

Contemporary Expressions of Populism for Gender Equality in Ghana

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Abstract---Populist expressions create spaces to enhance fair representation in decision-making positions and gender equality in political positions. This study aims at creating awareness about populism, gender equality and women political representation and empowerment. It seeks to sensitise Ghanaians about the need to facilitate the participation of women in local and national governments. The study used secondary data sources and employed desk stop analysis to analyse populist expressions that geared towards equality in the Ghanaian society. The results show that populist mobilisation has been appealing to 'the people' against the government ('the elite'), because governments, politicians and political parties have paid lip services to the world's agendas for gender equality. The study shows that populists' expressions have been impactful in improving women's consciousness to empower themselves politically. Populists' styles and activism as expressed in the media, and women's efforts to win support from the electorate are creating awareness for equity in the Ghanaian political society. The implications are that the populists' appeal to the people against the governments supports the recognition of gender equality, and the appointment of more women into political positions as well as the sensitisation of the abolition of discrimination in the Ghanaian society to empower women.

Keywords: Populism, populist mobilisations, Ghana, Gender equality, political party, women representation

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to explore the various forms of populist mobilisation, including, individuals or gender advocates, political parties, civil society organisations (i.e. social movements) to ensure gender equality. It is about discussing the varied populist activities that appeal to the citizenry ('the people') against the government ('the elite') to enhance fair representation of females in government and politics.

Populism has been used since the 19th Century to express various kinds of appeal, and it involves making claims about 'the people', which is always linked to the spread of democracy (Laclau, 2007). Populism is trending because leaders have glossed over the rights of the marginalised in society, which is deepening gender discrimination (Amoakohene, 2004; Ayoade and Taiwo, 2016; Korolczuk, 2019). In contemporary times, individuals or gender advocates play on gendered stereotypes as some females parade with 'feminine cards' such as "mama grizzly" or "hockey mom" by a US-based right-wing populist, Sarah Palin. An Australian right-wing populist, Pauline Hanson also said, "Australia is my home, and the people are my children".

These gestures portray a maternal image that supports the gains in political favour, popularity, which impresses gender equality in society (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 70). Populist expressions for gender equality in decision-making positions have been relevant for today's politics and political struggles because many countries, including Ghana, have limited political appointment positions for women (Manuh, 2011; Othman, 2017).

On the agendas of populist movements and mobilisations for gender equality in a country, populism has been the measures to enhance the fair representation of women in government. Thus, populists have created the awareness for gender equality and women political empowerment in both local and national governments. In manifestoes, incumbent governments' populist promises aim at employing affirmative action strategies to increase the number of women appointees in government. In their political rallies, opposing political parties also appeal to the people against the government and accuse incumbent governments of not fulfilling their mandates of fair representation in government. After criticising the governments, and winning in any elections and assuming political power, opposing political parties hesitate to fulfil the campaign promises. The phenomenon of governments and opposition parties paying lip services and not ensuring gender equality are apparent as many Ghanaian women are not seen in the political decision-making positions. The results are that Ghanaian women are placed in deprived circumstances in all facet of society. Thus, the unfair representation of women in politics places them in disadvantaged situations in Ghanaian society (Ofei-Aboagye, 2000).

Ghana was the first country in the South of the Sahara to gain independence on March 6, 1957, but there was no elected woman in the first parliament. It was until the Representation of Peoples Amendment Bill was enacted into law that the first president, acting under the First Republican 1960 Constitution was mandated to appoint ten women to occupy the reserved seats in parliament (Tsikata, 2009). Although women are most of Ghana's population, they are still underrepresented in the National and the Local Assemblies under the Fourth Republican 1992 Constitution. In 2010, the female population was 12, 633, 978, representing about 51.34% (Ghana Statistical Service [GSS], 2010). In 2019, the Ghanaian population reached above 30 million, and women were still the majority (World Population Review, 2019). Yet, out of a total number of 275 members of parliament, there were only

36 females, which represented 13% whilst 87% represented male MPs. The 2015 district assembly elections recorded 18,938 contestants; 17,783 males and 1,155 females. Out of the female contenders, 282 won the elections representing 4.65%, and 5,779 male competitors won it representing 95.35% out of the total number of elected members in the district assemblies (Boateng, 2017; Paaga, 2016). The results reflected on Ghana's achievement in the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) as by 2015, the country could not achieve the MDG 3-gender equality and women empowerment. Throughout the political transitions, there have been constant calls to ensure gender parity in government, but the number of females in political decision-making positions are not many. For instance, in December 17, 2019 District Assembly Elections, out of the 18,510 nominations received by the Electoral Commission, male nominations were 17,601 (representing 95.09%) whereas female nominations were only 909 (representing 4.91%) (Abdul-Hanan, 2019).

Meanwhile, there are compensations for making women part of the decision-making positions. Studies have shown that women representation in decision-making positions helps in addressing women needs and concerns as well as the needs of other groups of people in society (Paxton and Hughes, 2016). Explicitly, advocates affirmed that if women were fairly represented in decision-making positions, it would result in a practical function of a democratic country, thereby enhancing development in society (Ballington et al., 2012). Scholars from Harvard University such as Professors Anita Woolley and Thomas W. Malone reported a research and revealed that "women listen more, have more open minds, are not autocratic, and share criticisms more constructively. Also, the research showed that women are good leaders, have good communication skills, able to show empathy, are visionary, risk awareness and cautious and exhibit maturity (Abdulah-Hanah, 2019). Other studies also indicate that women spend more of their time in their neighbourhood, and are usually responsible for the household, take care, and contributes to the management of their communities. Women can transfer their household skills and interest including having clean and safe water, proper sanitation, health services, as well as other issues that bothers on development at the local level (Abdulah-Hanah, 2019; Boateng, 2017; Moser, 1993, 2003).

A fair representation of gender in government enhances democracy as the system of government could meaningfully improve popular participation and increase the wellbeing of women. Thus, democracy is improved if those who qualify to vote and be voted for are given adequate opportunity to exercise their civil and political rights (Ofei-Aboagye, 2000). Undeniably, a practical function of a democratic civic culture, which includes female activism and populism leads to a vibrant democracy (Adu-Gyamfi and Yartey, 2015). Populist influence on women participation and representation in politics is, thus, significant for the study of democracy (Huber and Saskia, 2017).

1.1. Purpose and Organisation of the Paper

The paper contributes to the existing literature on populism and democracy in Ghana. The significance is to sensitise the populace about populist mobilisations and the way Ghana's democracy strives on the quest for gender equality and equity. Again, women political consciousness as this study shows, serves as a locus point to encourage other women to adopt populist resources to engage in politics. Following the above discussions, the rest of this paper is organised as follows: Section two presents socio-economic and political rights and the disadvantaged woman in Ghanaian society. The barriers that hinder women from engaging in politics that deepen inequality in society are presented in section two of this paper. Next is populism as a phenomenon in Ghana in section three. Subsequently, the paper examines populism and women political participation and representation in Ghana. Conclusion of the study is in the fifth section. The next section presents socio-economic and political rights and the disadvantaged woman.

II. SOCIO-POLITICAL RIGHTS AND A WOMAN'S DISADVANTAGED POSITIONS

There are continental, regional and national legal instruments and international conventions, treaties, and goals aimed purposely to ensure equal rights, including women's political rights (Darkwa, 2016). For example, the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) was proposed in 1995 to enhance *women in power and decision-making* (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women [UN WOMEN, 2019). The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was initiated on 18 December 1979 to promote women political rights. CEDAW was sanctioned by 189 UN member States, including Ghana (UN WOMEN, 2015). Also, there is the 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and the 2003 protocol to the African charter on human and people's rights (Maputo protocol). There is also the 2006 African youth charter relating to the rights of women.

Moreover, the African Union (AU) as a body per its gender agenda, calls on all member states to achieve parity and equal representation of both women and men in political and public offices (African Union, 2018). Currently, there is Agenda 2030 to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Specifically, SDG 5 discusses gender equality to empower all women and girls (UNDP, 2019). All the above show the highest level of international policy on human rights, women rights, equality and equity that have established the interest in women participation in politics and representation in governance (Manuh, 2011).

2.1. Hindrances to women's socio-political rights

Despite the international advocacy for women political rights and gender equality in decision-making positions, there has only been a slight increase in the number of female

parliamentarians the world over (IPU, 2016). Thus, in contrast to the report that the worldwide campaign for women empowerment has improved women's involvement in politics in Africa, there is not much increase in women's representation in Parliament (Bawaand Sanyare, 2013). In 2016, about 22.7% of members of parliament were women in the South of the Sahara (Darkwa, 2016; IPU, 2017). Although Rwanda, South Africa, and Uganda have boosted the number of female members in parliament, only Rwanda had 50% or more female representation by the end of 2016 (Abdennebi-Abderrahim, n.d; Darkwa, 2016; IPU, 2017). In the year 2017, the female members increased to 64% in the Rwandan Parliament. During the 2019 elections, 54 women secured seats out of 80 contested seats, setting a new world record of 68% female representation in the Rwandan Parliament (Ghana News Agency, 2019). The Rwandan circumstances show how the government and the people have been consistent with the implementation of gender quota systems to boost the number of women in government. On the other hand, the same cannot be said about Ghana, which after the 2016 General Elections had 13% female representation (Paaga, 2016). The abysmal spectacle of female representation in parliament in Ghana is as a result of individual and institutional hindrances to gender equality in politics. One of the hurdles is the monetisation of politics (Darkwa, 2016). Financial resources have become a significant challenge for aspiring female politicians as they are unable to raise enough money to a campaign. Meanwhile, male candidates can raise considerable funds in competitive political activities to win elections (Asuako, 2017).

Secondly, issues of males dominating the executive positions in political parties have been the concern for all. Studies have confirmed that males' advantage in the helm of affairs of political parties, disfavours women. Thus, male dominance has a negative influence on female's access to any political positions. It is revealed that as political parties bore the responsibilities for women to aspire in politics, they could give chances for aspiring women to win political positions (Ballington et al., 2012; Paxton et al., 2007; Tsikata, 2009). Based on the political party's responsibilities in Ghana, the National Council on Women and Development (NCWD), then the national machinery for women in 1998 advised National Electoral Commission (NEC) to encourage political parties to nominate more women to contest Parliamentary seats (Crawford, 2004; Tsikata, 2009). The Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana had also mandated political parties to reserve some seats for women aspirants (The 1992 Constitution of Ghana).

Besides, there is a perceived male superiority in Ghanaian society, which is heightened during electoral competitions. In a typical traditional community, the Ghanaian is yet to recognise and appreciate a political position the woman occupies (Asuako, 2017). People still vote for more males than females in almost all elections. The assumption is that some traditional practices, customary laws, and religious beliefs rationalise and perpetuate the male and female differential roles in a patriarchal society. Public

responsibilities, including politics, has been perceived to be the preserved designation for males while home management is designed for females (Allah-Mensah, 2005). As a result of these socialisation processes and perceptions, some Ghanaian women and men have accepted and internalised the beliefs that the woman's role and status are recognisably substandard to that of the man in almost all aspects of social, political and economic life (Asuako, 2017). Hence, the advocacy to enhance women's political consciousness.

More so, acrimonious environment in which political contests are staged also features gendered perception about married female politicians (Darkwa, 2016). As part of the cultural orientation in typical Ghanaian society, most of the time in the sociological context, women seek their male partners' consent in any decisions they make. Husbands often disapprove of their wives' involvement in politics (Boateng, 2017). Hence, people have mixed reactions to a married woman's involvement in politics as to whether their husbands had approved their engagement in any public activities or politics. Some of the wives who unilaterally take decisions to engage in politics without their spouses' permission are divorced and driven from their matrimonial homes. That also explains the negative stereotypical perception, attacks, physical abuse and insults against divorced women politicians whose marital status indicates that their spouses never approved of their engagement in politics (Ofori-Boateng, 2017). Still, not all aspiring females consider the 'permission gesture' as mandatory; they discuss their decisions with their spouses because of respect for the Ghanaian culture. It is worth noting that some men seek their wives' consent before they engage in politics. On the other hand, when they unilaterally decide to engage in politics, wives do not divorce them, probably because politics is a perceived preserved designation for men.

There are deep-rooted socio-cultural hindrances that the aspiring women face. Indirect intergenerational transmission takes place, and specific patterns of decision-making within a family and ways of interacting with the outside world have an impact on an actor's political attitude (Franklin, Lyons, and Marsh, 2004). As part of the socialisation processes in Ghana, the family, which is also a socialisation agent plays vital roles in influencing an individual's interest to participate in politics. The family or parents determine a person's decision to engage in politics even at an advanced age above 18 years. Hence, when traditional Ghanaian family members are so much imbibed in the cultural beliefs, they would not allow their female relatives to engage in politics, hindering them from taking part in decisions that concern their welfare. It is suggested that affirmative action programs result in positive attitudinal changes towards women's participation in politics (Bawaand Sanyare, 2013). The next section of this paper discusses the disadvantaged positions of females in Ghanaian society.

2.2. Ghanaian Women and Disadvantaged Positions

The hurdles the average Ghanaian woman faces regarding inequality in a decision-making position in politics reflects Ghana's Gender Inequality Index (GII) as women are disadvantaged in certain aspects of their lives. The Gender Inequality Index (GII) is the loss in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements. GII features gender-based inequality, which is in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity (UNDP, 2018). Sexual and reproductive rights are the foundation for development (UNFPA, 2000), but regarding reproductive health, Ghana's maternal mortality rate is high at 319 deaths per 100,000 live births (UNDP, 2018). It implies that the average Ghanaian woman is in a life-threatening situation as she has little voice regarding her sexuality, family and childbearing responsibilities. The revelations, among other factors, prompt populists and advocates to appeal to the people against the government to enhance gender equality in decision-making positions for each gender to discuss their needs for better living.

Empowerment is another dimension of solving gender-based inequality, which will better liberate the woman from discrimination, sexual abuse, and other societal issues. Suggestively, GII's indication on empowerment is measured by the share of parliamentary seats held by women, and, the attainment of secondary and higher education by each gender. However, Ghana's parliament recorded only 13% female representation. Also, higher education seems to bring broader welfare benefits as it is a significant aspect of social capital (Keeley, 2007). For instance, educated women with at least primary and secondary education could negotiate with their partners on the use of a condom or plan a family size (Darteh, Dokuand Esia-Donkoh, 2014). The World Bank report in 2016 indicated that amongst those aged 15-24 years in Ghana, the literacy rate among females was 66% and 76% for males. The recent data places Ghana's literacy rate at 76.6%; thus, 82.0% for males, and 71.4% for the female populations (Ghana Business News, 2018 September 11). The literacy rate also reflected Ghana's achievement of the high literacy rate in most urban centres, as indicated in the 2015 MDG Report. The Sustainable Development Goal 4, hence, aims to ensure quality and equality in education. This is because; one of the liberating methods for females to be empowered is through education (Darteh, Dokuand Esia-Donkoh, 2014).

Inequality also affects Ghana's Human Development Index (HDI). A country's HDI is a summary measure for assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development. The dimensions are long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. The UN report has indicated that empowering women, giving them autonomy and improving their socio-economic and political status were necessary measures to achieve gender equality (Ocran, 2014). However, Ghana could not achieve the MDG 3 (gender equality and women empowerment) as she only could boast of having 13% of members being

females in Parliament. As earlier shown, the dissatisfaction of women representation in decision-making positions is also reflected in Ghana's Gender Inequality Index (GII). It is established that gender discrimination results in limited access to valuable resources such as decision-making positions, education, healthcare services (Manuh, 2011; UNDP, 2018; UNFPA, 2000). Consequently, populists advocate that gender discrimination should be avoided in society.

Anti-discriminatory laws are enshrined in the 1992 Ghanaian constitution, including Article 17 that deals with equality and freedom from discrimination. Articles 17(1) and (2) guarantee gender equality and freedom for women, men, girls and boys to be free from discrimination by social or economic status (The 1992 Constitution). In Ghana, however, populist mobilisations influence decisions on anti-discriminatory laws, but the lack of sustained demand for accountability from governments on their promises, making them relax in their mandate to avoid discrimination and ensure gender equality in decision-making positions calls for populist mobilisations (Dankwa, 2016). Thus, the populists appeal to the people against the government to ensure that women enjoy their political rights. As indicated earlier, governments have paid lip services to the international treaties of gender equality and women empowerment. Until the Affirmative Action Bill is passed into law, the Ghanaian women would not easily navigate through the deep-rooted male-dominated patriarchal structures to participate in decisions that concerns their wellbeing. The subsequent section of this paper discusses populism as a phenomenon in Ghana.

III. POPULISM IN GHANA

Populism exists in almost all political atmosphere where demands are made to satisfy the will of the people (Halikiopoulou, Bonikowski, Kaufmann and Rooduijn, 2018). There had been no self-conscious international populist movement, which might have attempted to control or limit term's reference. Those who have used populism have been able to attach it with a variety of meanings (Canovan, 1981). In this age of heightened political tensions, populist movements serve as other reliable ways to communicate peoples' ideas on equality, rights, agitations, petitions, promises and appeals. As a range of political approaches, populism comes in different forms in Ghana, and deliberately appeal to the people; often contrasting these people against the elite. The populist appeals are also in some form of demonstrations that sounds disagreeable but rather praising their redeemers. Ghanaians' populist expressions on signboards, road signs and street names insinuate either their displeasure or pleased with their leaders. For example, Kotoka International Airport was named after the Army General who ousted Ghana's first President, Dr Kwame Nkrumah. The compliment of naming an international airport after a coup strategist (redeemer) shows a populist stance against the then authoritarian leader. Despite the perceived dictatorial tendencies, avenues and a roundabout were named after him;

hence, Kwame Nkrumah Avenue and Kwame Nkrumah Circle. Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum has also been built as a tourist site. A major road in the capital city was inscribed Danquah Circle; named after Nkrumah's leading opponent who died while serving a jail term in Nsawam Prisons in Ghana. 31st December Makola Market commemorates Flight Lieutenant Rawlings's second coup, which was aimed to curtail corruption in Ghana (Bortey, 2012). There is the statue of Yaa Asantewaa, the Queen mother of Ejisu who fought against the British colonial masters. Okomfo Anokye, whom many Ghanaians believed to have conjured the Golden Stool from the skies to save the Ashanti Kingdom has his statue erected in the centre of Kumasi. Kumasi the second-largest city in Ghana, and Okomfo Anokye's home region. There are more populist physical signs that commemorate the Pan-African thoughts of Osagyefo Dr Kwame Nkrumah, the advocate for a united Africa. These populist gestures communicate Ghana's tribute to heroes, heroines and their appeals to the 'oppressed' against 'oppressors'.

Populist mobilisations also enhance the understanding of a country's democracy and its failure to adhere to international calls to treaties and conventions. Within the political science discourse, some scholars believe populism to be an ideology, which presents the people as a morally good force against 'the elite', who are perceived as corrupt and self-serving. Thus, accusing the elite of placing their interests and the interests of other groups (e.g. friends, relatives) above the interests of 'the people' (Akkerman, 2003). In today's politics, populism connotes policies and programmes that support the 'common man'. Put it succinctly; it is "the people" against "the elite" (Bortey, 2012). Bortey(2012) admits that populism is a political doctrine that supports the rights and power of the poor in their struggle against the privileged. Populism is also into people's opinions; if people have the right in a democracy, to hold an opinion, then these opinions could be populist expressions (Stanley, 2008).

Ghanaian populists appeal to 'the people' against the government ('the elite') whose mandate is to ensure that there is fair representation in decision-making positions in government and society. Politicians could initiate populist programmes, policies and assume to equalise the gender in society as politics embraces other areas of social life such as gender, race and class (Dzradosi, Agyekum, and Ocloo, 2018). However, they are sometimes over-ambitious when policies are presented to voters during elections. Thus, populist programmes in Ghanaian politics have turned to be red-herrings, and the common man has been the target as these politicians fail to deliver the over-ambitious policies and programmes (Bortey, 2012). These unfulfilled populist policies and programmes agitate the citizenry including opposing political parties, advocates and Civil Society Organisations. In March 2019, the Civil Society Organisations' (CSOs) in Ghana, for instance, criticised the government and expressed their concerns regarding discrimination in the appointment of women into the new regional political offices (Ultimate FM, March 18, 2019). The

CSOs were dismayed and disappointed over the one-woman appointee out of the fourteen (14) appointees as Regional Ministers for the newly created six regions in Ghana. Numbering about fifty-one groups, these CSOs signed a petition to the government to revise the unfair appointment to ensure gender equality in regional administration. While advocating for the recall of the discriminated appointment positions, the CSOs further quoted the national statutes-'that all state appointments should be undertaken within the overall commitment of gender equality of women and men in order to add value and make use of the diversity of experiences in ways that are democratic and define a genuine and equal citizenship' (The 1992 Constitution). The CSOs populist appeal in their ideological approach was a deliberate appeal to the people, which was a morally good force against the government (the elite) (Daniele and Duncan, 2008). Through their populist expressions, the CSOs exposed the incompatible ideological relationships between the people and the elite (Stanley, 2008). Paying lip services to campaign promises could be attributed to governments and politicians' anti-discriminatory agendas. Some contemporary populist leaders oppose anti-discriminatory legislation, gender-sensitive edification and transgender rights (Korolczuk, 2019). For example, gender issues may feature prominently on the contemporary populists' agendas in some jurisdictions. However, anti-discriminatory slogans for gender equality affect some political decisions, which may also influence any appointment of females into political office. These right-wing leaders observe gender as a threat to their country's politics and a danger to family, community and nation (Korolczuk, 2019). Some Ghanaian politicians have such anti-discriminatory posture, yet they make wild promises that would not equalise the gender in Ghanaian society.

Political parties in opposition also express disappointment at government fails to fulfil her electioneering campaign promises. A party in opposition presents itself as an alternative government or government in waiting; hence, the parties' campaign with messages insinuating that they had the people including women, but these women were not appointed into government positions. Thus, after winning elections and assuming the reign of power, the party's gestures indicate that there are no competent women in Ghana to be appointed into political positions. The 'no competent woman' stance could not be reasonable; it does not represent a genuine act of gender responsiveness, and it reinforces the critical gender equality gaps and challenges. Exalting the people through campaign promises and failing to fulfil those possibilities attracts criticisms. The government is accused of satisfying their cronies with appointment positions, thereby placing their interests and often the interests of other groups of people above the interest of the people (Akkerman, 2003; Stanley, 2008). As opposition political parties and government played with the mass illiteracy of the country to their benefit, the citizenry continues to express their dissatisfaction of the government failure to fulfil their national and international agendas (Bortey, 2012). Thus, many of the

citizenry are wide awake to this form of populist dishonesty. Hence, the populist stance by the CSOs was against the elites; it is about critiquing the establishment and adulation of the ordinary people (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013).

Despite the citizenry frustrations about the dishonest populist policies and programmes, millions of Ghanaians through their populists' stance are willing to support the two major political parties in Ghana; the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). Besides, party politics has permeated every facets of the Ghanaian life. Some sympathisers believe that the best way to participate in national development is to join a political party (Bob-Miller, 2012). In their attempt to express their populist ideologies of ensuring gender equality, political parties adhere to institutional directives. For example, EC appeals to political parties to encourage more female aspirants into government. The NPP, took the EC initiative and in the 2012 General Elections, offered female candidates 50% discount off their filing fees (Boateng, 2017; Myjoyonline.com, 2011 August 23). The gesture was to boost the levels of political consciousness and interest among Ghanaian women, and to encourage them to contest parliamentary seats.

More so, theories or approaches such as Gender and Development (GAD) agitate for equality. For instance, the GAD approach demands the equalisation of access to resources for economic development. GAD emphasises on women's empowerment and advocates that equality between the sexes could be achieved through empowerment. Concepts such as gender mainstreaming, gender analysis, gender discrimination, gender division of labour, and gender needs are in the framework of GAD as their influence on policy and practice indicate populist expressions. The GAD advocated that women must be endowed with different spheres of life and explained how the needs of men and women could equally be met and access valued resources such as political decision-making positions (Boateng, 2017).

Besides theories, group agitations, and petitions, individuals could advocate and appeal to the government to ensure gender equality in society. Advocates such as Prasad (2012) argue for women to be given equal status as men; giving women the capacity and ways to direct their lives towards desired goals and to be empowered. All these populist mobilisations appeal to the people against dominant structures, including unheeding governments, the patriarchal society, traditional authorities, traditional beliefs and activities that hinder women from their socio-political rights. It is reasonable to believe that populist calls for gender parity are mandating Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Africa, Senegal, Liberia and other African countries to make headway to achieve the 50/50 target for the appointment of women and men to high-level political offices (IPU, 2017). The inequality status of the country continuously prompts the tensions that are expressed by civil society organisations, political parties and gender advocates. Once Ghana is yet to pass the affirmative action bill into law, there are concerns to address issues of discrimination against the

marginalised and women. The subsequent section discusses populism and women political participation and representation.

IV. POPULISM AND WOMEN POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

The abysmal decline in the female representation in politics has been consistent as the number has not massively increased since Ghana became independent (Dzradosi, Agyekum, and Ocloo, 2018). Throughout the governing processes in the new millennia, Ghana's Parliament has not recorded more than 20% of female representation. As earlier stated, the 13% female representation in Parliament and 4.65% female representation in the district assemblies show that women are not proportionally represented in the decision-making positions (Ahikire, 2007; Allah-Mensah, 2005; Asuako, 2017; Paaga, 2016). The Ghanaian constitution mandates the government to appoint 30% of members of the district assemblies. Then again, the political party in government has the core responsibility to appoint more women into government. In 2002, then NPP government, through their populist directives, instructed that 50% of the 30% appointee positions in district assemblies be reserved for women. But, it does not happen because there is no legal instrument backing the directives (Ahwoi, 2010; Boateng, 2017; Institute of Local Government Studies [ILGS], 2010; Coalition on the Women's Manifesto [CWMG]-Ghana; Sana, 2011). The populist stance of governments shows some efforts, but not a political will to ensure that women are encouraged to engage in politics and government.

Few women have occupied positions of the speakers of Parliament, Ministers, Ambassadors and Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives since independence. Although there is a marginal improvement in the appointment of women into decision making positions over time, the situation still shows that a lot of Ghanaian women are not politically empowered (Dzradosi, Agyekum, and Ocloo, 2018). In 2017, women made up 19.25% of ministerial appointments, the highest figure since Ghana gained independence (Dzradosi, Agyekum, and Ocloo, 2018; Parliament of Ghana, 2017). Also, the local level government had 17% of females as MMDCEs, but the high number of males (83%) presents an unfair playing field in politics and decision-making positions.

The indications are that aspiring women are hard working in the face of societal challenges to win elections and contribute to development. They are aware that appointing more women and ensuring gender parity portrays a thoughtful governing system towards enhancing democracy. The women are by themselves working feverishly to win any organised elections. These female aspirants also appeal to the people against the government to appoint many of them into political positions. The disappointments in women representation in decision-making positions, thus encourage the aspiring female politicians to popularise their campaign messages to appeal to

the people to support them win elections. Previous study revealed that during district assembly elections, some female aspirants relied on the UN mandate for member countries to ensure gender equality and for Ghana to achieve the Millennium Development Goal 3. The study reported that the female aspirants campaigned along with their populist messages and appealed to the constituents to vote for them as most of them expressed themselves more common to emphasise their role as a wife and mother. For instance, one female aspirant in her populist slogan said, "to aba no ma obaa no" literally meaning, 'vote for the woman' (Boateng, 2017). She had been the sole woman contestant among males in a male-dominated district assembly and was nicknamed "Obaa no ara" in Ghanaian parlance meaning 'the only woman'. She capitalised on her 'newly acquired status' (Obaa no ara); a strong woman and a mother in the electoral area and won the election. 'Obaa no ara' approach is more of a rhetorical style as several populist leaders in Africa have distinguished themselves by speaking in indigenous languages rather than either French or English to make an impact (Resnick, 2017). The men also express their action in men words, talking of the need for "bold action" and "common-sense solutions" to issues, which they call "crises" (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 64).

Populist's influence on women consciousness in their political participation and political activities in a democratic nation gives an account of females' experiences in their populist activities including gender stereotyping and using feminist cards to win elections and gain popularity. However, the populist phenomenon has often been conflated with other concepts like demagoguery and generally presented as something to be feared and discredited (Stanley, 2008).

V. CONCLUSION

This paper reveals the populist mobilisations of individual advocates, political parties, civil society organisations. All to appeal to the people against the government to enhance gender equality in government decision-making positions and Ghanaian society. The populist mobilisations were to ensure that issues were communicated through advocacy, programs, policies, and petitions to achieve an equality goal in Ghana. The expressive theories and approaches that enumerate gender concepts and appeal to gender equality in society are presented in this paper. The paper revealed the consistent low female representation in decision-making positions and less appointment of women into government. A situation that calls for the regional and international bodies' policies to come in different forms and mandate member countries to ensure gender parity. UN directives appeal to the people for gender equality and aspiring females rely on such advocacy for gender equality in government and appeal for voting support to augment the worldwide calls. The Ghanaian situation does not demoralise aspiring women politicians as they use populist means through messages to attract votes during elections. The study reveals that the consciousness of the prospective women

politicians during electioneering campaigns appeal to traditional Ghanaians to support them to win elections. The study shows that the populist appeals have created the awareness for Ghanaians and governments to be gender-sensitive, and to ensure equality in government and the Ghanaian society.

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