

**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH (SoGSaR)**

**DEFINING FEMINISM THROUGH THE LENSES OF SOME GHANAIAN  
FEMINISTS**

**BY**

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**(MAPR 19011)**

**THIS DISSERTATION PROPOSAL IS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF  
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**Declaration**

I hereby declare that this research proposal on the topic, **“DEFINING FEMINISM THROUGH THE LENSES OF SOME GHANAIAN FEMINISTS”** is my original research. I further declare that no part of it has been presented for another has been presented for degree or diploma in the institution or elsewhere.

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### **Abstract**

The definition of feminism and what it means to a group of people, region, country, etc. has been controversial over the years. In Africa, the bid to clearly define the struggles of African women has led to differences in the definition of the term. The controversy in definition and concepts, especially amongst Ghanaian Feminists, is the inspiration for this thesis. This study is collated on the premise that feminist objectives differ in terms of culture, country, etc. and the main aim of this study is to define feminism through the lenses of some Ghanaian feminists.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Background to the Study

The word 'feminism' is said to have emerged in Europe and North America in the late 1960s. The concept has over the years become an essential term for intellectual analysis so much that it has assumed many distinctive meanings in the process. Hence, Hooks (2001) defines feminism as "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression" (p. 8)<sup>1</sup>. Beasley (1999)<sup>2</sup> refers to feminism as a 'troublesome' term that inconveniently defies simple explanations, and that its complexity and diversity provides obstacles to those wishing to gain a satisfactory grasp of it.

Thompson (2001) opines that that "It should be obvious that feminism is a social enterprise, a moral and political framework concerned with redressing social wrongs" (p. 6)<sup>3</sup>. He added that feminism is centrally concerned with judgments of what ought and what ought not to be the case. Mekgwe (2006)<sup>4</sup> refers to feminism as both an activist movement and body of ideas, that focuses on the needs of women and their importance in the society. Kristin & Catherine (2013)<sup>5</sup> in defining feminism today, refer to it as a vibrant and diverse activism, where everyone is entitled to get passionate about their own activist opportunities. They associate feminist involvement to, recession, government change, public pressure, etc.

According to Glenn (2009)<sup>6</sup>, theatrical convention has played a pivotal role in the emergence of modern feminism. Glenn argues that a generation of daring actresses began creating powerful images of ambitious, independent and sexually 'expressive' women, leading to modern feminism.

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<sup>1</sup> Hooks, B. (2001). *Feminism is for Everybody*. London: Pluto Press. p. 8

<sup>2</sup> Beasley, C. (1999). *What is Feminism?* London: Sage. p.11

<sup>3</sup> Thompson, D. (2001). *Radical Feminism today*. Sage. P. 6

<sup>4</sup> Mekgwe, P. (2006). *Theorizing African Feminism*.

<sup>5</sup> Kristin, A. & Redfern, C. (2013). *Reclaiming the F Word*

<sup>6</sup> Glenn, S. (2009). *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism*. Harvard University Press

The question of who a feminist is, draws a lot of attention to ideologies people have concerning the term and who should be regarded as a feminist. Kristin & Catherine (2013)<sup>7</sup> opine that while there is no overriding committee to decide who is ‘allowed’ to be called a feminist, should everyone entitled to an activist opportunity be referred to as a feminist? According to Maynard & Purvis (2013)<sup>8</sup>, feminists are now involved in exploring a wide range of issues, that has to do with practical, political and ethical matters. Andrews (1998) states that “until recently, suffragists were often the only women that historians designated as feminists, before the twentieth century” (p.11)<sup>9</sup>.

The term feminism is separated into three waves:

1. First wave feminism: dealt with property rights and the right to vote. This were the early stages of feminism, that occurred during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century and had it focus on legal issue specifically, gaining the right to vote. As some scholars argue with facts, what led to the first wave of feminism, Magarey (1890)<sup>10</sup> states that the women movement emerged in Australia in the 1880s, leading to some organizations like the ‘Victorian Women’s suffrage society (1884), Women’s suffrage league (1888) etc.
2. Second wave feminism: focused on equality and anti-discrimination among women.
3. Third wave feminism, which started in the 1990s as a backlash to the second wave’s perceived privileging of white, straight women.

Notwithstanding, most authors are now arguing that due to modern feminism, there are four waves of feminism. And this can clearly be seen in Rampton, Martha (2015)<sup>11</sup>, in her article, *The Four Waves of Feminism*. Wrye (2009) in her writing on the fourth wave, stated that “the fourth

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<sup>7</sup> Kristin, A. & Redfern, C. (2013). *Reclaiming the F word: Feminism today*

<sup>8</sup> Maynard, M. & Purvis, J. (2013). *Researching women’s lives from a feminist perspective*

<sup>9</sup> Melodie, A. (1998). *Common Ground-Feminist*

<sup>10</sup> Magarey, S. (1890). *Beginnings of the Women’s Liberation Movement in Australia*.

<sup>11</sup> Rampton, M. (2015). *The four waves of feminism*

wave moved into the 21st century as women turned toward spiritual concerns about the planet and all its beings, putting themselves in the service of the world, ecology, and the oppressed” (p. 185)<sup>12</sup>.

Though the focus of feminism has been on the West, over the years some African writers have perceived some feminism concepts as Africa exclusive. Hence, the need to include Africa’s experience in feminism, these writers developed concepts like *Black feminism*, *Africana womanism*, *Stiwanism*, which will all be deliberated in the literature review.

### **1.1 Statement of the Research Problem**

Most scholars consider feminist campaigns to be a main force behind the major historical fight for rights of women. Despite major laws and campaigns designed to fight for rights of women, discrimination against women continue to exist, and women in Ghana are not exempted as they still face discrimination and inequality in the Ghanaian society. According to Ama Ata Aidoo in an interview with Adewale Maja-Pearce in Harare, July 1990, Ghanaian women are no better off than women elsewhere, vis-a-vis patriarchy or male orientation in the society.

The situation is aggravated by a collective thinking on what is nationally accepted as constituting feminism in Ghana. Various women crusaders, who engage in the forefront of advocating feminism in Ghana, seem not to agree on what feminism in Ghana is or should be, due to differences in Ghanaian societal cultures. As a result of the differences in societal cultures, the expected results like enjoying constitutional rights, equal rights and opportunities with their male counterparts from these feminist crusaders, is not being achieved.

This study therefore aims at defining feminism in the eyes of the Ghanaian woman and what can be done in terms of advocacy to ensure the feminism movement achieves the right results in terms of education and women empowerment.

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<sup>12</sup> Wryle, K. H. (2009). *Gender and Sexuality*

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

The general objective of this study, is explore the varying understanding of feminism through the lens of some Ghanaian women. At the end of the study, the following specific objectives expected to be achieved are:

1. Identify how Ghanaian women define feminism
2. Establish the differences between these definitions
3. Explore some established ideologies or concepts of feminism, in Ghana
4. Explore the importance of these ideologies or concepts to the Ghanaian society.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

The following questions will guide the researcher in finding solutions to the topic under study:

1. How do Ghanaian women define feminism?
2. What are the differences in these definitions?
3. What are the various ideologies or concepts of feminism in Ghana?
4. How are these concepts and ideologies relevant to the Ghanaian society?

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study is to draw attention to the fact that, feminism can be defined in many ways and not only in the “perceived” themes that have been laid down. Additionally, it will add up to existing knowledge and serve as a reference guide.

## **1.5 Scope of the Study**

Though the study is focused on defining feminism from a Ghanaian perspective, the literature of this study will not be limited to Ghana only; the focus will as well be on some African writers, and scholars outside of Ghana, as far as it relates to what the study seeks to achieve.

## **1.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter defines feminism, history relating to it, the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study and the scope of the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

There are varying definitions of what constitutes feminism across the world, and each part of the world has a different view of what feminism should be. Offen (1988)<sup>13</sup> holds the view that the comparative historical approach of feminism, tends to broaden one's perspective on the term, hence the origination of new and different ideas in the definition of feminism. Offen proposes a re-examination and re-conceptualization of feminism which could lead to new definitions, ideas and concepts across countries. This work intends to ascertain the differences inherent in defining feminism, vis-à-vis feminism in Ghana, as a result of differences in beliefs and culture.

#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

##### 2.1.1 Postmodern Feminism Theory

Postmodern feminism evolved within the third wave feminism, and the theory argues that there are many ways that feminism is lived out by women through a multitude of discourses. Baber & Allen (1992) defined postmodern feminism as a framework that deconstructs the ideologies and practices that support gender inequalities between men and women, while also challenging "essentialist feminist theories that ignore differences among women related to factors such as; age, race, class and sexual orientation"<sup>14</sup>. The premise of postmodern feminism is the rejection of the notion of universal grand narratives as a means of understanding and explaining society.

Judy Butler (1990)<sup>15</sup> in her book, *Gender Trouble* argued that there is no single cause for women's subordination and no single approach towards dealing with the issue. Postmodern feminism acknowledges the importance of Third World and minority women's experiences. Fraser & Nicholson (2013)<sup>16</sup> state that the advantage of this theory is its usefulness to contemporary feminist political practice.

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<sup>13</sup> Offen, K. (1988). *A comparative Historical Approach*, Chicago Press.

<sup>14</sup> Baber, K. & Allen, K. (1992). *Women & families: Feminist reconstruction*. New York; Guilford Press.

<sup>15</sup> Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*.

<sup>16</sup> Fraser, N. & Nicholson, L. (2013). *Social criticism without philosophy*. London: Routledge.

Fraser & Nicholson (2013) refer to Post-modern feminist theory as non-universalist, pragmatic, cross-cultural and comparative, rather than universalizing. They add that the theory is attuned to changes and contrasts, instead of covering laws. Wolff (2007) also asserts that “The general premise of Postmodern feminism theory, is a rejection of the Western ideal of establishing universal grand narratives as means of understanding and explaining society” (p. 1)<sup>17</sup>. She adds that the theory makes room for all to contribute to gender inequality and other issues inherent to feminism.

The Postmodern feminism theory, according to Ebert (1991), is necessary for social change, since it permits varying ideas and concepts. Marchand & Parpart (2003) also adds that the Postmodern feminist theory is necessary since it acknowledges Third world women’s experience and their quest for change.

### 2.1.2 Standpoint Theory

Feminist Standpoint theory is traced to Harding (1986), who used the term to emphasize that knowledge is always rooted in a particular position. The theory was intended to explain the extensive successes of emerging feminist, in a wide range of projects. Wood (2005)<sup>18</sup> states that the focus of the Standpoint theory is on ways that social location shapes knowledge. That is, social location shapes women’s lives in material, social and symbolic ways.

Crasnow (2014)<sup>19</sup> opines that the standpoint theory was meant to promote the principle of inclusivity and justice. Smith (1987)<sup>20</sup> also used the notion of standpoint to emphasize that what one knows, is affected by where one stands in society. She added adds up by saying that no two people have exactly the same standpoint. Smith made this assertion from the standpoint as a female in a male dominated world, as a wife, a mother, and a sociology graduate student.

The Standpoint theory, as stated by Harding (2004) emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, as a feminist critical theory about relations between the production of knowledge and practices of

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<sup>17</sup> Kristina, W. (2007). *Postmodern Feminism*

<sup>18</sup> Julia, T. W. (2005). *Feminist standpoint theory and muted group theory: Commonalities and divergences.*

<sup>19</sup> Crasnow, S. (2014). *Feminist Standpoint theory.*

<sup>20</sup> Smith, D. (1987). *The everyday world as problematic.* Boston: Northeastern University press.

power. The theory was presented as a way of empowering oppressed groups, valuing their experiences and a way to develop oppositional consciousness. She added that theory provides a way to simultaneously advance growth in knowledge and social justice. Potter (2006) also adds that the theory is not just a perspective, but an achievement to “the result of an analysis by more than one person who in the first instance, occupy particular location in a political order” (p. 131)<sup>21</sup>. In Potter’s view, standpoint changes assumptions and reshapes knowledge to be more objective.

According to Harding (2004), “the theory has continued to attract both enthusiasts and critics during its recent history” (p. 1)<sup>22</sup>. Two main critics of the theory, Clough and Sullivan (2003) are of the view that Harding’s theory is ‘Representationalism’ – the idea that objects of perception are ideas that represent external objects, distinct from occasion of perception. That is, what is before the mind is not the object but a representation of it. They further argue that Harding risks retaining an objective-relativist twofold that would defuse the emancipatory potential of her theory.

The theories above explain the diverse ways feminists express their ideas based on their societies and experience, and also propounds to the topic under study. However, this research will relate how some ideologies under feminism have developed and the different standpoints these feminists took to develop these ideologies. These ideologies vary in terms of strategies, goals, etc. as evidenced by Davis (2008: 70) in his statement, “differences among women has become the leading subject of feminist theories in recent years”<sup>23</sup>. Feminists identify themselves with a number of thoughts and circumstances, leading to feminist movements and philosophies.

## 2.2 Concepts and Ideologies in Feminism

The following concepts were chosen randomly, just to throw more light on what the theories seek to explain, and what the study seeks to achieve. Radical feminist had a premise for challenging norms, black feminist also had theirs, and so on. Hence, the explanation that, one’s

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<sup>21</sup> Potter, E. (2006). *Feminism and Philosophy of Science: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>22</sup> Harding, S. (2004). *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and political controversies*.

<sup>23</sup> Davis, K. (2008). *Intersectionality as buzzword: A sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful*.

social location shapes knowledge, and what one would decide to fight for. Though the knowledge varies, the overall goal is to achieve gender equality.

### 2.2.1 Radical Feminism

This ideology seeks to abolish patriarchy; where men dominate and oppress women, and to liberate people from this oppression. This type of ideology is mostly accomplished by challenging existing norms and stems from criticism of early feminists. Solomon (1992) writes that “radical feminist theory states that patriarchy is related to the oppression and victimization of women” (p. 1)<sup>24</sup>. According to Robinson (2003), “radical feminism is utilized by male theorists, specifically those who theorize masculinity and who consider themselves sympathetic to feminist concerns” (p. 129)<sup>25</sup>. Thompson (2001) also defines radical feminism as “the struggle against male supremacy and the struggle for a human status for women identifying as women” (p. 16)<sup>26</sup>.

According to Hunter (2004) “Radical Feminism started with the assumption that the sexes are adversarial poised, that men have power over women and that society and its various social relationships can be best understood in terms of their relationship to that situation” (p. 1)<sup>27</sup>. Therefore, Allen (2011) is of the view that “radical feminist tends to understand power in terms of dyadic relations of dominance/subordination, often understood on analogy with the relationship master and slave” (p. 16)<sup>28</sup>. To the radical feminist, societies should not be all about male supremacy and privileges, but the experiences of women, the important roles women play in the society and the worthy roles that befit women in the society. Since the ideology was to challenge existing norms and oppression, these feminists were ready to go down the roots of patriarchy in societies in order to end domination.

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<sup>24</sup> Solomon, J.C. (1992). Child sexual abuse by family members: A radical feminist perspective.

<sup>25</sup> Robinson, Victoria. (2003). A place at the table: the representation of feminist thought in contemporary masculinity theory. New York: Nova press.

<sup>26</sup> Thompson, D. (2001). Radical feminism today.

<sup>27</sup> Hunter, D. (2004). *Radical Feminism*.

<sup>28</sup> Allen, A. (2011). *Feminist perspective on power*.

### 2.2.2 Black Feminism

This is based on empowering black women to think critically and challenge norms. Collins (1991)<sup>29</sup> define black feminism as women who theorize the experiences and ideas shared by ordinary black women that provide a unique angle of vision on self, community and society. (Carby, 1996)<sup>30</sup>, also adds that history has constructed black sexuality and femininity as deviating from qualities associated with white women; where the white women have been endowed, and the black, tarnished, hence the need for the ‘black her-story’ rather than history.

According to Smith (2009) though black feminism has been most successful, discrimination continues to affect black women’s academic salaries, opportunities for promotion and daily working conditions. In as much as other feminist were ‘fighting’ for sexual objectification and patriarchy, black feminists were fighting for their voices to be heard, and for recognition.

### 2.2.3 Cultural Feminism

Cultural feminism emphasizes essential differences between men and women, based on biological differences in reproductive capacity. Williams (1975) “Cultural feminism is the belief that women will be freed via an alternate women’s culture” (p. 79)<sup>31</sup>. “Radical feminism is a movement to transform society, while cultural feminism is about vanguardism, working to build women’s culture”<sup>32</sup> (MacKinnon, 2003).

According to Wolff (2007)<sup>33</sup>, “Cultural feminism seeks to understand women’s social locations in society by concentrating on gender differences between men and women” (p; 6). Lewis (2019)<sup>34</sup> suggests that the three main aspects of cultural feminism that are criticized by other feminists are: Essentialism; the idea that women are fundamentally different to men, hence, the essence of male and female, Separatism; the idea of opposition to patriarchy can be achieved

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<sup>29</sup> Collins, P. Hill. (1991). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness & the politics of empowerment*.

<sup>30</sup> Carby, V. Hazel. (1996). *White women listen! : Black feminism and the boundaries of sisterhood*.

<sup>31</sup> Williams, B. (1975). *Cultural feminism*.

<sup>32</sup> MacKinnon, C. (2003). *Cultural Feminism*.

<sup>33</sup> Wolff, K. (2007). *Postmodern feminism*.

<sup>34</sup> Lewis, J. J. (2019). *Cultural feminism: What is the essence of being a woman*.

through women's separation from men, and the idea of feminist vanguard; building new culture rather than transforming the existing one through political and other challenges.

#### **2.2.4 Liberal Feminism**

This is a form of feminist theory which focuses on women's ability to maintain their equality through their own actions and choices. Liberal feminists argue that society holds the false belief that women are, by nature, less intellectually and physically capable than men; thus, it tends to discriminate against women in the academy, the forum, and the marketplace.

Marilley (1996)<sup>35</sup> demonstrates in her book that, although native-born, white American women suffragists were not considered fully as agents of radical reform because they were elites, one cannot argue that they instigated liberal and egalitarian change. It further posits that, in the fight for egalitarian change, women suffragists introduced liberal feminism. In addition, these women suffragists in their struggle, developed three types of liberal arguments, each predominant during a different phase of the movement:

(1) the feminism of equal rights (1820s-1870s); it called for freedom through equality. It emerged during the Jacksonian era to counter those opposed to women's participation in antislavery reform.

(2) the feminism of fear (1870- 1900); the defense of women's right to live free from fear of violent injury or death perpetuated particularly by drunken men.

(3) feminism of personal development (1900- 1920); it called for women's freedom through opportunities to become full persons.

Though these theories have what they all fight or stand for, it must be noted that the end objective is to gain equal rights for women, in all walks of life, including Ghanaian women.

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<sup>35</sup> Marilley, M. S. (1996). *The evolution of American feminism*.

### 2.3 Feminism in Ghana

Though the various fights for gender equality in the above listed concepts is what most women would fight for, not to exempt Ghanaian women, the concepts do not particularly portray what a Ghanaian woman would really fight or stand for, in terms of gender equality. This is not to opine that Ghanaian women do not have stances of their own. Defining feminism and what it means, relative to a large group of people has been contentious, however, African women feminists have tried to clearly define their struggles. The multiplicity in feminism in the various part of the world, especially in Ghana, is what this thesis seeks to explore. One thing that runs through all feminist concepts, is the focus of emancipation of women from all forms of oppression and discrimination. Dietz's (2003) define feminism as:

A historically constituted local, and global, social and political movement with an emancipatory purpose and a normative content, which posits a subject (women), defines a problem and express views in the name of specific principles (P. 399)<sup>36</sup>.

Ghana actively contributes to the feminist movement in Africa. In 2006, over two hundred African feminists gathered in Accra, Ghana from all over the continent and the diaspora.<sup>37</sup> Out of the gathering emerged the Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists, seeking to re-energize and reaffirm African feminism in its multiple dimensions.

The forum facilitated the redefinition and affirmation of the commitment to feminist principles, which served as a guide on analysis, and practice. As such the Charter sets out the collective values that holds as the key to the work and lives of African feminists. It charts the change expected of Africa communities, and also how this change is to be achieved. In addition, it spells out our individual and collective responsibilities to the movement and to one another within the movement.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Dietz, M.G. (2003). *Current Controversies in Feminist*.

<sup>37</sup> Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists (2016). *Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists*. [www.africanfeministforum.com](http://www.africanfeministforum.com)[www.awdf.org](http://www.awdf.org)

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

The Charter is an inspirational as well as an aspirational document. Mechanisms for operationalizing it were also drawn up at the meeting. Key recommendations were:

- The dissemination and popularization of the Charter as a critical movement building tool. This requires such inputs as, translation of the charter into as many languages as possible, communication of the charter through different mediums such as radio, websites, television, and so on.
- The Charter was viewed by many as an accountability mechanism for feminist organizing. As such it was recommended that it be developed into a tool that women's organizations can use for monitoring the own institutional development as well as peer review with other feminists.<sup>39</sup>

One of the foremost and famous feminism activists in Ghana, Professor Ama Ata Aidoo who is a Ghanaian novelist, poet and playwright, in her famous interview with Adewale Maja-Pearce in Harare, July 1990, opined that modernism has actually worked against feminism in Ghana. She observed that the girl child is still not considered worth educating, in this modern dispensation, sighting the example of four boys' dormitories and one female dormitory on coeducational campuses.

In a Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) roundtable discussion on the topic *Feminism in Ghana: Are There New Approaches in The Push for Gender Equality?* Professor Audrey Gadzekpo (2020) defines feminism as "trusting in women enablement". She wondered why people, especially in a country like Ghana, were afraid to be called feminist. She argues that feminist-run spaces may have changed, and the fundamental wars that used to be waged in the past have changed, for instance, the perception of a woman's inability run for political office, has changed overtime.

In relation to the above assertion, a feminist with the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah (2016), who is the Director of Communications and Tactics, portrays herself as a feminist, an African woman, a blogger, a sister, a daughter, a researcher, a life coach and a trainer. She motioned that "all women have the right to a happy, satisfying and rewarding life free of the socio-cultural restrictions sometimes imposed on

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<sup>39</sup> <http://www.africanfeministforum.com/feminist-charter-introduction/>

women” (para. 5). She further argues saying, she has been inspired by the achievements of women from all across the globe including the African- American writer/lecturer/poet Maya Angelou, the Ghanaian professor/writer Ama Ata Aidoo and South African activist Pregs Govender, through their writings, hence, there was the need for the conscious effort to document the lives of women achievers for the younger generation. She states “one of my current passions is documenting the lives of African women”.

As a result of her strong beliefs in women's empowerment and growth, another feminist, Mansa Ayisi-Okyere (2016), alluding to Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah's position also claims that she considers herself a feminist. "She added, " I do not adhere to a feminist's misguided idea of a bra burning, male hating angry woman. Centered on the universal premise that we are people and entitled to fair opportunities, I believe in equality for both sexes” (para. 2).

She further argues “Feminists in Africa today are faced with the institutional and social/cultural structures that have long been in place to favor men” (para.3). She opines that although we are seeing shifts as a result of constant education and sensitization of people to women's value in society and the necessity to give them equal opportunities, we still have a long way to go.

A feminist and the Executive Director of the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre, a women's rights advocacy group, Dorcas Coker-Appiah (2016) also concurs as she describes herself as a feminist because she believes in women's and men's equal rights. "I think women should be given the same opportunities to reach their full potential as men” (para.2). She believes that her worth as a woman is to be a woman and not as a wife or mother of another, and the heart of her feminist principles are shaped by these beliefs.

Dorcas further argues that “feminists today are faced with almost, if not all the challenges that our predecessors faced including enduring socio-cultural norms that prescribe the roles of women as being subservient to men and under men's authority” (para.3).

The Finance Manager of African Women's Development Fund Gertrude Bibi Annoh-Quarshie (2016) who is also a feminist says that to her, actions of a person demarcates if the person is feminist or not. “I have been called a feminist and I call myself a feminist because I believe in the rights of women and I advocate and support all efforts by women to exercise their rights” (para.2). A unique confront to feminists in Africa according to her is lack of support for the drive

to appeal to and maintain a broader network of feminists cutting across all the groups including the young or older women.

She further explains by stating that the movement does not seem to be engaging as much as it should, with the necessary actors who are contributing towards the marginalization of women.

#### **2.4 Chapter Summary**

To conclude, it is apparent that the alternative and various concepts for feminism and how Ghanaian women see what feminism differs, and is all about our socio-cultural peculiarities and the quest in their struggle to bring about change amongst women. And as Arndt (2002)<sup>40</sup> puts it, it is necessary for feminism to be diverse, since it is responsive to the different needs and concerns of different women and defined by themselves.

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<sup>40</sup> Arndt, S. (2002). Perspective on African feminism: defining and classifying African – feminist literatures.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the various research procedures used to seek relevant data for the research work. It deals with research design, sample size and sampling method, sources of data, population of study, research instruments, data analysis and chapter summary.

#### 3.1 Research Design

Parahoo (1997)<sup>41</sup> describes research design as “a plan that describes how, when and where data are to be collected and analyzed” (p. 142). Also, Burns and Grove (2003)<sup>42</sup> define research design as “a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings” (p. 195). It is basically the blueprint of how the research work is conducted. Polit et al (2001)<sup>43</sup> also define research design as “the researcher’s overall for answering the research question or testing the research hypotheses” (p. 167).

This study is exploratory in nature, that is, the focus will be on questions like what, why and how, a problem exists and to have a better understanding of the problem. Polit et al (2001:19) argue that “exploratory studies are undertaken when a new area is being investigated, or when little is known about an area of interest”. Qualitative method will be used to investigate through interviews, observations, literature research, etc. to affirm what constitutes feminism in Ghana. Burns & Grove (2003)<sup>44</sup> refer to qualitative research as “a systematic subjective approach used to describe life experiences and situations to give them meanings” (p. 19). Parahoo (1997)<sup>45</sup> added that qualitative research focuses on the practices of people and their uniqueness. Streubert & Carpenter (1999)<sup>46</sup> argues that the researcher’s participation in the study adds to the uniqueness of data collection and analysis. Holloway & Wheeler (2002)<sup>47</sup> contend that comprehensive

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<sup>41</sup> Parahoo, K. (1997) *Research process, principles and issue*. Basingstoke: MacMillan.

<sup>42</sup> Burns, N. & Groove, SK. (2003) *The practice of Nursing research: Conduct, Critique & Utilization*.

<sup>43</sup> Polit D.F. (2001) *Research principles and Methods*. Philadelphia

<sup>44</sup> Burns, N. & Groove, SK. (2003) *The practice of Nursing research: Conduct, Critique & Utilization*.

<sup>45</sup> Parahoo, K. (1997) *Research process, principles and issue*. Basingstoke: MacMillan.

<sup>46</sup> Streubert, H., & Carpenter, D. (1999). *Qualitative Research in Nursing: Advancing the Humanistic Perspective* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

<sup>47</sup> Holloway, I. and Wheeler, S. (2002) *Qualitative research in nursing*. Blackwell Science, Oxford.

objectivity is impossible, and qualitative research understands that humans cannot be predicted, hence, making it subjective. From the above definitions, it is clear that the use of qualitative method, will help understand and interpret data, through a wide angled focus on life experiences and practices. Qualitative research is concerned with processes, has a natural setting, focuses on words and its description is detailed, hence, the implementation of this method.

The results of the study seek to provide significant insight into definition of feminism in Ghana, situate it in the context of universally accepted concepts and principles of feminism and whether feminism in Ghana deviates from globally accepted definitions based on the Ghanaian socio-cultural situation. The goal is to learn about feminism in Ghana and some concepts associated to it.

### **3.2 Population**

Parahoo (1997: 218)<sup>48</sup> defines population as “the total number of units from which data can be collected”. Data can be collected from organizations, individuals, events, etc. The target population for this research is defined to include feminists in Ghana, to achieve what this study seeks.

### **3.3 Sample Size & Sampling Method**

Sampling involves the selection of a number of units of study from a population. The sample size should be enough to obtain data to adequately describe the problem and answer the research questions. Sampling goes on until saturation has been achieved, and Glaser and Strauss (1967) commend the concept of saturation in the process of achieving appropriate sample size in qualitative studies. Guest, Bunce & Johnson (2006: 59) refer to saturation as the juncture when “no new information or themes are observed in the data”. Saturation refers to the stage where a researcher is assured that any further data collected would only yield similar results, to confirm existing themes and conclusions. At this stage, the researcher is satisfied with the data collected.

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<sup>48</sup> Parahoo, K. (1997) *Research process, principles and issue*. Basingstoke: MacMillan.

Sampling method on the other hand, refers to the specific processes through which sample size has been selected. It prevents and assists the researcher from collecting data from everyone in the population, but those deemed relevant in the study. Sampling method helps to carefully decide the sample representation and to draw conclusion from results.

The sample size of this research will be the views of ten (10) Ghanaian feminists on what constitutes feminism in Ghana. The sample size of ten (10), will represent the population of feminist in Ghana, and would be less expensive and easier to solicit information that represents the entire population of Feminist in Ghana. A purposive sampling procedure will be used for selecting the participants in this study. This technique will be employed to ensure that information is rich, fairly and logically equal representation of the variables for the study.

Purposive sampling which was obtained from a non-probability sampling technique will be employed to select the sample size, since it is useful for exploratory research.

### **3.4 Data Collection Instrument**

A semi-structured interview schedule will be designed as one of the data collections instruments for this study. This type of interview will help the researcher probe respondents, while maintaining the basic interview structure. The interview will be aimed at eliciting relevant information through personal interviews and or telephone interviews, in cases of unavailability. The interview will ensure that the views expressed will be peculiar to the Ghanaian setting. The interview questions will be open-ended, since the research seeks to explore the topic under study.

Observations will be used as a data collection instrument. McKechnie (2008) refers to observation in qualitative research as one of the oldest and most fundamental research methods which involves data collection using one's senses in a systematic and meaningful way. Similarly, Adler & Adler (1994) refer to observations as "the fundamental base of all research methods" (p. 389).<sup>49</sup> With this instrument for data collection, participants will be observed, in terms of their

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<sup>49</sup> McKechnie, L.E. (2008). *Observational Research*. The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods.

Adler, P. A. & Adler, P. (1996). *Membership roles in field research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

actions and inaction, using the researcher's senses. Unstructured approach will be applied, in order to monitor all behaviors. This data collection instrument will be applied while participant is being interviewed. Applying this instrument will provide more information to the researcher, other than relying solely on what is being said.

### **3.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter defined the methodology that guides this study, by describing the research design to be applied, the population of the study, sample size, sampling method and data collection instruments. Generally, in answering the research questions at hand, semi-structured interview and observation, will be applied as data collection instruments.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

#### 4.0 Introduction

This dissertation proposal set-out to explore the varying understanding of feminism through the eyes of female feminist in Ghana and juxtapose same with established feminist principles. In as much as feminist concepts are universal, their implementation hinges on the cultural setting of each unique society. This is particularly so because the cultural setting of Ghanaian societies as compared to their western counterparts are totally different. Put differently, the aim of the work was to establish a workable and acceptable feminism principle acceptable to the Ghanaian setting.

#### 4.1 Summary

It is important to state that, some level of feminism was practiced in Ghana before the advent of universally accepted feminism theories. For instance, Professor Ama Ata Aidoo (1990) argues that women from matriarchically societies in Ghana like the Akans were very important. They held and still holds power when it comes to choosing chiefs and other leaders in society and men essentially ruled for the proxy of the women. She further argues that, in a society like the Akan society, women were strong and performed the role as doctors, psychologists and priestess as the men does. Her argument therefore points to some level of women empowerment in societies in Ghana before the advent of modern feminism movement.

Recent feminist like Mansa Ayisi-Okyere argues that feminism should be about empowering and developing women instead of creating enmity between men and women. Dorcas Appiah on the other hand opines that feminism is when women are allowed to be whatever they want to be and whatever they want to do, without being valued only as a mother or wife.

The views of these feminists point to the Ghanaian conceptualization and understanding of feminism in relation to the characters and situations. It reveals the uniqueness of feminism desired by Ghanaian women and the liberation they seek. This must therefore

be modus operandi of supporters of these feminists instead of a wholesale importation of western feminism in Ghana.

#### **4.2 Conclusion**

The general objective of this study was to explore the varying understanding of feminism through the lens of some Ghanaian feminists, and with the views of these feminists obtained so far, it is evident that though feminist principles can be said to be universal, defining the term varies from a feminist to the other.

#### **4.3 Recommendations**

Throughout this study, it has been evident that the definition to feminism differs in terms of cultural perspectives and standpoint of feminists. The theories implemented in this study suggests the need for the term to be defined from one's point of view. However, this study recommends that researchers undertake a comparative study on what Ghanaian feminists define as feminism, and the extent to which these feminist definitions are being applied in real life. Also, it will be worthwhile to make a comparative study of the achievements of some feminists in Ghana and the achievements of feminists in other African countries. This study will help measure the growth of feminism in Ghana in comparison to other African countries.

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