

**ASSESSMENT OF VOTER TURNOUT IN DISTRICT LEVEL  
ELECTIONS IN ASHAIMAN**

**BY**  
**KNUST**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the Commonwealth Executive Masters in Business Administration and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the university, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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## DEDICATION

To my mother Sarah Charity Ismano

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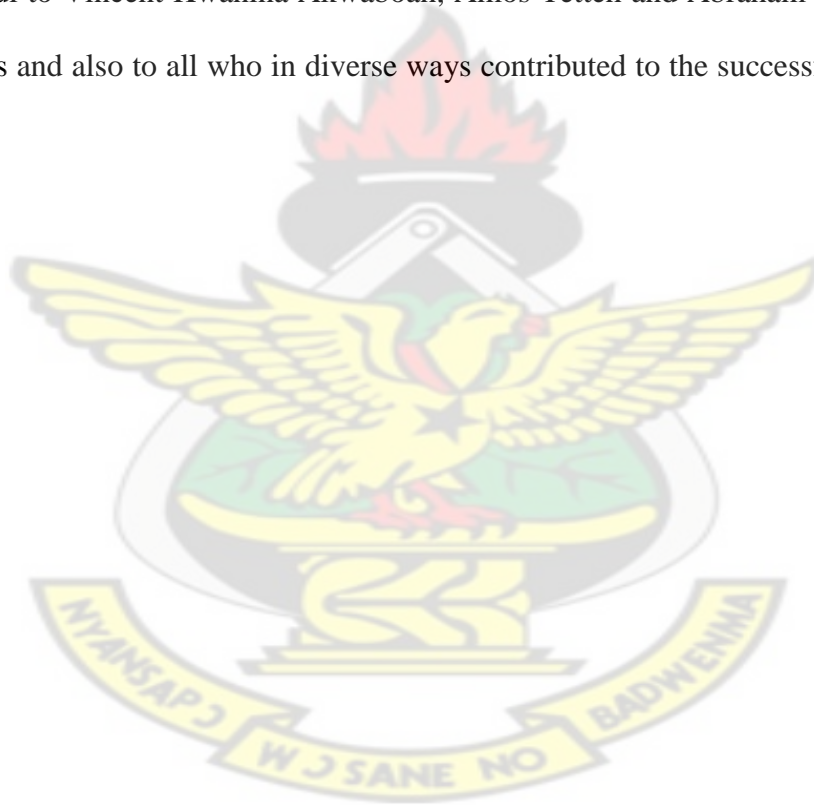


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## ABSTRACT

The turnout at the District Level Elections at Ashaiman has been consistently low for some time now. This study aimed at finding out the factors that has accounted for the low voter turnout, the strategies that have been adopted to increase turnout and finally the trend in the voter turnout in the District Level Elections at Ashaiman. These were arrived at by determining the perception of eligible voters in the district and also by interviewing Electoral Commission Officers. The Cluster Sampling Method was used to select 370 eligible voters from six (6) communities in Ashaiman. Among the major findings of the study are the observation that the major factors contributing to low voter turnout in the District Level Elections (DLE) are disenchantment of voters, voter fatigue fear of intimidation and inadequate voter education. It was also found out that other minor factors like religious factors, complacency, long queues at polling stations and the perception that one's candidate will not win also account for the low voter turnout in Ashaiman. The study also found that the Electoral Commission Office in Ashaiman has put in place certain strategies to increase voter turnout. These strategies are an intensification of voter education exercises, the strengthening of security at polling stations and the improvement of access to polling stations. The study recommended that voter education be intensified and also security strengthened at various polling stations. It also recommended that the proposed continuous voter registration policy be considered and implemented as early as practicable to reduce the unnecessary anxiety and tension that come with the automatic registration which prevents people from registering and thereby reducing the number of voters.

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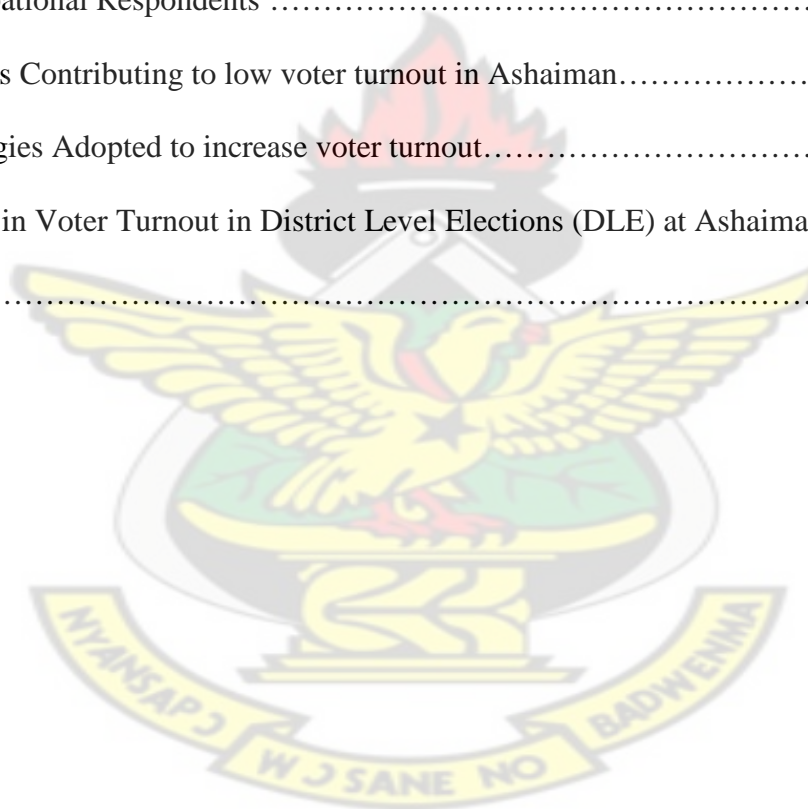
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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Voter turnout in any election is of immense relevance to the value or credibility that will be attached to its outcome. Voting in elections by citizens is very much encouraged in all democracies as it is the basis of democracy and citizenship. A high turnout is therefore seen as higher participation in decision making and a seal of approval or legitimacy.

In Ghana the introduction of the decentralization policy with the district Assembly concept seeks to involve citizens at the grass roots to participate in governance by playing a major role in decision making. It is for this reason that voter turnout at the District Level Elections are very relevant. A high turnout depicts an approval of the system and a high participation in decision making through the election of Assemblymen and women and unit community members to represent them at the District, Municipal, or Metropolitan Assemblies, where matters concerning the development of all the communities of the Districts, Municipalities, Metropolitan Assemblies as well as the welfare of the citizens are discussed and solutions found.

A high turnout also places legitimacy on the Assemblymen and women and unit committee members. It is also a sign of popular approval by the citizenry of the leadership of these elected representatives. They are therefore assured of the support of the people in their quest to fight for their interest at the District Assembly.

Ashaiman as a municipality like all other districts in Ghana requires the full participation of all its people in its quest to promote democracy, good governance and development. Thus the consistent complaint of low voter turnouts in District Level Elections every four years

suggests a lack of interest in the system and a reluctance to participate in the governance of the municipality and a defeat of the noble reasons for the creation of the decentralization concept.

There is therefore the need to find out the reasons behind the low voter turnout in District Level Elections and a comprehensive strategy drawn to improve voter turn out so that elected Assemblymen and women as well as unit committee members will command the fuller acceptance and support of their communities or electoral areas in their quest to work in their interest. A high voter turnout also indirectly indicates an approval or acceptance of the district assembly concept.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

The District Level Elections (DLE) provided a legitimate avenue for the inhabitants in the districts, municipalities and Metropolitan areas to be part of the decision making process by electing their representatives to the Assemblies to champion their interests and spearhead development in their communities. The local government Act (ACT 462) which forms the legal basis of the decentralization policy indicates that development at the grass roots is the responsibility of the district, Municipal or Metropolitan Assemblies in partnership with civil society, the private sector as well as the local people. A high turnout in the District Level Election is an indication of not only the development of their localities but also their involvement or participation in governance and decision making at the local level.

However the consistently low voter turn out in the District Level Elections (DLE) in Ashaiman since the inception of the fourth republic has given government, administrators and local authorities cause for concern. The reason for this low turnout is not yet known.

There is therefore the need to find out the factors contributing to this low turnout in the District Level Elections in Ashaiman, so that interventions can be put in place to avert this trend.

### **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

In line with the problem, the study seeks to;

1. Find out the factors contributing to low voter turnout in District Level Elections at Ashaiman
2. Find out the strategies that are being adopted to increase voter turnout in District Level Elections at Ashaiman.
3. Analyze the trend in voter turnout of District Level Elections at Ashaiman.

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the factors contributing to low voter turnout in the past District Level Elections at Ashaiman?
2. What strategies are being adopted to increase voter turnout in District Level Elections at Ashaiman?
3. What is the trend in voter turnout in the past District Level Elections at Ashaiman?

### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

As an additional material to an earlier research on voter turnout in elections in Ghana, this study will reduce voter apathy in District Level Elections at Ashaiman.

This research will also lead to an increase in voter turnout in District level Election at Ashaiman in the future.

The study will also lead to improvement of the image and relevance of the District Level Elections in the decentralization concept in Ghana.

## **1.6 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY**

The study has been organized into five chapters.

Chapter one deals with the introductory aspect of the study. It comprises of the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations of the study and organization of the study. Chapter Two deals with the review of literature on the topic, Chapter Three provide a thorough and comprehensive account of the research technologies and methodology used in the research. Chapter Four involves the presentation and analysis of the data collected. Finally, Chapter five comprises of the summary and conclusions of the study as well as recommendations made by the researcher.

## **1.7 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY**

The main problem associated with the study was the difficulty in getting data on voter turnout of district level Elections in Ghana.

Another problem associated with the study is the inadequate literature on voter turnout in Ghana.

## **1.8 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study is limited to eligible voters in Ashaiman. The study is also limited to turnout in District Level Elections in Ashaiman.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the researcher reviews the relevant literature in support of the objectives of the study which includes: definitions and concepts of elections, voter turnout, reasons for low voter turnout, strategies for increasing voter turnout and trends in voter turnout.

#### **2.2 DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS OF ELECTIONS**

This study looks at election at two levels, first as a process and second in terms of its functions in realizing a democracy. As a process, election is a viable means of ensuring the orderly process of leadership succession and change and an instrument of political authority and legitimisation, which stands as a symbol of popular sovereignty and the expression of the ‘social pact’ between the state and the people, defining the basis of political authority, legitimacy and citizens’ obligations. It is the kernel of political accountability and a means of ensuring reciprocity and exchange between governors and the governed’ (Adejumobi, 2000). In the same perspective, Chaligha (1997) understands elections as formalized mechanisms through which individual citizens and political parties take an active role in politics, and make major decisions regarding the fate of their society for development. It is on this note that elections are considered essential for enhancing democracy and development. Heywood (2002) sees election as a device for filling an office through choices made by a designated body of people; the electorate. Indeed, some scholars have gone further to portray elections as a function.



In terms of functions, elections serve the following purpose; educating voters, building legitimacy of the leaders and the government in power, a function that is performed to some extent even by elections that are non-competitive or undemocratic , and strengthening elites (IDEA, 2007). Elections also serve as the basis to hold elected leaders accountable and responsible for their performance in office. Elections also serve as a controlling mechanism of leaders as they know if they don't deliver effectively and equitably they are going to be dropped out of office come next elections.

Generally, election as a form of political participation is an important tool in the realization of democracy. Election is regarded as a mechanism through which citizens get an opportunity to decide and influence their destiny through a political process. It forms one of the significant ways through which people can participate in decisions that affect their lives and hold their elected representatives responsible for results (UNDP, 2004): defining the electorate and ensuring a level playing ground.

1. all adults are qualified voters
2. each voter has only one vote
3. each voter has an equal opportunity to participate in the elections
4. when casting their votes the electorate should be free to choose among the alternatives (parties, candidates) without fear for picking a particular choice, or without being compensated for choosing a particular alternative and should do it secretly.
5. each vote is counted only once and only for the alternative chosen by the voter
6. only ballots cast by the voters are included in counting
7. the criteria for registering parties and nominating candidates should be politically neutral

8. each contestant (party or candidate) should have an equal opportunity to present to the voters their arguments, both arguing for their own case as well as to formulate a critique against the incumbent government
9. none of the contestants should have access to resources that are supposed to be neutral between the contestants

Additionally, a “Free and Fair” election should mean universal and equal access to the electoral process and to ballots, an independent electoral commission (EMB), which enjoys the trust of all parties involved, well trained electoral workers who abide by professionalism, a voter’s list that is credible, and impartial coercive bodies like the army and the police. This requires an absence of fraud and intimidation and that the votes are translated fairly into legislative seats in a transparent manner and in accordance with the law (Freedman, 2004). In general, the extent at which an election is regarded free and fair is an explanatory factor for the level voter turnout.

### **2.3 REASONS FOR VOTING**

According to Merrifield (2003) socio economic and demographic characteristics of the electorate such as age, gender, economic status, type of locality (rural or urban) and occupational and educational background play an important role in voters deciding to participate in election. Ghosh (2006) also reports that voter turnout is affected by heterogeneity in demographic and socioeconomic compositions of the voter within a constituency. He added that voter turnout appears to be negatively correlated with the socio economic characteristics of districts and that even though such correlations are weak; they are statistically significant except for per capita income.

A report from a conference on electoral processes, liberation movements and democratic change in Africa, organized by IESE and CMI on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November, 2010 stated that free elections are one of the main forms of political participation of citizens in democratic regimes and that they are the mechanisms through which citizens can express their judgment on the way government takes care of their interest, deciding on who will represent them and who will govern. Thus, it is the legitimacy of the political power itself that is at stake in elections: the higher being the participation, the greater will be the legitimacy. On the contrary, a rising abstention erodes the activity and legitimacy of elected governments. This is why voter turnout is commonly considered an indicator of the vitality of democracy and is a major concern for political actors in democratic regimes.

In 1957, Anthony Downs introduced the model of voter participation that many continue to use in various forms to this day. He observed that citizens vote for whatever party they believe will provide them with the highest utility income from government action. Stated simply, citizens vote when the benefits of voting exceed their perceived costs. Most Americans place a high value on voting, yet the 'costs' are often high. Katosh and Traugott (1982) stated that adding convenience factors can significantly change the equation to get citizens to vote. Numerous studies have reinforced this idea that the 'costs' involved with going to the polls remain one of the largest detriments to increasing turnout.

The basic formula for determining whether someone will vote is  $PB+D > C$  where P is the probability that an individual's vote will affect the outcome of an election and B the perceived benefits that will be received if that person's favoured political party or candidate were elected. D originally stood for democracy or civic duty, but today represents any social or personal

qualification an individual gets from voting.  $C$  is the time, effort, and financial cost involved in voting. Since  $P$  is virtually zero in most elections,  $PB$  is also near zero and  $D$  is thus the most important element in motivating people to vote. Ricker and Ordeshook (1968) listed five major forms of gratification that people receive for voting; complying with the social obligations to vote, affirming one's allegiance to the political system, affirming a partisan preference (also referred to as expressive voting or voting for a candidate to express support, not to achieve any outcome), affirming one's importance to the political system and for those who find politics interesting and entertaining, researching and making a decision. Foulmer, et al (2007) in an experiment involving altruism using a dictator game came out with the findings that concern for the wellbeing of others is a major factor in predicting turnout and political participation.

Apart from the use of an implicit approach which describes voter turnout in terms of demographic, social, economic, cultural, and other factors, a second group of studies examines voter turnout from a rational choice perspective, the rational-choice perspective assumes that individual will make their decisions whether to vote by comparing the expected benefits of voting with its costs. Aldrich (1993) notes almost all scholars agree with the notion that preference determines political behaviour. By reintegrating politics and economics under a common paradigm and deductive structure, rational choice theory explains how those individual preferences determine behaviour. From the rational-choice prospective voter turnout is a collective action problem in which citizens are asked to sacrifice time and transportation expenses on behalf of a public good, the elected government. The most widely used rational-choice model of voter turnout is the calculus-of-voting model developed by Ricker and Ordeshook (1968) which incorporates insights from Downs's 1957 classic economic theory of democracy. The calculus-of-voting model consists of a theoretical framework used by a rational

voter with preference to decide whether to vote or abstain. The model takes the following form:  $R = BP - C + D$  where  $R$  is the voters net reward for voting,  $B$  is the difference in benefits to the voter of one or the other candidate winning;  $P$  is the probability of affecting the outcome,  $C$  is the cost associated with voting and  $D$  is the voters social and personal gratification or psychological benefit from voting. Green and Shapiro (1996) indicated that one advantage of the rational-choice perspective over competing explanatory approaches is its ability to estimate the marginal impacts of various factors on voter turnout.

## **2.4 CONCEPTS ON VOTER TURNOUT**

The oxford advanced learners dictionary of current English (fourth edition) defines vote as a formal expression of one's opinion or choice, for example by ballot or show of hands. According to Wikipedia a vote is a formal expression of an individual's choice in voting for or against some motion. Voting therefore is a method for a group such as a meeting or an electorate to make a decision or express an opinion often following discussion, debates or election campaigns. A voter is therefore a person who can or does vote.

Voter turnout is the percentage of eligible voters who cast a ballot in an election. According to Wikipedia voter turnout is the total number of voters who participated in voting. According to the Reference.com, voter turnout in an election is the number of people who vote in it, as a proportion of the number of people who have the right to vote in it. The core question regarding voter turnout is the perceived benefits and costs of voting, the credibility of elections and the individual characteristics of voters influencing voters decision to vote.



The number of electorates who turn out to vote for their government is important in understanding people's political participation. Emphasizing on the importance of voter turnout in a democracy Kuenzi and Lambright (2007) argue that because democracy in its most fundamental sense is "rule by the people," the proportion of the citizenry expressing its preferences through voting is of interest. While high voter turnout is a desirable indicator of participatory democracy, low voter turnout is an expression of dissatisfaction on the part of the voting public with the status quo or an indication of political apathy (Chinsinga, 2006).

Voter turnout is taken to mean the percentage of voters who cast votes in an election out of the registered voters. However, this study looks at voter turnout in two measures. The first is by looking at voter turnout in terms of the percentage of registered voters in relation to those who turn out to vote in an election. The second form is by looking at voter turnout in terms of the relationship between the percentage of voting age population (VAP%) and the voters who turn out to vote in an election. Voter turnout in terms of the percentage of registered voters refers to the percentage of voters that actually turnout on an election day to cast their ballots whereas Voter turnout in terms of the relationship between the percentage of voting age population refers to the percentage of voters who are eligible to vote, whether they registered and voted or not (Schumit et al. 1998). The second form is more useful in determining whether really there is low voter turnout or not though not mostly used because of the lack of data and its unreliability.

## **2.5 METHOD OR MEANS OF DETERMINING VOTER TURNOUT**

Several methods exist in determining the number or percentage of voters. According to Pintor et al (2001), the first and most basic way of determining voter turnout is simply counting the total

number of votes cast. This is known as the total vote. This method seems straight forward but it has some short comings. First, this method includes not only correctly cast votes, but also includes ballots later found to be invalid. It also provides no comparative component.

Another means to determine voter turnout is the method used by the United States Census Bureau. This technique relies on what is known as the voting age population or VAP. As the name implies the Voting Age Population is the total number of people in a given area older than the area's voting age. To arrive at a voter turnout figure the number of votes cast is divided by the voter population, which will obviously yield a percentage. While this method attempts to account for the imperfect voter registration roles, it is not without its own problems. For instance the VAP numbers are not strictly limited to only those over 18 and also eligible to vote. The VAP also takes account of non-citizens, those who have been convicted of felonies and those currently incarcerated.

To deal with the apparent problems in the VAP method of calculating voter turnout, some political scientist and other organisations have developed yet another means of determining turnout. This means is the Voter Eligibility Population or VEP. The VEP method is used by subtracting an estimate of the people ineligible to vote, such as non-citizens and felons from the VAP calculations. The number of eligible voters overseas is added. The figure that is attained is the VEP. This figure is finally divided by the number of people who actually voted in order to arrive at a voter turnout percentage. Proponents of the VEP claim that this method virtually eliminates the apparent decline in voter turnout recognised by other methods



## 2.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF VOTER TURNOUT

It is often considered that high voter turnouts are desirable, though among political scientists and economists specializing in public choice, the issue is still debated. A high turnout is generally seen as evidence of the legitimacy of the current system. It is for this reason that dictators the world over have often fabricated high turnouts in show case elections for this purpose. A typical example is Saddam Husseins' 2002 referendum which was claimed to have had 100% participation.

Voter turnout is also an indicator of the representativeness of the elected person or people. A low turnout may mean that the elected does not have the mandate of the people he or she seeks to represent. Low turnout can even lead to unequal representation among various parts of the population. In developed countries non-voters tend to be concentrated in particular demographic and socioeconomic groups, especially the young and the poor. In countries like India for instance which boast of 670 million electorates and more, the opposite is true. The poor, who comprises the majority of the demographic, are more likely to vote than the rich and the middle class and turnouts are higher in rural areas than urban areas. In low turnout countries, such groups tend to be under represented greatly.

Voter turnout can also give the election management body an idea about the image of the authority in the eyes of the electorate. It can give it cause to assess its election processes to eliminate steps that hinder turnout and improve its organization of elections with the introduction of other workable measures to lure eligible voters to the polling centers during elections.

In general voter turnout, especially in local elections is an indication of approval or disapproval of performance as well as an indication of the willingness of the citizens to participate in decision making or governance of their communities.

## **2.7 IMPLICATIONS OF VOTER TURNOUT**

Election is one of the important features of a democratic government today. In the ‘consent theory’ of John Locke, election is a mechanism for legitimising a political system, the succession of government and leaders, linking political institutions with voters as well as a way of holding the elected government and leaders accountable to the electorate.

The argument is also shared by Olson (1991) who contends that democracy commits rulers to avoid pursuing selfish interests rather than policies which optimize growth and collective well-being. Unless this is done, election fails to be a positive benchmark for a democracy and elections do not reflect the society’s interests.

It is the assumption of this study that if voter turnout were 100% or closer to that then political leaders and citizens would become more responsible and accountable than when it is lower. This would entail more political participation in the democratization process which in return promotes democratic consolidation and economic development for that particular society if other factors provide for that.

It is important also to note that a democratic government like the one in Ghana is striving to draw its authority from the people through elections. This view is shared by Caulfield (2009) who argues that;

It is the people via elections that give authority and can make their government accountable, therefore, the lower the turnout is the less representative and legitimate the government is, if not reversed this may lead to future unrest and the crisis looks only set to worsen. In practice elections are the central pillar of representative democracy, they serve to legitimize government and drastic decreases in turnout indicate a crisis in democracy.

When participation is biased in terms of politically relevant characteristics, such as race or income, then policy outcomes may also be biased (Lutz and Marsh, 2007). For example, in cases where low voter turnout is caused by candidates or parties buying voter cards (voter IDs) to prevent voters from voting or to bribe voters to vote for such candidates and if this plot is sponsored by the tycoons inside or outside the country, then the elected leader becomes more accountable to these sponsors. At the national level if leaders are bought by the rich class they are going to pass laws and policies that are for the rich and not pro-poor policies. These are indirect effects of low voter turnout. If some groups are over-represented and others under-represented, this could imply that “public officials hear more from some kinds of citizens than from others and thus jeopardize the democratic norm of equal protection of interests” (Verba et al., 1995).

With participatory governance approach, today most development programs are meant to be borne out of the interests of the local citizens themselves as advocated by mainstream institutions like International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. Election is one of such participatory processes. And low voter turnout implies a less participatory society. Therefore, in view of the relationship between democracy and development – election being an important aspect of

democracy - the number of voters who show up in the democratically upbringing of their government signifies the power, legitimacy and accountability of the government that comes to power. Grossman and Noh (1990) conform to this arguing that democracy ensures accountability of rulers to the ruled with the result that rulers are motivated to allocate resources efficiently and productively in order to be allowed to stay in power. In this perception therefore, the government from its formation (through election) lacks political support and seriously suffers from legitimacy crisis. In the long run this affects development policies, initiatives and efforts by the government. Citizens do not find themselves part of the development process and they slowly or completely do not participate in the development projects by their government and this hampers the country's development.

For political parties and the government, low voter turnout may imply failure to meet people's expectations. This is particularly the case when the candidate or party got more votes or a higher voter turnout in the past election but dropping in the next election. To the government and political parties low voter turnout is not a good sign, it means dissatisfaction especially in new democracies – this may not be the case in consolidated democracies. Therefore low voter turnout may help them to learn and improve their weaknesses if the turnout explains the reason for low voter turnout.

If the problem of low voter turnout persists in new democracies, there is danger of reversal to authoritarian regimes. Pointing out to the likelihood of countries reversing to non-democratic systems, Huntington (1991) in his theory of democratization explains what he terms as the wave of democratization in the world. Huntington defines a “wave of democratization as a group of

transitions from non-democratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during the period”. This research regards non-voting behaviour as one of such transitions in the opposite direction, therefore, if not well checked, democratizing countries may retreat and go back to undemocratic systems in what he terms as reverse waves or democratic breakdowns.

## **2.8 TRENDS IN VOTER TURNOUT**

Voter turn outs vary from country to country. For example, in the United States 2008 presidential election, turnout was 63% and 68% among African Americans who were generally credited to Barack Obama’s candidacy. In Australia, which has compulsory voting and Malta which does not, participation reaches 95%.

These differences are caused by a mix of cultural and institutional factors. In Australia, there are high proportions of unregistered voters, and once this is taken into consideration, the proportion of eligible voters is only 81%. Australia also has a high proportion of informal votes (deliberate invalid votes) and what is known as a Donkey vote when the elector numbers candidates randomly as they appear on the ballot.

Voter turnout is a fundamental quality of fair elections and is generally considered as a necessary factor for a healthy democracy. Low turnout is usually attributed to disengagement from the system because of perceived effectiveness of voting in changing policy decisions. As a result “established” democracies with free elections tends usually to have a higher turnout than other states.



Voter turnout in countries often fluctuates. For an example, national elections turn out in the United States has a history of rising and falling over time, although it has never risen to levels of turnout in most of the well-established democracies in other nations. After rising sharply from 1948 to 1960, turn out declined in nearly every election until dropping barely to half of eligible voters in 1988. Since 1988, it has fluctuated from a low of 52.6% of eligible voters (and 49.1% of voting age population) in 1966 to a high of 61% of eligible voters in 2004, the highest level since 1968.

Turn out in mid-term elections is far lower, peaking at 48.7% in 1966 and falling as low as 39.0% in 1978, 1986, and 1998 remaining below 50% in midterm elections. Even at its highest level in 1960, the percent of eligible Americans who turn out to vote never surpassed 65%. This is still substantially lower than in most well established democracies. Turnout is 70-75% in Canada and well over 80% on most other democracies, including 86.8% in the first round of the French presidential election and 91.7% in the 2004 proportional representation election for Luxembourg's legislature.

According to Gelman, Katz and Teurlinck (2002), low turnout is most pronounced in off year elections for state legislators and local officials as well as primaries. In many cities, for example, mayors of major cities often are elected with single digit turnout. For example, turnout was only 5% of registered voters in a recent Dallas Mayoral election, 6% in Charlotte and 7% in a recent Tennessee primary and was only 3 percent for a US Senate primary in Texas. A statewide gubernatorial election in Kentucky had a turnout of only 6%. Kentucky gubernatorial elections are held in the off-year between mid-term congressional election and presidential elections and scheduled at a time when there were no elections for a federal office. North Carolina's runoff elections have seen turnout as low as 3% in statewide elections.

Disparities in income levels have also been found to play a role in participation in voting in a number of countries. According to a study by the centre for the study of American Electorate, American university in 2008, it was found that in the United States of America, 86% of people with incomes above \$75000 claim to have voted in presidential elections as compared with only 52% of the people with incomes under \$15000. As a result of this participation disparity across demographic lines, politicians are more responsive to the opinions of high-income constituents. A study of roll call votes under the 107<sup>th</sup> and 108<sup>th</sup> congress reported that legislators were three times more responsive to high responsive income constituents and were the least responsive to the needs of low-income constituents.

The current barriers to voting such as registration and the untimely scheduling of elections during the work week further expand the disparity in the turnout between low and high-income votes. Therefore, the removal of barriers has the potential to not only increase turnout, but also to narrow the gap in the voting disparity.

According to Pintor et al (2002), the average voter turnout in Southern African countries during the last twenty years was 7%, and the corresponding value for the Western European countries in the same period was around 78% and for African countries as a whole was 64%. According to a report that came out from a conference on “Electoral Processes, Liberations Movements and Democratic change in Africa” organized by IESE and CMI on 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2010, the average turnout in elections in Southern Africa after the 1990s has been reducing. It cited results from recent years where general election were marked by extremely low voter turnout (less than 50%), namely the Mozambique elections in 2004 and Zambian presidential elections in 2008. According to Brito et al (2006), there were indications that most citizens especially did not really



feel free to vote during the 2004 elections. In 2009, the situation was much better. In fact, the abstention remained at almost the level; 56%.

Lesotho is another African country that shows a decline in election participation since the beginning of the 1990's. According to the report from the conference organized by the IESE and CMI on "Electoral Processes", Lesotho registered a voter turnout of 72% in the parliamentary elections of 1993 and 1998. This was lowered to 67% in 2002 and further down to 49% in 2007. The Zambian situation was not that different according to the report; having recorded 68% in 2001 and 7% in 2006, the presidential elections in 2008 had a turnout of 45%. The report further stated that among the high level citizens' political disengagement appears as a symptom of a crisis of the democratization process, where the main aspect seems to be the incapacity of political leaders and movements to develop a true system of political representation and accountability. The report added that according to data from the 2005 Afro barometer survey, 78% of voters in Mozambique, 87% in Lesotho and 96% in Zambia had a very bad image of politicians. They had the opinion that politicians never or rarely, do keep their engagements after elections.

## **2.9 REASONS FOR LOW VOTER TURNOUT**

Voter registration processes or procedure plays a significant role in low voter turnouts in many countries. There exist two broad systems in which voters may become registered; these are self-initiated and then state initiated. Self-initiated is the process where the individual is given the liberty to follow the registration process on his or her own and get registered. One advantage of this type of registration system is that the voter list generated will be specifically used in electoral proceedings. Privacy is protected in self-initiated system since there is no declaration of

private information. However with this system for a number of reasons people may not know how to register and may find registering inconvenient and therefore not register and vote. With the state initiated systems voter registration is virtually automatic. Government takes responsibility of the registration. The advantage with this system is that virtually all eligible voters are registered and can vote if they so wish. The disadvantage with the system is that the list of voters could be mishandled by the appropriate authorities and some voters might be disenfranchised. According to Rosenstone and Wolfinger (1978) voter registration is one of the factors that affect voter turnout in United States of America.

The Downsian model of the rational voter is the driving force behind most changes to more convenient forms of voting. The institutional feature most associated with limiting turnout has been the two-step voting process in America. Rosenstone and Wolfinger (1978) observed that not only must citizens decide well before the election that they wish to vote, but they must make the effort to go and register. Many times this is more difficult than voting; it often involves a “longer journey, at a less convenient hour, to complete a, more complicated procedure-and at a time when interest in the campaign is far from its peak.”

These often have an increased burden for those with less education or have moved recently. The effect was easy to see, with the U.S. being the second industrial democracy with less than 90 percent of eligible citizens registered to vote. For many years the thinking remained that registration requirements were the largest obstacle to voting. Timpone (1998) noted that even in states where Election Day registration was allowed, it still required a second trip on the part of the voter. Many states have also eased the restriction regarding the use of absentee ballots, but these processes also require voters to make a decision ahead of time and go through an additional

process to ensure they receive a ballot. With the passing of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) in 1993 it became much easier to register to vote, leading Berinsky (2005) to state that most barriers to registration have been removed. Yet turnout was not increasing. Convenience voting is designed to lower the costs of voting for every citizen, and it is thought that by doing this the number of people who vote in elections can be increased. Convenience voting can be simply defined as any form of voting other than the traditional precinct-place voting. This often involves fewer restrictions to absentee voting, to the point that many states no longer require a reason to vote absentee, and increasingly the use of early voting. It is hoped that the widespread use of these measures will lead to an increase in turnout.

Voter registration varies from country to country. According to Wikipedia, in the United States of America, the County Election Office is the place to start if one wants to register to vote. The administration of elections can vary widely across jurisdictions. Registering to vote is the responsibility of individuals. Voters are not automatically registered to vote once they reach the age of 18. Every state except North Dakota requires that citizens who wish to vote be registered. Traditional voters had to register at state offices to vote but in the mid -1990s effort were made by the federal government to make registering earlier, in an attempt to increase turnout. The national voter registration Act of 1993 forced state governments to make the voter registration process easier by providing uniform registration services through drivers' license registration centers, disability centers, schools, libraries and mail – in registration, all in an effort to increase turnout. Also voter registration form may be found at public libraries and registries of motor vehicles. This form must be filled out and mailed to the located selection department.

Registration has also been made possible at a voter registration drive. Online voter registration has also been introduced. Also one may register where ever one has an address, regardless of its performance. For an example, a college student in the United States living away from home may register to vote in the college's city, even if that is not a permanent address. These steps are all efforts at increasing voter turnout.

In Switzerland all citizens and other residents of Switzerland are required to register themselves with the municipal authorities at their place of residence. Voter registration is automatic for citizens, who receive their ballots by mail a few weeks before an election. However, in Mexico, there is the general electoral census. Any citizen of age 18 or greater must go to an electoral office in order to be registered into the electoral census. Citizens receive a voting card like in Ghana.

In India the government conducts an intensive revision of list every 5 years. An additional summary revision is conducted every year. Apart from this, citizens can request their inclusion in the voter list by applying through form 6. If the application is valid, the applicants name will get included in the list. In Israel, all citizens who are 18 years of age or older are automatically registered to vote. But in Hong kong all permanent residents who are above 18 years of age and suffering from no mental illness can register as voters. Imprisoned people can also register and vote since the laws prohibiting them from voting was ruled unconstitutional in 2009. The registered process is voluntary. In 2002 around 1.6 million permanent residents did not register. Lastly in Australia, the Australian Electoral Commission administers Australia's federal roll. Each states also has its own electoral commission office, but voters need only register with Australia Electoral Commission, which passes the registration details to relevant state

commissions. Voter registration is mandatory for all citizens 18 years of age or above. An individual has 8 weeks after turning 18 to register, but may register at any time with no penalty being enforced for failure to register. However if a change of address cause an individual to move to another electorate they are legally obliged to notify the electoral commission within 8 weeks. Each system comes with its own challenge which affects voter turnout.

The electoral system of states is one of the factors that contribute to low voter turnout in many countries practicing democratic governance in the world. Countries like the United States of America that has plurality voting system suffer low voter turnout of a kind. The plurality system of election means that it is a winner-takes all system, unlike the proportional voting system where the winner does not take all. Proportional representation voting has the tendency of bringing out many new voters. The use of electoral college like the one used by the United States of America further creates low voter turnout as many think it is unfair in a number of ways. A typical example in recent memory is the 2000 election, where George .W. Bush who lost the popular vote but won the vote in the Electoral College thereby making him president. Many researchers point to the American electoral system as the chief reason why people do not vote. Richard Timpone (1998) stated that democracy's face two options when designing an electoral system. Either the system can be designed to maximize registration of citizens or it can be designed in minimize corruption. In America the individual states have most often decided to reduce the possibility of corruption, which has led to the widespread use of the two-step registration and then vote process. In other countries the ability to register at the polls is often available.



According to Wikipedia project 2012, Canada's electoral system is what is referred to as the first past the post system. Here the candidate with the most votes wins; an absolute majority is not needed. Historically the prime minister could ask the Governor General to call an election at virtually any time, although one had to be called no later than five years after the return of the writs under section four of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, in 2007, the congregative - controlled parliament passed an act requiring fixed election dates in Canada every four years. If government losses a "no confidence" motion traditionally the prime minister will ask the governor general to call an election. In Canada a body called Election Canada informs Canadians of their rights to vote during an election, how to get on the national register of electors and the voters list and where and how they can vote. It also provides new releases, provide a toll-free telephone enquires offices, keep website opened and then organize meetings with community and ethno cultural groups. Where possible, election officers at polling stations speak both official languages; English and French. In addition a deputy returning officer can appoint and swear in an interpreter for the exercise. The peculiar nature of electoral systems can provide a hindrance for voters and might prevent many from voting.

Voter fatigue is another factor that leads to low voter turnout in many elections in the world. One factor that brings about voter fatigue is when elections are organised too often or at short intervals. Another reason for voter fatigue is where voters are bothered by the inconvenience of physically voting. Finally voters who think their votes will not count as usual may stay away from voting.

Voting procedures are also another reason for low voter turnout. There are varieties of methods that have been employed in many states for voting and such procedure could put eligible voters

off. Cumbersome voting procedures that put eligible voters through difficulties before casting their votes prevents voters from casting their votes and serves as a disincentive.

Another reason for low voter turnout is the presence of weak political parties. Weak political parties lack the ability to whip up the interest of people to rally behind them or to be enthusiastic about the political life of their nation and to find participation in governance interesting. Thus many are disinterested in voting especially when there has been no mobilisation by these political parties to get them interested in voting. Feddersen (2004); Lee (2004); and Uhlaner (1989) believe that mobilisation of voters by leaders in parties increase voter turnout in election. Hence the absence of strong political parties with adequate resources to engage the voters and mobilise them in many states creates apathy among voters resulting in low turnouts at elections. They cited examples from Pakistan. S. Rosenstone and M Hansen(1993) state that there is low turnout in election in the United States of America due to a decline in partisan identification. Many Americans have distanced themselves from parties and party activities. This can be attributed to the lack of a strong mobilization drive to get them interested in political matters and other national issues. This has drastically affected turnout in elections in the country.

A number of psychological factors within the minds of voters can also affect voter turnout. Prominent in psychological factors is the issue of political efficacy. People who believe that their votes will not make any difference may not be interested in voting in an election.

However, people are eager to vote when they believe that their vote could be pivotal or can make a difference. This is buttressed by the fact that voter turnout tend to increase in close election.

According to S. Rosenstone and M.Hausen (1993), distrust towards government is another factor that leads to low voter turnout. Citizens, who are disenchanted about the governments'



performance especially with its inability to fulfill its campaign promises, issues of corruption among political leaders, insensitivity of government towards their lives, lose trust in their system and are likely not to vote in an election again.

## **2.10 STRATEGIES TO INCREASE VOTER TURNOUT**

Mobilization of eligible voters by parties and politicians to vote or to be politically aware of issues in the state is likely to increase turnout. According to Mo et al (1991), rural people can easily be persuaded and mobilized to vote. Mobilization by parties or politicians keeps eligible voters aware of their civic responsibilities. It also whips up their interest in matters of governance and participation in governance and matters concerning the development and progress of the state. The thinking often goes that voting appear to be a low-benefit activity and that the best way to increase turnout is by lowering the costs. One encouraging sign is that when early voting is introduced up to 20 percent of the electorate takes advantage of it. The growing use of convenience voting has led many to study if there is any effect on turnout. Many studies have shown a slight increase in turnout. Gronke et al (2008) observed that most studies have found an increase between two and four percent.

Perhaps the most interesting study, Luechinger et al (2007) looked at Switzerland from 1970-2005 as different jurisdictions adopted no-excuse absentee voting. In what was called a “natural experiment” they found that the switch to no-excuse absentee was associated with a 4.1 percent increase in turnout during that period. Traugott (2004) also summarized the research by

saying that most studies show a small yet statically significant result. Other studies have shown conflicting results. Karp and Banducci (2000) claimed that only a complete switch to vote by mail increased turnout, while other studies have shown that many convenience voting methods have no effect. Other scholars have found that convenience voting leads only to an increase of those who vote absentee, but not an increase in voter turnout over all. To the limited extent that turnout is increased, this is not by getting new voters to turnout but by getting people who do vote to do so more often. Other scholars have shown that turnout may be briefly increased by more convenient forms of voting, but that the effect levels off over time. This is often explained by looking at the differences between those who take advantage of convenience voting methods and those who do not. Generally, it can be said that voters who vote early are those who were likely to vote anyway. Early voters tend to be both more interested in politics as well as more partisan than the average voter. These voters would be likely to turn out regardless of the methods used, and thus switching to convenience voting has little real effect on overall turnout. Studies of what affects turnout have been widespread and have often shown conflicting results. According to Posenstone and Hansen (1993), the level of education also has influence on voter turnout. Available evidence suggests that the more educated people are, the more likely they are to vote. It is assumed that education may influence voter turnout by improving the civic skills necessary to register and vote. Barohan et al (2007) points out an Indian state like West Bengal as an example of a state that has education influencing voter turnout. Education they add appears as the main positive determination of political participation. According to Blaydes (2006), the more educated people are, the less likely they are to vote when controlled by other factors. He explained that one possible explanation to this reaction is that in clientelistic environment, the votes of less educated people tend to be cheaper to purchase by candidates, and less educated

people are less more vulnerable to intimidation by authorities. Education and age have also proven consistently correlated with higher levels of turnout. In 1997, Benjamin Highton observed that 49 percent of citizens without a high school education voted while 90 percent of those with an advanced degree turned out. Many have blamed the registration process with causing this disparity, noting that those with lower education are more affected by registration requirements. Powell (1986) showed that each age increment increased in probability of voting, and numerous other studies have mirrored this effect. Turnout is also affected by what other races are on the ballot. Jackson (2000) found that turnout is higher in “high stakes” elections; such as when there are large differences between the candidates, when the race appears to be highly competitive, when the president is up for election as well. It therefore stands to reason that education of the citizenry is seen as a priority of all governments to promote not only the electioneering process but also the development of the entire democratic system of governance.

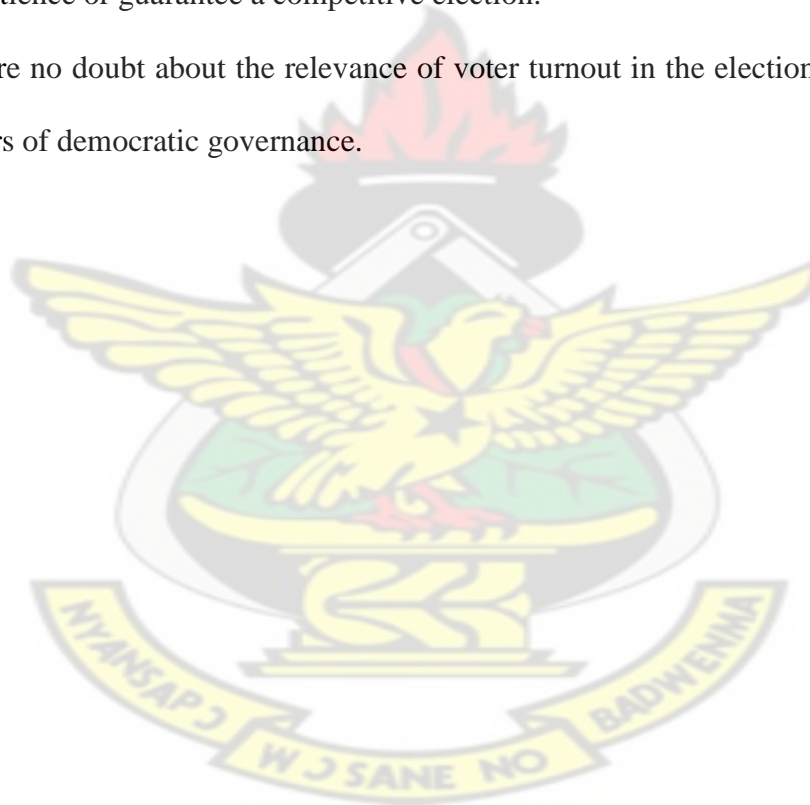
Motivation of people especially women to vote has to be intensified. According to Verba et al (1978), further studies have shown that men are more likely to be politically active than women. He adds that women are slightly more likely to vote than men. He suggested that gender differences in individuals and institutional characteristics might explain the differences in political participation between men and women. A report published by the International Food Policy Research Institute in 2008 also suggested that women in Pakistan are not concerned when it comes to developmental reforms and are disadvantaged when it comes to political participation. It is in this vein that they suggest efforts have to be made by governments and all other authorities responsible for elections to motivate women to step forward to vote in their numbers in elections.

The easing of voter registration requirements are also seen as a way of making many people who are eligible to register and vote. It is suggested that barriers to registration need to be removed. According to the social report (2008) the removal of barriers will enhance voter turnout. The one factor that is under the control of state officials is the registration process. Many times they attempt to remove what barriers might exist, while keeping enough restrictions to prevent fraud, in order to lower the perceived 'costs' of voting. This is seen in no-excuse absentee voting or periods of early voting, which enable anyone to acquire a ballot in advance of the election. Voters can then more easily fit voting into their schedule and choose when to vote. Same day registration allows voters to make only one trip and complete all the official tasks required for voting. Research on the effects of convenience voting is still in a relatively early stage.

It therefore stands to reason that evaluation of the citizenry is seen as a priority of all governments to promote not only the electioneering process but also the development of the entire democratization system of governance. It has also been advocated that making voting convenient and accessible to voters also promote high voter turnout. Election observers consistently counsel against the inconvenience of voting and the inaccessibility of voting in some developing countries. Turnout can also be affected by the surrounding environment; specifically when the district is dominated by one party turnout for the other party decreases. Much like competitiveness, the activity of the campaigns has been shown to increase turnout. Jackman (1987) observed that during close elections there is more incentive for the campaigns to mobilize supporters, and this in turn increases turnout. This result has been shown again and again in subsequent elections. Mobilization is dependent on campaign funding, and mobilization strategy will likely not benefit the state as a whole. Likewise, state officials cannot control the weather on Election Day or the demographic characteristics of their states. More recent studies have

focused on the effects of patience and turnout. For years scholars have stated that the benefits of voting are often not immediately seen, so those who understand and grasp this would see the benefits as higher than those who did not. Downs (1957) stated that some voters may even vote for a “hopeless” party now in the hope that it would grow into a viable party in the future. Fowler and Kam (2006) found that patience is correlated with political interest and church attendance, two factors that are correlated with a higher likelihood of voting. Many of these factors are not within control of the government. To increase turnout there is little way that a state can give its citizens more patience or guarantee a competitive election.

There is therefore no doubt about the relevance of voter turnout in the electioneering process as well as in matters of democratic governance.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter describes how the study was conducted. It describes the Research design, study population, sources of data, sampling procedures, instrument for data Collection and Methods of Data collection.

#### **3.2 STUDY POPULATION**

The study unit for the research is eligible voters in Ashaiman

#### **3.3 SAMPLING PROCEDURE**

The cluster sampling method was used to group all eligible voters in their respective communities at Ashaiman. Samples were drawn proportionately from each group to form the total sample size for the study.

The communities involved in the study were six, namely; Night Market, Ashaiman New Town, Asensuba, Nii Amui Community, Lebanon and Community 22.



### 3.4 SAMPLE SIZE DETERMINATION

The Yamane's (1965) simplified formula corrected to proportion was used for this study. It is defined as



Lebanon	1220	90
Community 22	311	23
Total	5000	370

**Source:** field work (2012)

### 3.5 SOURCES OF DATA

Both the primary and secondary sources of data were used for the study. In the case of the primary source of data questionnaires were used to collect data on factors affecting voter turnout at Ashaiman, strategies of promoting high voter turnout and the trends in voter turnout. The questionnaires are made up of both open ended and close ended questions.

In the case of the secondary sources of data, reports, books and journals on low voter turnout were studied.

### 3.6 INSTRUMENTS FOR DATA COLLECTION

The main instrument used in the collection of data was questionnaire. The questionnaires comprises of both open ended questions and closed ended questions.

The blend of the two types of questions was to solicit eligible voters' responses on the reasons for the low voter turnout, strategies to increase voter turnout and trends in voter turnout at Ashaiman.

A total of 370 questionnaires were self administrated to eligible voters. The study adopted the self administration method because of the high illiteracy rate in the study area and also the need for a high response rate.

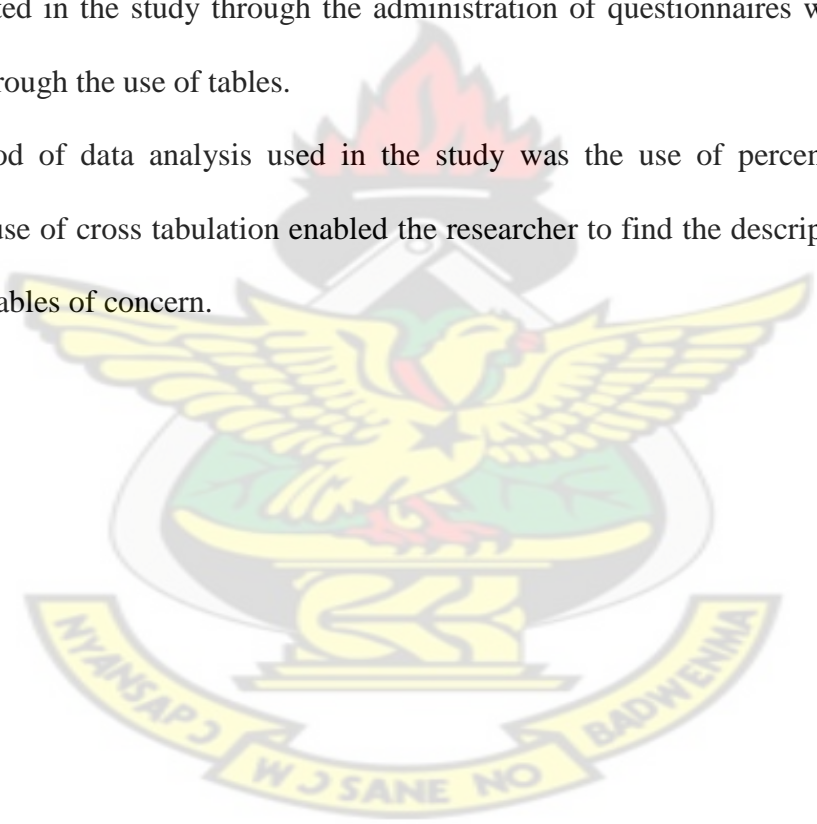
### **3.7 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research design used for this study is the Cross- Sectional Descriptive study approach, employing quantitative methods of data collection.

### **3.8 METHODS OF DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

The data Collected in the study through the administration of questionnaires were summarised and presented through the use of tables.

The main method of data analysis used in the study was the use of percentages and cross tabulation. The use of cross tabulation enabled the researcher to find the descriptive relationship between the variables of concern.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents and analyses the findings of the study. The findings are related to factors contributing to low voter turn out, strategies adopted to increase voter turn out and the trends in voter turn out. The socio-demographic characteristics of respondents are first analysed to describe how these back ground characteristics influence voter turnout.

#### **4.2 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS.**

The following socio-demographics were analysed; sex, age, educational characteristics, occupation and level of income.

#### **4.3 SEX OF RESPONDENTS**

Analysis on Sex of Respondents revealed that 56.8% of the respondents are males and the remaining 43.2% females. This indicates that more males were used in the study than females.

The details are presented in table 4.1

**Table 4.1: Sex of Respondents**

<b>Sex of Respondents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	210	56.8
Female	160	43.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** field work (2012)

#### 4.4 AGE OF RESPONDENTS

Analysis on age of respondents indicates that the study area is predominantly youthful. It was found that respondents aged 20-29 dominated the study and they constituted (33%). This was followed by those aged from 30-39 (22.43%), with those aged above 60 constituting (8.10%). The details are presented in table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Ages of Respondents.**

<b>Age of Respondents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than 20 years	36	9.72
20-29 years	122	33.00
30-39 years	83	22.43
40-49 years	56	15.13
50-59 years	43	11.62
60 years and above	30	8.10
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** field work (2012)

#### 4.5 EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF RESPONDENTS.

It was found that educational levels are generally low in the study area with majority (31.1%) having JHS/Middle School Leaving Certificate. This is followed by those with no formal Education (21.9%) and then SHS or Secondary Education (19.5%), Primary Education (18%) and then tertiary education (9.5 %.) The details are presented in table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Educational Background of Respondents**

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
No Formal Education	81	21.9
Primary Education	67	18.0
Middle School/JHS	115	31.1
SHS / Secondary	72	19.5
Tertiary	35	9.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** field work (2012)

#### 4.6 LEVEL OF INCOME OF RESPONDENTS

Levels of income were found to be generally low in the study area with (29.4 %) earning income less than GH₵100.00 per month. Those who earn between GH₵ 100.00 - GH₵ 250.00 per month constituted (32.4%).Those who earn between GH₵ 250.00 – GH₵500.00 per month constitute (13.9%). A small percentage (6.2%) earns more than GH₵ 1000.00 per month. The details are presented in table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Level of Income of Respondents**

Level of Income (GH ₵)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 100.00	109	29.4
100.00 – 250.00	120	32.4



250.00 – 500.00	51	13.9
500.00 – 750.00	37	10.0
750.00 – 1000.00	30	8.1
Above 1000.00	2.3	6.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** field work (2012)

#### 4.7 OCCUPATION OF RESPONDENTS

Analysis on occupation of respondents indicates that majority of the respondents (28.6%) are traders and businessmen. Skilled labourers and artisans constituted (22.7%) Unskilled Labourers and factory hands constituted (16.8%), Office workers, (11.4%) and the unemployed (13.2 %.)

The details are presented in table 4.5

**Table 4.5: Occupation of Respondents**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Unemployed Students	49	13.2
Apprentices	15	4.1
Office Worker	42	11.4
Trader / Businessmen	106	28.6
Skilled Labour/Artisans	84	22.7
Unskilled Labour	62	16.8
Farmers	12	3.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** field work (2012)

#### 4.8 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LOW VOTER TURNOUT.

The credibility of every election depends among others on the turnout of voters. Where voter turnout is low a lot of reservations are raised and the credibility of such elections suffers (Gelman et al 2002). In the light of the above accession the factors contributing to low voter turnout during previous District Level Elections in Ashaiman were examined and the results are presented in table 4.6.

**Table 4.6: Factors Contributing to Low Voter Turnout in Ashaiman District Level Elections**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Voter Fatigue	47	12.7
Disenchantment	71	19.1
Fear of Intimidation	59	15.9
Inadequate Voter Education	55	14.9
Long Queues	20	5.4
Inadequate Security at Polling Stations	51	13.8
Religious Factors	5	1.4
Apathy towards the system	28	7.6
Perception that their candidates will not win	15	4.1
Complacency	19	5.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** field work (2012)

From table 4.6 above it was found that a major factor contributing to low voter turnout was disenchantment of voters. This constituted (19.1 %.).The study found that most of the voters are

disappointed in the performance of the previous Assembly men and women as well as the unit committee members that they elected into office. The study found that promises made by such people were not honoured and after being in power showed little commitment to the growth of their electoral areas. Based on this most voters do not see why they should waste their time to queue and vote for people who will not be committed to their course. Some respondents complained bitterly that they waste their time and resources to vote but they see no development in their communities. Others complained that they hardly see their assemblyman or woman let alone their unit committee man or woman.

Another major factor identified is the fear of intimidation of people from the opposing parties. The study found out that most often during electioneering campaign it most often turn violent and opposing parties use assault and verbal abuse to intimidate people perceived to be in line with their opponents. The fear of being intimidated causes a lot of voters to abstain from voting especially the elderly. Some respondents complained of threats and the fear of being branded an enemy. Others also feared their family members could be in danger if they are suspected to belong to an opposing candidate.

Wikipedia (2011) buttresses this with the finding that intimidation and the use of violence is becoming a tool for suppressing voter turnout from opposing camps in sub-Saharan African countries. This finding is inconsistent with reports on 2005 elections in Bagdad, Iraq, which found that despite the widespread violence and intimidation which characterized their presidential and parliamentary elections there was high voter turnout.

Inadequate voter education (14.9%) was identified as another factor contributing to low voter turnout. It was found that most often voter education comes late. The timing of the education is often too close to the election date and so little time is left for an intensive education. Most often

the education is carried on national media, especially on the television and radio. But most often a number of people do not have access to these facilities and are cut off from this information.. It was also found out that posters and flyers educating people about the election were often in English which makes understanding difficult for those with little or no education. A common phenomenon that stems from lack of voter education is to see people move from one voting centre to the other looking for their polling stations to vote. When people move in search of their names in the first two polling stations they visit they become disillusioned and may decide not to vote at all.

Voter Fatigue (12.7%) was found to be another contributing factor to Low voter turnout. Respondents indicated that they were tired of the voting process. The respondents indicated that the changes in the process of acquiring voter's identity cards for an example are too much. According to some of them at a point there was the need to change the black and white identity card and then finally to the Biometric Voter Registration. All these processes required that the voters needed to be present at the point for the registration. Some Voters see these processes as worrying. It was also found that people are fatigued because no physical changes as a result of voting have happened in their communities.

Inadequate security at polling stations (13.8%) was found to be another reason for low voter turnout. Some respondents were not satisfied with the security arrangements during such elections. Those who feel their lives will be threatened will not turn up to vote. Some respondents complained that they feel insecure at their polling stations during such elections. They added that the security at various polling stations must be strengthened so that they will feel free to go and vote.

On the contrary, others complained of the presence of a lot of security personnel on patrol during such elections. They claimed that frightens them.

Apathy towards voting was also identified as another reason for low voter turnout. This constituted (7.6%) of the responses. It was found out that some people are apathetic and nothing will move them to go and vote even though it is a national assignment. No specific reason can be given for indifferent attitude. But the study found out that people from low income status tend to be more apathetic to voting than those with high income status. Unfortunately no reported studies were found to justify this claim.

Long queues normally formed during voting (5.4%) were found as a factor contributing to low voter turnout. The study found out that the long queues at polling stations deter people from coming to vote, especially the aged and pregnant women. The way out of this is to re-demarcate large electoral areas in order to reduce the long queues. The study further found out that long queues normally arise due to inefficiencies of polling officers. It was found that some officers are very slow in any task assigned them in the cause of elections causing increases in waiting time of voters.

Complacency arising from the perception that a preferred candidate has already won that election or lost also was seen as a factor contributing to low turnout. This constituted (5.1%). When one perceives his candidate to have already won the elections the motivation to vote in order to win the election is no longer there since he or she thinks whether he or she votes or not his or her candidate will win.

The religious affiliations of voters (1.4%) were found to be another factor contributing to low voter turnout. The study found that even though voting is a national assignment and all nationals

eligible are under obligation to vote, religious dogmas and doctrines often prevent followers of such religions to abstain from voting.

From the above there are many factors contributing to low voter turnout but the key factors are disenchantment, fear of intimidation and inadequate voter education in the study area.

#### 4.9 STRATEGIES ADOPTED TO INCREASE VOTER TURNOUT

The Strategies the Electoral Commission of Ghana is adopting to increase voter turnout are presented in table 4.7 below.

**Table 4.7: Strategies adopted to increase Voter Turnout**

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Increase Voter Education	174	47.0
Strengthening Security	89	24.1
Continuous Registration for people who turn 18 years	47	12.7
Improve access to polling stations	60	16.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** field work (2012)

From table 4.7 it was found that a major strategy being adopted to increase voter turnout in the District Level Elections (DLE) is to increase voter education. This constituted (47%). It was found that the Electoral Commission of Ghana uses advertisements and jingles on television and radio to educate the general public on the elections. The National Broadcasting Corporation



(GBC) is often used in major educational projects affecting the whole nation. However other private television and radio stations are often involved in the education and publicity. A very comprehensive plan has been put in place to intensify voter education at the district level. Besides the general education, district offices of the Electoral Commission of Ghana have been tasked to spearhead voter education at the district level. A major strategy being adopted to strengthen voter education is to increase the funds for public education in regional and district offices and also to collaborate strongly with National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) for structured public education on the elections. There is also face- to-face interaction with stakeholders like the political parties, religious bodies, NGOs, schools, traditional leaders, opinion leaders and associations and organized groups in the district. Public educators and public announcers are to be recruited to assist with the education. There are plans to have an extensive use of flyers, brochures and posters.

It was also found out that early voter education has been adopted so that the public will have enough time to assimilate any educational information being given in order to act appropriately. All these measures are in operation in Ashaiman in an effort to increase voter turnout.

Strengthening of security at the polling stations (24.1%) was also indentified as a strategy adopted by the Electoral Commission and the National Security. It was found that every polling station will be guarded by an armed peace officer. This is to reduce intimidation and any lawless activity at the polling centre. It is also meant to assure voters of their safety so that they will be willing to come and vote. As part of strengthening security during voting the security services have been encouraged to intensify patrols to volatile communities in order to arrest any lawless behaviour during voting.

The Electoral Commission of Ghana has also re demarcated a number of electoral areas in order to reduce long queues as well as increase access to polling stations. For instance the study area had 11 electoral areas but has been re demarcated and now has 17 Electoral areas. Due to re demarcation polling stations have also been increased in the study area from 96 to 130 all with the view to increasing access. The study found that some polling stations are not accessible and efforts have been made to relocate these inaccessible polling stations to more accessible areas.

Another strategy adopted by the electoral commission to increase voter turnout is the continuous registration of people who turn 18 years. With the introduction of the Biometric Voter Registration any person who turns 18years will have to visit the district office of the Electoral Commission in his or her area for registration. When implemented, all who turn 18 years in a particular year will have the chance of being added to the voters register without having to wait till a general registration period before doing so.

This innovation of continuous registration is a novel strategy that will increase young people's enthusiasm to register for voting.

In conclusion the main strategy being adopted by the Electoral Commission to improve voter turnout is to increase voter education in order to reduce disenchantment, apathy, poor perception and fear so that people will turn out in their numbers to vote.

#### **4.10 TRENDS IN THE TURNOUT IN DISTRICT LEVEL ELECTION AT ASHAIMAN**

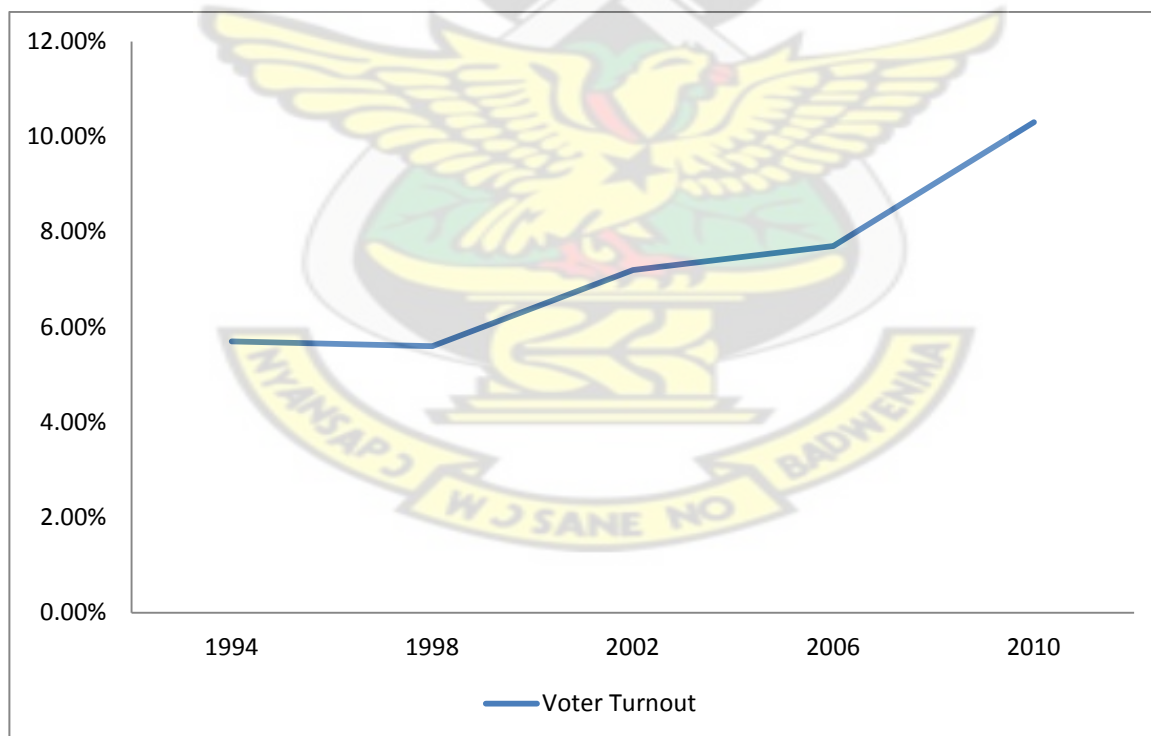
Secondary data on voter turnout was collected from the District Electoral Commission Office at Ashaiman. The Details are presented in table 4.8 below.

**Table 4.8: Trend in Voter Turnout in District Level Elections (DLE) at Ashaiman from 1994 to 2010**

District Level Election	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010
Total Votes Cast	5,116	5,760	7,950	10,221	15,320
Registered Voters	89,500	103,000	110,747	133,054	148,791
Percentage Voter Turnout	5.7%	5.6%	7.2%	7.7%	10.3%

**Source:** Electoral Commission of Ghana

**Trend in Voter Turnout in District Level Elections (DLE) at Ashaiman from (1994- 2010)**



**Figure 4.1: Trend in Voter Turnout in District Level Elections (DLE) at Ashaiman from (1994- 2010)**

From table 4.8 it was found that the total vote cast over the five successive district level elections kept increasing over the years with 2010 having the highest vote cast of 15,320 out of 148,791 registered voters. Voter turnout was 10.3%. In terms of percentage turnout it was found out that, in 1994 it was 5.7%, this decreased by 0.1% in 1998. After which it rose to 7.2%. The district level election held in 2006 had a percentage turnout of 7.7%. This increased to 10.3% in the 2010 district level elections.

The likely reason for the drop in the turnout in the 1998 district level election was due to the fact that the district level election was a new concept and the people did not understand it well.

Thus, the people felt betrayed when their expectations were not met by their Assembly men and women and Unit Committee members. For this reason, some voters decided not to commit themselves in the next district level election.

There is a general trend emerging from the five successful district level elections held at Ashaiman. It was found that there is a general increase in terms of registered voters, total votes cast and percentage turnout over the five successive elections. This suggests that in general even though turnout is always less than 10% except in 2010 which was 10.3% there had been improvement in every successive election. The likely reason for this improvement for voter turnout is the ever increasing urban population at Ashaiman which leads to high registered voters.

Based on this trend it can be projected that the next district level election in 2014 at Ashaiman will have a voter turnout higher than the current percentage of 10.3%.

In conclusion, it has been found that even though voter turnouts in the five successive district elections are low there is an improvement in voter turnout over every successive election with

the exception of 1998. It is expected that the next district level elections which will be held in 2014 will also have a low voter turnout of less than 15%.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

#### **5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

This study assessed voter turnout in the District Level Elections (DLE) in Ashaiman. This study was chosen because of the perception that voter turnout during District Level Elections have been falling over successive elections due to voter fatigue. The study was carried out to determine factors contributing to voter turnout in the District Level Elections, strategies adopted by management to increase voter turnout and the trends in turnouts in District Level Elections over successive elections.

The study adopted the survey method of data collection and analysis. This was done by distributing 370 questionnaires to eligible voters in the suburbs of Ashaiman. Each suburb was considered as a cluster and samples were drawn proportionately from each suburb until the intended and sample size was reached. The suburbs are the Night Market, Ashaiman New Town, Asensuba, Nii Amui Community, Lebanon and community 22. Data collected from the study was presented by tables and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

#### **5.2 CONCLUSION**

The following findings were considered before the conclusions were drawn.

1. There are more male voters in Ashaiman than females
2. Majority of the voters in Ashaiman are between 20 – 29 years.

3. The level of education among the voters in Ashaiman is generally low with majority having up to middle school and Junior High School education.
4. Most of the voters are traders and private businessmen whose level of income is generally low.
5. Major factors contributing to low voter turnout in the District Level Elections are disenchantment of voters, Voter fatigue, fear of intimidation and inadequate voter education.
6. Other factors considered to be minor in accounting for low voter turnout are religious factors, complacency, long queues at the polling stations and the perception that one's candidate will not win.
7. Strategies being adopted by the Electoral Commission Office at Ashaiman are to increase voter education, strengthen security and improve access to polling stations.
8. Voter turnout was found to be increasing constantly in the past five successive district level elections, even though this was an increase the total turnout was found to be low where in most cases the turnout was less than 10%

It can be concluded from the following findings that there are a lot of factors contributing to low voter turnout in the Ashaiman municipality with the main factors being disenchantment, voter fatigue, fear of intimidation and inadequate voter education.

Based on these factors the trend analysis revealed that even though there is low voter turnout of which in all cases the increase in turnout is less or slightly above 10% there had been a consistent increase of which the percentage increase is not significant irrespective of the strategies being adopted to increase voter turnout.



### 5.3 RECOMMENDATION

1. Among the major factors contributing to low voter turnout was the fear of intimidation. To address this problem the Electoral Commission of Ghana needs to strengthen the security in polling stations and also ensure that adequate security are given to all voters so that they can come out freely to vote.
2. There is the need to provide adequate voter education in order for all voters to make informed decisions on the electoral processes involved in the District Level Election.
3. The trend analysis suggests that there is low voter turnout in all the four successive District Level Elections held in 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006 and 2010 and it is likely to fall in the next District Level Elections in 2014. Its therefore being recommended that there should be an aggressive voter education on the importance of District Level Elections so that the issues of voter fatigue as well as apathy towards the system of voting will be reduced.
4. The issue of continuous registration for people who turned 18 years in the course of the year must be considered and implemented in order to reduce the unnecessary anxiety in the process of registering such people.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE LEARNING**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

I am a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) student of the above university and need information to carry out a study on the topic: Assessment of Voter Turnout in District Level Elections at Ashaiman Constituency. This is for academic purposes only and information provided will be treated as confidential. It will be appreciated if you could spend some time to complete the questionnaire.

#### **SECTION A: SOCIO - DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please tick [✓] where applicable

1. What is your sex

a) Male [ ]

b) Female [ ]

2. In which age range do you belong?

a) Less than 20 years [ ]

b) 20 – 29 [ ]

c) 30 – 39 [ ]

d) 40 – 49 [ ]

e) 50 – 59 [ ]

f) 60 + [ ]

3. What is your Marital Status

a) Married [ ]

b) Separate [ ]

c) Divorced [ ]

d) Single [ ]

e) Widowed [ ]

4. What is your level of education?

a) No formal education [ ]

b) Primary education [ ]

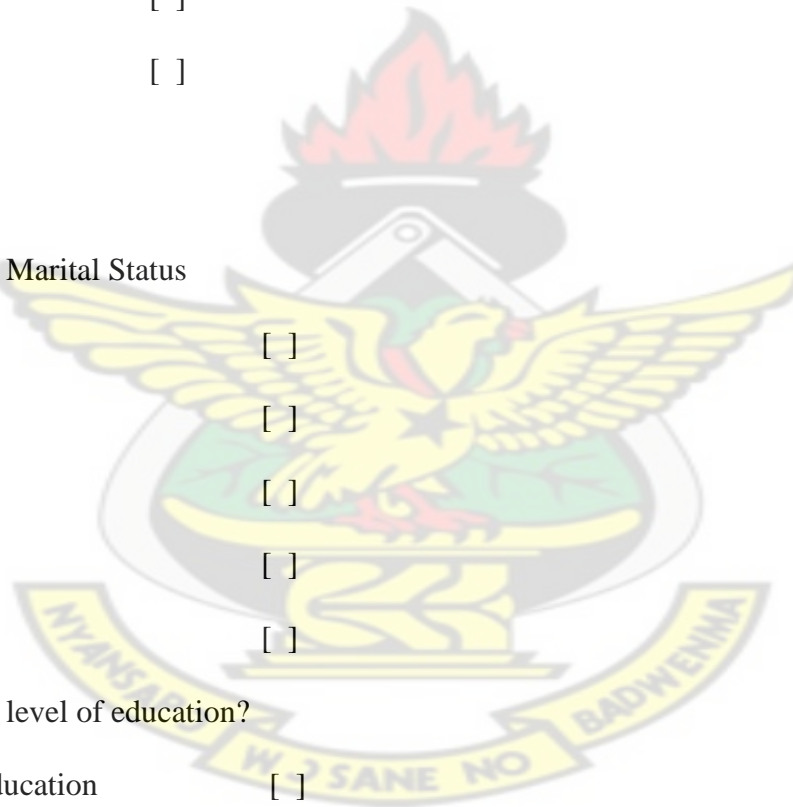
c) Middle / JHS Education [ ]

d) SHS / Secondary Education [ ]

e) Tertiary education [ ]

f) Others (Specify).....

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5. What is your level of income?

- a) Less than GH¢ 100.00 [ ]
- b) GH¢ 100.00 - GH¢ 250.00 [ ]
- c) GH¢ 250.00 - GH¢ 500.00 [ ]
- d) GH¢ 500.00 - GH¢ 750.00 [ ]
- e) GH¢ 750.00 - GH¢ 1000.00 [ ]
- f) More than GH¢ 1000.00 [ ]

6. What is your formal occupation?

- a) Unemployed [ ]
- b) Student / Apprentice [ ]
- c) Former [ ]
- d) Trader / Businessman [ ]
- e) Artisan [ ]
- f) Civil Servant [ ]
- g) Others .....

## **SECTION B: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LOW VOTER TURNOUT IN DISTRICT LEVEL ELECTIONS IN ASHAIMAN**

**1. What are the factors contributing to Low Voter Turnout in District Level Elections?**

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**2. How can these factors be reduced?**

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**SECTION C: STRATEGIES BEING ADOPTED TO INCREASE VOTER TURNOUT  
IN ASHAIMAN**

1. What are the strategies being adapted to increase voter turnout in Ashaiman?

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2. Whose responsibility is it to see to the increase in voter turnout?

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