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FROM TRIUMPH TO DEFEAT: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE NEW PATRIOTIC PARTY'S (NPP) 2024 ELECTORAL LOSS IN GHANA: EXPLORING THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the 2024 electoral defeat of Ghana's New Patriotic Party (NPP), exploring the political, economic, and social dynamics that contributed to this pivotal event. Using Social Choice Theory as a guiding framework and a qualitative research approach, the study incorporates data from interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. The findings reveal that economic hardships, such as high inflation, unemployment, and currency depreciation, significantly undermined public confidence in the NPP's leadership. Furthermore, the party's heavy reliance on legacy achievements, particularly the Free SHS initiative, failed to resonate with voters' immediate concerns. In contrast, the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) capitalized on public dissatisfaction by effectively mobilizing grassroots support and leveraging social media. The increasing influence of urban youth also played a crucial role in shaping the electoral outcome. Based on these insights, the study recommends policy reforms aimed at addressing inflation, creating jobs, and promoting equitable development. Additionally, it emphasizes the need for improved communication strategies centred on transparency and voter engagement, youth-focused programs to enhance employment and skills development, and investments in regional infrastructure to ensure balanced growth.

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INTRODUCTION

The 2024 general elections in Ghana marked a pivotal moment in the nation's political landscape, highlighting the dynamism of electoral politics in Africa. The New Patriotic Party (NPP), which had previously enjoyed consecutive electoral successes in 2016 and 2020 under the leadership of President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, suffered a historic defeat at the hands of the National Democratic Congress and John Dramani Mahama. This loss ended an era characterized by significant political dominance and raised critical questions about the factors determining voter behaviour and electoral outcomes. The ruling party saw its 137 parliamentary representations drop to under 90 in 4 years, spanning 2020 to 2024. The downward spiral saw NPP dropping from 169 parliamentary majority in 2016 to 137 in 2020 and finally under 90 parliamentarians in 2024. Historically, Ghana has been a model of democratic stability in sub-Saharan Africa, with peaceful power transitions and robust electoral participation (Gyampo, 2023). The NPP, known for its liberal economic policies and ambitious programs such as the Free Senior High School (Free SHS) initiative, earned widespread acclaim for its developmental focus (Asiedu, 2023).

Their focus on social initiatives like Free SHS, One Million Dollars per Constituency, One District One Factory, and One Village One Dam influenced voters' choice of campaign message. This won them power in 2016 and 2020 but failed to rescue them in the landslide defeat in 2024. The party's defeat in 2024 highlighted a complex interplay of factors, including economic challenges, governance issues, arrogance of government officials, and changing voter demographics (Daily Statesman, 2024). The election results reflected growing dissatisfaction with governance outcomes, including economic instability, unemployment, arrogance, and perceptions of corruption, which eroded public trust in the ruling party (Mensah & Appiah, 2024). Additionally, the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) capitalized on these challenges, deploying effective messaging strategies to mobilize disillusioned voters (Owusu, 2024). Furthermore, the opposition NDC capitalised on the frailties of the ruling government made themselves visible and unseated the incumbent in arguably the biggest political upset in Ghana's geopolitical space. This political shift confirmed the importance of understanding the dynamics that led to the NPP's 2024 mass defeat. Ghana's democratic maturity is often lauded for fostering government accountability. Hence, the 2024 electoral outcome offers a unique opportunity to examine the interplay of economic policies, social

dynamics, and political strategies in shaping electoral results within emerging democracies.

What is the Problem?

Despite the NPP's prior successes in 2016 and 2020, the party's dramatic loss in the 2024 elections painted a significant gap in governance and political strategy. Existing research on electoral outcomes in Ghana tends to focus on quantitative metrics, such as vote margins and turnout rates, often neglecting the qualitative aspects of voter perceptions and policy impacts (Acheampong, 2024). This approach limits a comprehensive understanding of the socio-political dynamics that inform voter behaviour, particularly in the context of dissatisfaction with economic management and governance failures. The NPP's tenure was marked by ambitious programs such as the Free SHS, Planting for Food and Jobs (PFJ), One Village One Dam, One District One Factory, and One Million Dollars per Constituency, which were designed to improve access to education, alleviate poverty and promote economic transformation. However, the period leading up to the 2024 elections saw escalating economic challenges, including high inflation, currency depreciation, rising cost of fuel, and unemployment, which severely impacted public sentiment (Boakye & Nyarko, 2024). While the party implemented policy responses, these were perceived as insufficient or poorly communicated, leaving a credibility gap with the electorate. In the lead-up to the 2024 General Elections, the Ghanaian electorate was presented with a choice between the ruling government's "Upgrade" agenda and the opposition party's "Resetting Ghana" agenda. Moreover, shifting demographics and the growing influence of social media further complicated the NPP's ability to control political narratives. Young voters, who constituted a significant portion of the electorate, expressed frustration over limited opportunities and unmet expectations (Sarpong, 2023). The viral nature of social media made available frailties of the government, an informing platform ahead of the election. Various social media handles, dedicated to exposing the woes of the government, fed the youth and other socialites with updates on government issues. These frustrations were compounded by allegations of corruption and governance lapses, which became focal points in the opposition's campaign strategy. The central research problem for this study is the lack of an integrated understanding of the political, economic, and social factors that culminated in the NPP's 2024 defeat. The study therefore aims to address this gap by exploring the following objectives:

1. To examine the extent to which economic challenges influenced voter's perceptions and behaviour in the 2024 elections.
2. To assess the effectiveness of the NPP's political strategies in comparison to those employed by the opposition NDC.
3. To examine how demographic shifts and social dynamics, particularly youth engagement and urbanization, influence electoral outcomes.

It is our expectation that as the NPP investigates its significant defeat to the NDC in the 2024 elections, this paper will offer valuable insights for political actors and contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors that led to the NPP's loss.

Empirical Review: This section explores theoretical and empirical foundations to analyse the NPP's electoral defeat in 2024, integrating insights from Social Choice Theory and recent studies on political strategy, economic factors, and social dynamics.

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by the Social Choice Theory. The Social Choice Theory is rooted in the work of Kenneth Arrow and further developed by academic scholars such as Sen (1999). It provides a robust framework for understanding collective decision-making in democratic systems. This theory examines how individual preferences are aggregated into collective outcomes, highlighting the complexities

and potential failures in representing diverse voter interests (Arrow, 1963). It further posits that collective decisions are influenced by the framing of political options, the salience of policy issues, and the heterogeneity of voter preferences (Sen, 1999). Social Choice Theory thus provides a lens to assess how the interplay of economic, political, and social dynamics influenced voter decisions, revealing the systemic challenges in achieving electoral alignment. It particularly provides a lens through which to examine the NPP's inability to align its policy narratives with voter priorities, compounded by rising economic inequality, which may have disrupted the aggregation of support needed for electoral victory (Boakye & Nyarko, 2024). Furthermore, vocal voices against the national cathedral and the viral e-levy brouhaha fortified the social choice theory as a guiding framework for this study.

Empirical Studies

Political strategies are critical in shaping electoral outcomes, as they provide frameworks for engaging voters, framing issues, and responding to opposition narratives. Owusu (2024) highlights the role of framing and messaging in political campaigns, emphasizing that the strategic articulation of policies and promises can significantly influence voter perceptions. This aligns with Adjei and Boateng's (2024) analysis of the growing importance of social media platforms, which provide dynamic spaces for political discourse, voter mobilization, and real-time feedback. Moreover, Gyampo (2023) underscores the necessity of swift counter-narratives to opposition criticisms, suggesting that an agile and responsive communication strategy can mitigate the negative impacts of political attacks. This approach ensures that political campaigns maintain credibility while addressing emerging social issues promptly. Mensah and Appiah's (2024) study offers a comparative perspective, examining the divergent strategies of Ghana's major political parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The NPP's 2024 campaign strategies faced substantial criticism for their inability to align with evolving voter priorities, a shortfall that the NDC exploited through grassroots mobilization. By directly engaging disappointed voters, the NDC was able to strengthen its appeal and capitalize on the perceived governance failures of the ruling party. The involvement of the average Ghanaian in the development of the people's manifesto whipped NDC ahead of the ruling NPP in the build-up to the 2024 election. Research by Owusu (2024) highlighted the importance of framing and messaging in political campaigns, noting that the NDC's focus on economic hardship and corruption resonated more deeply with voters than the NPP's emphasis on past achievements. Additionally, the opposition utilized social media platforms to amplify voter grievances, an approach that proved particularly effective among urban youth (Adjei & Boateng, 2024). Comparatively, the NPP's reliance on traditional campaign methods and its delayed response to criticisms weakened its political capital. Studies indicate that strategic missteps, such as the inability to counter opposition narratives and failure to effectively engage key demographic groups, significantly contributed to a party's electoral loss (Gyampo, 2023).

Economic conditions often serve as a decisive factor in shaping voter behaviour, particularly in emerging democracies. Voters are highly responsive to fluctuations in economic indicators such as inflation, unemployment rates, and currency stability. Scholars like Boakye and Nyarko (2024) argue that inflation figures exceeding 40% and a depreciating currency have adverse tangible impacts on the public's perception of a government's competence, as these conditions directly affect household finances and purchasing power. Similarly, rising unemployment, particularly among the youth, has been identified as a significant driver of voter dissatisfaction. Adjei (2023) emphasizes that high unemployment rates not only diminish public trust in leadership but also contribute to the erosion of political loyalty, particularly among younger, more economically vulnerable populations. The escalating costs of goods, services, and utilities further complicate economic grievances. Ampofo and Yeboah (2023) discuss how the rising cost of living increases the economic burden on households, making economic management a pivotal issue in voter

decision-making. During the NPP's tenure, flagship programs such as the Free SHS and Planting for Food and Jobs were implemented with the aim of improving social equity and boosting agricultural productivity. However, Boakye and Nyarko (2024) observed that the perceived limited impact of these programs on household incomes weakened the party's economic credibility. This dynamic created an environment ripe for opposition narratives, which linked the government's economic challenges to broader governance failures, management paralysis and gross incompetence. Empirical evidence also points to the disproportionate economic impact on marginalized groups. For instance, women and rural populations reported higher levels of financial insecurity, eroding the NPP's support in traditional strongholds (Sarpong, 2023). This aligns with Social Choice Theory's emphasis on the role of economic equity in shaping collective decisions.

Emerging social dynamics, particularly the increasing political engagement of younger and urban populations, have become pivotal in shaping electoral outcomes in recent years. Adjei and Boateng (2024) report that the proportion of voters aged 18-35 reached a historic high during the 2024 elections. This demographic, characterized by their agitation over unemployment and limited economic opportunities, posed a significant influence over the electoral landscape. Social media has also emerged as a vital tool for political mobilization, particularly among the youth. Owusu (2024) highlights how platforms like Twitter (now X) and Facebook were instrumental in amplifying youth-led movements and critiquing government policies. The opposition NDC capitalized on these platforms to foster a narrative of change, describing the ruling NPP as disconnected from contemporary issues. This aligns with the findings of Mensah and Appiah (2024), who emphasize the role of social media in facilitating real-time political discourse and mobilizing younger voters. Economic policies such as the taxation of betting, a popular activity among the youth, further influenced perceptions. Adjei and Yeboah (2023) argue that tax regimes targeting youth-inclined activities often compound existing economic frustrations, feeding into the broader narratives of government insensitivity to their challenges. This, coupled with perceptions of corruption and poor management of flagship programs like the Free SHS, further moved the younger electorate away from the ruling NPP. Cultural and social tensions also played a role. Tribal conflict in regions such as Bawku highlighted the government's inability to ensure national cohesion, further undermining its credibility (Gyampo, 2023). The combination of high unemployment, poor economic management, and perceptions of corruption created a perfect storm of disillusionment among voters.

METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the methodological approach adopted to investigate the factors contributing to the New Patriotic Party's (NPP) 2024 electoral defeat, emphasizing the locale of the study, research design, sampling strategy, and data collection methods and analysis techniques.

Study Area: This study examines the electoral performance of the New Patriotic Party in the 2024 General Elections. The study took place in key regional capitals including Wa in the Upper West Region, Accra in the Greater Accra Region, Kumasi in the Ashanti Region, Techiman in the Bono East Region, and Tamale in the Northern Region. These locations were purposefully selected to capture demographic and geographic diversity. Data from these locales were collected using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis, allowing for a detailed understanding of voter priorities and governance perceptions. This comprehensive approach provides a foundation for understanding the political, economic, and social dynamics that influenced the NPP's 2024 defeat.

Research Design: The study employed a qualitative research design approach to explore the factors that led to the NPP's electoral loss. This approach facilitates an in-depth understanding of voter perceptions, party strategies, and contextual dynamics. Qualitative

methods are particularly effective for capturing the nuanced, subjective experiences of stakeholders, such as voters, party officials, and analysts, allowing for a rich interpretation of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental or selective sampling, is widely recognized in qualitative research for its ability to target participants who possess specific knowledge or experience relevant to the study. According to Patton (2015), purposive sampling allows researchers to deliberately select individuals who can provide in-depth insights into the phenomenon being studied. This method is particularly effective in studies where the focus is on understanding specific perspectives or experiences rather than achieving broad generalizability. Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasize that purposive sampling is most appropriate in exploratory studies, where the aim is to obtain detailed and contextually rich information. This aligns with the views of Etikan et al. (2016), who argue that purposive sampling is ideal for identifying key informants with the ability to provide meaningful contributions to the research objectives. For this study, purposive sampling was employed to select participants with direct experience or expertise relevant to the 2024 elections. The study's focus on voter behaviour, political strategies, and socio-economic dynamics necessitated the engagement of diverse respondents who could provide nuanced insights.

Selection of Respondents: Political analysts were selected due to their expertise in evaluating electoral trends, campaign strategies, and the broader political landscape. These individuals were identified through their media appearances, or affiliations with think-tanks and academic institutions. Their insights were crucial for understanding the strategic decisions made by political parties and their impact on voter behaviour. Campaign strategists for both NDC and NPP were chosen based on their involvement in the 2024 elections, either as advisors to political parties or as independent consultants. Their first-hand experience in designing and executing political campaigns provided valuable perspectives on how various strategies resonated with different voter segments. Youth representatives, including leaders of student unions and youth advocacy groups, were included to capture the perspectives of the increasingly politically active younger population. Given the study's emphasis on unemployment, social media influence, and youth engagement, their participation was essential for understanding how these factors shaped voter behaviour. Economic experts, such as academics and policymakers, were selected to provide insights into the economic challenges faced during the NPP's tenure. Their analysis helped contextualize the economic grievances that influenced voter decisions, such as inflation, currency depreciation, and unemployment. Community leaders and representatives from CSOs were included to address issues of tribal conflict, perceptions of corruption, and grassroots mobilization. Their engagement with local communities offered a ground-level view of the socio-political dynamics at play. This purposive sampling technique ensured that each category of respondents was carefully chosen based on their ability to contribute to the specific research objectives. This approach also enhanced the study's reliability by focusing on participants with the most relevant knowledge and experience.

Sample Size

The study involved 50 participants, distributed as follows:

For the voters, 20 participants from diverse demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds were selected purposively. Additionally, 10 participants from NPP were also selected. Finally, 10 election experts specializing in Ghanaian electoral politics, and 10 participants from Civil Society Representatives. The sample size was determined based on the principle of saturation, ensuring that sufficient data are collected to identify recurring themes and insights (Guest et al., 2006).

Data Collection Methods

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection method, enabling an in-depth exploration of participant's perspectives. A total of 30 interviews were conducted across different stakeholders led by the youth, election campaign strategists, civil society organizations and party executives. These stakeholders were selected based on merit and skill-set, as described in the respondents' selection section. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and via video conferencing platforms, depending on participant availability. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was recorded with the participant's consent for accurate transcription and analysis.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): The study engaged in seven focus group discussions (FGDs) to capture collective perspectives and dynamic exchanges of ideas from distinct sub-groups: youth, women, and civil society. Each group consisted of 6–8 participants, carefully selected to represent their respective demographics and contribute to the study's focus on the 2024 elections.

Youth Group: The youth group included participants aged 18–35, representing students, unemployed graduates, and young professionals. Discussions centred on issues of employment, social mobility, and the growing influence of social media on electoral engagement. The group highlighted frustration over limited job opportunities and economic hardships, as well as the power of digital platforms like Twitter and TikTok in shaping political discourse and organizing grassroots movements. Their concerns reflected a demand for tangible economic policies and accountability in governance.

Women's Group: The women's group comprised participants from diverse economic and social backgrounds, including market traders, professionals, and homemakers. Discussions explored gender-specific concerns such as economic insecurity, unequal access to opportunities, and underrepresentation in political decision-making. Participants voiced dissatisfaction with the implementation of social policies, noting the disproportionate economic burden on women, particularly in rural and low-income households. This group underscored the need for inclusive policies that address systemic inequalities and promote women's participation in governance.

Civil Society Group: The civil society group consisted of leaders and members of community-based organizations, advocacy groups, and non-governmental organizations. Discussions in this group focused on governance, corruption, and voter mobilization. Participants shared insights on the effectiveness of grassroots campaigns, the impact of perceived corruption on voter trust, and the role of civic education in empowering communities to make informed electoral choices. Their contributions highlighted the importance of transparency and equitable resource distribution in fostering voter confidence. The diverse characteristics and experiences of participants enriched the study, offering valuable insights into the socio-economic and political dynamics of the 2024 elections.

Data Analysis

Primary Data Analysis: The primary data collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were analysed using thematic and narrative analysis. These methods allowed for the identification of recurring patterns, themes, and participant experiences related to governance challenges, voter priorities, and campaign strategies. The thematic analysis involved coding the data to identify categories such as economic dissatisfaction, perceptions of corruption, and the influence of social media. Narrative analysis provided deeper insights into participants' stories, enabling a contextual understanding of how individual experiences shaped collective voter behaviour. These approaches ensured a rich interpretation of the primary qualitative data, capturing the perspectives of youth, women, and civil society groups on the 2024 elections.

Secondary Data Analysis: Document analysis was conducted to complement the primary data, offering contextual insights and supporting the triangulation of findings. The reviewed documents included:

NPP's 2024 Campaign Manifesto ("Bold Solutions"): This document was analysed to evaluate the alignment of the party's policy promises with voter priorities. Specific programs, such as Free Senior High School (Free SHS) and economic stabilization measures, were examined for their perceived relevance and effectiveness.

Policy Documents and Government Reports: These readily available provided an overview of the NPP's governance outcomes and implementation gaps, particularly in addressing inflation, unemployment, and social inequities. Various government reports were reviewed to augment the ruling party's manifesto and any eventual gap either in implementation or availability.

Media Reports: News articles and opinion pieces were analysed to understand public narratives about governance and campaign dynamics. Media coverage highlighted critical issues, such as corruption allegations and economic hardships, which significantly influenced voter perceptions.

Historical Election Data: Trends in voter turnout, party performance, and regional results were analysed to contextualize the 2024 electoral outcomes and assess shifts in voter behaviour. The document analysis employed a theme guided by Social Choice Theory, emphasizing how policy outcomes and political messaging aligned with or diverged from voter preferences. This dual approach to data analysis provided a robust foundation for understanding the complex interplay of political, economic, and social dynamics in shaping Ghana's 2024 elections.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Economic Challenges: Economic hardship was a central factor influencing voter behaviour, with inflation exceeding 40% by mid-2024 and severely eroding household purchasing power. Respondents highlighted the disconnect between the government's economic rhetoric and their lived experiences. A Wa-based voter remarked:

“They kept talking about GDP growth, but what does that mean to someone who cannot afford basic goods? We needed policies that worked for us, not for the economy on paper. Our purchasing power was getting weaker almost every day despite the commentary on the success of the economic management team. All we needed was to have the ability to buy what we need and that would have made the economy a vibrant one in the eyes of Ghanaians.” (Key Informant, 2024).

These remarks resonate with the general sentiments of most Ghanaians highlighting the fact that the purchasing power of the average Ghanaian has adversely eroded due to high inflation. The prices of goods and services kept rising by the day creating general economic hardships among households. These findings align with Acheampong's (2024) observation that economic hardship significantly erodes voter trust and influences electoral outcomes in Ghana. Rather than introduce concrete measures to ameliorate the suffering of Ghanaians, the government focused extensively on touting their achievement of introducing the Free Senior High School program. Indeed, most parents expressed dissatisfaction with this program, noting hidden costs and logistical constraints associated with the implementation process. A parent shared the following:

“My child is in school benefiting from the free SHS, but we still have to buy supplies and provide food. The ‘free’ is not free as the media painted. The amount of money needed to prepare a student for a term is becoming unbearable and to make matters worse, the calendar is not well planned with

students spending barely 2-3 months and lengthy holidays.” (Key Informant, 2024).

The discourse on the free SHS program gained so much traction during the campaign period in Ghana. Although Ghanaians upheld the policy as good, the opposition NDC party promised to review it if given the mandate. The NPP government capitalized on the review promise to imply cancellation in their campaign rhetoric. Hence, called on Ghanaians to reject the NDC. This message however did not appeal to the conscience of most Ghanaians. Rather, there were other compelling issues like corruption, family and friends government, and state capture of public properties that gained popular attention. The perceptions and incidence of alleged corruption cases in government compounded public discontent. As one respondent bluntly stated:

"The series of corruption allegations against this government has made the governing machinery a crime scene. It appears there is no single sector under this government that has not been in the news for the wrong reasons. From bloated contracts to family and friends, poorly executed projects to broad day machinations, state capture and several allegations leveled against the NPP government, corruption allegations have been the weakest link in this NPP government." (Key Informant, 2024).

This remark reflects the general opinion of most participants who reported that President Nana Akufo-Addo appeared to have reneged on his fight against corruption and rather orchestrated the removal of the former Auditor General - Mr Daniel Yaw Domelevo from office for fighting alleged corrupt government officials. This was evident when the Supreme Court of Ghana eventually declared his removal by the President as unconstitutional. These findings are consistent with Acheampong's (2024) account that governance inefficiencies significantly affect voter behaviour during elections.

Political Strategy: The NPP's campaign strategy heavily relied on legacy achievements like the Free SHS, failing to address pressing issues such as inflation and unemployment. As an NPP campaign insider admitted:

"The NPP's campaign felt like a rerun of 2020, but the electorate in 2024 was dealing with new and urgent problems. The campaign was not recycled ahead of the 2024 election as they just edited portions of the 2016 and 2020 manifestos in the quest to break the eight. The current situation in Ghana called for a new manifesto that addresses the needs of the people not to sing praises on past glories." (Key Informant, 2024)

In contrast, the opposition NDC capitalized on grassroots mobilization and messaging that resonated with voter frustrations. A Tamale-based voter observed:

"The NDC people were everywhere including marketplaces, churches, even our community WhatsApp groups. They listened to us. They came to us virtually everywhere while the ruling party was seen dancing on stage and touting free SHS as the magic solution to Ghana's problem." (Key Informant, 2024)

Social media further amplified these dynamics in favour of NDC. Hashtags like #Change2024 and #EndHardship dominated platforms such as Twitter, shaping the narrative among young voters. A Tamale respondent noted:

"The NPP didn't understand social media. The NDC flooded the space with promises, while the NPP's posts felt robotic and out of touch. The same NPP that preached digital presence was beaten in the digital space ahead of the election. They didn't use social media as expected and the youth were captured by the opposition NDC ahead of the election day. It was obvious." (Key Informant, 2024).

Another respondent stated:

"Social media made it easy for us to connect and organize. The NPP didn't understand this space. The content posted by the two political parties in the build-up to the 2024 election helped NDC as a party. Their social media team flooded the new media space with promises of the potential Mahama government led by the 24-hour economy. The NPP on the other hand said #InshaAllahPossible." (Key Informant, 2024)

Political strategies are indeed critical in shaping electoral outcomes. The NPP's campaign emphasis on the free SHS policy which did not secure positive outcomes for the party suggests that the way their campaign message was framed was problematic for Ghanaians. This corroborates Owusu's (2024) account that framing and messaging in political campaigns are important tools in shaping voter perceptions. Besides, the manner in which social media was deployed by the two dominant parties accounted for the verdict of the Ghanaian people. The findings align with the report by Mensah and Appiah (2024) who emphasized the role of social media in shaping electoral outcomes. Furthermore, Kamau and Njoroge (2023) also emphasized the growing importance of digital platforms in political mobilization.

Social Dynamics: Demographic shifts, particularly the rising influence of youth and urban voters, played a pivotal role in the election. Youth participants expressed frustration over unemployment and limited opportunities. As one respondent stated:

"We have certificates but no jobs. The NPP gave us promises, but the reality hasn't changed. The jobs created are only heard on paper or during TV discussions but in reality, the jobs are not there. Imagine a master holder left to rot in the house while retirees are allowed to stay in office occupying the few established jobs available." (Key Informant, 2024)

Unemployment is a pressing issue in Ghana. With the advent of the NPP government, most Ghanaians were hopeful that the situation would change for the better as promised. However, over the years the rate of unemployment continued to rise. Therefore, most Ghanaians became dissatisfied and resentful with no hope in sight under the NPP government. These disappointments in the ruling party were expressed by a participant. A Kumasi-based voter remarked:

"We always support them, but this time the unemployment situation among the youth caused us not to deliver our votes to them. It's like they have taken us for granted. They knew votes from Ashanti were already secured so why attend to them? They felt like our votes were their legal property and we told them in a loud voice that the votes are earned." (Key Informant, 2024)

Social media platforms became vital tools for this demographic, shaping perceptions and organizing voter engagement. The findings align with Social Choice Theory, which underscores the importance of addressing equity and responsiveness in governance (Sen, 1999).

Regional Trends: Regional disparities in voter turnout and party support underscored the NPP's electoral challenges. In the Ashanti Region, a traditional NPP stronghold, reduced voter turnout reflected dissatisfaction. A Suame-based voter shared:

"We always support them, but this time, they didn't deliver. It's like they took us for granted. They knew votes from Ashanti were already secured so why attend to them? They felt like our votes were their legal property and we told them in a loud voice that the votes are earned." (Key Informant, 2024)

Meanwhile, the NDC made significant gains in regions like Greater Accra, leveraging targeted campaigns and addressing localized needs. A civil society representative observed:

"Accra voters wanted change, and the NDC gave them a compelling case. The NDC's past imprints and promises aligned with the voters in Greater Accra and they massively endorsed Mahama over Bawumia. With the numbers coming from the parliamentary representation, NPP will need an open-heart surgery to come back." (Key Informant, 2024)

These regional shifts echo Acheampong's (2024) analysis of the importance of localized campaign strategies in addressing voter priorities.

Guided by Social Choice Theory, the findings illustrate the NPP's failure to adapt its governance and political strategies to evolving voter priorities. The disconnect between policy outcomes and voter expectations, particularly amid economic and social challenges, led to a loss of public trust. Comparative analyses, such as Oluwole's (2016) study of Nigeria's 2015 elections, further demonstrate the necessity of grassroots engagement and responsive policy-making in electoral success. This integrated approach highlights the dynamic interplay of economic, political, and social variables in shaping Ghana's 2024 electoral outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The study set out to explore the political, economic, and social dynamics underpinning the New Patriotic Party's (NPP) 2024 electoral defeat in Ghana. The findings identified key factors that underscored the NPP's loss, offering critical insights for political actors in Ghana and emerging democracies across sub-Saharan Africa. Foremost among these factors were Ghana's pressing economic challenges, including persistently high inflation, the depreciation of the local currency against major currencies, escalating costs of living, and widespread unemployment. These issues fueled voter discontent, particularly among urban and peri-urban populations, who bore the brunt of these economic difficulties. The NPP government's emphasis on flagship legacy programs, such as the Free Senior High School (Free SHS) initiative, failed to mitigate the public's dissatisfaction. Instead, many voters viewed these programs as inadequate in addressing their immediate economic hardships. Attempts by government officials to attribute Ghana's economic struggles to external factors, such as the Russia-Ukraine war, were widely dismissed as deflective and unconvincing. We therefore argue that these economic hardships, largely stemming from poor economic management, fostered deep-seated disillusionment and resentment among the electorate. This dissatisfaction profoundly influenced voter behaviour, contributing to the NPP's electoral defeat. Additionally, the NPP's campaign strategy, which heavily relied on touting past achievements and employing traditional outreach methods, failed to resonate with a populace grappling with urgent economic and social challenges. Conversely, the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) capitalized on these shortcomings by adopting a more adaptive and resonant approach. The NDC's grassroots mobilization efforts, coupled with targeted messaging that underscored economic hardships and governance reform, struck a chord with disillusioned voters. The campaign's effective use of social media platforms amplified these messages, particularly among the youth and urban voters, who have increasingly become influential in shaping electoral outcomes.

This highlights the growing significance of digital platforms in contemporary political campaigns, especially in engaging and mobilizing younger demographics. Demographic changes also played a crucial role in the 2024 elections. The rising influence of the youth and urban voters underscored the need for political actors to reassess their strategies and address the evolving priorities of these groups. The study reveals that voters are increasingly demanding tangible solutions to their immediate needs, making it imperative for political parties to prioritize effective communication, economic reforms, and inclusive governance in their platforms. In conclusion, the NPP's 2024 electoral defeat demonstrates the complex interplay of economic mismanagement, unmet voter expectations, and an outdated political

strategy. This case serves as a valuable lesson for political actors in Ghana and other emerging democracies: achieving electoral success requires addressing pressing economic challenges, leveraging digital tools to enhance voter engagement, and crafting adaptive strategies that resonate with a changing and increasingly discerning electorate. The experience underscores the urgency of aligning governance with the aspirations and needs of citizens to sustain trust and ensure political relevance in evolving democratic landscapes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and analysis, this section provides actionable recommendations for improving governance, political strategy, and voter engagement to address the factors that contributed to the NPP's 2024 electoral defeat.

Policy Adjustments

The NPP's electoral defeat highlighted a disconnect between governance outcomes and the immediate needs of voters. To rebuild trust and regain electoral relevance, the following policy adjustments are recommended:

Addressing inflation and unemployment should be prioritized by sitting governments and parties seeking to rule. Policies aimed at stabilizing the currency, controlling inflation, and supporting job creation must be implemented to mitigate the woes of the electorate. For example, expanding small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) funding programs could help alleviate youth unemployment. This aligns with the urgent economic concerns voiced by voters (Acheampong, 2024). While initiatives like the Free SHS were well-intentioned, their implementation revealed gaps in equity and accessibility. Future policies should incorporate mechanisms for regular assessment and feedback from beneficiaries. This includes ensuring adequate funding for essential supplies and addressing disparities in rural and urban service delivery (Boakye & Nyarko, 2024). Development projects must address the unique needs of underserved regions. Investments in rural infrastructure, including roads, schools, and health facilities, are critical in earning the trust of the voters and netizens. By reducing regional disparities, the NPP can rebuild support in areas where voter trust was lost.

Improved Communication: Effective communication is pivotal in shaping voter perceptions and building political support. The NPP's 2024 campaign suffered from a failure to adapt its messaging to evolving voter concerns. The following strategies are recommended:

The party should leverage data analytics to understand voter priorities at the constituency level. Campaign messages should address the specific concerns of key demographics, such as economic insecurity for youth or service delivery gaps for rural voters (Owusu, 2024). Context-based requirements needed to be implemented against the generic pledges and promises. The party must establish clear communication channels to address corruption allegations and demonstrate commitment to transparency. Regular updates on policy implementation and outcomes can help counter misinformation and rebuild trust. The leadership of the party should expand the use of digital platforms to connect with voters, particularly youth. Campaigns should prioritize interactive content, such as live Q&A sessions, videos highlighting governance successes, and targeted advertisements on platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

Youth Engagement: Youthful voters played a decisive role in the 2024 elections, and their disillusionment with unemployment and limited opportunities was a major factor in the NPP's defeat. To address these concerns and re-engage this critical demographic, the following actions are proposed:

Establish genuine programs tailored toward youth employment, such as apprenticeships, internships, and skill development initiatives. Partnerships with the private sector can create pathways for the youth to gain experience and access job opportunities. The introduction of

tax incentives for companies that hire and train young workers is another potential avenue (Adjei & Boateng, 2024). Foster a sense of political and social responsibility among youth through civic education campaigns. These campaigns should emphasize the role of youth in shaping the country's future and highlight opportunities for active participation in governance. Recognizing the growing importance of the digital economy, invest in training programs for technology-related fields, such as coding, data analysis, and digital marketing. This aligns with global trends and positions youth for emerging job markets.

Insights for Future Electoral Strategies: The 2024 elections offer valuable lessons for political actors in Ghana and similar democracies. First, the results underscore the importance of continuous engagement with voters to understand and address their changing needs. Political parties must prioritize economic policies that directly impact household welfare and ensure the equitable distribution of resources to build and sustain trust across all regions. Second, effective communication is vital for maintaining political relevance. Future campaigns must adopt data-driven approaches to craft resonant messages tailored to diverse voter groups. Leveraging digital platforms and social media is particularly critical for engaging younger voters and controlling political narratives. Transparency and accountability must also be integral to communication strategies to counter perceptions of corruption and governance lapses. Third, addressing the aspirations of the youth is paramount. Policies that create tangible opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement can help parties cultivate a loyal and active base among this critical demographic. Investments in skill development and emerging sectors, such as technology, are essential for positioning youth as drivers of national development. Finally, regional equity in development remains a cornerstone of sustainable political support. Targeted interventions to address infrastructure gaps and improve service delivery in underserved regions will not only foster trust but also contribute to balanced national progress.

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