial independence.
2. to measure the level of trust the public has in the judiciary system among residents of the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District.
3. to analyze the perceived challenges and threats to judicial independence as reported by the residents of the district.
4. to examine how public perceptions of judicial independence affects trust in

court decisions in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District.

As a consequence, the main research questions that were explored were;

1. what is the level of public awareness of judicial independence among the residents of Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District?
2. what is the level of public trust in the judiciary system among residents of the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District?
3. what are the perceived challenges to judicial independence as reported by the residents of the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District?
4. how does public perception of judicial independence affect trust in court decisions in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District?

5.3 Summary of Research Findings

In this section, the main findings of the research are presented. These are presented along the lines of the research questions as follows.

5.3.1 Public Awareness of Judicial Independence

The study revealed that public awareness of judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District is relatively low. As presented in Chapter Four (Chapter 4, Figure 4.1: Public Awareness of Judicial Independence, p. 73-74), only 25.4 percent of respondents indicated that they were aware of the concept of judicial independence, while 28 percent disagreed, and 31.2 percent remained neutral. This suggests that a significant portion of the population lacks a comprehensive understanding of judicial autonomy and its role in democratic governance. The low level of awareness may

indicate inadequate civic education on the judiciary's role in maintaining the rule of law and protecting fundamental human rights.

The qualitative findings reinforced this observation, as judicial personnel and legal practitioners interviewed in the study emphasized that many citizens do not fully grasp the principles of judicial independence. Respondents highlighted that limited public education and misinformation contribute to misconceptions, with some people believing that the judiciary operates under the influence of political actors, traditional authorities, or powerful business interests. Several interviewees noted that the lack of transparency in judicial proceedings, coupled with instances of alleged corruption, has further deepened public skepticism. These perceptions, as discussed in Chapter Four, influence public trust in the judiciary and may contribute to a reluctance to seek legal redress through the courts.

The findings highlight the need for improved public education on judicial independence. Enhancing civic awareness through the NCCE and integrating judicial education into the Social Studies curriculum can help clarify the judiciary's role and strengthen public trust.

5.3.2 Public Perceptions of Judicial Independence

The study revealed varied perceptions regarding judicial independence among residents of the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. Quantitative data presented in Chapter Four (Chapter 4, Figure 4.2: Perception of Judicial Independence, p. 75-76) showed that 68.8 percent of respondents (250) agreed that judicial independence

exists in Ghana, while 31.2 percent (120 respondents) disagreed. This statistical split underscores a complex perception landscape although a majority hold a positive view of the judiciary's autonomy, the sizeable minority expressing doubt indicates a significant level of public skepticism. This skepticism appears rooted in broader concerns about the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.

Further insights from the qualitative findings (Chapter 4, Section 4.4.1: Awareness and Understanding of Judicial independence, p. 86-88) revealed that political affiliations heavily influence public perceptions of judicial independence. Interviewees emphasized that many individuals tend to associate the actions and decisions of the judiciary with the political party in power. For instance, when court rulings go against opposition political figures, some members of the public interpret such decisions as evidence of judicial bias or political interference, rather than a neutral application of the law. Conversely, others see such rulings as proof of judicial independence and fairness, suggesting that political loyalties shape how individuals interpret judicial behavior.

This mixed perception reflects a broader lack of confidence in the judiciary's ability to function independently of political and economic pressures. The interviews also highlighted that public understanding of judicial independence is limited, and in the absence of widespread civic education, many citizens remain unaware of the principles and safeguards that define a truly independent judiciary. As such, the findings emphasize the need for sustained public education initiatives and institutional

reforms aimed at reinforcing the judiciary's autonomy and rebuilding public trust.

5.3.3 Public Trust in the Judiciary

The study found that public trust in the judiciary in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District was generally low, as reported in Chapter Four (Chapter 4, Figure 4.3: Trust in the Judiciary, p. 77-79). Quantitative findings revealed that only 26.2 percent of respondents expressed trust in the judiciary. In contrast, 30.6 percent remained neutral, while nearly 30 percent openly indicated a lack of trust. These statistics suggest that a significant portion of the population is either doubtful or undecided about the judiciary's integrity and fairness, highlighting a notable trust deficit in the justice delivery system.

The qualitative data in Chapter Four (Chapter 4, Section 4.4.2: Trust in the Judiciary, p. 88-91) further reinforced these findings. Interview responses from judicial personnel and informed community members revealed that public trust in the judiciary is largely contingent on personal or communal experiences with the justice system. Participants noted that individuals are more likely to trust judicial decisions when outcomes align with their personal expectations or political beliefs. However, when verdicts are perceived as unfavourable or unjust particularly in politically sensitive cases people are quick to question the impartiality of judges and the autonomy of the courts.

Moreover, several interviewees identified key factors that contribute to this erosion of trust, including perceptions of political interference, corruption within the judicial

system, and the high cost of accessing justice. These factors have fostered a general sense of skepticism, with some respondents suggesting that the legal system disproportionately favours the wealthy, politically connected, or influential individuals, to the detriment of ordinary citizens.

Together, the quantitative and qualitative findings highlight a pressing need for institutional reforms, increased transparency, and public engagement to restore confidence in the judiciary. Building trust will require more than just legal guarantees; it demands active efforts to demonstrate fairness, integrity, and accessibility within the justice system.

5.3.4 Perceived Challenges to Judicial Independence

The study revealed a range of structural and systemic challenges that continue to undermine judicial independence in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District, as presented in Chapter Four (Chapter 4, Figure 4.4: Perceived Challenges to Judicial Independence, p. 80-81). Among the key issues identified were political interference, corruption, frequent resort to out-of-court settlements, and prolonged delays in court proceedings. These challenges collectively contribute to a weakened perception of the judiciary's autonomy and effectiveness.

Quantitative data from the survey showed that 43.7 percent of respondents believed that corruption significantly influenced judicial decisions, suggesting a widespread perception that court rulings are not entirely based on legal merit but are instead subject to external manipulation. This perception severely compromises public trust in

the judicial process and raises concerns about the integrity of the rule of law.

The qualitative findings (Chapter 4, Section 4.4.3: Challenges to Judicial Independence, p. 91-95) corroborated the quantitative results. Judicial personnel interviewed in the study acknowledged that political interference remains a critical challenge, especially in high-profile cases involving influential individuals or political figures. Interviewees reported instances where attempts were made by powerful actors to sway judicial decisions, thereby compromising judicial neutrality and undermining public confidence in the judiciary's ability to deliver impartial justice.

The study also found that out-of-court settlements, particularly in cases involving chieftaincy, land, and family disputes, were prevalent. While these settlements may be seen as culturally appropriate or expedient, respondents expressed concern that they circumvent formal legal mechanisms, reduce transparency, and contribute to the erosion of public trust in the judiciary. These informal resolutions often lack accountability and are perceived as favouring those with social or economic leverage.

Another significant challenge identified was the persistent delay in court proceedings. Respondents voiced frustration over the lengthy timeframes required to resolve cases, which often discourage people from seeking justice through formal legal channels. Judicial personnel attributed these delays to inadequate resources, insufficient staffing, and the growing backlog of cases. These systemic inefficiencies not only deny timely justice but also reinforce the perception that the judiciary is ineffective or inaccessible.

In sum, the study illustrates that addressing these deep-seated challenges is essential

to strengthening judicial independence and restoring public faith in the justice system. Comprehensive reforms are needed to promote transparency, reduce political and economic interference, and ensure that the judicial process is timely, credible, and accessible to all citizens.

5.3.5 The Relationship Between Demographics and Perceptions of Judicial Independence

The inferential statistical analysis showed that variables such as age, education level, and employment status did not have a statistically significant effect on respondents' belief in judicial independence, as all their p-values were above 0.05. This means that people's perception of whether or not the judiciary is independent does not vary much based on how old they are, how educated they are, or whether they are employed. In other words, these demographic characteristics do not appear to influence their opinions about judicial independence.

However, income level was found to have a statistically significant influence ($p = 0.001$) on perceptions of judicial independence. This means that a person's financial status plays a role in shaping their view of whether the judiciary operates independently or not. The qualitative data further explained this relationship. Interviewees indicated that people with lower incomes often feel that the legal system is biased against them, making them less likely to trust in judicial independence. They believe that wealthier individuals are more likely to win court cases or receive favourable treatment, whereas poorer individuals are disadvantaged. In contrast,

respondents with higher income levels expressed greater confidence in the impartiality and fairness of the judiciary. This suggests that socioeconomic status, particularly income, is a key factor influencing public trust in judicial independence.

5.3.6 Influence of Judicial Independence on Legal Outcomes

The study found that perceptions of judicial independence strongly influence how people view legal outcomes. When people believe that the judiciary is independent, they are more likely to accept court decisions. However, when judicial independence is questioned, people tend to view rulings with skepticism and may refuse to comply with court orders.

The qualitative findings further illustrated this, with judicial personnel explaining that some individuals believe that judges favor certain groups based on political or economic status. A few respondents expressed concerns that judges may be influenced by politicians or affluent individuals, which weakens public confidence in legal rulings.

5.3.7 Summary of Findings

Overall, the study found that public awareness of judicial independence is low, with many people lacking knowledge of how the judiciary operates. Perceptions of judicial independence were mixed, with some respondents believing in judicial autonomy while others expressed skepticism, particularly regarding political influence. Trust in the judiciary was relatively low, with concerns about corruption, case delays, and external interference contributing to public doubt.

The study also identified political pressure, corruption, out-of-court settlements, and legal delays as major challenges to judicial independence. While age, education level, and employment status did not significantly impact perceptions, income level played a crucial role, with lower-income individuals expressing more skepticism about judicial autonomy. Finally, the study found that perceptions of judicial independence shape how people view legal outcomes, affecting their willingness to accept court rulings.

5.4 Conclusion

This study set out to examine public perception of judicial independence and its impact on trust in court decisions in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District of Ghana. The research was guided by the Social Trust Theory, which posits that institutional trust is built not only through formal guarantees or legal frameworks but also through people's lived experiences, perceptions of fairness, and access to justice. The study combined quantitative and qualitative methods to gather rich and diverse data from 382 respondents and judicial personnel in the district.

One of the most significant findings was the low level of public awareness of judicial independence. A total of 68% of respondents were found to have limited knowledge of what judicial independence means or whether it is constitutionally guaranteed. This lack of awareness poses a threat to democratic accountability, as citizens are less likely to demand fairness or transparency from institutions they do not fully understand.

In addition, trust in the judiciary was found to be weak, with 58% of respondents

reporting low trust in the justice system. The data revealed that trust levels were especially low among economically disadvantaged groups, who perceived the judiciary as inaccessible and skewed in favour of the wealthy. Many respondents cited high legal costs, frequent delays, and the lack of transparency in court proceedings as major barriers to confidence in the judiciary.

The qualitative findings further reinforced this distrust, as respondents repeatedly mentioned political interference, lack of impartiality, and favouritism in judicial decisions. The perception that political figures and affluent individuals were more likely to receive favourable outcomes in court created a sense of helplessness among ordinary citizens.

These findings confirm the core proposition of Social Trust Theory: that institutional legitimacy and public trust are not simply the result of constitutional promises, but must be continuously earned through transparent and equitable practices. The judiciary, although formally independent in Ghana's Constitution, is not perceived as independent by a substantial portion of the population. This gap between legal structure and lived experience undermines the judiciary's legitimacy and weakens the rule of law at the local level.

Therefore, the study concludes that public perception plays a central role in the legitimacy of judicial institutions. If the courts are to function effectively and uphold justice, they must be seen as independent, transparent, accessible, and fair. The research highlights a critical need to bridge the gap between formal independence and

public trust through reform and civic engagement.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings of the study and grounded in Social Trust Theory, the following recommendations are proposed to improve public trust in the judiciary and promote judicial accountability in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District and beyond.

Each recommendation is directly derived from specific findings of the study.

Enhance Civic Education on Judicial Independence

The study revealed varying and, in some cases, limited levels of public awareness regarding constitutional provisions safeguarding judicial independence. This gap in knowledge contributes to misconceptions about the role and autonomy of the judiciary. It is therefore recommended that the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), in collaboration with civil society organisations, intensify public education efforts on judicial independence and the functioning of the courts. Civic education programmes should be tailored to local contexts and delivered in accessible language through radio discussions, community forums, schools, and religious institutions. Increasing public awareness will help citizens better understand judicial processes and strengthen institutional trust.

Increase Transparency in Judicial Appointments and Operations

Findings from both the quantitative and qualitative phases indicated that perceptions of political interference negatively affect public trust in the judiciary. To address these

concerns, greater transparency in judicial appointments and administrative processes is necessary. The criteria and procedures for judicial appointments should be clearly communicated to the public, and where feasible, independent oversight mechanisms should be strengthened. Additionally, publishing periodic reports on court performance and judicial activities can help reduce suspicion and reinforce confidence in the impartiality and independence of the judiciary.

Simplify Court Procedures and Improve Access to Justice

Respondents identified procedural delays, complex processes, and financial barriers as key factors influencing their perception of the judiciary. The statistical analysis also suggested that socio-economic factors, particularly income level, shape perceptions of judicial independence. To address these concerns, the Judicial Service should simplify court procedures, reduce bureaucratic bottlenecks, and expand access to alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms. Strengthening legal aid services and introducing mobile courts in underserved communities would enhance accessibility and improve perceptions of fairness, particularly among lower-income groups.

Strengthen Public Communication and Community Engagement

The study found that limited direct engagement between the judiciary and the public contributes to misunderstanding and mistrust. To improve perceptions of transparency and accountability, the Judicial Service should adopt more proactive communication strategies. These may include regular press briefings, publication of simplified and anonymised case summaries, and structured community outreach initiatives. Clear

and consistent communication can help demystify judicial processes and reinforce the legitimacy of court decisions.

Promote Institutional Safeguards against Political Interference

Given that political interference emerged as a perceived threat to judicial independence, policymakers should strengthen institutional safeguards that protect judicial autonomy. This includes reinforcing existing constitutional protections and ensuring that administrative and financial independence of the judiciary is maintained. Strengthening these safeguards will not only protect decisional independence but also enhance public confidence in the neutrality of judicial outcomes.

Encourage Further District-Level Research

The study contributes district-level empirical evidence; however, variations in perceptions may exist across other regions of Ghana. It is therefore recommended that future research be conducted in other districts to enable comparative analysis of public perceptions of judicial independence. Such studies would provide broader national insight and inform evidence-based reforms aimed at strengthening judicial legitimacy.

While some of these recommendations, particularly those relating to reducing political interference and strengthening judicial autonomy, involve structural and institutional reforms that may require constitutional, legislative, or administrative adjustments, their implementation can begin through incremental measures. These

may include strengthening oversight mechanisms, enhancing transparency in judicial appointments, promoting stakeholder dialogue, and reinforcing existing constitutional safeguards. Although such reforms may require political will and sustained institutional commitment, gradual and coordinated implementation strategies can significantly enhance public trust and reinforce judicial legitimacy over time.

In conclusion, public perception of judicial independence is a critical indicator of institutional legitimacy and democratic health. A judiciary that is transparent, accessible, and demonstrably independent is essential for sustaining public trust and upholding the rule of law. The implementation of these targeted recommendations would help bridge the gap between constitutional guarantees of independence and citizens' lived perceptions of the justice system.

5.6 Contribution to Knowledge

This study makes theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions to knowledge in the field of judicial independence and public trust in Ghana.

First, at the theoretical level, the study extends the application of Social Trust Theory to the analysis of judicial independence within a localized Ghanaian context. By empirically demonstrating how perceptions of independence, fairness, and institutional integrity influence trust in legal outcomes, the study reinforces and contextualises the theoretical proposition that institutional legitimacy is fundamentally rooted in public trust.

Second, at the empirical level, the study contributes district-level evidence from the

Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District, an area that has received limited scholarly attention in prior research. While much of the existing literature focuses on national-level institutional assessments, this study provides nuanced insights into how socio-economic factors, particularly income level and education, shape perceptions of judicial independence. This localized approach enriches the Ghanaian literature by highlighting how judicial legitimacy is experienced and interpreted at the community level.

Third, at the methodological level, the study contributes by employing an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to examine judicial independence. By integrating quantitative survey data with qualitative interview insights, the study demonstrates the value of methodological triangulation in institutional perception research. This approach strengthens analytical depth and offers a framework that future researchers can adopt in similar district-level governance studies.

Overall, the study advances understanding of the complex relationship between institutional independence, public perception, and democratic legitimacy within Ghana's justice system.

5.7 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should explore comparative studies on judicial independence in different regions of Ghana to determine whether perceptions vary across different legal jurisdictions. A longitudinal study could also be conducted to examine how judicial reforms over time affect public confidence in the judiciary. Additionally,

future studies could incorporate a larger sample size and include legal professionals, policymakers, and political actors to gain a broader perspective on judicial independence and governance.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE (QUESTIONNAIRE)

Dear respondent,

The researcher is final year master of Philosophy student of the department of Social Studies at University of Education, Winneba (UEW), who are undertaking a research on the topic **“PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE IN GHANA: A CASE OF ASIKUMA-ODOBEN-BRAKWA DISTRICT IN THE CENTRAL REGION”**. This study seeks to evaluate the extent to which the residents of the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District are aware of the concept of judicial independence and its importance, to measure the level of trust the public has in the judiciary system within the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District and identify the factors influencing this trust, to identify and analyze the perceived challenges and threats to judicial independence as reported by the residents of the district. And finally to investigate how perceptions of judicial independence influence the public's view of legal outcomes and justice delivery in the district. This questionnaire is designed to solicit information from you to enable us to complete the project work. The data being sought is purely for academic purposes, hence, any information you will give will be treated confidentially. Your candid answers would be a valuable contribution to this research. Please, provide the appropriate response as frankly as possible and where options are **given tick (✓)** that which is applicable. Thank you in advance for your participation.

SECTION A (Demographic distribution of respondents)

Indicate the appropriate response by ticking [☐] where necessary.

1. Sex

Male [☐] Female [☐]

2. **Age** :

3. Religion

Christianity [☐] Islam [☐] Tradition [☐] Others [☐]

4. Educational background

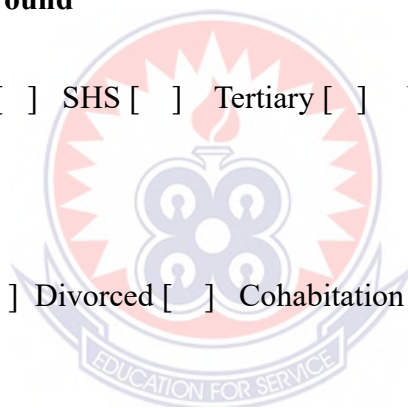
PRIMARY [☐] JHS [☐] SHS [☐] Tertiary [☐] No Education [☐]

5. Marital status

Married [☐] Single [☐] Divorced [☐] Cohabitation [☐] Separated [☐]

6. Occupation

Employed [☐] Unemployed [☐]



SECTION B

Please read the following statement carefully and tick [✓] the appropriate responses [as they apply to you] to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement. Please use the scale below: 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Strongly Agree), 5 (Agree)

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE RESIDENTS OF THE ASIKUMA-ODOBEN-BRAKWA DISTRICT ARE AWARE OF THE CONCEPT OF JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE.

Item	SD	D	N	SA	A
I am aware of the concept of judicial independence.					
I understand how judicial independence affects court decisions.					
Judicial independence is important for fair legal judgments.					
I have heard discussions about judicial independence in the media or public forums.					
I believe judges in the district can make decisions without external influence.					
I trust the judiciary in this district to act independently from political pressures.					
I feel that judicial independence is well-explained in public education efforts in the district.					
I can confidently explain the meaning of judicial independence to others.					

THE LEVEL OF PUBLIC TRUST IN THE JUDICIARY SYSTEM AND THE FACTORS INFLUENCE THIS TRUST.

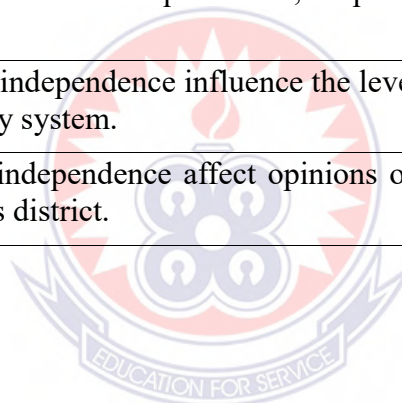
Item	SD	D	N	SA	A
I believe the judiciary in this district is fair in its decisions.					
I trust that the judiciary in this district operates with high integrity.					
The judicial process in this district is transparent and open to public scrutiny.					
I believe that corruption influences judicial decisions in this district.					
I feel that individuals receive fair legal representation in the judiciary system here.					
The judiciary system in this district effectively resolves legal disputes.					
The judiciary actively engages with the public to build trust and address concerns.					
Media coverage of the judiciary system in this district positively influences public trust.					

THE PERCEIVED CHALLENGES AND THREATS TO JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

Item	SD	D	N	SA	A
The local judiciary is often influenced by political leaders					
Corruption is a significant issue affecting the independence of the local judiciary.					
Insufficient resources impact the effectiveness of the judiciary in this district.					
Residents feel that the judiciary in this district lacks public trust and confidence.					
The judiciary in this district lacks public trust and confidence					
There is a lack of adequate legal knowledge and training among judicial staff in this district.					
The mechanisms for holding the judiciary accountable in this district are effective.					
Judicial officers in this district can make decisions without undue pressure or influence.					

**PERCEPTION OF JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE INFLUENCE ON THE
PUBLIC'S VIEW OF LEGAL OUTCOMES AND JUSTICE DELIVERY**

Item	SD	D	N	SA	A
I believe that perceptions of judicial independence impact how fair legal outcomes are in this district.					
My trust in the justice delivery system is influenced by how independent the judiciary is perceived to be.					
I feel that when the judiciary is perceived as independent, it delivers more fair and just decisions.					
Perceptions of judicial independence affect the credibility of legal decisions made in this district.					
I have more confidence in the judicial process when I perceive the judiciary to be independent.					
When judicial independence is questioned, I perceive legal outcomes to be biased.					
Perceptions of judicial independence influence the level of public support for the judiciary system.					
Beliefs about judicial independence affect opinions on the need for legal reforms in this district.					



APPENDIX TWO

(INTERVIEW GUIDE)

I am a graduate student in the Social Studies Department at the University of Education, Winneba. I am conducting research on "Public Perception of Judicial Independence: A Case Study of Asikuma Odoben Brakwa". The purpose of this interview is to gain insights into public perceptions of judicial independence within the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. I kindly request your participation in this interview, and I ask that you respond as honestly as possible. Please be assured that your information will be used solely for academic purposes, and your responses will be kept confidential and protected from unauthorized access. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Section 1: Understanding Judicial Independence

- 1 What does judicial independence mean to you personally?
- 2 Can you describe any experiences or situations that shaped your understanding of judicial independence?
- 3 In your view, how aware do you think people in your community are about the concept of judicial independence?
- 4 Why do you think that is?

Section 2: Trust in the Judiciary

- 1 How would you describe your trust in the judicial system?
- 2 Can you elaborate on why you feel that way?

- 3 What specific experiences or events have influenced your level of trust in the judiciary?
- 4 Do you think trust in the judiciary differs among various groups in the community (e.g., by age, sex, education)? If so, how?

Section 3: Perceived Challenges and Threats

- 1 What challenges do you believe exist for judicial independence in your district?
- 2 Can you share any specific incidents or examples that illustrate these challenges?
- 3 How do you perceive the influence of political or social pressures on the judiciary in your area?

Section 4: Influence on Legal Outcomes and Justice Delivery

- 1 How do you think perceptions of judicial independence impact people's views on legal outcomes?
- 2 Can you provide an example where you believe judicial independence affected a legal case or outcome in your community?
- 3 What role do you think the judiciary should play in ensuring fairness and justice in your community?

Conclusion:

- 1 Is there anything else you would like to share about your views on judicial independence?

APPENDIX THREE
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA (UEW) LETTER OF
INTRODUCTION



UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

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Our Ref: SSE/SM.2/VOL.1/169

Date: 30 May 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MICHAEL ESHUN

We write to introduce Mr. Michael Eshun to your outfit. He is an M.Phil Social Studies Education student with index number 220003495.

As part of the requirement for the award of M.Phil Degree, he is undertaking a research on the topic "Public Perception of Judicial Independence In Ghana: A Case of Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District." We will be most grateful if you could grant her permission to undertake the study including collecting data.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Grace-Gifty Sarpey
for: Ag. Head of Department



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