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Social Construction of Gender Roles and Participation of Women in Ghanaian Parliamentary Politics

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Abstract:

This paper is the result of an observation of the imbalance in the representation of men and women in the parliament of Ghana. Studies (Manuh, 1985; Dolphyne, 1991; Tsikata, 1998; IPU, 2014) have shown that Ghanaian women have never been adequately represented in political decision-making processes in the country over the years. The call for political partnership between men and women is based on the presupposition that the complementary roles of both sexes can boost the welfare of society. In spite of this realization, women have not been significantly represented in the in the Ghanaian Legislature. It is important that reasons are explored to explain the poor representation of women in Ghanaian politics at parliamentary level.

This phenomenon of poor representation of Ghanaian women in the legislature is explained by some theories. The theory of discrimination against women for instance attributes the problem of low participation of women in decision making process to social construction of gender roles. Society in this instance uses feminine and masculine attributes in assigning social roles to both sexes. On the other hand the theory of patriarchy regards women as inferior to men and therefore regarded as politically inferior as well.

1. Introduction

Using secondary data, the study analyses the effects of differences between both sexes on their rates of participation in parliamentary politics in Ghana. It is revealed that the gender imbalance within the political terrain is a global issue with its own ramifications for Ghanaian politics. Efforts made by international bodies such as the United Nations, Africa Union and the International Parliamentary Union as well as governments to ensure that at least 30% of parliamentary seats in any country are occupied by women have not achieved results in Ghana.

To resolve this problem and draw more women into politics, a reorientation is necessary to disabuse the mindset of society against women. This way, women may be seen not only as playing reproductive complementary role at home, but also as social partners in politics among others.

1.1. The Problem

The concern of this paper is the reasons for the unequal representation of the sexes in Ghana's parliament. Over the years, it is common to see women playing second fiddle to men in virtually every department within the social system such as the family, religion, economics and more especially, and as far as this paper is concerned, the political institution. The principal question for this paper is why the disparity in the levels of representation of the sexes in parliament which skewed toward the men. Comparatively, women have been lowly represented even though by the 2010 population census they constituted 50.9 percent of the total number of persons in Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012: 12) and should, by logic, have the greater say in decision making. The reverse has rather been the case. Is it the tyranny of the minority segment of the population?

In an interview with an octogenarian at Kisseman on 27th March 2008 about the power relations between the sexes, the man, now deceased said the difference between men and women in any ramification of life – biological or social - is divine. When pressed to explain his conviction, the octogenarian, who sounded rather biblically, tasked his listeners including the author of this paper to find out why God did not use the same material in moulding Adam and Eve. He opined that the use of the rib of man in creating woman signified the relationship of super-ordination and subordination between the two sexes. No matter how biblically logical this is, it may be explained off to the foibles of male chauvinism.

Is discrimination against women in politics divine? Otherwise, what factors account for the unequal representation of the sexes in parliament? Is humanity comfortable with this situation? If not what is being done to promote equity?

This paper is the result of the exploration of these questions on unequal representation of the sexes in parliament. In achieving this, secondary data on the global and local phenomena of gender representation in parliament has been utilized and synthesized.

2. Discrimination against Women: Theoretical Bases

Social theorists (Kottak, 2000; Davis, 1961 and Ortner, 1974) have attributed the discrimination against women in the decision making process to social prescription of gender roles. Kottak (2000:274-276) for instance argues that:

“Sex, which is a definite, highly visible physiological fact, provides a universally applicable dichotomy for dividing individuals into two permanent classes – male and female. This sex difference has been used as convenient, but not wholly fortuitous criteria for ascribing lifetime statuses. In every society, it is utilized for assigning definite statuses, even giving monopolies on achieved statuses”. This means that positions, otherwise meant to be achieved are at the same time sex-ascribed. For instance, views from south eastern Africa indicate that,

“Power and politics are designed and identified as a male sphere. The public sphere is a male sphere. Women have to stay at home. This changed during twelve years of armed struggle for national liberation, but it has not been easy to change the culture. There are a lot of women who are involved in the liberation struggle but that does not mean that the gender or power relations have changed. Power and its language are still male. The patriarch, the androcracy are still male” (IPU, 2000:24).

Power and politics related positions in south- eastern Africa, therefore, become ascribed to only men. It is possible then that one sex would be receiving more prestige than the other. This could be unfairly exploited to the advantage of one sex over the other because social position is not only a matter of prescribed activities but also of discriminatory judgement as well. Men have used this unfair distinctions based on their own whims.

According to the observations of Davis (1961: 99), ascribed behaviour to the sexes springs from the biological qualities of the groups concerned. He, however, thinks it is a great error in interpreting the ascription of status on the basis of sex. In many societies, the male-female division of statuses is rationalized in terms of the alleged traits of men and women. For instance Davis observes that in Western Culture, women were long pictured as naturally more delicate, emotional, intuitive, religious and monogamous than men. This notion justified women’s exclusion from higher education and better occupations, their disbarment from certain property rights and their subordination to men generally.

It is also the view of Firestone (1970) that the relations of domination and subordination between men and women are located in nature’s unequal allotment of reproductive tasks. Women bear, suckle and raise children while men have the time and opportunity to develop institutions such as the family, and political organizations through which they appropriate power and control women and children. While Murdock (1949) and Parsons (1959) are also of this view of biological differences as the basis of sexual division of labour in society, Oakley (1974) however believes otherwise. She does not accept that there is any natural or inevitable division of labour or allocation of social roles on the basis of sex. She thinks gender roles are culturally determined. No matter the degree of truthfulness in these characteristics of women, there is no justification in assuming that each sex possesses physiological attributes that explain directly the behaviours ascribed to it.

Gender roles are culturally assigned; and related to these roles are gender stereotypes which are oversimplified, but strong held ideas about the characteristics of males and females. These ideas relate to gender stratification rewards such as socially valued recourses, power, prestige, and personal freedom between men and women, reflecting their different positions in a social hierarchy.

Martin and Voorhies (1975) reviewed the woman’s situation and opine that women lost their role as primary cultivators and the respect accorded them as horticulture developed into agriculture. According to them certain agricultural techniques such as plugging, clearing of forest and digging were assigned to men because of their greater average size and strength.

For the first time in human history, further observed by Martin and Voorhies, women were primarily cut off from production in order to take care of the larger number of children (required for farm labour). Belief systems further contrasted men’s valuable extradomestic (outside home or pertaining to public domain) labour with women’s domestic role now viewed as inferior.

From the foregoing, it has become clear that man has been prized over and above the woman. While the man has been physically endowed to undertake strenuous activities associated with farming for instance, the woman has the responsibility of motherhood. Accordingly, the woman suffered domestic ‘confinement’, the man, extra domestic duties. This translated into the wider responsibility of the man in public domain over that of the woman. The authority of the man transcended the household. He gained control of the wider society. Political power belonged to him. It is this political power that he monopolized and unwilling to cede part of it to the woman. This may best be described as patriarchy.

2.1. The Theory of Patriarchy

Gender issues where women are regarded as inferior to men have been endorsed and intensified by patriarchy. Patriarchy describes a political system ruled by men in which women have inferior social and political status including basic human rights. Ritzer (1983; 2000:332) looks at how the term patriarchy has been used to mean domination or a relationship in which one party, the dominant, succeeds in making the other party, the subordinate. This has been more accepted among socialist feminists than the Marxian analysis of the concept capitalist patriarchy. This is because the socialist feminists, while accepting the radical argument and proof that patriarchy interacts with economic conditions are also of the view that the concept is an independent structure of oppression.

Ortner (1974) considers how culture has promoted the devaluation of women. She looks at the situation from the point of view of culture as the means by which humanity controls and regulates nature. For instance, by inventing weapons, humans can kill animals; and by inventing religion and rituals humans can seek material favours from the supernatural. By culture, therefore, humans do not passively submit to nature. Humanity’s ideas and technology (culture) have power over nature and are therefore seen as superior to it. Ortner contends that women are seen as closer to nature than men and therefore as inferior to men because their bodies and physiological functions are more concerned with the natural processes surrounding the reproduction of human species. These include menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and lactation; processes for which the female body is “naturally” equipped. Women’s social role

as mothers is also seen as closer to nature. This involves the socialization of the young. According to Ortner, since the mother's role is linked to the family, the family itself is regarded as closer to nature compared to activities such as politics, warfare and religion which are as more removed from nature, as superior to domestic tasks and therefore as the province of men.

This social construction of gender role has created in the woman a state of inertia – a condition in which majority of women have accepted their subordination to man in several fields of life including politics.

2.2. Unequal Representation of the Sexes in Parliament: The Global Picture

Evidence of a society in which women control strategic resources such as the basic necessities of life, and in which women's activities are the most prestigious has never existed (Friedl, 2001). Friedl thinks the Iroquois of North America and the Lovedu of Southern Africa came closest. According to Friedl, in these societies, women raise food, control its distribution and help in choosing male political leaders while they themselves rule as queens. They led ceremonies and controlled their own sex lives. Despite these respective privileged positions of women in these two societies, it is the men who owned the land and held other positions of power and prestige. Although a scenario of equality between the two sexes has been perceptibly created, the women have no ultimate authority over the men. Neither of the cultures of the two societies was a true matriarchy. Instead, Kelly (1998) thinks women have been considered the "possessions of men" in both societies.

Gender discrimination is a social phenomenon which has affected women's participation in political decision making (processes) globally. The perpetuated gender imbalance this discrimination has created is responsible for the political apathy in women.

Hypothetically, one may think that the problem can be resolved once women are given the necessary push through encouragement and sponsorship to achieve what they have been denied over the centuries. This perspective is in line with the affirmation of the World Organization of Parliaments toward the "achievement of democracy which presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarily, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences" (Johnson, 2000: i).

Inherent in the call for partnership between men and women is the presupposition that the complementary roles of both sexes can boost the welfare of society. Consequently, attempts have been made to encourage women's participation in decision making institutions such as the parliament. These attempts are deemed necessary not only to have women in the legislature of the various countries but also to break the male monopoly of these law making bodies.

To achieve this, conscious attempts have been made at promoting women's interest in politics and most particularly getting them elected into parliament. Some of these attempts have constitutional backings. An example of the measures is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly which is often described as an international bill of rights for women. The bill isolates actions and inactions deemed as promoting discrimination against women and recommends measures against them (UN, 1979).

The convention, among other things, provides basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life – including the right to vote and to stand for election". Countries that are signatories to this convention are to put in practice the provisions and to also report every four years on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations.

Another attempt aimed at promoting political interest in women is the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. Article 9 of this document states that "State Parties shall ensure increased and effective representation and participation of all sexes at all levels of decision-making", – this, no doubt, calls for representation of the sexes in parliament on equal basis (AU: 2003).

While the United Nations recommended 50% seats in parliament for women, 30% threshold figure has been recommended by the Geneva-based world organization of parliaments the Inter-Parliamentary Union. These are to ensure among others a new social contract in which men and women work in equality.

Irrespective of efforts at promoting gender equality at the political front world-wide, the picture of women participation in parliament is still gloomy. A research by the IPU (2000) found out that women were represented in the 170 of the 179 existing parliaments globally. Out of a total number of 38,643 seats, only 5,010 (13%) of them were occupied by women. The table below shows regional average figures of women in parliament the world wide.

Region	Percentage Average
Nordic Countries	38.9
Americas	15.3
Asia	14.8
Europe	13.1
Pacific	12.2
Sub-Sahara Africa	11.5
Arab States	3.6

Table 1: Percentage Average of Women in Parliament by Regions in October, 1999

Source: A study on "Politics: Women's Insight" IPU (2000)

The table above shows the regions by rank. The Nordic region which tops the ranking surpasses the international standard threshold determined by the IPU although the average regional representation falls below the United Nations recommended figure. The Arab

region has the least (3.6%) women representation in parliament. Of concern to this study is the figure of Sub-Saharan Africa which averaged 11.5%.

In sub-Saharan Africa, there are varied degrees of representations of women in parliament. According to Nwakaeme (2007, 2009) a number of post-conflict countries rank high as regard to women's participation in legislative bodies, averaging 25-30%. In 2003, Rwanda became the first country in the world with the highest percentage of women in parliament at 48.8%. The IPU reports that this improved in the 2013 parliamentary election of the country when out of 80 seats, 63.8% (51) were occupied by women. This makes Rwanda the first country in the world to have achieved beyond the United Nations call for 50% representation of women in the parliaments of member countries. Women in the 2012 Senegalese national legislative elections won 43.3% of the 150 seats while South Africa had 41.5% of women in its 400 seats parliament. Zimbabwe also voted for 31.5% women to its 270 seats legislature. It is worth mentioning that South Africa and Zimbabwe have bicameral legislature with 35.2% and 47.5% of seats in their upper houses occupied by women respectively. Senegal, South Africa and Zimbabwe have been ranked 7th, 11th and 29th out of the 189 member countries of the IPU in the world (IPU, 2014).

It is clear from the statistics that the four countries with the highest women representations in their legislatures have been working within the two quota systems put forward by the United Nations and the Geneva-based IPU.

3. The Ghanaian Situation

Although Ghana's scenario has not been singled out in the study mentioned above, the country has her own statistics which indicate the low representation of women in parliament spanning the four republics as in the table below.

Year	Total seats in Parliament	Number of seats occupied by women	Percentage of Total	Ratio of Women to men
1960	104	10	9.6	1:10.4
1965	104	19	18.3	1:5.5
1969	140	1	0.7	1:140
1979	140	5	3.6	1:28
1992	200	16	8	1:12.5
1996	200	18	9	1:11.1
2000	200	19	9.5	1:10.5
2004	230	25	10.8	1:9.2
2008	230	20	8.7	1:11.5
2012	275	30	10.9	1:9.2

Table 2: Number of Women Representation in Parliament of the Republic of Ghana from 1960 – 2012.

Source: Author's compilation 2014

From table 2 above, it is clear that the percentage figures of women in Ghana's legislature are nowhere near the internationally recommended quotas. It is fluctuating scenarios with the highest (18.3%) representation of women in 1965 of parliamentary seats were occupied by them. The least case was in 1969 when only 0.7% (one woman) was in the 140 seats parliament. The representation in the present parliament appears to be an improvement though insignificant compared with the various previous parliaments of the fourth republic. The task then is to find out the reason for this poor representation of women in Ghana's national legislature.

3.1. Low Representation of Ghanaian Women in Parliamentary Politics

Dolphyne (1991: 45-46) recognized the fact that Ghanaian women are occupying positions in major professions as lawyers, judges, doctors, engineers, pilots, University lecturers and professors, bankers, accountants, administrators and so on making valuable contributions to the various facets of life. She continued that "in spite of the increasing number of highly-qualified and competent women, the number in policy-making positions in government and on statutory bodies is very small." The poor representation of women in Ghana's parliament may as well be one of the concerns of Dolphyne.

Allah-Mensah (2005) carried out a study which among other things, looked into the trend of women's participation and positions in politics and public offices. She used all the political parties such as the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the New Patriotic Party (NPP), the People's National Convention (PNC), the Convention People's Party (CPP) and the Great Consolidated People's Party (GCPP) in the study. All these political parties, with the exception of the GCPP, stated in their manifestoes their commitment to gender issues. According to Mensah, some party leaders interviewed contradicted their party stands by stating that "positions", political positions for that matter, "are contested for and not given on the basis of one's gender". Allah-Mensah, therefore, sees all political parties in Ghana as subtly discriminating against women thereby accounting for the negligible number of women in politics (pp 2-3).

In March 2015, an attempt by the largest opposition political party in Ghana, the New Patriotic Party, at recognition and the involvement of more women in the forthcoming 2016 parliamentary elections generated a lot of controversies. The party's National Executive Committee (NEC) came up with a policy that in constituencies where parliamentary seats had already been occupied by women from the party, men would not be permitted to contest in the primaries. However, women were allowed to contest for the primaries. This was meant to create safe seats for women in the strongholds of the party. This move was not meant to ensure increase in the number of female parliamentarians of the party but an attempt to prevent a decrease in the number of female parliamentarians on the ticket of the party which could be seen as a contribution to at least maintaining the number of female legislators in parliament

provided other parties followed suit. This move by the NPP defeats the purpose of the IPU and the United Nations to enable countries increase the number of women legislators all over.

Unfortunately the move was shot down by mostly the male members of the party forcing the NPP NEC to withdraw the directive. The criticisms levelled against the NEC and the resultant withdrawal of the directive enabled Ursula Owusu-Ekuful a female NPP parliamentarian to observe that “NPP now treat women as nonentities” (2015). In an interview on a UTV programme in Ghana dubbed *Adekye Nsroma* Hon. Owusu-Ekuful wondered if her own party was not behaving as if women were no importance when it came to participating in decision making processes.

Discussions on the NPP issue showed that men usually thought women have always been political “inferiors”. Adofo (2015) thought the decision to preserve seats for women in the NPP was “pure madness” and “silly” policy. The issue generated a severe reaction and counter reactions on the airwaves and in the newspapers in Ghana. Its withdrawal, although, managed some sanity in the NPP camp, it nonetheless left the female party activists pensive. This showed that men have varied perceptions about the political capabilities of women. This may be the result of centuries of accumulated socio-cultural barriers created between men and women.

This may support what Staudt (1987: 207) thinks of African women as having largely withdrawn from politics to enable them manage what is left of their own affairs. Staudt (1986: 201) also observes that “opting out of politics is not necessarily due to political apathy, as some African men would like to make us believe. Rather, it is based on the experience that women enter politics on terms set by the male elite who use women’s political energy for their own ends”. Electioneering campaigns coupled with party manifestoes in Ghana have always been promising in the light of the affirmative actions the political parties declare. In the end the woman remains downhearted, disappointed and disillusioned.

Women’s participation in parliamentary process in Africa and Ghana in particular is very low irrespective of the international laws that encourage them to participate in politics like their male counterparts. This phenomenon can be attributed to several reasons. Primarily, the prescriptive gender role is worth considering as a militating factor against women’s participation in parliamentary politics. This always keeps women in “reserve” position on the political playing field. The prescriptive gender role rests on the idea that “men are superior and women are inferior”. Though international conventions and charters as well as countries’ constitutions have continually decreed that “men and women have equal political rights” (Bowman and Kuenyehia, 2003; IPU, 2000), this is only accepted in theory and not in practice. True equality has never been recognized and achieved.

Structural barriers have also placed women in low-keyed positions in the political arena where they always play second fiddle to men. One such structural barrier is the invisible impediment between women and politics. This is the old stereotype that women are not tough enough for politics which is an extradomestic activity for men. Although efforts directed at breaking this barrier are enough, old stereotypes take a long time to disappear. Women, therefore, still hold the belief that men are the leaders. Although a few female gender activists appear to be waging war against this perception, the greater number of women still believes that they must rather support the men in politics. After all, the women have always been celebrated as having stood solidly behind every successful man. So men would always push themselves into, for instance, political success and the woman congratulated for facilitating the man’s success.

Furthermore, until recently, women’s relations to land became significantly minimized as a result of the inception of agriculture as compared to horticultural era where they constituted 50 percent of workers in the horticultural societies. This change in women’s productive roles according to Kottak (2000: 290) “reflected the need for women to stay closer home to care for the larger numbers of children that typify agriculture, compared with less labour-intensive economies”. This change in productive roles of women is enough to politically impoverish them. Since political activism requires substantial resources, women who have been disadvantaged as a result of this change in gender roles and for that matter have little control over income generating resources are structurally barred by poverty from participating in parliamentary processes which have become the preserve of men.

Agriculture economics has greatly affected the income levels of women in Ghana – as a result of their poor land- holding status. Kotey and Tsikata (1998:203-229) indicate that on average women cultivate 40 percent of all land holding under production in Ghana, except in the matrilineal Ashanti Region where their holdings exceed 50 percent. Women’s land-holding status in Ashanti is 54 percent while it is 2 percent in the Northern Region.

Considering the fact that women constitute a greater percentage (50.5) of Ghana’s population (Ghana Statistical Service; 2002), the 40 percent average land holding status granted them is exploitative. This inequality in land holding is informed by the arrangements of tenure founded on men’s customary rights to inherit and control land almost everywhere in Ghana. The resultant effect is poor income for women. This affects funding of political activities involving them. Above all the woman must also obtain permission from the husband if she wants to use family resources for politics. Women therefore shy away from politics.

3.2. Ensuring Equity

This paper has examined the problem of low participation of women in parliament and adduced reasons to explain the situation. Prominent among the reasons are the tenet of the social construction of sex roles supported and entrenched by patriarchy. These circumstances have created some sort of continual discrimination against women globally and more particularly in the Ghanaian woman. Although the discrimination against women affected the entirety of the social structure, the political organization has remained the focus of this paper. This does not suggest that the political institution is isolated from the others. In fact, the attempt at solving this problem of seeming exclusion of women in politics may need the exploration of discrimination suffered by women in the other social institutions. The question is what must be done to break the cyclic culture of the seemingly political ‘inertia’ in women.

Education remains one important factor which could help sharpen the political potentials in women to be appreciated by all and sundry. According to literacy statistics, the woman falls below the man in Ghana. For instance, *The Ghana Statistical Service* (2002)

puts the country's literacy rate at 57.9%. Of this figure, 66.4% are men while 49.8% are women. Although these figures may have their own doubts in terms of "how literate are the literates", it is, nonetheless, clear that more men receive formal education in Ghana than women, and if education can help create confidence and consciousness in people, then, women are disadvantaged. With reference to Marxian aphorism that one's social position determines one's level of consciousness, Senah (2010: 14) is convinced that the higher one's educational background, the higher one's level of consciousness. This theory of education being part of the panacea to the problem is perhaps better captured in Assimeng's (1981: 117) view as playing an interventionist role such as "demystifying, accelerating social change, creating new men with new ideas, and enabling society's movement away from the cyclology of traditional metaphysic, to a notion of lineal history, from fatalism to idea of progress". Education, to all intent and purposes, is, therefore, an agent of transformation of people's thought about not only the environment, science and technology, modernity and civilization and the like; but also about the traditional notions held about women which have forced them to play second fiddle to men.

Todaro (1980, 331) has also recognized formal education as the principal mechanism for developing human skills and knowledge. This leads to the creation of human resources of a nation. The human resources, according to Harbison (1973), "constitute the ultimate basis for wealth of nation. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production; human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations and carry forward national development. Clearly, a country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else" (p. 3).

A country's potential human resources include both males and females. Discrimination against any segment of a country's potential human resource is a challenge to the development of the nation involved. Therefore, in the case of Ghana where there is evidence that the female segment of the population is discriminated against on the field of political organization, the consequence may be limitation of development as has been warned by Harbison (1973). It is to escape the consequence of limited development that Ghana's drive for the total education of the female sex is welcome.

The increased enrolment of the girl child in the country's schools is therefore seen as very appropriate. However, gender activists who are mainly women achievers as well as role models can also help champion women's education by setting up special funds for educating the girl child to higher levels. Resources could be pumped into the fund from diverse non-governmental sources both national and international. Through higher education women can win the respect of the opposite sex. Education can also help them demonstrate their abilities and capabilities. This way, women would be seen not only adding value to their personalities but also enhancing their abilities and capabilities. Change, however, does not come easily. Women's advancement in education may not be a necessary passage for their entry to parliament. This must go with other measures prominent among which is the direct quota system as advocated for by the UN and IPU.

Direct quota systems for parliamentary seats for women could be encouraged for the country's political terrain. Even though this may suggest that women lack the initiative to enter parliament it is necessary to help bridge the gap. Although the quota system has been advocated for by the United Nations and IPU, Ghana is yet to adopt it. However, the various political parties in Ghana may start by giving opportunities to a greater number of women to contest for parliamentary seats. As at the 2012 elections, the NPP put up 24 women as parliamentary candidates out of the 230 constituencies. The remaining political parties put up the following numbers of female candidates: NDC – 17; the Convention People's Party – 18 and the Progressive People's Party – 24. Out of these numbers only the NPP and the NDC female candidates won 16 and 14 seats respectively.

In view of the uproar that greeted the effort by the NPP in the attempt to protect the 16 parliamentary seats of sitting women parliamentarians for the forthcoming 2016 general elections it is clear that the level of education alone cannot provide a single solution to this problem of discrimination against women when it comes to parliamentary politics. It is, therefore, important to legislate on the issue making it a statutory obligation for Ghana's parliament to have 30% seats for women in parliament. This way, political parties would have to reserve safe seats for women parliamentary candidates to ensure their safe entry into the legislature.

Ghana is largely patrilineal (with the exception of the matrilineal Ashanti). Patrilineality has its own inherent discrimination against women. Women leaders and role models in collaboration with their men sympathisers can begin workshops and debates on whether discriminatory descent system should not be reviewed by the societies practising it. For instance among the Tallensi of Northern Ghana, a man considers himself as having achieved cultural and psychological fulfilment when, the wife gives birth to a male child. This is an insurance that the man can join the Tallensi cosmos after death and become an ancestor because he ensures the continuity of the descent group by the birth of a male child. This phenomenon has the tendency of devaluing the status of women in society. It can only take a lot of sensitization and reorientation to change such an entrenched tradition in a society that views men as more important than women regarding the perpetuation of the lineage.

Generally the woman is faced with financial problems when it comes to resources for political activities. It is difficult for her raising resources from her own colleagues and the opposite sex. There is always the suspicion that the woman is misusing resources meant for the household. Women aspirants therefore have to contend with difficult processes of seeking the support of husbands, family and friends financially. It is therefore in the right direction that numerous women empowerment programmes (including the education of the girl child) have been initiated to enable the target group become not only more enlightened, but also become economically independent.

Legislations against obnoxious customs that degrade and devalue women have already been put in place meant for bridging the gender gap. These include the legislation against the use of female virgins as objects of reparation in troxovi shrines, female genital mutilation, child betrothal and marriage and child sexual defilement among others. These cultural practices devalue women and tag them as objects at the mercy of men. Indeed, women are considered as private objects according to Lenski (1984, 126-131) who observes that the wealth and for that matter the status of man is measured in the form of the number of wives, pigs and ornaments he

has. Legislations are meant to proscribe these treatments and perceptions about the woman. However, a lot need to be done to ensure the viability and effectiveness of these promulgations. It is one thing legislating and another making the provisions work. Is it true that parents “smuggle” their daughters to neighbouring countries for clitoridectomy to be performed on them irrespective of a law proscribing the practice? Are troxovi shrines in the southern Volta Region of Ghana still accepting female minors to atone for crimes committed by their male relatives? Do men perceive women as sex machines in Ghana by which reason they defile the girl child? If these are the situation in Ghana as may be in other countries as well, then, this is the kind of concern this paper is raising – treatment of women as objects at the mercy of men. Laws may be passed with the intention to curtail the discrimination and ill-treatment meted out to women but are these laws effective? For legislations meant to abridge gender gap to be effective, implementation bodies must be legally established and charged with the responsibility to carry such enactments through. In Ghana, these laws never bite and thereby allowing these cultural practices persist with impunity. It is, therefore, important that groups of security services be given special responsibilities to make laws passed against obnoxious socio-cultural practices effective. In effect, the clarion call of this paper is that there is the need for a reconstruction of gender roles in this century to pave way for a better image for the woman for a more effective complementary political partnership. This way, Ghana would be assured of a more acceptable democratic culture and development.

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