

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Feminist identity crisis in Africa

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Received: April 5, 2024;
Accepted: June 14, 2024;
Published: June 19, 2024.

Citation: Norman, I. D., & Awiah-Norman, B. M. (2024). Feminist identity crisis in Africa. *International Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 5(1), 216-226. <https://doi.org/10.25082/IJAH.2024.01.003>

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Abstract: Feminist movement in Africa lacks capable guardians to steer the development of feminine identity or theory, and to operationalize the feminist agenda. The apparent lack of a national or continental feminist theory has not helped to elevate the status of the majority of women beyond the patriarchal controls, particularly in the rural and peri-urban communities, despite improved social modernization. Africa's feminist crisis involves the lack of leadership, ideological vacuity, absence of structure or movement, and the non-application of cultural; political; class; religious and tribal identities in developing feminist theory. In search of capable feminist guardians, the tendency of feminist groups is to co-opt self-actualized African women into feminism with or without their consent, and without regard to the accidental coincidence of those personalities' narratives with feminist epistemology. Feminism in Africa is in search of relevance within the public space. This paper interrogates these issues and uses the narrative of several self-actualized women in Africa, who have, apparently, been co-opted into feminism as a result, to discuss aspects of the crisis and the delimiting public policy and legislation against, perhaps, the development of feminine identity.

Keywords: feminism, patriarchy, capable guardians, restrictions on sexual orientation

1 Introduction

The evolution of feminist epistemology the world over, has experienced definitional and identity crisis for a considerable length of time. It is expected that feminism in Africa would undergo the same developmental challenges, although the African feminists seem to have opted out of gaining deeper insight into feminist causes through civil disobedience, public demonstrations, boycott, advocacy and scholarly publications coupled with activism against patriarchal controls (Motta *et al.*, 2011). The apparent neglect of the performative duties of feminists in Africa has created a huge gap in the theoretical scholarship and functional development of feminist agenda for society. The term "Feminism" emerged in 1837 from a French philosopher and socialist, Charles Fourier (1772 – 1837). This was to indicate the "illness of womanly qualities appearing in men" (Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022, p. 1). bell hooks tackled the same issue in her book, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984), which aimed to see feminist having a common language to spread the word and create a mass, global feminist movement. So, what is the nature of the African feminist crisis? Feminist crisis in Africa consists of the lack of leadership, ideological vacuity, the existence of structure or movement, crises of cultural integration of feminism; political; gender; class, sex; and religion. These values have been used as vehicles for the propagation of, for example, universal suffrage, and the rights of women as demonstrated by Susan B. Anthony; Betty Friedan and in the recent past by Gloria Steinem and others.

African feminism seems to have no sense of direction just as hooks observed that feminists in the United States were not "directed by gender, race and class, which combined to create the destiny of women" (Hooks, 1984, p. xiii). In the case of Africa, although so much was expected from groups like the African Feminist Forum, (AFF) together with the African Women's Development Forum (AWDF) resulting in the drafting of the "Feminist Charter" of 2006, these did not lead to directing women and men on gender, race and class which are key factors that combine to determine the identity of women. In Africa and in many of the democratically underdeveloped nations of the world, one's success in life is determined by one's identity of being a woman or a man, Ashanti or Kikuyu, a Zulu or Afrikaans, tall or short, Black or White and whether a democrat or republican, depending upon geography and ecosystem in which one finds him- or her-self. The Charter contained broad-brush strokes of expectations and aspirations articulated by the AFF/AWDF.

In addition, the structural deficiencies of African feminism are, perhaps, due to the lack of awareness that “the necessity of building a mass-based feminist movement” requires “a sound foundation on which to structure the movement” (Hooks, 1984, p. viii). Like what was observed in the First Wave of Feminism, Africa’s women liberation movement has only been structured on a narrow platform, which primarily called attention to issues relevant to college educated women, women who are politically connected, university lecturers and professors and who are financially stable (Ibid, 1984). For example, in the case of Ghana, Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings for a long time was the promoter, leader and financier of the 31st Women’s Movement, (31st DWM) a grassroots organization dedicated to the economic and social empowerment of women. Incidentally, during the time of the longest serving First Lady, Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings established a political movement under the guise of a women’s movement by the sheer fact that the majority of its members were women who were also members of the National Democratic Congress, NDC (Allah-Mensah, 2005). In the case of South Africa’s African National Congress (ANC) prior to the collapse of Apartheid regime in 1994, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, the wife of Nelson Mandela (1958 – 1996) was the leader of the Social Welfare Department of ANC and who also controlled the Women’s League from 1993 till 1997. Such politically connected leaderships in women’s movements, are as transient as the political term of office of the presidency and the moment the presidency ends, the movement also fizzles away into oblivion. Despite the general acceptance of feminist philosophy in society as an abstract concept, as a practical matter, the “feminist movement has not created sustained feminist revolution. It has not ended patriarchy or eradicated sexism and sexist exploitation and oppression. And as a consequence, feminist groups are always at risk” (Hooks, 1984, p. xv). In a study of *Sexual Harassment in Public Medical Schools in Ghana* (2013), the researchers found that “women were 61% more likely to be sexually harassed than men 39%. (...) They found that the traditional form of sexual harassment was prevalent in medical schools in Ghana and that academic dependence predicted attacks. In the first and second years, women at these institutions are more likely to be sexually harassed than men” (Norman et al., 2013, pp. 128, 132-134). In another study by the same researchers titled, *Faith-Based Organizations: Sexual Harassment and Health in Accra-Tema Metropolis* (2013), they found the prevalence rate in religious centers to be higher than in the medical schools. They also found that “women were more likely to be sexually harassed (73%) than men were (27%). Sexual harassment negatively affects the victims’ health outcome. Secondly, both the traditional and contra-power forms of sexual harassment were prevalent in FBOs in Ghana” (Norman et al., 2012, p. 100).

Part of this observation is due to the perception that African feminists seem not to appreciate the true status of, for example, women in the rural areas or those living at the fringes of urban centers as well as patriarchal entrenchment in society and its pernicious consequences. A significant number of feminists in the urban enclave have little or no interface with the bulk of the continent’s women, except the few emerging community leaders that are women, or queen mothers, and college educated or still in college. To echo bell hooks submission made in relation to Western feminism, African feminist may have been victims of sexism, but tribalism, identity politics and its accompanying neopatrimonialism, classism, enable them to act as exploiters and oppressors of poor and uneducated women. “As long as any group defines liberation as gaining social equality with the ruling-class White men, (in Africa’s case, Black men), they have vested interests in the continued exploitation and oppression of others” (Hooks, 1984, p. 16).

The First Wave gave women the right to vote, or gave the women the Suffrage Movement in the 1920, through the religious influences of Susan B. Anthony, for example, the daughter of a Quaker farmer, and Lucretia Mott a Quaker minister, although the fight did not include Black women or men. It was exclusively for the right of White women to vote (Paglia, 2008, pp. 6-7). Such an event was more than likely to cause misalignment in the women’s movement since it also contained Black people. Every movement goes through internal and external crisis concerning ideology, leadership, strategy, goals, operations and tactics. The feminist movement in the Western world, most specifically, in the United States in the 1970s also experienced internal upheavals about what the focus of the movement ought to be at that time: Should it be about the enlargement of White women’s well-entrenched rights and their class privileges? Feminists like bell hooks said no to Betty Friedan’s congregants: that it ought to be about gender, race and class perspective. Eventually, gender became the main lens through which vectors like race, sex and class were viewed leading to the development of contemporary feminist thought of today.

Another view point expressed about the upheavals in the women’s movement is offered by Motta et al., (2011, pp. 1-2) where they attributed the cause of the crisis to the fact that,

“Prominent sectors of the feminist movement have become institutionalized and

professionalized, including within academia, and in this context serious questions have been raised about how well they can defend women from neoliberalism and about their role in the struggle for a post-neoliberal, post-patriarchal world. The result is a paradoxical situation of defeats and de-politicization, on the one hand, combined with new forms of re-politicization, on the other”.

That is to say, the educated feminists are still caught in a web of feminist hubristic thinking that, perhaps, ‘they have arrived’ and it is probably better to exclude the less privileged members of society that are women from their kind. The challenges being faced by feminist in the Western industrialized nations, convinced Motta et al., just as it motivated hooks, to call for the possible reformulation of feminine identity and theory that fits the subjective permutation of the various actors and vectors of feminism. The call is not only being made to address national or continental feminist challenges, but to incorporate individual crisis, mitigated by sex, sexual orientation issues, ethnicity, social status and religion. Such calls echo sentiments expressed by other feminist researchers such as Friedan (1963), Beal (1969), Cross, Jr. (1971), Downing & Roush (1985), and Alcoff (1988), which are similar to calls being made by current researchers such as Antic & Radacic (2020), Peroni & Rodak (2020), Mohajan & Mohajan (2022). Despite the positivity underlying the call for the re-invention of feminine identity and theory by researchers, others cast aspersions on the machinations of women to undermine their own progressive gains on the feminist agenda. Motta et al. (2011) still maintained that,

“Feminists themselves may have contributed to their being marginalized in activist contexts because of their tendency to privilege a partial, white, bourgeois, liberal perspective. Long resisted by black and working-class women for its silencing and sidelining of their experiences, voices and strategies, this tendency can make feminism appear less relevant than it should to movements of racially oppressed groups and of the poor” (Ibid, p. 2, para 3).

The fact of the matter is that in the broader majority of rural communities in Africa, conservative as they should be expected to be, feminism has no significance to the needs of the inhabitants for survival.

The birth of the Second Wave of feminism in the 1960s through the 1970’s in the Western world, may have been both opportunistic in timing and a tumultuous social moment particularly because of the public protests for improvements in civil rights of Blacks and other minorities; protest against the Vietnam war and other social upheaval resulting from desegregation of United States educational system to end “Jim Crow” laws on segregation (*Brown v. Board of Education, 1954*), and challenges to housing under the U. S. *Fair Housing Act of 1968*, redistricting and zoning laws (*Thornburg v. Gingles, 1986*), and the passage of the *Civil Rights Act of 1968*, all calculated to enhance civil liberties and freedoms in the U.S.

For Africa, the 1960’s and 1970’s were not about individual rights but the collective right of the nations for self-determination, social inclusion and integration of various ethnic groups amalgamated into one nation with a common purpose, starting with Ghana in 1957 as the first former British colony to gain political independence for self-rule. Feminism in Africa was, perhaps, an after-thought to the independence struggles in Africa that vicariously evolved out of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/217(III)[A] draft of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR)* in 1948, which was subsequently reinforced by the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)* in 1979. Ghana ratified CEDAW on February 2, 1986. This observation does not only apply to the African situation but even the Western feminist movement, considering the timing of Friedan’s thesis, the *Feminist Mystique* (1968) and the dissemination of the UN Resolution 217 creating the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Notice that in 1948 many of the nations in Africa were under colonial rule and could not have been represented at the United Nations as equal members of that General Assembly. Ghana only ratified the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* on September 7, 2000, and later on in 2016, Ghana ratified the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*. Ghana like all monist nations, has to take active steps to ratify international conventions and treaties before these conventions and treaties can become part of domestic law. This is unlike the dualist nations that accept international conventions and protocols as automatic part of their domestic legal framework without their national parliamentary ratification.

Speaking generally about the political developments in the respective nations and their role in international diplomacy, Ghana’s or the broader Africa’s participation in creating the international legal framework for women did not happen long after the various Waves of Feminism has already been developed and captured by the Western women elite and scholars.

It further explains why feminism or homosexuality in Africa has often been described as an imported ideological prompting from the West, with no genesis from the domestic culture and social norms? The acceptance of such a statement would be reductive if not completely misleading to the human condition and the denial of the tendency for outliers to emerge out of the established norm. It appears the pre-occupation of African nations with matters of self-rule and nationalism left no room for the development of women's movement for equal rights with men. "Political alliances and tensions between the civil rights movement (in the case of Africa, the independent movement) and the women's movement illustrate how race consciousness and feminism can both converge and be at odds" (Hooks, 1981; King, 1988; Hunter & Sellers, 1998).

Secondly, what we have come to accept as African feminism is nothing short of a borrowed concept from the Western Feminist Movement? Due to the improvident use of Western concept of feminism, the issue of subjective feminism in Africa appears to have been left untouched and to which no attention has been devoted. Subjective feminism in Africa is a reality based on the rationale that African women as autonomous individuals, possess intrinsic qualities that are different from each other, though undeveloped and untapped in many instances in the context of feminism (McDougall, 2012). Oyekan has raised similar sentiments in his 2015 paper on African Feminism that writers and researchers should "consider the plight of the bulk of the African women (...) from a uniquely African viewpoint in order to adequately mirror the reality of the African woman" (Ibid, 2015, pp. 1-2). According to the Combahee River Collective (1978) statement, "the Black women are inherently valuable, that Black women's liberation is a necessity not as an adjunct to" (perhaps, White women's) or "somebody else's but because of our need as human persons for autonomy". There were other statements by other groups such as the Third World Women Alliance (TWWA), a revolutionary socialist organization that operated in the United States from 1968 through the 1980s (Romney, 2021; Schiller, 2000). In the 1970, TWWA published the Black Women's Manifesto, which was opposed to racism and capitalism because the "Black woman was demanding a new set of female definitions and a recognition of herself as a citizen, companion and confidant, not a matriarchical villain or a step stool baby-maker..." (The Black Woman's Manifesto, 1970, In Norman, 2024, p. 8).

Waves of feminism through the times show the degree of fragmentation in feminism in the Western societies and the sheer intellectualism that was drawn to the progressive development of Western feminist thought or feminine identity (Antic & Radacic, 2020; Peroni & Rodak, 2020; Krokke & Sorensen, 2006). The period of the Second through the Third Wave experienced the politicization of feminist goals and aspirations and engendered the social acceptability of feminism as a political philosophy for social movement and national development (Tong, 2009; Bryson, 2003). One fact is certain that, while it is historically feasible to identify the founding mothers of feminist thought and philosophy, or the periodic leadership of the feminist movement in the Western world, the same cannot be said about Africa's feminine identity. The Western world did not co-opt successful women into feminism by compulsion. Those women they identified as feminist self-described as feminist, either through verbal advocacy or through scholastic publications, and even the creation of not-for-profit organizations to serve, promote and protect the interests of women. The Western Feminism emerged out of the intellectual output and advocacy of women like Hildegard Bingen (1098-1179); Christine de Pisan (1364-1430); Olympe de Gouge (1748-1793); Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797); and then later on, by Betty Friedan (1921-2006) and Gloria Steinem (1934 - present). Their actions led to the First through to the Third Waves of Western Feminine Identity, which have benefited the strengthening of women's rights and capabilities not only in the Western world but also causing improvements in the lives of women the world over. The gap in the development of Africa's feminine identity or theory requires urgent attention because Africa owes a debt to world feminist scholarship and intellectualism.

2 Approach to literature search and content analysis

In this paper, the author assesses through desk-top literature review and content analysis, the potential crisis or threats the African Feminist Movement. Key terms and phrases that were used to identify literature on the topic conveniently included: "*the origin of African Feminism*"; "*What is African Feminist Theory?*"; "*What is Feminism in Africa?*" "*What is Feminism in Ghana?*" "*Does Feminism in Africa translate into Lesbianism?*" "*Do African Feminists see themselves in the same plane as Western Feminists?*" "*What are the legal protections for feminism in Sub-Saharan Africa?*" "*Does Western Feminism values define African Feminism?*" The data was culled from journals, books, and other grey literature sources and purposively

selected those that addressed the themes of the topic from the huge cache of publications on the topic. The data was briefed and analyzed based on the author's skills, training and experiences working on policy, law and national security concerns.

3 Outcome of investigation and discussion

3.1 Ideological Vacuity

Researchers on feminism in African tend to accept the reality that, it is difficult to identify the origins of African Feminism, let alone those of the independent African nations. Although Western Feminine Identity has persistently raised the issue of patriarchy as its most endearing and dominant obstacle for women's self-expression, which researchers like hooks in 1984 tried to re-direct the feminist conversation away from just focusing on patriarchal controls, towards gender, race, and sex, in the African feminist discourse, colonialism has not featured in the demand for equal rights by women or feminist groups. Therefore, Africa's feminism thought, if there is any, cannot be clawed back to the colonial times, but should be viewed from the post-independence era. Even so, as a general observation, "African Feminist Theory does not appear to exist in literature, despite the huge bibliography on feminism related publications in Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere" (Norman, 2024, pp. 2-3). Instead, "(...) literature on African Feminism produced by African scholars or others writing about feminism in Africa have been engineered on the platform of Western Feminist thought and theory" (Ibid, p. 3), such as the works of Aidoo (1977); Adamson et al. (1988), African Feminist Forum (2006), McCaskie (2007), Adomako Ampofo (2008), Tsikata (2009), and Oyekan (2015). "In trying to identify the historic African feminist, a lot of improvident claims have been made by various feminist groups, researchers and scholars, particularly in Africa such as Kasseye Bayu (2019, p. 54). As reported earlier in this paper, Motta, Fominaya, Eschler, et al. (2011, pp. 1-2), have postulated that "(...) feminism seems to be in crisis". These scholars felt that "prominent sectors of the feminist movement have become institutionalized, and professionalized, including academia (...)" raising "questions about how well they can defend women from neoliberalism and about their role in the struggle for post-neoliberal, post-patriarchal world" (Norman, 2024, p. 7).

3.2 Elitism and mislabeling of feminist

In the Western world, the feminist drive was an elite capture, leaving behind women who were not economically independent, or who were marginally educated and living on the margin of society. The background of each of the founding mothers of Western feminism confirms the fact that they came from middle to upper middleclass white families, university educated, some with graduate degrees, socially influential and racially privileged to the point where their agitations were described not as protest per se, but acts of indulgence by frustrated white housewives (Hooks, 1984). Unlike their white counterparts, agitation by black women was not considered as acts of a group of frustrated black housewives, but agitation by irate negroes. The differences in the social labeling of the plight of white and black feminists decided the path of feminism for the future. Among current African American population, women who self-describe as feminist is only 61%. Although 61% of all American women see themselves as feminist, despite the large sum, only 19% accept "feminist" as apt description, with the rest of the 61% saying "feminist" somewhat describes them (Barroso, 2020, para 3-5). In 2018 in UK YouGov poll reported by Christina Scharff, they found that 34% of women in the UK said "yes" when asked whether they were feminist for various reasons among which is the reasoning that, gender equality has been achieved (Scharff, 2019). There are many reasons in Africa why a significant number of women may not want to be associated as feminist in the public space, among which is the presumption that feminism closely associates with lesbianism. Granted lesbianism is one of the factors of the Feminine Identity (McDougall, 2012). Feminism is assumed to be an extension of lesbianism or homosexuality, a type of "illness" that one may not want to be associated. Such thinking is not enabling and reductive on the development of human rights, choice and autonomy. The fact of the matter is, Africans are generally homophobic although there is a significant population of Africans that are homosexuals, bisexuals and fall within the LGBTQ+ label among men and women. "Adult lesbianism, like adult male homosexuality is also present in Ghana's society (Ankomah, 2001). The only difference is that while male homosexuality is taken seriously with adverse consequences on the gay man, female homosexuality is not" (Norman et al., 2016, p. 12-13). Recently, Ghana's Parliament passed the *Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill*, which the President of Ghana is reluctant to sign into law, due to the chilling effect it could have on many aspects of human rights; and in contravention of the various United Nations protocols to which Ghana is a signatory. The object of the Bill is "to

provide for “proper human sexual rights and Ghanaian family values; proscribe LGBTQ+ and related activities; proscribe propaganda of, advocacy for, or promotion of LBGTQIAAP+ and related activities, provide for the protection of and support for children, persons who are victims or accused of LBGTQIAAP+ and related activities and other persons; and related matters” (Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill, 2021, p. i). Some human rights and public health experts have warned that, if this Bill becomes law, it would have massive negative effect on one hand; on feminism and women’s movement in the nation. On the other hand, it may arouse the militancy of feminist groups to even fight for better conditions of life for themselves. Either way, the law does not agree with the dictates of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana on human rights, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination on Women* and quite a number of national and international laws.

3.3 Examples of personalities co-opted and mislabeled as feminists

Some of the African women personalities that have been co-opted into the feminist landscape might not agree with being labeled as feminist if they were alive, due to the perception that feminism is akin to lesbianism or homosexuality in women, particularly in nations like Ghana, Uganda, Nigeria, Gambia, and even Kenya. Having said that, even if one conscripts a person like Mariama Ba, (circa, 1929 – 1981), the author of “*So Long a Letter*” (1989), by compulsion into African feminism, that might be a bit of a stretch, although her effort was not an ordinary one (Norman, 2024, pp. 7-8). Another personality that appears to be mislabeled by feminist groups is Prof. Wangari Maathai (1940 – 2011) a Kenyan scholar, human rights & environmental activist and Nobel Peace laureate (Nobel Foundation, 2004). Maathai’s scholarship was not uniquely about the rights of women, but generally about human rights and environmental protection for the benefit of humans. Maathai is described as ecofeminist due to her care and dedication towards environmental protection and health (Muthuki, 2006). Buchanan (2018) defined ecofeminism as “a philosophical and political position which posits that there is a connection between the social mentality underpinning the domination of women in patriarchal society and the domination and degradation of nature by industrial capitalism.” “The term *écoféminisme* was originally proposed by Françoise d’Eubonne, a French feminist writer in her 1974 work *Feminism or Death*. d’Eubonne condemned Western patriarchy for destroying the earth and argued that only feminist ideals could save the earth from an “eco-death” (Sharnappa, 2016; Buchanan, 2018). d’Eubonne viewed women as “life-givers, life-preservers, and have concern for future generations, whereas men are exploitative, plundering, and subordinate women and nature” (Sharnappa, 2016, para. 8). The position taken by d’Eubonne, Sharnappa, Buchanan and Maathai ascribing the degradation of the earth to male patriarchal (male) society and domination is a divisive, sexist and unfair statement against males as if the women in society were comatose and did not stir at all, fed by men as they lay in their vegetative state of existence? Environmental destruction by and large, is caused by human beings, irrespective of gender or sex. Directly or indirectly, both men and women have contributed and continue to contribute to the destruction of the environment, to engage in over exploitation of the Blue economy, the Green economy and the natural resources of the earth, irrespective of one’s personal philosophy of life, sexual orientation or gender. Despite the underlying difference in the apportionment of responsibility to the state of affairs of the environment today, the main question as to whether Wangari Maathai was a feminist or rather an environmental educationist still remains contentious and unaddressed?

Another case of mislabeling of accomplished woman as feminist or “womanist” is Amenyedzi’s reference to Professor Jane Naana Opoku Agyemang of Ghana, whom Amenyedzi also labeled as “indigenous” on the account of being nominated a Vice Presidential running mate in her paper *Leadership Roles for Indigenous Ghanaian Women: The Case of Prof Jane Naana Opoku Agyemang as Vice-Presidential Candidate for the National Democratic Congress (2021)*. For the second time in a row, one of the dominant political parties in Ghana’s political landscape, the National Democratic Congress, NDC with Mr. John Dramani Mahama, as the flag-bearer, has nominated Professor Jane Naana Opoku Agyemang as his running-mate for his 2024 quest for the presidency of Ghana. In 2020 Presidential Elections, Jane Opoku Agyemang was Mr. Mahama’s choice of a running-mate for the Vice President’s position. He lost the race to Mr. Akufo Addo. Mr. Mahama was the former Vice President under Ex-President John Evans Fiifi Atta Mills. He subsequently became the 4th President of Ghana after the passing of President Mills in office in 2012. Mr. Mahama took office from the 24th of July 2012 and served as President till 7th January 2017. From 2012 through 2017, Mr. Kwesi Amisshah-Arthur (1951 – 2018) was his Vice President. Mr. Mahama’s nomination of Professor Naana Opoku Agyemang as his running-mate again in 2024, with the potential to become the Vice President after the 2024

general elections, has already raised the bar on the discussion of women's empowerment very high and the tendency of women's groups and researchers to label every seemingly successful woman a feminist or a "womanist", "aborigine" or even "indigenous" to the zone of political opportunism. Some women's groups and advocates during television and other media discussions, have already labeled Professor Opoku Agyemang as a feminist or "edufeminist". "Edufeminist", like 'ecofeminist', is the belief that, perhaps, there is a connection between the social mentality underpinning the domination of women in patriarchal society and the domination of men in science and technology, law, research, leadership in education, industry and in politics as a result of patriarchal neopatriomonal praxis". This author submits that the success of individual members of women does not provide the moral equivalences or the justification for labeling such individuals as examples of feminist successes. It is the contention of this author that some of such labels are inappropriate and ill-conceived. First, it is rather curious that Amenyedzi (2021) described Naana Opoku Agyeman as "an indigenous woman", "womanist", and being part of the "womanism which is also being interpreted as black feminism" (*Ibid*, pp. 169, 171-173). Contextually, culturally, and on the basis of her personal achievements, Professor Naana Opoku Agyeman is not an indigenous woman, but a cosmopolitan intellectual with qualities that are desirable in both men and women who aspire to high leadership positions.

4 Discussion

The nomination of any person to the Vice-Presidential position of any political party, a nonelectable position, though based on unique political party internal criterion, is both a fortuitous and politically deliberative event. The goal is the maximization of voter commitment to that politician or political party due to that nomination so as to win political power in the hands of men. The nomination of Professor Naana Opoku Agyeman could cynically be described as subtle exploitation of a woman by NDC (Naana Opoku Agyeman) in order to exploit the political support of many women (Ghanaian educated women cohort of) voters into the NDC camp so as to capture political power. The act of nomination of a Vice Presidential candidate is a deliberative exercise because the party evaluates the gains it could garner from such a candidate and opportunistically announces and affirms such a selection to the National Executive and then the political party base. The act does not essentially define the nature, the character and the belief system of the individual so nominated. Therefore, as already alluded to, Naana Opoku Agyeman is, perhaps, a subaltern intellectual: - A university lecturer who rises through the ranks to become head of English Language Department, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and finally Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Coast, has exhausted any residual indigenous qualities through her long commitment to scholarship, research and professionalism. In her acceptance speech on the 7th of March, 2024, Naana Opoku Agyeman said: "(...) by renominating me, you have demonstrated your remarkable consistency and unwavering commitment to inclusivity and innovation. I have heard you share with the public your (President John Mahama's) rationale for choosing me, again. I have found that very touching". "*Ansan Kushun*", meaning in Gonja, the ethnic language of Mr. Mahama's clan, thank you. "I see your choice as an affirmation of your belief in the capabilities of the Ghanaian woman". By the submission of Naana Opoku Agyeman, Mr. Mahama is more a "feminist" sympathizer than, even the nominee herself. It is a bit shallow and discriminatory for a public figure such as a vice presidential candidate to self-describe as a feminist, or a womanist with the partisan partiality to feminist or women issues at the expense of the broader society of men and women. It is doubtful whether the nomination of Professor Naana Jane Opoku Agyeman would vanquish patriarchal proclivities from the Ghanaian population just as the ascendancy of Samia Suluhu Hassan, a woman in 2021 to the Presidency of Tanzania has not lessened domestic violence, intimate partner violence and sexism in that country (*Mwaipopo, 2023; World Bank Group, 2022; Christopher et al., 2022*). It is probably more mature to view her nomination as being within the constitutional normative values of Ghana, as it is ethical, moral and politically equitable deed for women to be represented in national politics at the highest level of government. This glass wall or glass ceiling was not shattered by feminism, (though very seductive for feminists to seize such a development as one of their successes) but because of the collective cognitive acceptance of the National Democratic Congress members that women are equal players in the matters of national development. No one single woman and no one single ideology can remove from society patriarchal or matriarchal controls, no matter the good will of others, because in Black Africa the system allows for binary fiduciaries of power between traditionalism and republicanism.

The crisis that feminism in Africa faces could be amplified by exuberant evaluation of women or a group of them, where the narrative is not supported by historical fact of the personalities involved. The implications from such documented developments call on researchers to take a

critical look at what feminism is, how it is operationalized, who operationalizes it, and why? Above, what qualifies a person as a feminist? Is it by sustained commitment and deeds over a considerable length of time in furtherance of women's causes? Does any passing statement in favor of women's causes qualify one as a feminist?

Feminist ideology also requires the proper labeling and systematic and periodic review of the progress of society towards feminism, or the feminization of the mundane routines of society. Society needs to agree on how the expected emancipation of women from patriarchal controls and patrimonialism can be measured through mechanisms such as the Human Development Index, or any nationally accepted indexes. This paper is meant to get the ball rolling again on the apparently stalled scholastic and popular discourse on human rights as they pertain to women in general but not as to feminism in particular due to subjectivism of feminism (Freeman, 1972; Baber & Allen, 1992; Alcoff, 1988; Frieze & McHugh, 1998). The crisis of leaderships, structure and functionality could be cured by first defining what African feminism means to women in Africa and then to men in Africa. This author in another paper, defined feminism in Africa in the paper, *The Null Feminist Wave in Africa* (2024):

“As not merely the demand for equality with men, or to again access to seats in the board room, but women must have the will to shatter all glass ceilings, bulldoze all glass walls, to instill into our collective consciousness, the concept of autonomy, choice, and freedom from fear of one another: - in order to have the agency to promote and empower women; sustain and respect the contributions of women towards the development of society; irrespective of social, cultural; political and economic status; and to give weight and attention to women not for the promotion of sexual promiscuity and deviance, or the emasculation of men, but to universalize human rights; the right to fairness; the rule of law and equitable participation in every aspect of society” (Ibid, 2024, p. 5).

Such a broad-based definition of feminism would attract more sympathizers to feminist causes and encourage the mainstreaming of the feminist agenda. In the same paper, *The Null Feminist Wave in Africa*, it is also suggested Africa Feminine Identity with specific attributes that cover gender, race, sex, culture and religion as vectors to determine the identity of feminist women with lived experiences, choice and autonomy. Above all, African feminists need to be bold, to resist male oppression and challenge legal limitations placed on the expressions of women with regards to gender, sex, sexual orientation, partner selection and religious devotion and promote the feminist agenda to enhance national development.

5 Conclusion

It is concerning to know that Africa does not have a working definition of African Feminine Identity or the attributes of such an identity as well as African Feminist Theory. Theoretically speaking, African researchers on feminism ought to do more to revitalize the discourse on feminism and to provide the blueprint for feminist theory and African feminine identity; away from the wholesale adoption of Western feminist thought and theory. The best way for African feminist ideology to become meaningful, and to reduce identity crisis among African feminists, is to develop a well-thought out African feminine identity with the strategic commitment and blueprint for the operationalization of the African feminine identity in all facets of African society, whether liberal or conservative, whether secular or religious and whether political or not. Without such an approach; the feminine identity crisis that has bedeviled the Western feminist movements, would decimate the fledging African feminist groups even further. If this happens, it will obliterate the remnants of African feminists in the face of the growing legislative controls over gender equity, sexual independence and expressions of autonomy.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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