

**Clientelism & Local Governance in Ghana: Does Political Clientelism Influence Public
Attitude towards the Election or Appointment MMDCEs in Ghana?**

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Abstract

The present article examines the effect of political clientelism on public attitude towards the election or appointment of Metropolitan, Municipal, & District Chief Executives (MMDCEs) in Ghana. Analyzing a sample size of 2400 respondents, it was revealed that the majority of respondents (72%) favor the election of MMDCEs. Moreover, the results indicate that political clientelism was not a significant predictor of public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCE. However, factors such as employment, problems in Ghana, crime victimization, discrimination, party affiliation, and region are significant predictors of public attitude towards electing or appointing MMDCEs in Ghana. The theoretical and policy implications of the results of the present study are discussed extensively.

Keywords: political clientelism, elections, appointment, local government, MMDCEs

Introduction

Despite the proliferation of various empirical studies examining democratic development and consolidation, electoral politics and policy, national politics, local government, and decentralization (Ayee, 2002; Gyimah-Boadi, 2001, 2009; Smith 2002; Van Gyampo, 2008; Agomor et al., 2019), civil society and institutions, prospects and challenges of Ghana's democracy, public opinion, and electoral politics in Ghana (Abdulai & Crawford, 2010; Fobih, 2008; Arthur, 2010; Van Gyampo & Asare 2017), there are gaps in the existing literature specifically in regard to understanding the nexus between public opinion and local governance in Ghana worth exploring (see Dzordzormenyoh et. al., 2022). Undoubtedly, Ghana's democracy and some aspects of it has received significant intellectual attention (Alidu, 2014; Brierley & Ofosu, 2014; Van Gyampo & Asare, 2017; Debrah, 2016; Agomor et al., 2019). Despite the intellectual attention devoted to understanding Ghana's democracy there are some glaring gaps worth exploring. First, there is a lack of scientific enquiry focusing on the nexus between public opinion and local governance in Ghana. Second, although political clientelism has been found to influence public opinion and national politics in Ghana and in Africa, only few studies have attempted to investigate this phenomenon in regard to local governance in Ghana and Africa (see Van Gyampo, 2008; Wantchekon, 2003; Agomor et al., 2019; Dzordzormenyoh et. al., 2022). Although these studies together have attempted to investigate and identify the factors that influence public attitude towards the election or appointment of Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs) in Ghana, more work is required to add nuance to the existing findings. Therefore, to address the existing gaps identified in the present literature, build upon the existing literature, and to add nuance to the findings from previous studies. The present study seeks to answer one research question, namely:

Research Question 1: What is the effect of political clientelism, specifically, working for a political party or candidate, on public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana?

To fully answer the aforementioned research question, 2400 responses of Ghanaians were obtained from the Afrobarometer Round 7 survey conducted from 2016 to 2018. The data was analyzed using a descriptive, correlational, and multivariate ordinary least squares regression to assess the association between the outcome, predictor, and control variables. The result of the present study has both theoretical and practical implications which is discussed extensively in this article.

Literature Review

The literature review will discuss the local government structure in Ghana briefly and then political clientelism and its association with public attitude towards local governance and politics.

Local government system in Ghana

The local government system in Ghana cannot be divorced from its colonial heritage of indirect rule. Ghana as a colony under British rule was divided into provinces and districts headed by native authorities such as chiefs, kings, elders, and educated local folks empowered to govern by taxing the people, appointing staff, formulating, passing by-laws, and implementing laws from the central government for their localities (Ayee, 1994; Nkrumah, 2000; Awortwi, 2011). After independence in 1957, although the Nkrumah government and subsequent ones attempted to develop a local government system, it was not different from the one utilized by the British (Awortwi, 2011). In 1988, the Local Government Law 1988 – PNDC, 207 came into existence with the goal of increasing public participation, accountability, and efficiency of local governance (Crawford, 2008; Honyenuga & Wutoh, 2019). To further deepen local government reforms and

decentralization in Ghana, the 1992 Constitution of Ghana through Article 240, Section I and II, contends that local government and administration shall be decentralized, and the functions, powers, and responsibilities and resources shall be transferred from central government to local government to enhance participation, accountability, and efficiency in the public sector (Crawford, 2008; Awortwi, 2011; Honyenuga & Wutoh, 2019).

To operationalize the local government provision in the 1992 Constitution, the Local Government Act of 1993 – Act 462 and Local Government Establishment Instrument of 1994 – LI 1589 was promulgated and enacted to promote popular participation in local government and governance (Republic of Ghana, 1993; Zanu, 1996; Awortwi, 2011). Currently, the local government in Ghana can be categorized into Regional Coordinating Councils (RCC), Metropolitan Assemblies (MA), Municipal Assemblies (MA), and District Assemblies (DA) with RCC being the highest and DA being the lowest in rank. At the center this structure is Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Chief Executives – MMDCEs (Zanu, 1996; Awortwi, 2011; Honyenuga & Wutoh, 2019).

Furthermore, the 1992 Constitution of Ghana stipulates that all local government leaders must be appointed by the president of Ghana (Republic of Ghana, 1992; Debrah 2016; Agomor et al., 2019). This stipulation created a policy path of appointing local government leaders opposed to direct election of MMDCEs. However, recent evidence from the 2008 Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) and some empirical studies suggest that most Ghanaians (70% or more) prefer direct public elections of MMDCEs compared to the current appointment status (Van Gyampo, 2008; Fiadjoe et al., 2011; Adams & Agomor, 2020).

Political clientelism: a review

The term and concept clientelism have a lot of confusion and controversy surrounding it because of the difficulty associated with defining and measuring it (Hopkin, 2006; Stokes et al., 2013). Also, the term of clientelism covers a wide variety of exchanges which further adds to its definition and measurement challenges (Ibn Zackaria & Appiah-Marfo, 2020). The existing literature on this subject matter reveals that the term clientelism is used interchangeably with other terms such as patronage, spoils system, and pork barrel politics (NDRI, 2010; Ibn Zackaria & Appiah-Marfo, 2020). Historical definitions of political clientelism suggest that it is an unequal, hierarchical feudal system characterized by patrons and clients developing a mutually beneficial relationship based on a powerful sense of obligation and duty (Mason, 1986; Hopkin, 2006). According to Mason (1986), patrons provide clients with access to basic needs for survival and clients reciprocate by providing services to patrons such as loyalty, labor, deference, and etcetera.

Although this system originated in medieval society, we have found ways to incorporate it into our modern society. For example, the use of clientelism is pervasive in our modern socio-political and economic system, specifically in emerging and developing democracies like Ghana (Kopecký, & Scherlis, 2008; Kopecky, 2012). Since democracy is dependent upon popular participation, partisan politics, and elections, it is not surprising that globally clientelism has found its way into democracy. Politicians provide favors for voters in exchange for their votes to win elections. This form of clientelism became known as political clientelism (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007; Kopecky, 2012). Throughout the literature several definitions have been given for the term political clientelism by various scholars (see Hopkin, 2006; Stokes 2007; Kopecky, 2011, 2012). To attempt to review all the definitions of political clientelism would be beyond the scope of the present study; however, a few of such definitions that apply to the focus of the present are worth reviewing (Hopkin, 2006; Stokes 2007, 2013; Robinson & Verdier, 2013).

Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007), contend that political clientelism is a patronage system that links voters to a political party. Stokes (2007) also defined political clientelism as political parties providing material goods to voters to acquire the electoral support of the voters. Hopkin (2006) defines political clientelism as distribution of selective benefits to individuals and groups with the goal of earning their political support. Robinson and Verdier (2013), also contend that political clientelism refers to the process where votes are used to secure political jobs. Kuo (2018) argues that pork barrel politics utilized by legislators leads to political clientelism because it supports the exchange of favors between legislators, their constituents, and interest groups in exchange for electoral support.

In conclusion, although the term clientelism is very difficult to define and measure among scholars. Earlier studies provide us with a roadmap about some possible definitions and measurements (Hopkin, 2006; Robinson & Verdier, 2013). Additionally, the term political clientelism includes concepts such as patronage, spoils systems, and pork barrel politics because they all involve some type of unequal incentive structure that allows for the development of a patron and client system to be established (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007; Kuo, 2018).

Method

Data

In the present study, random sampling responses of 2,400 respondents across the regions of Ghana was obtained from the Round 7 Afrobarometer survey conducted between 2016 – 2018. The survey assesses public attitudes towards democracy, markets, civil society, local government, crime, security, healthcare, and other issues in Ghana. The survey also measures various demographic characteristics of the sampled population like age, gender, education, religion, and employment among others.

Study variables

Dependent variable

The dependent variable of the present study was public attitude towards the election or appointment of local government officials – Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs) in Ghana. Respondents were asked if they agree or disagree with either electing or appointing of local government MMDCEs in Ghana.¹ This variable was measured and coded as 1 = Agree very strongly with electing MMDCEs, 2 = Agree with electing MMDCEs, 3 = Agree with appointing MMDCEs, 4 = Agree very strongly appointing MMDCEs, 5 = Agree with neither electing nor appointing MMDCEs.

Independent variable

The independent variable measures respondent's opinion about working for a political party or candidate.² This variable was used to measure political clientelism. Overall, the variable was measured and coded as 0 = no and 1 = yes. Some previous studies have studied and measured political clientelism as working for a political party or candidate. The present study adopts this measure of political clientelism (see Hopkin, 2006; Stokes 2007, 2013; Robinson & Verdier, 2013).

Control variables

The effect of several variables relevant to understanding public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs were controlled for in the present study. Rural-urban residency was measured and coded as 0 = rural and 1 = urban. Region was measured and coded as

¹ Q79A_GHA: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2.
Statement 1: The Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives (M/M/DCEs) should be elected by citizens in the local authority area.

Statement 2: The Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives (M/M/DCEs) should continue to be appointed by the President with the approval of Assembly members.

² Q24B: Work for a candidate or party?

1 = Ashanti, 2 = Greater Accra, 3 = Eastern, 4 = Western, 5 = Brong-Ahafo, 6 = Northern, 7 = Volta, 8 = Central, 9 = Upper East, 10 = Upper West. Employment was measured and coded as 0 = unemployed, 1 = employed. Ethnicity was measured and coded as 1 = Akan, 2 = Ewes, 3 = Ga/Adangbe, 4 = Dagomba, 5 = Others. Education was measured and coded as 0 = no education, 1 = primary education, 2 = secondary education, 3 = post-secondary education. Religion 0 = no religion, 1 = Christianity, 2 = Muslims, 3 = Others.

Additionally, access to services was measured and coded as 0 = no access, 1 = access to electricity, 2 = access to clean water, 3 = access to sewage. Access to facilities was measured and coded as 0 = no access, 1 = access to schools, 2 = access to healthcare centers, 3 = access to markets/stores, 4 = access to transportation and roads. Gender was measured and coded as 0 = female, 1 = male. Age was measured and coded as 1 = 18 – 25 years, 2 = 26 – 35 years, 3 = 36 – 45 years, 4 = 46 – 55 years, 5 = 56 – 65 years, 6 = 66 years or more. Access to news was measured and coded as 0 = no news, 1 = radio, 2 = television, 3 = newspaper, 4 = internet, 5 = social media. Discrimination was measured and coded as 0 = no discrimination, 1 = gender discrimination, 2 = religious discrimination, 3 = ethnic discrimination. Crime victimization was measured and coded as 0 = no crime victimization, 1 = theft, 2 = physical attack, 3 = armed robbery. Neighborhood insecurity was measured and coded as 0 = no insecurity, 1 = felt unsafe walking in neighborhood, 2 = felt unsafe while home.

Moreover, the type of government preferred was measured and coded as 0 = no preference, 1 = support one party, 2 = support military rule, 3 = support no parliamentary just the presidency. Experienced political violence was measured and coded as 0 = no, 1 = yes. Trust in political leaders was measured and coded as 0 = no trust, 1 = trust electoral commission, 2 = trust local governments, 3 = trust metropolitan, municipal, and district chief executives – MMDCEs. Institution and leaders

involved in corruption was measured and coded as 0 = no involvement, 1 = electoral commission involved, 2 = MMDCEs involved. Support for political vigilantism was measured and coded as 0 = no support, 1 = support). Political participation was measured and coded as 0 = no participation, 1 = attend political rallies, 2 = discuss political issues with friends & families. Problems facing Ghana were measured and coded as 0 = no problems, 1 = crime, 2 = unemployment, 3 = others. Economic and living conditions in Ghana were measured and coded as 1 = very bad, 2 = fairly bad, 3 = neither bad nor good, 4 = fairly good, 5 = very good. Performance of MMDCEs was measured and coded as 1 = strongly disapprove, 2 = disapprove, 3 = approve, 4 = strongly approve).

Analytical strategy

To answer the research question of the present study – the effect of political clientelism on public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana several analyses were conducted. A descriptive analysis was conducted to show the distribution of scores across the variables utilized in the study. Again, a bivariate correlation was conducted to indicate the relationship between two independent variables but also to ensure there are no issues of high correlation between two independent variables in the present analysis. Additionally, a multicollinearity test was conducted to ensure no issues of collinearity exist but to also augment the correlation analysis. Finally, a regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable while controlling for other variables. Specifically, a multivariate ordinary least squares regression was utilized.

Results

Descriptive results

A comprehensive description of the distribution of scores for the study variables are presented in Table 1. Public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana

(57.7% = Agree very strongly with electing MMDCEs, 14.4% = Agree with electing MMDCEs, 8.1% = Agree with appointing MMDCEs, 18.2% = Agree very strongly appointing MMDCEs, 1.4% = Agree with neither electing nor appointing MMDCEs) with an average score of 1.91. Work for a political party or candidate – political clientelism (82% = no and 18% = yes) with an average score of .17.

Likewise, rural-urban residency (46% = rural and 54% = urban) with an average score of .54. Region (19.3% = Ashanti, 18.3% = Greater Accra, 10.6% = Eastern, 10% = Western, 9% = Brong-Ahafo, 9% = Northern, 8.6% = Volta, 8.3% = Central, 4% = Upper East, 2.6% = Upper West) with an average score of 4.17. Employment (34% = unemployed, 66% = employed) with an average score of .66. Ethnicity (55.4% = Akan, 15.6% = Ewes, 9.4% = Ga/Adangbe, 5.2% = Dagomba, 14.2% = Others) with an average score of 2.07. Education (15.8% = no education, 27.0% = primary education, 43.7% = secondary education, 13.4% = post-secondary education) with an average score of 1.54. Religion (3.4% = no religion, 78.8% = Christianity, 15.7% = Muslims, 2.1% = Others) with an average score of 1.16.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for study variables (n = 2,400)

Variables	N	M(SD)	Min.	Max.
Dependent variable				
Election or appointment of MMDCEs	2,260	1.91(1.23)	1	5
Independent variable				
Work for a political party	2,399	.17(.38)	0	1
Control variables				
Political party affiliation	2,324	.77(.78)	0	3
Rural-urban residency	2,400	.54(.49)	0	1
Region	2,400	4.17(2.66)	1	10
Employment	2,399	.66(.47)	0	1
Ethnicity	2,206	2.07(1.46)	1	5
Education	2,393	1.54(.91)	0	3
Religion	2,282	1.16(.49)	0	3
Access to services	2,336	2.33(.71)	0	3
Access to facilities	2,400	3.45(1.18)	0	4
Gender	2,400	.50(.50)	0	1

Age	2,399	37.82(15.26)	18	98
Access to news	2,259	2.80(1.56)	0	5
Discrimination	2,399	.43(1.00)	0	3
Crime victimization	2,391	.28(.69)	0	3
Neighborhood insecurity	2,330	.28(.65)	0	2
Type of government supported	2,383	.69(1.03)	0	3
Political violence	2,331	.82(.38)	0	1
Trust in political leaders	2,392	2.41(1.07)	0	3
Involved in corruption	2,378	1.69(.69)	0	2
Performance of MMDCEs	1,803	2.64(.85)	1	4
Political vigilantism	2,394	.02(.15)	0	1
Political participation	2,399	1.38(.87)	0	2
Problems in Ghana	2,386	2.63(.65)	0	3
Economic & living conditions	2,397	2.65(2.65)	1	5

N = number of observations, M = mean or average score, SD = standard deviation, Min. = minimum value and Max. = maximum value

Additionally, access to services (1.7% = no access, 9.5% = access to electricity, 42.1% = access to clean water, 46.5% = access to sewage) with an average score of 2.33. Access to facilities (5% = no access, 8% = access to schools, 3.3% = access to healthcare centers, 4.3% = access to markets/stores, 79.3% = access to transportation and roads) with an average score of 3.45. Gender (50% = female, 50% = male) with an average score of .50. Age (24.4% = 18 – 25 years, 29.5% = 26 – 35 years, 18.8% = 36 – 45 years, 12.9% = 46 – 55 years, 8.3% = 56 – 65 years, 6% = 66 years or more) with an average score of 38 years. Access to news (.4% = no news, 19% = radio, 42% = television, 5% = newspaper, 2% = internet, 31% = social media) with an average score 2.80. Discrimination (82% = no discrimination, 3% = gender discrimination, 3% = religious discrimination, 12% = ethnic discrimination) with an average score of .43. Crime victimization (82% = no crime victimization, 12% = theft, 2% = physical attack, 4% = armed robbery) with an average score of .28. Neighborhood insecurity (83% = no insecurity, 6% = felt unsafe walking in neighborhood, 11% = felt unsafe while home) with an average score of .28.

Moreover, type of government preferred (64.7% = no preference, 8.5% = support one party, 18.8% = support military rule, 7.9% = support no parliamentary just the presidency) with an average score of .69. Experienced political violence (18% = no, 82% = yes) with an average score of .82. Trust in political leaders (13% = no trust, 5.7% = trust electoral commission, 7.5% = trust local governments, 73.5% = trust metropolitan, municipal, and district chief executives – MMDCEs) with an average score of 2.41. Institutions and leaders involved in corruption (13.2% = no involvement, 4.2% = electoral commission involved, 82.4% = MMDCEs involved) with an average score of 1.69. Support for political vigilantism (97% = no support, 3% = support) with an average score of .02. Political participation (26.8% = no participation, 7.5% = attend political rallies, 65.6% = discuss political issues with friends & families) with an average score of 1.38. Problems facing Ghana (.21% = no problems, 9% = crime, 17% = unemployment, 73% = others) with an average score of 2.63. Economic and living condition in Ghana (26.4% = very bad, 25.5% = fairly bad, 10.4% = neither bad nor good, 31.3% = fairly good, 6% = very good) with an average score of 2.65. Performance of MMDCEs (12.2% = strongly disapprove, 24% = disapprove, 51% = approve, 13% = strongly approve) with an average score of 2.63.

The effect of political clientelism on public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana

About 72.1% of the respondents strongly agree or agree with electing MMDCEs in Ghana compared to 26.3% of respondents that strongly agree or agree with appointing MMDCEs in Ghana. Also, 1.4% of the respondents neither agree with electing or appointing MMDCEs in Ghana. Overall, the majority of respondents favor the election of their MMDCEs in Ghana. After estimating the effect of political clientelism, specifically working for a political party or candidate on public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana while controlling

for other variables, the model was significant at ($F = 2.56, p < 0.001$). Political clientelism – working for a political party or candidate, was found not to be a significant predictor of public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana.

Table 2: Estimates of the effect of political clientelism on public attitude towards election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana

Variables	b(SE)	Beta	t/F
Independent variable			
Political clientelism – work for a political party	.15(.08)	.04	1.69
Control variable			
Employment	.19(.07)	.07	2.55*
Political violence	-.06(.09)	-.02	-0.75
Performance of MMDCEs	.08(.04)	.05	1.87
Problems facing Ghana	-.10(.04)	-.05	-2.05*
Rural-urban residency	-.01(.09)	-.00	-0.11
Access to services	.02(.06)	.01	0.32
Access to facilities	-.00(.03)	-.00	-0.14
Access to news	.00(.02)	.00	0.13
Crime victimization	-.09(.04)	-.05	-1.97*
Neighborhood security	-.00(.05)	-.00	-0.06
Type of government preferred	-.02(.03)	-.01	-0.66
Trust in leaders	.04(.03)	.03	1.16
Involved in corruption	-.00(.06)	-.00	-0.08
Political vigilantism	.11(.21)	.01	0.52
Political participation	.05(.04)	.03	1.29
Economic & living condition	-.05(.02)	-.06	-2.12*
Discrimination	-.07(.03)	-.06	-2.05*
Political Party Affiliation¹			
NPP	-.18(.08)	-.07	-2.33*
NDC	-.14(.10)	-.04	-1.42
Others	.16(.28)	.01	0.58
Region²			
Ashanti	-.94(.28)	-.29	-3.27**
Greater Accra	-.49(.30)	-.14	-1.63
Eastern	-.91(.31)	-.24	-2.91**
Western	-1.21(.30)	-.30	-4.01***
Brong Ahafo	-1.06(.29)	-.27	-3.57***
Northern	-.27(.28)	-.06	-0.94
Volta	-1.07(.32)	-.25	-3.31***
Central	-.96(.30)	-.24	-3.18**
Upper East	-1.04(.33)	-.12	-3.18**
Ethnicity³			
Akan	.24(.16)	.09	1.52
Ewe	.13(.19)	.04	0.70

Ga/Adangbe	.12(.19)	.03	0.66
Dagomba	-.05(.18)	-.01	-0.30
Education⁴			
Primary	-.17(.12)	-.06	-1.43
Secondary	-.08(.12)	-.03	-0.64
Post-secondary	-.07(.15)	-.02	-0.52
Religion⁵			
Christian	-.09(.18)	-.03	-0.51
Muslim	.05(.22)	.01	0.22
Others	-.49(.35)	-.04	-1.38
Age⁶			
18 – 25 years	.05(.16)	.01	0.31
26 – 35 years	.18(.15)	.07	1.19
36 – 45 years	.01(.16)	.00	0.11
46 – 55 years	.12(.17)	.03	0.75
56 – 65 years	-.03(.18)	-.00	-0.17
Constant	.44(2.70)		6.11
Model fit			2.56***
R-Square			0.085
Adjusted R-Square			0.080

Note(s):

1 = no party affiliation, 2 = upper west, 3 = other ethnicity, 4 = North Africa, 5 = no religion, 6 = 66 years and above

b = Unstandardized Coefficients, SE = Standard Error, Bata = Standardized Coefficient.

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Regarding the control variables it was observed that the employment status of respondents influences public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs with the estimates ($t = 2.55, p < 0.05$). Problems facing Ghana were also a significant predictor of public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana with the estimates ($t = -2.05, p < 0.05$). Crime victimization statistically significant with public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana with the estimates ($t = -1.97, p < 0.05$). Economic and living conditions in Ghana was a significant predictor of public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana with the estimates ($t = -2.12, p < 0.05$). Discrimination in Ghana was also statistically significant with public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs with the estimates ($t = -2.05, p < 0.05$).

Likewise, political party affiliation was revealed to be a significant predictor of public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana with the estimates ($t = -2.33$, $p < 0.05$). Region was statistically significant with public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana. Specifically, the following regions, namely: Ashanti with the estimates ($t = -3.27$, $p < 0.01$), Eastern with the estimates ($t = -2.91$, $p < 0.01$), Western with the estimates ($t = -4.01$, $p < 0.001$), Brong-Ahafo with estimates ($t = -3.57$, $p < 0.001$), Volta with the estimates ($t = -3.31$, $p < 0.001$), Central with the estimates ($t = -3.18$, $p < 0.01$), and Upper West ($t = -3.18$, $p < 0.01$).

Discussion & Conclusion

The current study assessed the factors that influence public attitude towards the election or appointment of Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs) in Ghana. Specifically, the study sought to examine the effect of political clientelism on public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana while controlling for the effect of other variables. To accomplish this research goal, 2400 responses of Ghanaian from the Afrobarometer Round 7 survey were obtained and analyzed. The data allowed the present study to consider several individual, social, economic, crime and security, local government related factors, and other variables in answering the question. Overall, the majority of respondents (72.1%) favor the election of their MMDCEs in Ghana compared to 26.3% that favor the appointment of MMDCEs and 1.4% that neither support election nor appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana. This finding is significant because it shows a drastic shift from the existing path and status quo of appointment of local government officials (Awortwi, 2011; Agomor et al., 2019). Furthermore, per the Article 240, Section I and II of the 1992 Constitution and the Local Government Act of 1993, the present result gives credence to the accomplishment of some of the goals enumerated in both documents

(Crawford, 2008; Awortwi, 2011; Honyenuga & Wutoh, 2019). Regarding political clientelism – working for a political party or candidate, the majority of respondents (82%) did not work for a political party or candidate compared to 18% that work for a political party or candidate. Of the variables examined in this study, several important revelations were made worth discussing.

First, the investigation revealed that political clientelism, specifically, work for a political party or candidate was a significant predictor of public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana. As noted by Gyampo et al., (2017), political clientelism continues to influence public attitude towards various aspects of Ghana's' democracy at the national level. It was surprising to find no evidence of this when looking at local government. This raises the question of whether Ghanaians approach national and local politics differently? If they do, what are the explanatory factors for that? Future studies can further explore this to aid our understanding and also to add nuance to the existing literature. Globally, some previous studies (Hopkins, 2006; Robinson & Verdier, 2013) measured political clientelism as working for a political party or candidate and found that it influences public opinion and electoral outcomes. The present study reveals that political clientelism measured as working for a political party or candidate does not influence public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana. An explanation for this can be the fact that most of the respondents altered their responses in answering the question about working for a political party or candidate to appear credible during the survey process. Political vigilante studies in Ghana contend that political clientelism is a major contributing factor to the ever-increasing numbers of such groups in Ghana (Asamoah, 2020; Owusu Kyei & Berckmoes, 2020; Kumah-Abiwu, 2017; Gyampo et al., 2017).

Another important revelation made from the present analysis suggests that employment status influences whether Ghanaians prefer to elect or appoint their MMDCEs. Unemployment

rates in Ghana continue to be a major challenge for successive governments. The failure of successive national governments to address the issue of unemployment, has led to the perception that perhaps if the local governments – Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) are independent enough that can lead to economic growth and boost local economies. Thus, provided some source of employment for the folk folks (Agbevade, 2018; Ile & Boadu, 2018). In essence, this helps reduce the high levels of unemployment in Ghana. In countries where the local governments are autonomous to the largest extent, especially the United States, has experienced some creativity in revenue generated and economic policymaking to provide employment for local folks (Fairholm et al., 2018; Lobao, Adua, & Hooks, 2014). Related to the problem of unemployment are the issues of other problems facing Ghana and crime victimization and their influence on public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs. A common phrase among Ghanaians if asked about the effectiveness of the public sector is, “the system is not working”. Although the phrase is as old as the problems of the country, the popular Ghanaian social influencer and Youtuber Twene Jonas popularized the phrase by comparing the United States system to that of Ghana (Twitter, 2022). Fighting the increasing number of crimes in Ghana coupled with the influx of immigrants and other failures of the public sector and the government of Ghana to provide its citizens with their basic needs and opportunities continue to influence public opinion in various ways but specifically, regarding the election or appointment of MMDCEs (Asare, & Frimpong, 2013; Kulinkina et al., 2016; Wrigley-Asante et al., 2016).

Finally, Ghanaian politics is rooted in ethnicity which has its merits and demerits. For instance, some studies have observed that the New Patriotic Party (NPP) is strongly dominated by Akan’s while the National Democratic Party (NDC) is dominated by Ewes and other minority ethnic groups in Ghana (Lindberg & Morrison, 2008; Debrah, 2016b). This coupled with the

construction of the regions of Ghana along ethnic lines implies that political party affiliation and region of residency can influence public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs (Adjei, 2013; Alidu, 2014). Thus, political power and resource distribution also falls along the lines of ethnicity. This creates issues of ethnic discrimination and other types of discrimination which also influence public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana (Michelitch, 2015).

Like most empirical studies, the current study is not without limitations. Although several important observations and revelations were made from this study that improves our understanding of the predictors of public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana, there are some limitations worth mentioning. First, the present study acknowledges the possibility of desirability bias that is likely to influence the results. Since the present study analyzes survey data, there is the possibility that respondents may alter their actual answers to look good and credible during the interviewing process. This limitation can be addressed by future studies using systematic social observations to further improve our understanding of the predictors of public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs. Furthermore, the present study acknowledges that this study is limited in scope because it uses only one question to measure political clientelism. Again, this question as constructed and formulated by the survey might mean different things to different respondents. Thus, it might not be the best measure of political clientelism. Future studies can focus on asking respondents questions that directly or indirectly measure the concept of political clientelism. Despite these limitations, the results from this study have serious implications for theory building and for practice. Theoretically, the present study and its findings improves our understanding of the predictors of public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs. Specifically, the role of political clientelism – work for a political party

or candidate on public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana. Also, the other variables that influence such attitudes. Policy-wise, the issue of either electing or appointing MMDCEs continues to generate public debates among diverse stakeholders in Ghana. The results of the present study and that of previous studies can provide stakeholders with common factors for consensus building.

In conclusion the present study examines the effect of political clientelism, specifically working for a political party or candidate, on public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana while controlling for other explanatory factors. Support for the election of MMDCEs among respondents was very high compared to appointing MMDCEs. Although, political clientelism was not a predictor of public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana, it was revealed that factors such as employment status, problems facing Ghana, crime victimization, economic and living condition, discrimination, political party affiliation, specifically the New Patriotic Party (NPP), region, specifically, the Ashanti, Western, Eastern, Brong-Ahafo, Volta, Central, and Upper West regions are all predictors of public attitude towards the election or appointment of MMDCEs in Ghana.

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