

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

**GENDER ASYMMETRY IN GHANA'S PARLIAMENTARY
COMMITTEES: CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S
REPRESENTATION AND LEGISLATIVE INFLUENCE**

BY

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this work is original and my own and has never been published anywhere for an academic award. All references to the work of other authors have been duly acknowledged.



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CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned supervisors, hereby certify that this thesis is the original work of the candidate, undertaken under our supervision and guidance, and that it meets the academic and scholarly standards required by the University of Ghana for the award of the Doctor of Philosophy degree.



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DEDICATION

This work is respectfully dedicated to the cherished memory of my spiritual master, His Holiness Swami Ghananand Saraswati, whose profound wisdom, spiritual guidance, and unwavering belief in my potential have been a compass throughout my life's journey. To the memory of my late father, John Alex Hamah, whose enduring legacy of integrity, discipline, and leadership continue to inspire and guide me. And to my beloved mother, Gifty Hamah, whose steadfast love, prayers, and encouragement have sustained me through every challenge. May this work be a humble tribute to their immeasurable influence on my life.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- IEA: Institute of Economic Affairs
IPU: Inter-Parliamentary Union
MDGs: Millennium Development Goals
MP: Members of Parliament
NDC: National Democratic Congress
NPP: New Patriotic Party
SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals
UN: United Nations
US: United States
WACSI West Africa Civil Society Institute



ABSTRACT

This study interrogates the complex dynamics of gender asymmetry within one of the most influential institutional arenas of democratic governance, parliamentary committees. As committees increasingly function as the nucleus of legislative deliberation, oversight, and policy development, they simultaneously serve as spaces where entrenched gender hierarchies are reproduced or contested. Within this context, the study explored the extent to which women parliamentarians are substantively represented and able to exercise influence within Ghana's committee system. Anchored in a political settlement theoretical framework, the research employed a qualitative case study methodology to examine structural barriers, informal norms, leadership patterns, and resource allocation practices that shape women's participation and influence in legislative committees. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 19 selected Members of Parliament and former Members of Parliament, using purposive and convenience sampling techniques to capture diverse experiences and perspectives. A thematic content analysis tool was used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that while nominal gains in women's access to committee membership have been achieved, substantive influence remains constrained by male-dominated leadership hierarchies, informal gatekeeping practices, and unequal distribution of institutional capital. These asymmetries not only limit women's effectiveness in policy formulation but also reinforce broader patterns of exclusion in women's representation and legislative influence, particularly concerning committee composition and the allocation of leadership roles and resources within Ghana's legislative processes. The study contributes to scholarly discourse on gender and political institutions in the Global South, particularly within the African parliamentary context, and addresses a significant gap in public policy literature concerning the intersection of gender, institutional power, and legislative performance. It concludes with actionable policy recommendations to strengthen gender-responsive reforms within parliamentary structures, thereby advancing inclusive governance and supporting the realisation of Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality in political participation and leadership.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Gender asymmetry in politics refers to the unequal standing and positions of men and women in public policymaking. It includes the unequal representation of men and women in the public decision-making process, differences in the institutional opportunities that support men and women in politics, and unequal assessments of the worth of men and women in the political space (Erikson & Verge, 2022). The United Nations has driven major policy interventions in five decades to advance women's social, economic and political status (Ghodsee, 2010; Manion, 2012; Erikson & Verge, 2022). Notable among these interventions included the 1985 Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (Planning, 1992) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 (Allotey & Denton, 2020). Subsequently, the promulgation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and ongoing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) underpins continuous global efforts to achieve gender equality in policy decision-making and equity (Zamora et al., 2018).

Despite the enormous policy interventions initiated to empower women globally, Johnstonbaugh (2018) opined that the literature on the theoretical explanation of the social position of women is occasioned by the historical subordination of women sustained by structural and cultural norms. Indisputably, structural barriers underscore gender asymmetry in almost all aspects of societal engagements, especially within the high echelon of policy-making. This assertion is effectively articulated by Goetz (1998, p. 1), asserting that whereas gender quotas positively enhanced the

numerical strength of women in the parliaments of Uganda and South Africa, for example, their correlative effect on policymaking was still asymmetrical, citing “institutionalised resistance to gender equity within the apparatus of governance.” This implies that equality in political representation would not necessarily result in equity in policymaking, especially when gendered sociocultural barriers continue to exist.

Further on, extant literature is significantly generous on the structural barriers that impede the effective participation of women in politics. For example, Tamale (2000, p. 1) cited factors such as the “reality of male bias, prejudice, and sexual harassment that women MPs confront when they manage to enter parliament”. Shvedova (2005) was more elaborate on the political obstacles confronting women, citing factors such as the masculinisation of politics, inadequate funding, lack of broader political networks, and the uneven moral expectations for women political candidates. Bardall et al. (2020) also delved into the theoretical and empirical literature on the impact of political violence on women’s political participation. Evidently, these challenges sustain man’s hegemonic control in politics.

The balance of power relations between men and women which reflects the global power inequalities of gender at the high echelons of political leadership and decision-making. According to Paxton and Hughes (2018), until about a century and a half ago, only men exercised the franchise to vote, and women were excluded from politics. Whereas Finland was the foremost country to allow for women’s participation and election into the House of the Legislature, women’s right to vote was gained much earlier, such as in the Wyoming Territory in the US and New Zealand in 1869 and 1893, respectively (Paxton et al., 2020). To a large extent, as described by Morales (1999), women’s political representation has been enhanced by the contemporary influence of

democratic governance globally. Thus, in all democratic countries, women are afforded the right to vote and also to equally participate as candidates in the elections for various political positions, which has boosted the increasing numbers of women in political positions from the grassroots level to the national level (Paxton & Hughes, 2018).

Correspondingly, the legislative field in over 130 countries has made relatively significant gains concerning gender parity, which is largely driven by affirmative electoral gender quota policies (Hughes et al., 2017). Thus, it can be argued that the attainment of women's political rights has been rightly sanctioned by the global community on the grounds of equity and equality. Notwithstanding, the power asymmetry between men and women continues to challenge the multiple policy efforts of the global community to address gender inequality in politics and governance.

Yoon and Bunwaree (2006, p. 1), citing the 1995 United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report, opined that the "Political space belongs to all citizens, but men monopolise it." Undeniably, the dominance of men in politics undermines women's substantive impact on policy outcomes as informed by Mansbridge (2005, p. 622), who argued that "Descriptive representation by gender improves substantive outcomes for women in every polity for which we have a measure." Such findings will invariably strengthen the curiosity of scholars in the areas of women and politics to delve into the theory of "critical mass" as a prescriptive measure to enhance women's substantive impact on public policy outcomes. According to Childs and Krook (2009, p. 125), critical mass is "a threshold number (or percentage) of women in a legislature necessary for transforming the legislative context from one in which women-friendly policy is unlikely to one in which the opportunities for women's policy success are increased."

Until the last 25 years, “critical mass” was the dominant concept in the literature on women and politics. Sarah and Mona’s (2008) analysis of the critical mass theory argued that the token representation of women in politics accounts for the inability of women politicians to drive substantive policy outcomes. In a further explanation, Sarah and Mon (2008) posited that the limitation of women to achieve equity in policy outcomes cannot be implied as an innate disposition of women, but rather reflects the structural dynamics of the asymmetrical numbers of men and women in politics, especially in elective assemblies.

Conversely, in the contemporary development paradigm, the SDGs, specifically goal 5, advance a “Gender Equality” agenda, which is an unquestionable exponential shift from the critical mass (Zamora et al., 2018). The gender equality argument plausibly offers adequate support to the reality of women’s significant share of the world’s population (UN 2019). **Similarly, Goal 16, which advances Peace, justice and strong institutions, underpins contemporary global support for gender equality.** Despite the numeric strength of women globally, the global statistics of women’s representation at legislative assemblies reflect the prevailing gender asymmetry in all facets of society. Yet the past two and a half decades have significantly increased women’s parliamentary representation. As of 2015, the global proportion of women in parliaments was 22.1 % a major improvement from the 11.3 % recorded in 1995 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020). The advancing years have rather recorded slower increases. In 2020, women made up about 25% of national parliaments (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020). Statistically, Rwanda leads the global indices with about 61.3% of women represented in parliament as of the year 2020 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020). Such a significant feat amply aided by gender quotas. South Africa follows with second place in the African continent with over 46.4% seats for women followed by Senegal with 43% and Namibia with 42.7% (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2020).

Ghana is visibly missing in these impressive gender ratio legislative outcomes, despite the historical pride as the first independent country in sub-Saharan Africa since 1957. Even more puzzlingly is the quantum shift from the affirmative or gender quota system in Ghana which was introduced as far back as 1959 under the name representation of the (women Members) Act which ensured the nomination and subsequently the election of 10 women into the house of the legislature (Madsen, 2019). The Beijing Conference of 1995 which was only three years down the line into Ghana's fourth republic offered a fresh wave of women's rights awareness in Ghana as opined by Manuh and Anyidoho (2015). Nonetheless, the outcome of the Beijing conference has not enhanced the status of Ghanaian women in politics in general and also within the legislative spaces of high policy and decision-making. This assertion is buttressed by a lot of studies on women's participation in politics at the national level (Bawa & Sanyare, 2013; Hessami & Fonseca, 2020). Consequently, the purpose of this study is to understand how the gender power dynamics impacts on the parliamentary committees of Ghana's parliament.

1.1 Problem Statement

Ghana's total population of 30,832,019, according to the population census conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service in 2021, is made up of 49.3% males and 50.7% females. Thus, females outnumber males in Ghana. Yet, since 1992, Ghana's Fourth Republic parliament achieved its highest women's representation of 14.5% in 2020, moving from as low as 8.3 % in the year 2012 (Sarfo-Kantankah, 2021). At the end of the December 2024 parliamentary elections, the number of women in Parliament saw a marginal increase from 40 to 42. These statistics underscore the gender asymmetry within Ghana's parliament and invariably would reflect in the dynamics and workings of the legislative committees. As Murray and Sénac (2010) asserted, the gender

composition of the legislative committee is important as it is the central point of parliamentary influence.

Longley and Davidson (1998) expressed that “We are living in the age of parliaments” (p.1). Parliamentary committees are the legislative sub-structures for negotiation and compromise over proposed policies within a parliamentary system (Goodhand & Walton, 2022). Parliamentary committees offer the space in which political actors can engage in bargaining, coalition-building, and other forms of political horse-trading to advance their interests and achieve policy goals. According to Bukenya and Nakaiza (2018) the parliamentary committee space is the arena in which policy negotiations take place. The parliamentary committee space can be influenced by a variety of factors, including the ideological orientation of political parties, the distribution of seats in parliament, and the strength of civil society groups and other stakeholders (O'Brien, 2012). The size and diversity of the parliamentary committee space can also vary depending on the level of polarisation and conflict within the entire political system.

The parliamentary committee space is important for promoting democratic governance and effective policy-making. It provides an opportunity for different voices and perspectives to be heard, and for policy decisions to be made through negotiation and compromise rather than through coercion or authoritarianism (Goodhand & Walton, 2022). However, the parliamentary committee space can also be limited by factors such as corruption and unequal power relations. In some cases, political parties or interest groups may use their power to limit the scope of negotiations or to exclude certain voices from the process (Bukenya & Nakaiza, 2018). By promoting a more open and inclusive parliamentary committee space, policymakers can help to ensure that policy decisions are more reflective of the needs and priorities of all members of society.

Longley and Davidson (1998) espoused that the committee level of parliament has become the centre stage for the business of parliament globally. This has led to increasing scholarship interest in parliamentary committees (Strom, 2012; Chaqués-Bonafont & Muñoz Márquez, 2016). The significant functions of the legislative committee within the general workings of parliament, coupled with the contemporary global sensitivity towards women's political empowerment also generate academic curiosity about gender power dynamics at the legislative committees and thus underscore the relevance of this research.

For the purposes of this research, empirical and theoretical validation based on extant literature is critical as that establishes a concrete research problem. Empirical and theoretical literature on gender-power relations at the legislative committees' level is generally limited (Bolzendahl, 2014; Murray & Senac, 2018). Existing literature predominantly focuses on the roles of parliamentary committees (Stapenhurst & Pelizzo, 2012), the composition of parliamentary committees (Pedersen et al., 2015), the performance of parliamentary committees (Kinyondo & Pelizzo, 2022), and global perspectives of parliamentary committees (Strom, 2012). Notably, the literature generally concentrates less on women's participation at the legislative or parliamentary committee levels (Norris, 2013; Makhunga, 2014). Though women's participation and contributions in parliamentary affairs are immeasurable (Norris, 2013; Bari, 2010), there is little accompanying literature to buttress this reality. Although Bari (2010) acknowledges the structural and functional obstacles that mitigate against women legislators, he asserted that, nonetheless, women continue to harness their agency to push the limits of politics and offer their token contribution to the workings of parliament. Despite women's progressive representation and contribution to parliamentary discourses, published studies on how gendered power relations impact on legislative committee structuring and decision-making in Ghana's parliament is scarce to find. The closest

study is by (Adams et al., 2016). Even so, the emphasis of Adam's study focuses on the relationship between women's representation in parliament and the cabinet, which is parallel to the focus of this study.

Further support to the justification for this study is the observation that "Nations and Parliaments vary in the gender structure of their committee system" (Bolzendahl, 2014). Certainly, the variations of countries and their parliaments in terms of political history, culture, and economy would undoubtedly impact differently on their gender relations at the legislative committees. The global north countries dominate the scholarship on the gendered legislative committees, excluding countries in the global south including Ghana (Strom, 2012; Pedersen et al., 2015). This evidently underscores a very strong proposition for the consideration of the examination of gender-power relations within the legislative committees of Ghana's parliament.

Various parliaments have different compositions in respect of parliamentary committees (Ahmed, 2001). Although a substantial aspect of the literature acknowledges various types and structures of parliamentary committees, their relevance and benefits to their members are scanty. A study by Murray and Senac (2018) asserted the dominance of male parliamentarians in prestigious committees as compared with female parliamentarians, and thus expressed the "puzzle of why the gendered nature of legislative committees remains unresolved". Murray and Senac (2018) further posited that the gendered outlook of the legislative committee has implications for "power, visibility, political career opportunities for a parliamentarian, and policy outcomes", yet prior studies have rarely examined this direction. These gaps indicate that there is a need to examine the asymmetrical power relations of legislative committee structuring and composition with emphasis on Ghana's parliament.

Another important gap in the study of parliamentary committees and decision-making is the distribution of positions on the basis of the power of male and female parliamentarians. For instance, Hansen (2019) argues that the distribution of positions in parliamentary committees is based on expertise, experience and government of the day (majority or minority) of members of parliament, among others. Not much is known about how the distribution of positions in parliamentary committees take into account the asymmetry of gender power relations between male and female parliamentarians (Pedersen et al., 2015; Malcolm, 1998).

Examination of the literature offers a significant gap of knowledge about how the dynamics of gender asymmetry impact on the decisions making process of parliamentary committees. The parliamentary committees' workings and decision-making processes employ methods such as debates, discussions, arguments and counter-arguments which are approached in a gender-neutral function and thus insensitive to gender dynamics. The works of Ahrens (2016) affirm the dominance of male parliamentarians in committee decisions. Ahren's (2016) call for balanced gender participation in the policy decision-making of parliamentary committees' workings is well-placed, especially within the ongoing global strive for gender parity.

Attaining gender parity within the committee space of Ghana's parliament although an uphill task is achievable. This thus gives the impetus to commission this study on Ghana's parliamentary committees to unearth the influence of the asymmetrical gender power relations in Ghana's Parliament on the structuring of parliamentary committees, the distribution of positions within committees, and policy-making processes. The central question of the study is this: How do gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament affects the influence of female Members of Parliament within the committee space? The study hopes to find appropriate answers to this important question.

1.2 Research Objectives

The primary aim of the study is to examine how gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament shapes the influence of female parliamentarians in the committee space of Ghana's parliament. To achieve this general objective, the specific objectives pursued are as follows;

- i. To examine how gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament affects the composition of committee membership between male and female members of parliament.
- ii. To explore how gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament influences the distribution of positions and resources within parliamentary committees.
- iii. To investigate how gender asymmetry affects the influence of female parliamentarians in policy-making within the committee space.

1.3 Research Questions

The following specific research questions underpinned the study:

- i. How does gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament affect the composition of committee membership between male and female members of parliament?
- ii. How does gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament influence the distribution of positions and resources within parliamentary committees?
- iii. How does gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament affect the influence of female parliamentarians in policy-making within the committee space?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study seeks to investigate how gender asymmetry shapes and influences the policy-making process within the committee structures of Ghana's Parliament. Specifically, it explores the power dynamics, patterns of influence, and institutional practices that underpin the composition of

committees, the allocation of leadership roles, and the formulation of policies in the parliamentary committee system. By examining who gains access to strategic committees, how positions of authority are distributed, and how gendered power relations affect deliberations and decision-making, the study provides a deeper understanding of the structural and informal mechanisms that sustain gender imbalance within this critical legislative arena. The insights generated are expected to enrich the limited body of knowledge on gender power relations and parliamentary institutions, contributing meaningfully to practice, policy, research, and theory.

In terms of policy contribution, the study's findings aim to inform and refine national and institutional strategies for promoting gender equality within Ghana's parliamentary processes. A clearer understanding of the drivers and implications of gender asymmetry can assist policymakers, parliamentary leadership, and political parties in designing targeted interventions to address the systemic barriers that disproportionately affect female parliamentarians. The study anticipates that its results will guide the development of deliberate and progressive policies that seek to rebalance gendered power relations and enhance the participation and influence of women within committees. A more gender-sensitive parliamentary environment not only supports equitable representation but also creates opportunities to draw on the diverse lived experiences, perspectives, and expertise of both male and female MPs. Such inclusivity has the potential to foster shared value in policymaking and deepen the quality of deliberations both within committees and in the wider parliamentary chamber.

Additionally, the study makes a significant contribution to the academic literature on political representation and institutional governance in emerging democracies, particularly within Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). While scholarship on gender and politics in the region is growing, empirical work examining gender asymmetry within the operational dynamics of parliamentary committees

remains limited. By focusing on Ghana, one of SSA's more stable democracies, the study offers context-specific insights into how gendered power relations affect committee functioning, influence policy outcomes, and reflect the broader political settlement that governs parliamentary behaviour. The findings are expected to stimulate further research on gender and legislative institutions, encourage comparative studies across African parliaments, and deepen scholarly understanding of how political settlements shape gender inclusion or exclusion within democratic spaces. Through these contributions, the study advances both theoretical and empirical debates on gender, power, and governance in Africa.

1.5 Outline of the Study

This body of work is organised into six chapters. Chapter one elaborates on the general background of the study and outlines the issues that underpin the research problem as well as delineates the research objectives and research questions. Chapter two of this study reviewed both empirical and theoretical literature on the research topic which served as a contextual basis for the study. The methods of study constitute Chapter Three. The study employs a mixed-method approach. The analysis of the findings of the study was discussed in Chapter Four. Chapter Five further discusses the implications of the findings and how these findings relate to theory, practice and policy as well as the general growth of parliamentary operations at the committee level. Finally, Chapter Six covers a summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations of the study. It draws some conclusions based on the outcomes of the findings and duly recommends areas that need Ghana's parliament's attention and underscores the need to improve the performance of parliamentary committees' operations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Chapter Synopsis

Chapter Two provides an extensive review of the literature on gender asymmetry and its dynamics within parliamentary committees. It begins with a conceptual review, offering detailed definitions and interpretations of the core concept of gender asymmetry. This is followed by a discussion of three theoretical frameworks that underpin the study, establishing a strong foundation for the analysis. The chapter then presents an empirical review, synthesising findings from relevant studies. It concludes with a conceptual framework that visually and descriptively illustrates the relationships among the key variables, offering a roadmap for the analysis and discussion in the subsequent chapters.

2.1 Theoretical Background

This section presents the theoretical framework that guides the study. According to Miner (2015), a theory is a generalisation that describes the relationship between factors and is applicable within specific parameters. It represents an effort to make sense of observations that may otherwise appear disconnected or lacking in clear logic. In this context, applying relevant theories helps to structure and interpret the complexities surrounding gender asymmetry in parliamentary committee systems.

Recognising the dynamics of gender asymmetry in parliamentary processes is regarded as a critical factor for achieving meaningful parliamentary development and institutional inclusivity (Lynch, 2017; Aspinall et al., 2018). The body of literature on gender asymmetry and parliamentary

committee systems has identified several theoretical perspectives that provide valuable insights into the causes, patterns, and implications of gender inequality in political institutions. Among the most influential are feminist theory, intersectionality theory, and political settlement theory.

Feminist theory (Beauvoir, 2011 [1949]) offers a foundational framework for analysing gender-based disparities and asymmetries in power relations. It highlights the ways in which historical and systemic structures have perpetuated male dominance and marginalised women's participation in political and institutional life. Feminist theory enables researchers to interrogate the structural and ideological roots of gender-based exclusion within parliamentary systems.

Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989) complements feminist insights by emphasising how multiple social identities, such as gender, race, class, and sexuality, interact to shape individuals' experiences of inequality. This theory is particularly relevant in contexts where gender alone does not sufficiently explain the barriers women face. It acknowledges that women's political participation and influence may be compounded or constrained by other intersecting forms of social stratification, and it thus offers a more layered understanding of gender asymmetry in parliament.

Political settlement theory (Khan, 1995) examines how the distribution of power among social groups and elites determines the nature and functioning of institutions. It provides a valuable lens through which to understand how informal norms, power bargains, and elite interests can either reinforce or disrupt formal efforts toward gender equality in political institutions. This theory highlights how power dynamics can shape not only the rules of political engagement but also the degree to which those rules are implemented or undermined in practice. The theories are discussed below to show their relevance for the work.

2.1.1 Feminist Theory

Feminist theory (Beauvoir, 2011 [1949]) is a foundational framework that interrogates the social, political, and institutional arrangements through which women are historically subordinated and marginalised. At its core, feminist theory seeks to understand and challenge the entrenched patriarchal structures that privilege male dominance while excluding or silencing female voices in both public and private spheres (Flax, 1999; Van der Tuin, 2017). The theory emerged during the first wave of feminism in the 19th century and has evolved through successive waves and critical reinterpretations by scholars such as Simone de Beauvoir, Bell Hooks, Judith Butler, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Pucherová, 2022). These theorists have advanced feminism from a singular focus on legal equality to a more nuanced understanding of intersectional power dynamics across class, race, sexuality, and institutional contexts.

Feminist theory identifies patriarchy not merely as individual acts of bias but as an enduring system of male power embedded in laws, customs, political structures, and epistemologies. It argues that social expectations, symbolic representations, and institutional practices conspire to reproduce male dominance and exclude women from equal participation in society's most influential decision-making spaces (Benstead, 2021). In this sense, feminist theory serves as both an analytical tool and a normative project, aiming to expose gendered inequities and envision more inclusive and egalitarian social arrangements.

In the context of this study, feminist theory provides an essential framework for examining how Ghana's parliamentary committee system continues to be shaped by patriarchal assumptions that systemically exclude women from key political processes. As Chapter 4 of this thesis shows, the persistent underrepresentation of women on parliamentary committees, and their

overrepresentation in committees perceived as less influential, mirrors broader patriarchal norms within Ghana's political culture. For instance, while women are present on committees focused on social welfare and gender, they are often absent from those responsible for finance, defence, and foreign affairs, reinforcing traditional gender hierarchies in institutional responsibilities.

This gendered pattern of committee assignment validates feminist critiques that argue women's marginalisation in politics is not accidental but structurally embedded through informal norms and gatekeeping mechanisms that define who is considered competent or legitimate in the political arena (Bolzendahl, 2014; Vickers, 2011). The findings in Chapter 4 reveal that female MPs often face resistance when expressing assertiveness or seeking leadership within committees. Such experiences reflect what feminist theorists describe as the double bind women face, where assertiveness is penalised as aggressive while deference is dismissed as weakness (McDaniel-Miccio, 2015).

Furthermore, feminist theory is relevant for understanding how the marginalisation of women in committees undermines democratic legitimacy and policy effectiveness. Women bring distinct life experiences, policy priorities, and representational concerns to the legislative process (Bratton, 2005; Kabear, 2016). When committees are dominated by men, there is a greater risk that women's needs, particularly in health, education, care work, reproductive rights, and social protection, are deprioritised or misunderstood. As the empirical data in Chapter 4 indicates, several female MPs noted that gender-sensitive bills often receive limited support or are delayed due to lack of backing from male-dominated committees. This not only curtails the potential for gender-equitable laws but also reinforces the perception that politics is a male domain.

Feminist theory also critiques the myth of neutrality in institutional decision-making. Parliamentary procedures and committee practices often present themselves as rational, objective, and merit-based. However, feminist scholars argue that such procedures are rarely neutral, they often reflect male-centric norms, networks of patronage, and gendered ideas of leadership and authority (Acker, 1992; Ferguson, 2017). For example, interviewees in Chapter four reported that committee chairperson roles are frequently allocated through informal political arrangements that favour male MPs due to perceived seniority or loyalty, criteria that disadvantage women, particularly in male-dominated political parties.

Applying feminist theory to this study therefore does more than highlight women's numerical underrepresentation. It interrogates the very structure of parliamentary power and the gendered logic that determines who participates, who leads, and whose interests are considered valid. It also resonates with the study's transformative-emancipatory paradigm by emphasising the need for institutional change rather than mere inclusion. Feminist theory calls for affirmative action policies, gender mainstreaming in all legislative processes, and the dismantling of patriarchal norms that shape legislative participation and leadership (Pucherová, 2022; Kabeer, 2016).

Finally, feminist theory aligns with the broader objectives of this research: to examine how gender asymmetry affects policymaking, resource allocation, and positional authority within Ghana's parliamentary committees. It provides a conceptual lens through which the gendered distribution of power can be critically evaluated and reimagined. By revealing the institutionalised barriers that hinder women's equal participation, feminist theory strengthens the empirical and theoretical foundations of this study and underscores the urgency of reform for achieving a more inclusive and representative parliamentary system.

2.1.2 Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality is a theoretical framework developed to explore how various forms of social identity, such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, and sexuality, interact to produce distinctive modes of privilege and oppression. First introduced by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s (Crenshaw, 1989), intersectionality emerged as a critique of traditional feminist and anti-racist theories that often treated social identities as separate and independent categories of analysis (Crenshaw, 1989). At its core, intersectionality challenges the assumption that individuals experience social injustice through single-axis frameworks. Instead, it argues that disadvantage is shaped by multiple and simultaneous forms of discrimination that are mutually reinforcing (Walby et al., 2012).

A key insight of intersectionality is that social experiences are shaped not only by an individual's gender or race in isolation, but by the way these and other identities intersect. For example, a Black woman does not experience gender discrimination in the same way as a white woman, nor does she experience racial discrimination in the same way as a Black man. The intersection of race and gender produces a qualitatively different experience of marginalization that cannot be fully understood by analyzing either axis in isolation. Phoenix and Pattynama (2006) emphasise that intersectionality also compels scholars and policymakers to examine the institutional structures, norms, and power dynamics that reinforce overlapping inequalities in everyday life, including in areas such as employment, education, health care, and political representation.

This understanding is particularly relevant to research focused on gender asymmetry within Ghana's parliamentary committee system. Parliamentary committees are central to legislative oversight and policymaking, yet access to and influence within these committees are not equally

distributed. While women in general may face gender-based exclusion, intersectionality suggests that some women encounter additional barriers based on class background, age, regional affiliation, educational level, or ethnicity. For instance, a woman parliamentarian from a marginalised region in Ghana may face structural and social disadvantages that limit her ability to access leadership positions or effectively influence decisions within committee structures, even when compared to other female colleagues from more privileged backgrounds.

Intersectionality is useful for this study because it moves beyond simplistic accounts of male-female disparities by accounting for the heterogeneity of women's experiences in legislative environments. As Cho et al. (2013) argue, the application of intersectionality in institutional settings enables a more nuanced understanding of how power operates through complex social arrangements. In the context of parliamentary committees, this theory provides insight into how layered identities affect women's visibility, participation, and decision-making authority. It helps explain why women's underrepresentation in these spaces is not only a matter of numerical disparity but also the result of deeply embedded structural inequities.

Lombardo and Rolandsen Agustín (2012) extend this analysis by demonstrating how intersectional barriers manifest in both formal and informal political processes. Women from minority groups may not only be underrepresented in committee leadership but may also lack access to the informal networks, mentorship, or party support systems that are often crucial to navigating legislative power. This suggests that policy interventions aimed at improving gender representation must consider the multiplicity of social identities that shape participation. Without such a lens, reforms risk benefiting only a narrow group of elite women, leaving broader gender equity goals unmet.

Furthermore, intersectionality underscores the importance of inclusive policymaking. As Helboe et al. (2015) note, when policy processes fail to consider the lived experiences of diverse women, legislative outcomes may perpetuate exclusion or reinforce existing power hierarchies. Intersectional analysis of parliamentary committees therefore helps identify whose voices are systematically excluded and why. For Ghana's parliament, this is particularly salient given the persistence of regional, ethnic, and economic inequalities that intersect with gender to shape access to political power.

By applying intersectionality theory, this study aligns with its research objective of understanding how demographic factors influence the dynamics of power, resource allocation, and decision-making within parliamentary committees. The theory enables the exploration of how social structures in Ghana's political system interact with individual identities to produce differentiated experiences of representation and influence. It also provides a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of existing policy reforms aimed at enhancing gender equity in legislative spaces.

In summary, intersectionality theory offers a comprehensive and context-sensitive approach to understanding gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliamentary committees. By revealing the complex interplay of gender with other social identities, the theory sharpens our understanding of the mechanisms through which exclusion occurs. It affirms that addressing gender inequality in parliament requires more than increasing the number of women; it requires dismantling the intersecting structures of power that restrict participation and mute the voices of the most marginalised. As such, intersectionality not only deepens the theoretical grounding of this study but also enhances its practical relevance for inclusive policy reform.

2.1.3 Political Settlement Theory

Political settlement theory provides a critical framework for understanding the distribution and exercise of political power within a society. According to Khan (2010), political settlements refer to the balance of power among groups and classes, sustained by formal and informal institutional structures. These settlements determine which actors control access to political and economic resources, shape policymaking processes, and influence institutional behaviour. In essence, political settlements are not limited to legal frameworks or formal rules but extend to the negotiated and often informal arrangements that govern political life.

While the concept continues to evolve, its core principles are increasingly recognised in both academic and policy-making circles. As Ní Aoláin (2016) observes, there is no universally agreed definition, but the common theme revolves around how elites, through formal or informal means, organise and exercise power. The UK Department for International Development (DfID) defines political settlements as “the expression of a common understanding, usually forged between elites, about how power is organised and exercised.” These elite bargains are central to shaping institutions and can either entrench exclusion or open pathways to more inclusive governance.

Edward (2012) adds that political settlements operate through complex relationships between differently placed elites and their followers. These relationships are often characterised by implicit negotiations over how power and resources are distributed. In identifying key dynamics that structure governance, political settlement theory shifts analytical focus from merely institutional design to the balance of capabilities among powerful groups (Khan, 2010). These capabilities are rooted not only in wealth or formal status but in the historically accumulated capacity of certain actors to organise and assert influence over state institutions and societal norms.

The theory's relevance to the study of gender asymmetry in parliamentary committees is significant. Political settlement theory helps explain how informal norms and elite bargains can marginalise women from formal political participation, even when institutional reforms promise greater inclusion. In many political systems, including Ghana's, parliamentary committees play a pivotal role in shaping laws and scrutinising executive policies. However, the distribution of committee roles and influence is often skewed in favour of dominant political and social actors, typically male elites, who control the internal dynamics of political parties and legislative procedures (Nazneen & Hickey, 2019).

By focusing on the deeper power arrangements that structure political participation, political settlement theory illuminates why women may be systematically underrepresented or relegated to committees perceived as less influential. This exclusion is often embedded in the informal rules of elite consensus, party patronage, and seniority norms, which rarely prioritise gender equity. The theory encourages an analysis of both the visible institutional mechanisms and the hidden informal practices that collectively shape gender outcomes in parliamentary decision-making spaces.

Political settlement theory also highlights the importance of negotiated power arrangements in achieving institutional change. If gender equity is to be improved in parliamentary committees, it may require more than statutory reforms or affirmative action policies. It demands a renegotiation of the political settlement itself to accommodate gender-inclusive power-sharing practices. This might involve securing elite buy-in for gender-balanced leadership structures, increasing women's access to influential networks within political parties, and ensuring that women are not merely included for symbolic representation but given substantive authority.

The theory further posits that political settlements are not static; they evolve as power relations shift. Thus, progress toward gender inclusivity may be contingent on broader changes in political alignments, electoral incentives, or external pressures. For instance, civil society mobilisation or international gender parity norms may influence elite perceptions and trigger new bargains that open space for women in parliamentary leadership roles (Hickey et al., 2018). Yet, these shifts often require strategic engagement with the informal aspects of the political settlement, networks of influence, patronage systems, and power brokers, that determine how formal rules are interpreted and applied.

Moreover, the inclusivity or exclusivity of political settlements is central to understanding their gender dynamics. Inclusive settlements, which allow broader stakeholder engagement, tend to support more equitable political outcomes. Conversely, exclusive settlements entrench elite dominance and reproduce systemic inequalities, including gender exclusion (Hassan & Prichard, 2016). The extent to which women are included in the political settlement of Ghana's parliament, particularly at the committee level, affects the nature and scope of policy decisions.

Lastly, political settlements are shaped by historical and cultural contexts. In Ghana, traditional gender norms, colonial legacies, and post-independence political traditions continue to influence elite perceptions about women's roles in politics. These historical trajectories must be acknowledged to understand why reforms have been slow or uneven in addressing gender gaps in parliamentary participation. As Castillejo (2014) argues, without attention to the social and historical factors that structure political authority, attempts to transform governance systems may reproduce the very inequalities they seek to dismantle.

Political settlement theory provides a comprehensive lens to explore how deeply embedded power structures influence gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliamentary committee system. By situating gender disparities within the broader context of elite bargains, informal institutions, and negotiated power relations, the theory deepens our understanding of why formal inclusion does not always translate into substantive representation. Its emphasis on negotiated change, evolving dynamics, and historical context makes it a powerful tool for analysing the challenges and opportunities for promoting gender equity in political institutions.

Political settlements are often marked by limited inclusivity and a lack of gender sensitivity, restricting women's access to decision-making processes and parliamentary committees (Nazneen & Mahmud, 2012). This exclusion results in policies that may not reflect women's needs and priorities, reinforcing marginalisation and inequality (Paxton & Hughes, 2018). To address this, gender considerations must be integrated into political institutions. Quota systems, such as those successfully implemented in Rwanda, can increase women's representation and ensure their voices are included in policymaking.

In sum, within the parliamentary committee system of Ghana, gender asymmetry often persists, with women underrepresented in key decision-making roles (Ahrens, 2016). Political settlement theory helps to uncover the informal power dynamics behind committee membership and influence, including the roles of political parties and elite networks in maintaining exclusionary practices (Ahmed, 2001). Addressing these barriers requires reforming the institutional arrangements that sustain gender imbalance. This may include introducing quotas for women representation in committees and mainstreaming gender perspectives in legislative processes (Benstead, 2021; Tretyakova & Khudoydodzoda, 2021). Overall, political settlement theory offers

a useful lens to identify the structural and informal constraints on gender asymmetry and to inform strategies for institutional change and inclusive governance.

2.1.4 Why the Use of Three Theories

The application of feminist theory, intersectionality theory, and political settlement theory is essential because gender asymmetry in parliamentary committees is shaped by structural, relational, and power-political factors that no single theory can fully explain. Feminist theory provides the foundational lens for examining the patriarchal norms, institutional practices, and gendered assumptions that reproduce women's exclusion from political power (Beauvoir, 2011 [1949]; Acker, 1992). While feminist theory effectively exposes the systemic marginalisation of women within parliamentary structures, it does not sufficiently account for why certain women gain access to influence while others remain excluded. Thus, although feminist theory identifies patriarchy as the root of institutional gender inequality, it does not fully explain the differentiated experiences of women or the political bargains that determine access to committee leadership.

To address this limitation, intersectionality theory complements feminist insights by highlighting how gender interacts with class, ethnicity, age, regional identity, and educational background to produce varied patterns of privilege and disadvantage (Crenshaw, 1989; Walby et al., 2012). It explains why women in parliament do not constitute a homogeneous group and why some women face compounded barriers within committee systems due to intersecting social identities. Intersectionality therefore enriches the analysis by demonstrating that gender asymmetry cannot be understood solely through male–female comparisons; rather, it emerges from overlapping social hierarchies that shape women's levels of influence, committee assignments, and political visibility (Cho et al., 2013; Lombardo & Rolandsen Agustín, 2012). However, intersectionality alone does

not illuminate how elite networks, party hierarchies, and informal power arrangements consolidate gender exclusion.

For this reason, political settlement theory is incorporated to capture the underlying elite bargains, informal norms, and power-sharing arrangements that determine who gains strategic positions within parliamentary committees (Khan, 2010; Hickey et al., 2018). This theory explains how male-dominated political hierarchies, patronage systems, and negotiated power deals shape committee leadership and resource distribution, often sidelining women despite formal equality provisions (Nazneen & Hickey, 2019; Hassan & Prichard, 2016). Political settlement theory therefore reveals the hidden power dynamics that feminist and intersectional perspectives cannot fully expose on their own. Taken together, the three theories offer a comprehensive and multi-dimensional framework: feminist theory exposes structural patriarchy, intersectionality reveals layered social inequalities, and political settlement theory uncovers the political bargains that sustain gender exclusion. The combined use of these theories thus provides a richer and more accurate explanation of gender asymmetry in parliamentary committee systems than any single theoretical lens could achieve.

2.2 Conceptual Clarification: Gender Asymmetry

Gender asymmetry remains a persistent and complex phenomenon that cuts across various domains of social, political, and institutional life. As defined by Van Berkel et al. (2017), gender asymmetry entails the unequal power relations between men and women, rooted in socially constructed roles, cultural norms, and institutional practices that disadvantage one gender, typically women. In pedagogical and political contexts alike, gender asymmetry transcends biological differences and reflects structural disparities in access, representation, and influence.

These disparities manifest as unequal access to education, political office, employment, healthcare, and other critical public resources (Baitinger, 2015; Bari, 2010; Allotey & Denton, 2020). In line with the first objective of this study, which examines how gender asymmetry affects the composition of committee membership in Ghana's parliament, the literature establishes a foundational understanding of how unequal structural dynamics limit women's entry and participation in legislative bodies.

Scholars argue that institutionalised gender biases are evident in the political realm, where male dominance is deeply entrenched in political party structures and parliamentary committees. The persistent under-representation of women in politics, especially in parliamentary committees, is attributed to traditional gender roles, lack of political will, unequal resource access, and absence of gender-sensitive policy frameworks (Bratton, 2005; Okumo & Asfaw, 2014; Mickler, 2017). The literature reinforces the second objective of this research, which investigates how gender asymmetry influences the distribution of positions within committees. Women are often marginalised in committee appointments, especially those deemed strategic or prestigious, resulting in unequal influence over the legislative agenda (Murray & Sénac, 2018).

Furthermore, gender asymmetry not only affects representation but also shapes outcomes in decision-making spaces. The literature highlights that parliamentary committees function as the epicentre of legislative negotiation, where substantive policymaking occurs. However, male-dominated committee structures risk producing outcomes that fail to reflect women's needs and perspectives (Ahrens, 2016; O'Brien, 2012). This underpins the third objective of the study, which explores how gender asymmetry affects the influence of female MPs on policymaking in committee spaces. Paxton and Hughes (2018) and Mansbridge (2005) argue that descriptive

representation, referring to increasing the number of women, must translate into substantive representation to influence gender-sensitive policymaking effectively.

Global experiences, such as Rwanda's gender quota model, demonstrate that institutional reforms can mitigate gender asymmetry. Gender mainstreaming, capacity-building programs, and legislative quotas have shown promise in enhancing women's participation and visibility in legislative processes (Lihiru, 2022; Paxton & Hughes, 2018). These lessons are pertinent to Ghana, where women constitute only 13.8% of the national parliament (Asekere, 2020). The Affirmative Action Bill, which proposes a 30% quota for women, reflects efforts to address this imbalance. However, as literature and policy experiences reveal, numerical improvements alone are insufficient without complementary institutional and cultural changes (Bawa & Sanyare, 2013; Bauer, 2012).

Finally, the literature makes clear that addressing gender asymmetry is not only a question of increasing female numbers but also of challenging entrenched power structures and transforming legislative norms. As emphasised by Allotey and Denton (2020), society must confront and rethink the cultural and institutional limitations imposed by gender. In doing so, the pursuit of gender equity becomes integral to democratic development, effective governance, and inclusive policymaking. Addressing these challenges requires both institutional reforms and normative shifts to create more gender-inclusive legislative spaces.

2.3.4 Parliamentary System: “We are living in the age of parliaments”

The parliamentary system of governance is a form of democratic government in which the executive branch, typically led by a prime minister, is accountable to the legislative branch, or parliament (Gerring et al., 2009). In this system, parliament constitutes the supreme decision-

making body, and the government is formed by the party or coalition of parties that command a majority of parliamentary seats. The head of state in such systems is often a ceremonial figure, such as a monarch or president, while executive authority rests with the prime minister (Goel & Nelson, 2020). The prime minister is tasked with leading government policy and is directly answerable to parliament. Parliament exercises essential functions, including enacting legislation, approving budgets, and overseeing government actions (Coghill et al., 2012). Members of parliament are elected by the people, either through direct voting or party-list systems.

Parliamentary systems are generally valued for their potential to ensure governmental accountability and responsiveness. Since the executive must retain parliamentary confidence to remain in power, this structure enables a closer connection between public concerns and government actions (Coghill et al., 2012). Moreover, the system is often more adaptive to changing political and social conditions. If a government loses public support, it can be removed and replaced more efficiently, contributing to political flexibility (Moen, 2022). However, parliamentary systems are also susceptible to political instability, particularly in fragmented legislatures where coalition-building is required among numerous small parties (Gerring et al., 2009).

From a political settlement perspective, this instability can reflect the underlying balance of power among elite factions. Parliamentary committee assignments, leadership roles, and policy direction often result from negotiated bargains between political elites, which sustain the institutional structure of the parliament. When women or marginalised groups are excluded from these elite bargains, their interests are less likely to be reflected in committee decisions and legislative

outcomes. Consequently, political settlements in parliaments that fail to institutionalize gender-inclusive norms can reinforce exclusionary practices.

Another limitation is the potential short-termism in policymaking, as governments may focus more on retaining majority support than on achieving long-term policy outcomes (Ilie, 2015). Feminist theory would critique this prioritization by highlighting how short-term political strategies often sideline issues that predominantly affect women, such as care work, social protection, and gender-based violence, which require sustained legislative attention.

Similarly, intersectionality theory compels us to examine how the formal structures of parliamentary governance might appear neutral but can produce exclusionary outcomes for individuals at the intersection of gender, race, class, and other social markers. For example, even when women gain parliamentary representation, systemic barriers such as informal party rules, internal patronage, or resource disparities can limit their access to influential committees, including those responsible for budget oversight or security policy.

In parliamentary regimes, elected legislatures are central in holding the executive accountable. The quality of parliamentary democracy is often assessed based on how effectively the legislature influences government formation and dissolution, allocates cabinet portfolios, and monitors cabinet performance (Diermeier, 2006). While these processes are key to democratic governance, political settlement theory highlights how such outcomes often emerge through elite negotiations that are not always visible or equitable. Women and marginalised groups can be excluded from these negotiations unless formal mechanisms, such as gender quotas or inclusive selection procedures, are established.

Even between government formations, individual legislators continue to influence policy direction. Although only a few issues may trigger cabinet collapse, day-to-day legislative processes are sustained by parliamentary majorities (Gerring et al., 2009). Parties in government use parliamentary engagement as a monitoring tool to prevent policy drift, where ministers may act outside the consensus of the coalition (Moens, 2022). This oversight is essential because ministers typically possess superior technical information, making deviations difficult to detect. However, feminist theory would underscore that if parliamentary review mechanisms do not include diverse perspectives, oversight itself becomes skewed, enabling continued marginalization of gender concerns.

In sum, while the parliamentary system offers important mechanisms for democratic accountability and responsive governance, its inclusiveness depends significantly on the power dynamics, social norms, and institutional rules that govern representation. Integrating the insights of feminist, intersectionality, and political settlement theories allows for a more nuanced understanding of how gender asymmetries and structural inequalities may persist even within formally democratic institutions. This underscores the importance of institutional reforms that ensure equitable participation in all facets of parliamentary decision-making.

2.3.4.1 Parliamentary System in Ghana

The Parliament of Ghana is the highest authority responsible for enacting laws and providing oversight over the executive branch. Ghana operates a unicameral parliamentary system, meaning it has only one legislative chamber, which is formally known as the “Parliament of Ghana.” This body is composed of 275 members who are elected through general elections held every four years. The leadership of parliament is vested in the Speaker, who is elected by Members of Parliament

(MPs). The Speaker is tasked with ensuring that parliamentary proceedings are conducted in an orderly and efficient manner. In addition to presiding over debates, the Speaker is responsible for maintaining order during sittings and interpreting parliamentary rules when necessary.

The parliamentary system in Ghana provides several benefits (Goel & Nelson, 2020). One of the key advantages is its ability to represent the diverse interests of the Ghanaian population. Parliament consists of members from various political parties and constituencies, which helps to ensure that a broad spectrum of opinions and concerns are reflected in national decision-making. This structure supports inclusive governance by giving voice to minority and special interest groups in the legislative process.

Another important feature of the parliamentary system is its role in maintaining checks and balances between the different branches of government. Parliament exercises oversight over the executive by reviewing government activities, scrutinizing policies, and ensuring accountability. This oversight function is crucial for promoting transparency and ensuring that government decisions reflect the interests of the public. According to Article 93 of the 1992 Constitution, no person or entity other than Parliament has the authority to enact laws with legal force (Daddieh & Bob-Milliar, 2012). While most bills originate from the executive, individual MPs also have the constitutional right to propose legislation through private members' bills.

Furthermore, Parliament has control over its own agenda and legislative calendar. The President cannot unilaterally compel Parliament to vote on a bill, alter legislation without parliamentary approval, dissolve the legislature, or govern by decree. Parliament is also empowered to remove the President, Vice President, or Speaker under specific conditions, as provided by Article 69 of the Constitution and Part 16 of the Standing Orders of Parliament.

Despite these institutional strengths, Ghana's parliamentary system faces notable challenges. Chief among them is the problem of political polarization. The adversarial nature of party politics often leads to entrenched divisions that hinder consensus-building on key national issues. This polarization can reduce the effectiveness of parliamentary deliberations and undermine cooperation across party lines. For example, as Daddieh and Bob-Milliar (2012) point out, intense partisanship in Ghana has, at times, obstructed dialogue and delayed legislative outcomes.

Nevertheless, the parliamentary system in Ghana has contributed significantly to democratic stability since independence in 1957. It has facilitated the peaceful transfer of political power between parties and has helped institutionalize democratic norms. While challenges persist, the structure and function of Ghana's parliament continue to play a central role in upholding democratic governance and ensuring that the state remains responsive to the needs of its citizens.

2.3.5 Parliamentary Committees

Parliamentary committees are specialized groups composed of Members of Parliament (MPs) tasked with reviewing and scrutinizing specific policy areas or legislative proposals. These committees play a central role in democratic governance by providing a mechanism for the detailed examination of policy and legislation, allowing for more substantive deliberation than is often possible during general plenary sessions (Siefken & Rommetvedt, 2021). Committees are typically organised by subject matter, such as health, education, finance, or foreign affairs, and are designed to harness the expertise and interests of MPs in shaping legislative outcomes.

The primary function of parliamentary committees is to review policy proposals, conduct hearings, examine evidence from stakeholders, and formulate recommendations to the full parliament (Gerring et al., 2009). Through this process, committees help refine legislation, propose

amendments, and evaluate alternative policy options. Their findings and recommendations often carry significant weight and may influence the final content of legislation (Ilie, 2015). Committees also provide an institutional space for MPs and stakeholders, including civil society and industry groups, to express their views and participate in governance processes (Goel & Nelson, 2020).

From a feminist theoretical perspective, the committee system has the potential to either reinforce or challenge existing gender asymmetries. If committee membership is disproportionately male and dominated by established elites, the priorities of women and other marginalised groups may be underrepresented in policy outcomes. Feminist theory draws attention to the embedded patriarchal structures that often govern committee appointments, limiting women's influence in areas such as finance, defense, or constitutional affairs, where key decisions are made (Pucherová, 2022). This exclusion weakens the gender responsiveness of parliamentary oversight and perpetuates a policy environment that does not fully reflect the lived experiences of women.

Intersectionality theory deepens this critique by showing that exclusion from parliamentary committees does not impact all women equally. Women from minority ethnic groups, low-income backgrounds, or rural constituencies may face additional layers of discrimination in accessing committee roles. These barriers may include limited access to political networks, inadequate financial resources, and cultural biases within political parties. Intersectionality thus calls for a more nuanced understanding of representation that moves beyond gender to consider the multiple, overlapping identities that influence political access and participation (Lombardo et al., 2012). For parliamentary committees to be genuinely inclusive, their composition must reflect this diversity and ensure that intersectional identities are not relegated to the margins.

Political settlement theory offers further insight into how informal power dynamics influence committee formation and functioning. According to this perspective, committee appointments are often determined by elite bargains rather than merit or representational fairness. In Ghana, for example, the selection of committee members is negotiated by majority and minority leaders in consultation with party leadership, and final nominations are approved by the Committee on Selection chaired by the Speaker of Parliament. This process reinforces elite control over committee structures and limits broader participation, especially for those outside dominant political networks. Political settlement theory emphasises the need to unpack these informal power arrangements to understand how exclusionary practices persist, even within formally democratic institutions (Khan, 2010; Hickey et al., 2018).

Over time, the role of parliamentary committees has expanded globally. In both newly democratized and long-established parliaments, committees have become vital centers for legislative activity, policy oversight, and political negotiation. Scholars such as Mattson and Strøm (1995) observed that the “committee stage” has become a fundamental part of parliamentary procedures worldwide, reflecting a shift toward more decentralized and participatory forms of governance. Committees now act as the primary organizing units for legislative work and have assumed growing responsibilities in monitoring the executive branch.

Interestingly, both parliamentary systems and separation-of-powers systems have witnessed a strengthening of committee roles, despite differences in institutional design (Riera & Cantú, 2018). This development underscores a broader trend toward institutional innovation aimed at enhancing legislative influence and accountability. Assertive parliamentary committees challenge the traditional concentration of authority in the executive, suggesting a move toward more balanced

governance structures. However, unless deliberate efforts are made to integrate gender and intersectional perspectives into committee processes, these gains may bypass marginalised groups. Historically, committees did not always occupy a central place in parliamentary life. For instance, in the British Parliament, formal select committees did not become institutionalized until 1979, and their roles were initially limited (Mattson & Strøm, 1995). The global spread of committee structures in the past few decades marks a significant transformation in how legislatures function. Today, parliamentary committees are no longer peripheral but are instead indispensable to effective lawmaking and democratic accountability.

In summary, parliamentary committees are essential mechanisms for legislative scrutiny and inclusive governance. However, their potential is undermined when power dynamics, gender asymmetries, and elite bargains distort representation. Integrating the insights from feminist, intersectionality, and political settlement theories allows for a more critical understanding of how these structures can be reformed to promote genuine inclusivity, equity, and democratic accountability. An empirical analysis of the impacts of gender asymmetry on Ghana's parliamentary committee system is done later in this study.

2.3.5.1 Types of Parliamentary Committees and Their Functions

Parliamentary committees in Ghana play an essential role in the effective functioning of democratic governance. These committees are established to perform specific duties, such as reviewing legislative proposals, scrutinizing government actions, and providing oversight across various policy domains. The literature identifies several key types of parliamentary committees, each with distinct responsibilities and structures (Stapenhurst & Alandu, 2009; Darfour, 2021; Siefken & Rommetvedt, 2021).

One significant category of parliamentary committees is the Standing Committee. These are permanent committees created by parliament to monitor and engage with designated areas of government activity. Comprising members from both the ruling party and the opposition, standing committees are mandated to examine legislation and assess policy implementation in their respective sectors. Their reports and recommendations often shape the final form of laws enacted by the legislature. Examples include the Public Accounts Committee, which oversees public expenditure and audits, the Justice Committee, which examines legal reform and judicial affairs, and the Education Committee, which monitors developments in the education sector.

Select Committees constitute another major type. Unlike standing committees, they are temporary and are typically formed to address a specific issue or bill that requires comprehensive investigation. They are often composed of members with subject expertise drawn from related standing committees, and their existence is limited to the duration of the inquiry. Once the task is completed, these committees are dissolved. Their creation, usually authorized by the Speaker of Parliament, allows for focused deliberation on pressing or complex policy matters.

Joint Committees are formed through collaboration between two legislative chambers, typically the lower and upper houses, where bicameralism exists. They are convened to deliberate on national concerns that cut across both chambers, such as security, economic policy, or constitutional issues. Their cross-house composition ensures that decisions and recommendations reflect broader consensus and coordination across the legislature.

Ad hoc Committees are formed in response to urgent or emerging issues that demand immediate legislative attention. These committees are temporary in nature and are either established by the Speaker of the House or initiated by executive recommendation. Initially used to draft legislation

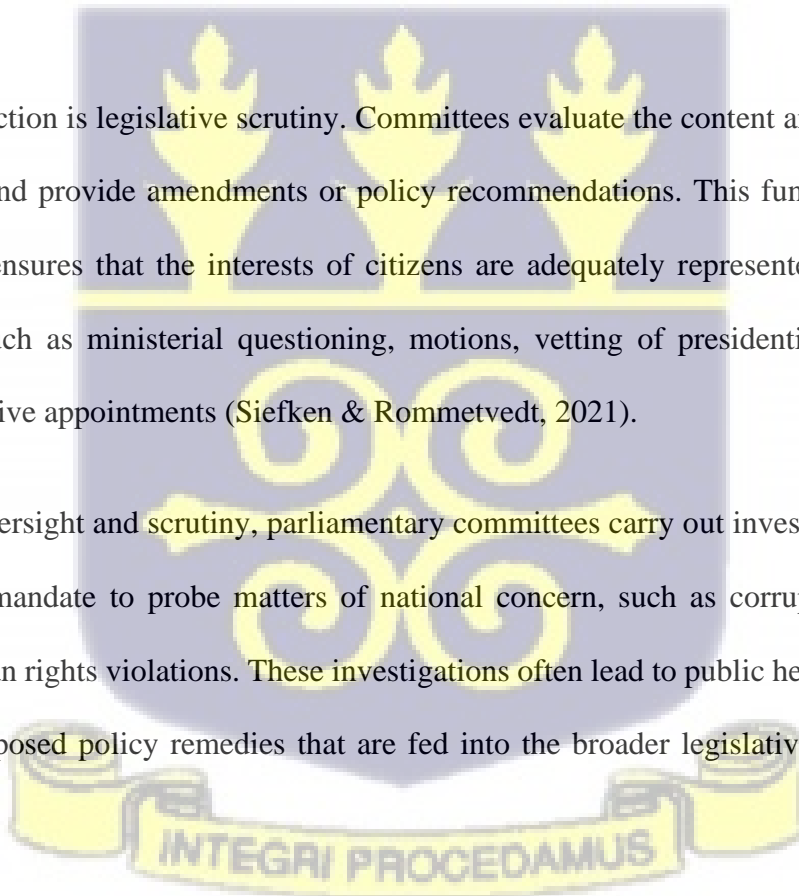
already discussed on the floor of parliament, ad hoc committees have evolved to serve as agile structures for addressing critical and time-sensitive matters before permanent committees are assigned or restructured (Siefken & Rommetvedt, 2021).

The functions of these committees, while varying based on their structure, often converge around several core responsibilities. A central function is oversight. Parliamentary committees are instrumental in holding the executive accountable, ensuring that public policy aligns with constitutional and legal mandates. Through this function, they monitor how ministries and public agencies implement policies and whether public resources are being used efficiently and lawfully (Darfour, 2021).

Another key function is legislative scrutiny. Committees evaluate the content and implications of proposed laws and provide amendments or policy recommendations. This function helps refine legislation and ensures that the interests of citizens are adequately represented. It is exercised through tools such as ministerial questioning, motions, vetting of presidential nominees, and review of executive appointments (Siefken & Rommetvedt, 2021).

In addition to oversight and scrutiny, parliamentary committees carry out investigative functions. They have the mandate to probe matters of national concern, such as corruption, governance failures, or human rights violations. These investigations often lead to public hearings, committee reports, and proposed policy remedies that are fed into the broader legislative process (Boafo-Arthur, 2005).

Committees also serve consultative functions by engaging stakeholders, civil society actors, policy experts, and affected groups. These consultations enrich the legislative process by bringing in



diverse perspectives and empirical evidence. As a result, committee recommendations are often better informed and more inclusive, reflecting the realities and priorities of various constituencies. Overall, parliamentary committees are indispensable structures within democratic legislatures. Their specialization enables detailed examination of policy, while their diverse functions enhance government accountability and legislative responsiveness. Through oversight, scrutiny, investigation, and consultation, committees serve as foundational instruments for effective lawmaking and democratic consolidation.

2.3.5.2 Benefits of Parliamentary Committees

The parliamentary committee system offers several significant benefits that enhance effective governance, inclusive representation, and democratic accountability. These advantages become even more meaningful when examined through the theoretical lenses of feminist theory, intersectionality theory, and political settlement theory.

One major benefit is the ability to draw from the expertise of Members of Parliament and other stakeholders (Siefken & Rommetvedt, 2021). Committees serve as forums where subject-matter experts, civil society actors, and citizens can provide input on legislation. This inclusion of external expertise fosters a more informed and nuanced decision-making process. From the perspective of feminist theory, this participatory approach challenges patriarchal knowledge monopolies by opening space for women experts and marginalised voices to shape policy debates. Intersectionality theory further underscores the importance of drawing diverse inputs to reflect the multiple identities and experiences of affected populations, particularly those often excluded from formal political processes. Political settlement theory reinforces that the quality of policy outcomes

depends not only on elite bargains but on the ability to broaden consultation and include actors beyond dominant coalitions.

Another key benefit is transparency (Darfour, 2021). Parliamentary committees enhance public oversight by holding open hearings, publishing reports, and allowing citizens to observe deliberations. This promotes greater visibility into legislative processes and builds public trust in institutions. Feminist theory supports transparency as a strategy for deconstructing hierarchical power dynamics and ensuring that legislative processes are not opaque or dominated by male elites. Intersectionality theory emphasises that transparency is vital for exposing the compounded barriers faced by marginalised groups, whose concerns may otherwise be hidden in the dominant policy narrative. Political settlement theorists may see transparency as a mechanism to rebalance informal power arrangements by legitimizing citizen scrutiny and reducing elite capture.

Representation is another core benefit of parliamentary committees. These forums offer MPs from diverse political parties and regions the opportunity to engage meaningfully in legislative deliberations. This inclusive setup fosters collaboration across political divides and ensures that decision-making reflects varied geographic and political interests. Feminist theory highlights that parliamentary committees can advance gender representation by creating space for women parliamentarians to participate in key policy domains. Intersectionality theory further stresses that effective representation must go beyond gender to include social class, ethnicity, religion, and other identity markers that shape individuals' political experiences. Political settlement theory is open to the idea that inclusive representation in committees can lead to more stable and legitimate institutional outcomes, particularly when participation extends beyond the dominant elites to previously excluded or underrepresented groups.

Efficiency is another benefit realized through the committee system. By assigning detailed policy analysis to specialized groups, committees reduce the workload of the full parliament and allow for deeper scrutiny of legislative proposals (Darfour, 2021). This division of labour contributes to faster decision-making and better-quality legislation. From a feminist theoretical standpoint, institutional efficiency must also be judged by the extent to which it accommodates gender-responsive decision-making. Intersectionality reminds us that efficiency should not merely be measured by speed but also by how equitably it integrates the needs of diverse constituencies. Political settlement theory suggests that institutional efficiency improves when informal power dynamics are disciplined through structured mechanisms like committees, which impose procedural rules on elite negotiations.

The oversight function is another vital contribution of parliamentary committees. These bodies are tasked with monitoring the implementation of policies, ensuring that government actions align with legislative intent, and addressing emerging issues promptly. Feminist theory views oversight as crucial to holding patriarchal systems accountable, particularly in sectors such as reproductive health, education, and employment, where policy neglect disproportionately affects women. Intersectionality theory emphasises the role of oversight in identifying how policy implementation may produce unequal outcomes across identity groups. Political settlement theory points to oversight as a way to enforce elite bargains by institutionalizing compliance mechanisms that check discretionary or arbitrary governance.

In sum, the parliamentary committee system plays a pivotal role in strengthening democratic institutions. It enables informed debate, ensures transparency, facilitates inclusive representation, improves efficiency, and strengthens oversight. Through the lens of the three theories, it becomes

clear that committee structures not only improve technical quality but also support the broader goals of social justice, power rebalancing, and institutional legitimacy. By promoting collaboration and fostering deliberative engagement among diverse political actors and stakeholders, parliamentary committees contribute to a more equitable and responsive political order.

2.3.6 Structure and Composition of Parliamentary Committees

The structure and composition of parliamentary committees are fundamental to their effectiveness in fulfilling legislative and oversight responsibilities. While variations exist across different parliamentary systems, certain structural elements are common to most committee systems. Generally, parliamentary committees are composed of Members of Parliament (MPs) who are appointed to scrutinize specific areas of public policy or proposed legislation (Mickler, 2017). Committees are typically organised based on thematic areas such as finance, education, health, or foreign affairs, allowing for targeted engagement with specialized policy domains. Each committee is usually headed by a chairperson, who is responsible for directing discussions, coordinating activities, and ensuring that the committee's work is conducted efficiently. Vice-chairpersons and secretaries often support the leadership role by facilitating communication, managing schedules, and preparing documentation.

A key feature of committee composition is political proportionality, which ensures that political parties are represented in committees in a manner that reflects their numerical strength in parliament (Stapenhurst & Pelizzo, 2012). This arrangement promotes democratic legitimacy and political inclusivity. However, it also implies that dominant political parties may exert greater influence over committee outcomes, while smaller parties may struggle to assert their views. The distribution of power within committees therefore reflects broader political settlements and elite

bargains, as suggested by political settlement theory. The theory draws attention to how such arrangements reproduce existing hierarchies and reinforce or mitigate exclusionary practices in parliamentary operations.

Beyond partisan distribution, committee composition is often shaped by the subject matter under review. Some committees may include MPs with prior expertise in specific policy areas, or invite non-parliamentary actors such as civil society representatives, academics, or professionals to provide testimony or technical support. Such inclusion enhances deliberative quality and can improve the technical robustness of recommendations. Feminist theory and intersectionality theory highlight the importance of ensuring that this inclusion reflects a broad spectrum of identities and experiences, not only professional or technocratic expertise. Where women and marginalised groups are underrepresented, either as MPs or expert contributors, the committee process risks perpetuating gender and structural biases in both legislative content and oversight practices.

Diversity in committee composition is another critical consideration. An inclusive committee structure reflects the demographic realities of society and enriches parliamentary deliberation. Gender is an important factor that should inform the appointment of members to parliamentary committees. Feminist theory argues that increasing the presence and influence of women in such political spaces challenges entrenched patriarchal norms and fosters gender-sensitive policy outcomes. Similarly, intersectionality theory underscores the need to consider how overlapping social identities impact who is able to access and influence committee work. Ensuring that committee composition reflects a mosaic of identities helps prevent the reproduction of power imbalances that exclude women from the policy process.

There are also variations in how committee membership is determined (Darfour, 2021). In some parliamentary systems, individual MPs select their committee assignments based on interest or expertise, while in others, political parties allocate seats according to internal negotiations and broader legislative strategies. Political settlement theory reveals how elite negotiations and informal rules shape which MPs gain access to influential committees and how internal balances of power are maintained within the legislature.

The structure, composition, and functions of parliamentary committees are often defined by statutory instruments or constitutional mandates. These frameworks guide how committees are organised, how responsibilities are delegated, and how oversight is conducted. According to Martorano (2006), while committee composition has received considerable research attention, the formal structural features of committees, such as their rules of procedure and reporting obligations, have been relatively less studied. Yet these structural dimensions are vital for ensuring accountability and transparency in committee work.

Overall, the structure and composition of parliamentary committees are central to their effectiveness in delivering informed legislative scrutiny and meaningful oversight. When these committees are diverse, inclusive, and supported by clear institutional rules, they can function as powerful mechanisms for democratic engagement. Strengthening the inclusiveness and balance of power within parliamentary committees can help to dismantle existing inequalities, ensure broader representation, and promote more equitable and responsive governance.

2.3.7 Distribution of Positions in Parliamentary Committees

The distribution of positions in parliamentary committees refers to how committee memberships and leadership roles, such as chairperson and vice-chairperson, are allocated among political

parties and individual Members of Parliament (MPs) (Treib & Schlipphak, 2019). This process plays a critical role in shaping the balance of power within the legislature and influences whose interests and perspectives are prioritised in policy deliberation. In most parliamentary systems, the allocation of committee seats is broadly proportional to the representation of political parties in parliament. As a result, larger parties often secure more committee memberships and hold a greater share of leadership positions, including chairs of influential committees (Kim & Loewenberg, 2005). This arrangement is typically governed by internal parliamentary rules or negotiated agreements among party leaders.

Committees are frequently organised by policy domain, including areas such as health, education, finance, and foreign affairs. The specific allocation of members to these committees reflects not only political weight but also strategic interests, policy priorities, and the informal power dynamics between ruling and opposition parties. From the perspective of political settlement theory, the distribution of committee roles is a reflection of elite bargains and negotiated settlements among political actors. These arrangements sustain institutional stability and often mirror the broader distribution of power in the political system. However, they may also reproduce exclusionary structures when informal norms and elite preferences consistently favour dominant groups at the expense of minority voices.

According to Treib and Schlipphak (2019), equitable distribution of committee positions is essential to maintaining a parliamentary system that is effective, representative, and accountable. A fair distribution ensures that a wide array of perspectives is brought into the legislative process, thereby enhancing deliberative legitimacy and responsiveness. However, political representation alone is not sufficient. An inclusive committee system must also consider other axes of diversity

such as gender, ethnicity, religion, region, and socioeconomic background. Attention to these factors ensures that committees are not only politically representative but also socially reflective of the broader population.

From a feminist theoretical perspective, the underrepresentation of women in committee leadership and membership undermines gender equality and restricts the scope of policy discourse. Despite formal equality provisions, informal practices and patriarchal norms often limit women's access to powerful committees or marginalise them in roles perceived as less influential. Addressing this imbalance requires deliberate institutional reforms that promote gender-sensitive allocation practices, such as gender quotas or rotational leadership roles, to ensure women have meaningful influence within committee structures.

Intersectionality theory further draws attention to the compounding disadvantages faced by individuals who occupy multiple marginalised identities. For example, a woman from a minority ethnic or religious background may face greater obstacles to securing leadership roles than her male or majority counterparts. Such intersecting barriers are often invisible within systems that rely solely on party representation or formal equality criteria. Applying an intersectional lens to the distribution of committee positions underscores the importance of addressing both visible and hidden inequities that affect access to decision-making spaces.

The distribution of committee positions is not merely a procedural matter but a reflection of deeper structural dynamics within parliamentary governance. By ensuring that the allocation of roles is not only politically proportional but also inclusive across gender, ethnic, and social lines, parliamentary committees can become more responsive, representative, and equitable. This

inclusive approach, supported by the theoretical insights of feminist, intersectional, and political settlement frameworks, is essential for strengthening the legitimacy and effectiveness of democratic governance.

2.3.8 Parliamentary Committees' Decision-making

The decision-making process in parliamentary committees is a structured and multi-phase procedure that ensures policy deliberation is informed, participatory, and accountable. It typically begins with the formation of the committee and the selection of its members, which is often influenced by party representation and subject-matter relevance (Treib & Schlipphak, 2019; Rabie, 2019). Once constituted, the committee identifies the specific issue or topic to be addressed. This is followed by the gathering of relevant evidence, including expert testimonies, public consultations, commissioned research, and stakeholder submissions. These inputs are critically evaluated through discussions and analyses aimed at developing actionable recommendations or policy proposals.

Committee deliberations are marked by negotiation and debate among members, where competing interests and perspectives are reconciled to achieve either consensus or majority decisions. These findings are then submitted to the wider parliamentary body for debate, amendment, and possible adoption. Although the procedural aspects may vary across different countries and legislative systems, the overarching aim remains the same: to ensure decisions are based on reliable evidence, reflect diverse viewpoints, and promote public accountability (Rabie, 2019).

From the perspective of political settlement theory, this process is deeply shaped by both formal institutional procedures and informal elite bargains. The manner in which committee members are selected, the issues prioritised, and the recommendations accepted often reflect the underlying

distribution of power within the legislature. Elite actors may use committee platforms to reinforce their influence or maintain negotiated balances, which can result in the marginalization of less powerful actors, particularly women or minority groups. Thus, even as committees are designed to promote deliberation and accountability, they may also reproduce asymmetrical power dynamics unless inclusive principles are deliberately institutionalized.

Committees in recent times have been central in addressing several critical and evolving policy issues. One major area is climate change (Willis, 2018). In this context, committees are required to assess complex environmental challenges, review mitigation strategies, and examine the socio-economic implications of policy interventions. Given the scale and urgency of environmental threats, parliamentary committees serve as crucial sites where political commitment, scientific expertise, and citizen engagement intersect to shape national climate policies.

Immigration and refugee governance is another pressing area of committee focus (Weber, 2016). Committees engage with questions of humanitarian obligations, national identity, resource allocation, and global inequality. From an intersectional perspective, it is vital that these discussions consider how immigration policies differentially affect individuals based on race, gender, class, and nationality. For example, refugee women often experience layered vulnerabilities due to their intersecting social identities, which may be inadequately addressed if committee deliberations fail to adopt an inclusive framework.

Technological innovation has also emerged as a dominant subject in committee work, as advances in automation and digital systems reshape labour markets, education, privacy, and security (Ganzevles et al., 2014). Committees must balance innovation with social equity by assessing who

benefits from technological progress and who may be displaced or excluded. Here again, feminist theory urges committees to examine how technologies are gendered, whether in terms of access, design, or impact, ensuring that digital policies do not reinforce existing inequalities but rather create opportunities for all groups, especially women and marginalised communities.

Healthcare remains a persistently significant area of parliamentary deliberation (van Baar et al., 2023). Committees are often tasked with evaluating access to healthcare, pricing structures, drug regulation, and health infrastructure. Applying an intersectional lens to healthcare policy ensures that committee recommendations reflect the lived experiences of diverse social groups, such as women, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations. Without such an approach, health reforms risk being skewed toward the needs of dominant groups.

The decision-making processes of parliamentary committees are not only procedural but also deeply political. This study highlights how committee deliberations can either reinforce or challenge existing power structures. Committees have the potential to create inclusive and responsive policy frameworks, but only when they are attentive to who participates, whose voices are prioritised, and how gender inequalities are addressed in the course of parliamentary work.

2.4 Empirical Literature

2.4.1 Gender Asymmetry in the Deal Space of Ghana's Parliament

Gender asymmetry refers to the unequal representation and participation of men and women in political institutions and decision-making spaces (Childs & Palmieri, 2023). In Ghana's Parliament, this imbalance is evident in what scholars refer to as the “deal space”, the informal and formal processes through which political negotiations, influence, and resource allocations are

determined (Ahrens, 2016). Despite constitutional provisions and efforts aimed at promoting gender inclusion, women remain significantly underrepresented in both parliamentary seats and the inner workings of legislative influence.

Empirical studies show that women are often excluded from informal networks and behind-the-scenes negotiations that shape parliamentary agendas and committee leadership (Ahrens, 2016; Worthy, 2017). This exclusion undermines their ability to influence policy outcomes and to participate in high-stakes bargaining that determines the distribution of political resources. Moreover, gender-based stereotyping and discriminatory norms persist within the political culture of parliament, making it more difficult for female MPs to assert authority or access leadership roles (Ahrens, 2016).

The limited presence of women in these influential spaces has broader policy implications. Research indicates that the absence of women's voices in decision-making often results in policy outcomes that fail to adequately address gender-specific concerns or reflect the lived experiences of diverse populations (Sarfo-Kantankah, 2021). In contrast, where women are meaningfully involved in legislative processes, the policy agenda tends to be more inclusive and responsive to social issues such as education, healthcare, and family welfare (Childs & Palmieri, 2023).

In Ghana, the issue of gender imbalance is particularly pronounced. As of 2023, women held only 13 percent of parliamentary seats (Sarfo-Kantankah, 2021). This low level of representation limits women's influence not only in formal debates but also in the allocation of committee roles and leadership positions, which are critical to shaping parliamentary outcomes. Empirical findings suggest that this imbalance perpetuates a cycle of underrepresentation, where male-dominated networks continue to shape the structure and direction of parliamentary business (Worthy, 2017).

To address this challenge, scholars and advocates have proposed a range of institutional reforms. These include the adoption of gender quotas, capacity-building programmes for female politicians, and targeted efforts to increase women's visibility and influence within parliamentary committees (Sarfo-Kantankah, 2021). Some studies also emphasise the importance of creating enabling environments that support women's full participation in parliamentary life beyond simply increasing numerical representation.

The literature shows that gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliamentary deal space is a persistent challenge that affects the inclusiveness and responsiveness of legislative processes. While efforts have been made to improve women's access to parliament, their participation in core decision-making remains limited. Bridging this gap requires both institutional reforms and shifts in political practice to ensure that female MPs can participate equally in shaping national policy and development priorities.

2.4.2 Gender Asymmetry and Composition of Parliamentary Committees

Gender asymmetry within parliamentary committees is often a reflection of broader disparities in parliamentary representation. When women are underrepresented in national legislatures, this imbalance tends to extend to parliamentary committees, limiting the diversity of viewpoints within these key decision-making bodies (Ahrens, 2016). The lack of gender balance in committee membership may reduce the committees' effectiveness in addressing a wide range of public policy concerns, particularly those that disproportionately affect women.

Research has shown that the composition of parliamentary committees can reinforce existing gender disparities. When male-dominated committees are tasked with overseeing sectors such as healthcare, education, or social welfare, areas that significantly impact women, there is a risk that

gendered concerns may not receive adequate attention (**Childs & Palmieri, 2023**). The absence of gender-inclusive representation may lead to the development of policies that fail to reflect the lived experiences and priorities of women.

Efforts to address these disparities have included calls for affirmative action measures, such as gender quotas in committee appointments, and educational initiatives aimed at promoting gender sensitivity among legislators (Childs & Palmieri, 2023). Increasing the representation of women in parliament and on parliamentary committees has been associated with more balanced discussions, improved responsiveness to underrepresented voices, and broader consideration of policy issues. Studies emphasise that inclusive committees are more likely to prioritise public concerns such as healthcare, education, and family welfare, sectors where gendered experiences differ (Darfour, 2021). In the case of Ghana, the gender asymmetry evident in parliamentary committees reflects the broader underrepresentation of women in parliament. As of 2021, women held only 13 percent of parliamentary seats (Sarfo-Kantankah, 2021). Given that committee appointments are drawn from sitting members, this imbalance is typically replicated in the composition of parliamentary committees. The consequence is a limited platform for female MPs to influence legislative priorities or shape deliberations on key national issues.

Several proposals have been made to reverse this trend. These include the adoption of quota systems that ensure a minimum level of women's participation in committees and broader efforts to encourage women to contest elections and pursue leadership roles within parliament (Darfour, 2021). While these measures aim to correct numerical imbalances, they also seek to enhance the substantive participation of women in the political process.

Empirical evidence suggests that gender-balanced committees are more likely to integrate gender-sensitive perspectives into legislative outcomes. Häusermann (2018), analyzing data from the European Parliament, found that committees with at least one-third female membership were significantly more likely to adopt policies advancing gender equality. Similarly, Grace (2016), in her study of Canada's Standing Committee on the Status of Women, found that female-led and gender-conscious committees contributed significantly to parliamentary discourse on gender issues, even though their influence on institutional change was constrained.

Volden et al. (2018) provide further empirical support, showing that female legislators in the U.S. House of Representatives disproportionately sponsor bills related to women's health, childcare, and education. However, their findings also suggest that these bills face lower rates of legislative success, especially when the sponsoring legislator is a woman. They link this outcome in part to biases within the committee system, which may deprioritise issues framed as women's concerns. Overall, the literature indicates that improving gender representation within parliamentary committees enhances the inclusiveness and relevance of legislative debates and decisions. Addressing gender asymmetry in committee composition is not only a matter of fair representation but also a means to ensure that the policymaking process adequately reflects the needs of diverse constituencies. In Ghana, sustained attention to institutional design, political recruitment, and gender equity measures is needed to correct imbalances and enhance the quality of parliamentary deliberation and outcomes.

2.4.2.1 Gender Asymmetry and Parliamentary Committees in Africa

A growing body of empirical literature across Africa underscores the importance of gender diversity within parliamentary committees and its influence on policy outcomes. Studies in Ghana,

Uganda, South Africa, and broader sub-Saharan Africa consistently demonstrate that greater gender balance in parliamentary committees is positively associated with the adoption of gender-sensitive legislation and inclusive policymaking (Adams et al., 2016; Wang, 2013; Bauer, 2012; Mojapelo & Faku, 2020). These findings suggest that committee composition plays a pivotal role in setting legislative priorities and ensuring that marginalised perspectives, especially those of women, are integrated into the policy agenda. As committees often function as the ‘engine room’ of parliaments, shaping and reviewing legislative proposals before they reach the plenary, a gender-imbalanced composition risks perpetuating systemic blind spots in addressing the needs of half the population.

The image shows a large, semi-transparent watermark of the University of Ghana crest in the background. The crest features three golden trees at the top, a central shield with a golden scrollwork design, and a golden banner at the bottom with the motto 'INTEGRITY PROCEEDS FAITH'.

In South Africa, Mojapelo and Faku (2020) documented how affirmative action policies and constitutional protections supported increased women’s participation in legislative committees. These institutional reforms helped catalyze progress toward Millennium Development Goal 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment. The South African case suggests that intentional state interventions, such as party quotas and constitutional mandates, can create enabling environments for women’s political inclusion. Rwanda’s experience, with over 63% female parliamentary representation, further exemplifies the transformative potential of political will. In both countries, institutional mechanisms reinforced by strong political leadership played a central role in advancing gender equity, particularly within legislative structures.

Similar findings emerge from Uganda, where Wang (2013, 2014) noted that women in parliament, particularly through the women’s caucus, leveraged limited political space to push for progressive policies on gender-based violence, political representation, and property rights. These legislative

gains were not achieved in isolation; rather, they were the result of strategic coalition-building with sympathetic male legislators, advocacy networks, and development partners. This highlights the importance of alliances and institutional navigation in overcoming structural barriers to influence. The Ugandan case illustrates how women can exercise agency even in constrained political environments, yet it also underscores the fragility of such gains when not institutionally safeguarded.

In Ghana, Adams et al. (2016) identify three main drivers of women's participation in parliamentary committees: a conducive institutional environment, global norms promoting gender-balanced governance, and the strength of domestic women's movements. These drivers interact in complex ways to shape the extent and effectiveness of women's engagement. Committees with a higher representation of women were more likely to engage with gender-related policy concerns, including education, healthcare, and social protection, areas that disproportionately affect women and children. However, the representation of women in key committees remains limited, reflecting deeper issues of patriarchal dominance and gatekeeping in political institutions. Ambasa et al. (2022) show that even when women are present, they are often assigned to committees deemed 'soft' or peripheral, rather than those controlling fiscal and strategic policy levers.

Although women's presence in Ghana's parliament increased modestly to 14.5% in 2021 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021), their influence within parliamentary committees remains limited. Bawa and Sanyare (2013) argue that despite global discourses on women's empowerment, entrenched socio-cultural norms continue to impede substantive female participation in decision-making. This is particularly evident in male-dominated spaces where norms around leadership and authority remain heavily gendered. Bauer (2019) adds that structural constraints, such as rigid

party hierarchies and executive dominance, often neutralize women MPs' ability to champion gender-focused legislation. The limited presence of women in committee leadership positions restricts their access to agenda-setting powers and diminishes their voice in key policy decisions.

Across West Africa, the evidence points to systemic underrepresentation of women on parliamentary committees. A 2016 study by the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) highlighted the limited presence of women in strategic committees in Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal, noting persistent exclusion from finance and public accounts committees (Ambasa et al., 2022). This underrepresentation is not merely numeric but reflects a broader pattern of exclusion from power and influence within legislative structures. Fokum et al. (2020) argue that numeric representation alone is insufficient for transformative change; institutional barriers such as opaque nomination processes and patriarchal norms must also be addressed. Without such reforms, the inclusion of women risks becoming tokenistic rather than meaningful.

Overall, the empirical literature illustrates that gender asymmetry in parliamentary committees is both a reflection and a reinforcement of broader societal inequities. While the presence of women can contribute to more inclusive and equitable policy outcomes, their influence is mediated by institutional contexts, party systems, and the broader political economy. Thus, increasing women's numerical representation is a necessary but insufficient condition for transformative governance. The evidence across Africa, and especially in Ghana, underscores the need for deeper reforms and political commitment to dismantle gendered hierarchies and foster substantive representation.

2.4.3 Gender Asymmetry and Distribution of Positions in Parliamentary Committees

Gender asymmetry remains a persistent challenge across political systems and is frequently reflected in the distribution of power within parliamentary committees. These committees play a

central role in legislative processes by shaping agendas, scrutinizing executive actions, and overseeing the implementation of policies (Siefken & Rommetvedt, 2021). When men dominate parliamentary committees, it often signals broader structural inequalities in political representation and decision-making (Darfour, 2021). This underrepresentation of women restricts their participation in critical legislative functions and limits the diversity of voices influencing national priorities.

The distribution of positions within committees such as chairpersonships, vice-chair roles, and strategic memberships, often reflects existing gender disparities. These imbalances can have significant consequences, as the absence of women from influential positions may reduce the responsiveness of parliamentary outputs to the needs of diverse social groups (Erikson & Verge, 2022). Women bring different experiences and perspectives that are essential for shaping inclusive and equitable public policies. Empirical research confirms that gender asymmetry in parliamentary committee leadership and membership can diminish the scope of issues addressed, limit the diversity of deliberative input, and marginalise gender-related concerns (Ahrens, 2016; Volden et al., 2018). Homogeneous, male-dominated committees may develop policies that inadvertently neglect the needs of women and other underrepresented groups. Moreover, such exclusion reinforces gender stereotypes and may signal that women's perspectives are undervalued within formal political processes.

To mitigate these challenges, several strategies have been proposed. These include the adoption of gender quotas to ensure equitable representation, affirmative action policies, and institutional support for women candidates (Mojapelo & Faku, 2020; Bawa & Sanyare, 2013). Additional interventions such as mentorship programs, political leadership training for women, and the

creation of support networks can empower women to compete for and occupy leadership roles within committees. Simultaneously, broader societal efforts to challenge gender norms and encourage male allies in promoting equity are critical.

In Ghana, the effects of gender asymmetry are evident in both the parliament and its committees. As of 2021, women constituted only 13 percent of parliamentary seats (Sarfo-Kantankah, 2021). This low level of representation affects the composition of parliamentary committees, which are primarily formed from sitting MPs. The result is a high likelihood that committees remain male-dominated, limiting the degree to which women's concerns influence legislative outcomes.

Empirical studies provide evidence that increasing gender diversity in committee leadership improves policy inclusivity. Ahrens (2016), in her analysis of the European Parliament, found that committees with at least one-third female representation were more likely to adopt gender-sensitive policies. Contrary to assumptions that voluntary membership in such committees reflects low institutional status, Ahrens observed that the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality strategically leveraged parliamentary procedures to enhance its influence and thematic inclusion.

Similarly, Bolzendahl (2014) analyzed data from Germany, Sweden, and the United States over a 40-year period and found that women were often assigned to committees dealing with social issues such as health, childcare, and education. While this reflected traditional gender-typing, her study also revealed that countries differ significantly in how they structure gender relations within committees, including variations in segregation patterns and the prestige accorded to specific roles.

These findings suggest that institutional design and cultural context shape the extent and impact of women's participation.

Overall, addressing gender asymmetry in the distribution of committee positions is essential for ensuring that legislative processes reflect the full spectrum of societal interests. Increasing women's representation not only enhances the legitimacy of parliamentary decisions but also contributes to more inclusive and effective public policies. In Ghana, strengthening mechanisms that ensure equitable distribution of committee roles, beyond simply increasing female numbers in parliament, will be critical to ensuring women have a substantive voice in national governance.

2.4.4 Gender Asymmetry and Parliamentary Committee Decision-making

Parliamentary committees play a critical role in shaping legislative outcomes in democratic systems. Composed of elected representatives from diverse political backgrounds, these committees are responsible for examining proposed policies and laws, making amendments, and issuing recommendations (Weller et al., 2010; Rabie, 2019). In recent years, growing attention has been paid to how gender asymmetry within these committees affects the quality and inclusiveness of their decision-making processes.

One key concern is that when women are underrepresented in parliamentary committees, their views and experiences may be inadequately reflected in legislative decisions. This underrepresentation can result in policy outcomes that overlook critical issues such as healthcare, education, reproductive health, and gender equality (Bauer, 2012). Rabie (2019) notes that the exclusion of women can negatively affect the depth and scope of parliamentary deliberations, especially on issues where gendered experiences are central.

Moreover, gender asymmetry can perpetuate a culture of unequal power within committees, where women's contributions are marginalised or undervalued. This imbalance not only limits the effectiveness of policy decisions but also reinforces structural barriers to women's full participation in governance (Erikson & Verge, 2022). Addressing gender imbalances within committees is therefore essential for ensuring democratic legitimacy and inclusive governance.

Research has further shown that male-dominated committees are often characterized by narrower perspectives, as women's experiences are either sidelined or trivialized (Erikson & Verge, 2022; Adams et al., 2016). In such environments, women may be less inclined to speak or contribute actively due to persistent stereotypes, reduced confidence, or fear of backlash (Mojapelo & Faku, 2020). This dynamic results in a decision-making process that lacks diversity and fails to capture the full spectrum of societal concerns.

Additionally, gender composition can shape the thematic priorities of parliamentary committees. For example, committees with a higher proportion of women are more likely to emphasise issues such as domestic violence, reproductive health, and social welfare, whereas male-dominated committees may focus on security and defense (Sarfo-Kantankah, 2021). Gender-balanced committees are thus better positioned to reflect a broader range of policy priorities, enhancing the responsiveness and fairness of legislative outputs.

While empirical studies on gender and committee decision-making in Africa remain limited, existing research highlights similar concerns. Appiah (2015) discussed legal strategies for correcting gender imbalances in Ghana, noting that entrenched patriarchal norms often limit women's influence in legal and institutional reforms. These challenges are particularly evident in

committee structures, where women are frequently excluded from influential bodies such as those dealing with finance and budgeting (Fokum et al., 2020).

Further evidence suggests that gender asymmetry negatively affects decision-making effectiveness by restricting women's input into high-level policy deliberations (Joshi & Timothy, 2019). For instance, women are often excluded from critical decision-making spaces, leading to the formulation of policies that do not adequately consider gendered implications. Joshi and Timothy (2019) also note that in some authoritarian contexts, gender quotas may initially serve symbolic purposes, but over time, they can facilitate greater integration of women into influential parliamentary roles, especially when accompanied by increasing professionalization and institutional support. Their longitudinal study of Vietnam's National Assembly demonstrates that gradual improvements in gender equity can lead to more substantive participation and influence over legislative outcomes.

Overall, gender asymmetry in parliamentary committee decision-making undermines the principles of inclusive governance. Promoting gender balance within these structures is not only a matter of fairness but also a prerequisite for effective and equitable policy development. Enhancing women's representation ensures that diverse perspectives are incorporated into the legislative process, thereby strengthening the democratic function of parliamentary committees.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The discussion of the literature in this chapter has established that parliamentary committees are not merely procedural mechanisms of legislative governance but contested deal spaces where power relations and institutional norms shape participation and influence. Gender asymmetry within these committees reflects broader structural inequalities in Ghana's political institutions

and is manifested in patterns of underrepresentation, unequal access to influential positions, and limited substantive engagement with issues affecting women. These asymmetries are not simply numerical but are embedded in the architecture of political power, including the distribution of resources, decision-making authority, and access to deal spaces.

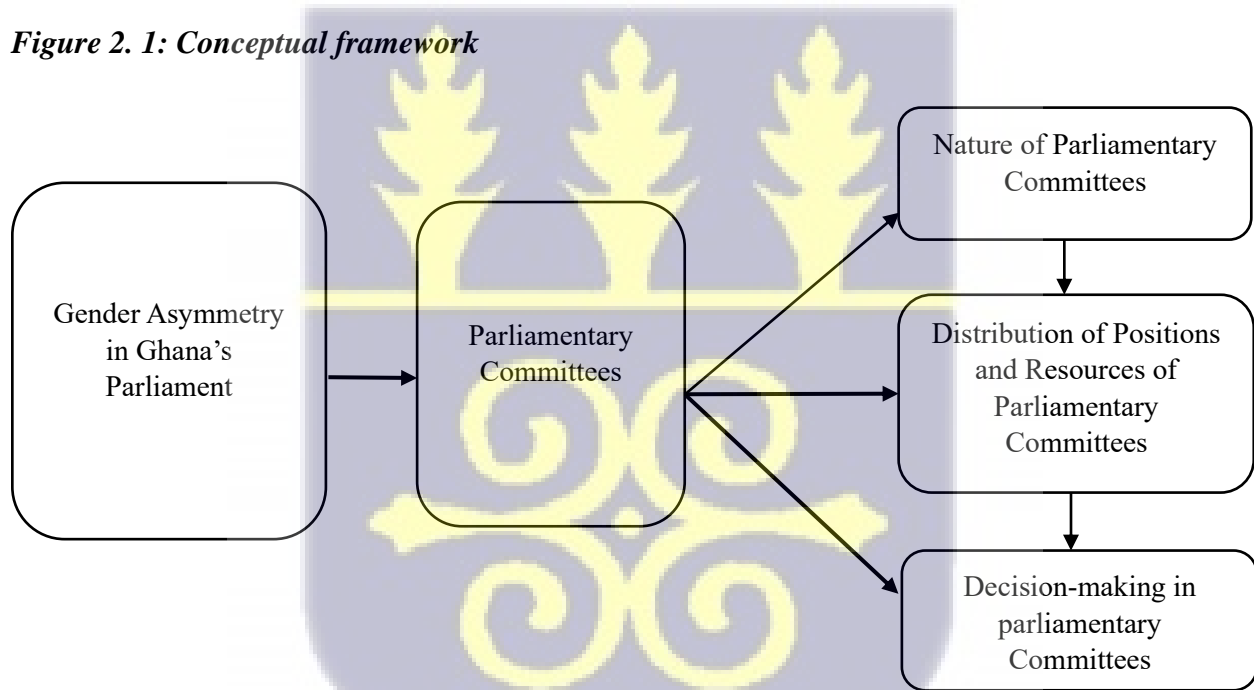
This conceptual framework draws on three complementary theoretical perspectives to explain how gender asymmetry is produced and sustained in Ghana's parliamentary committee system. First, feminist theory provides the foundational lens for understanding how patriarchal structures and male dominance in political institutions systematically exclude women from decision-making spaces. It underscores the need to challenge institutional norms that render women's participation invisible or peripheral in parliamentary governance.

Second, intersectionality theory deepens the analysis by highlighting how gender interacts with other social identities (such as party affiliation, seniority, regional background, or ethnicity) to mediate women's access to committee roles and authority. Rather than treating women as a homogenous group, the framework considers how overlapping forms of advantage or disadvantage shape differential access to political voice and influence among women MPs.

Third, political settlement theory situates parliamentary committees within the broader context of elite bargaining and informal institutional arrangements. It organises that access to key committee positions is often negotiated within male-dominated political networks, where decisions about committee leadership, agenda-setting, and influence are shaped by political patronage, strategic alliances, and the logic of elite accommodation. As such, gender asymmetry is both a reflection of and a constraint on the distribution of power within Ghana's evolving political settlement.

By integrating these three theoretical insights, the conceptual framework focuses on four interrelated constructs: the structure and composition of parliamentary committees, the extent and nature of gender asymmetry, the dynamics of decision-making and deliberation, and the distribution of leadership positions and strategic portfolios. These constructs are used to examine how institutional rules and informal practices interact to constrain or enable women’s influence within parliamentary processes. In this way, the framework provides a multi-layered lens for analyzing how gender inequality is institutionalized and how it might be disrupted to promote more inclusive governance. The conceptual framework that emerges is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. 1: Conceptual framework



Source: Author’s construct (2024)

Building on the conceptual foundation outlined above, the framework posits a multi-layered relationship between gender asymmetry and the structural and operational dimensions of Ghana’s parliamentary committee system. As established in the literature review, gender asymmetry reflects more than a numerical imbalance. It is embedded in institutional norms, hierarchical power

relations, and representational dynamics that limit women's voice and influence in legislative processes (Tamale, 1999; Bauer & Burnet, 2013). The framework identifies three primary constructs arising from gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament, namely (i) gender asymmetry, committee structure and composition, and decision-making and power distribution. The study explores how gender asymmetry interacts these variables within parliamentary committees.

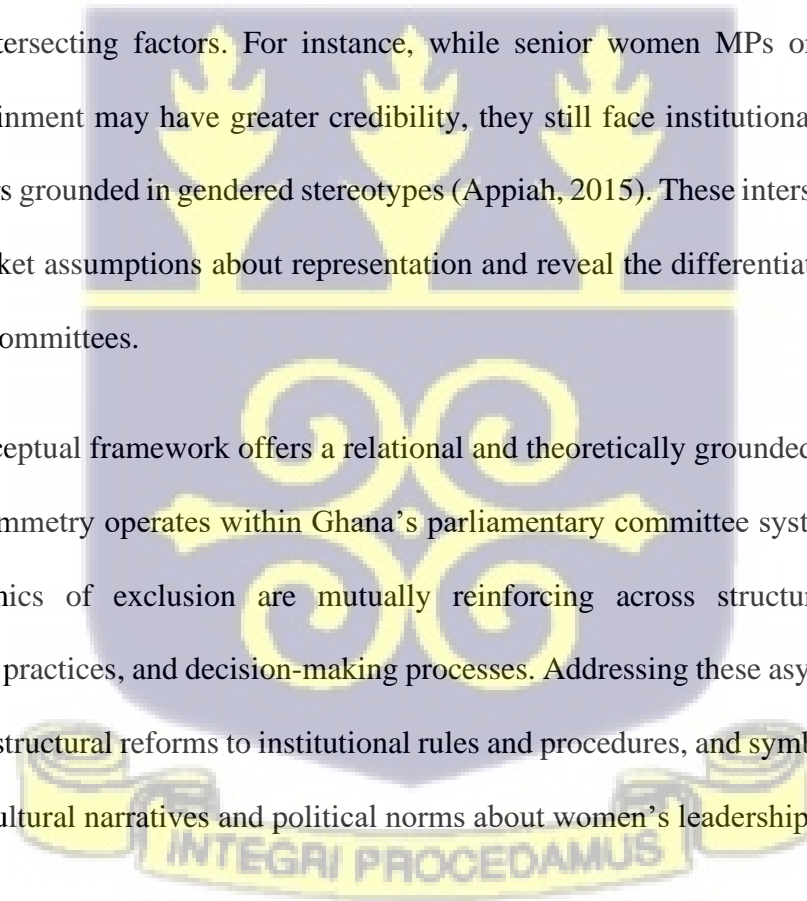
First, the framework proposes that gender asymmetry shapes the structure and composition of parliamentary committees. Feminist analyses have shown that women tend to be excluded from high-prestige or agenda-setting committees and are disproportionately assigned to social sectors traditionally viewed as extensions of domestic roles (Franceschet & Piscopo, 2008; Gyekye-Jandoh, 2014). Institutional mechanisms such as party nominations, seniority rules, and internal bargaining processes often reinforce these patterns. Drawing from political settlement theory, the formation of committees is often negotiated within elite male-dominated networks, making access to influential positions contingent upon political loyalty rather than gender equity. Thus, committee structure (e.g., leadership configurations, sectoral portfolios) and composition (e.g., gender ratios, party representation) serve as mediating variables through which gendered power relations are either entrenched or contested in legislative spaces.

Second, gender asymmetry directly influences power distribution and decision-making within committees. Presence alone does not guarantee voice. As Goetz (2003) and Krook and Mackay (2011) caution, formal inclusion of women often masks deeper exclusions from strategic influence. Even when women are appointed to committees, they may be marginalised in deliberative processes, bypassed for leadership roles, or confined to consultative rather than decision-making functions. Feminist theory helps explain how patriarchal norms, exclusionary procedures, and

informal practices systematically silence women's agency, while political settlement theory reveals how access to power is governed by elite bargains that seldom prioritise gender equity. Thus, gender asymmetry is not only about numerical underrepresentation but also about constrained participation in setting agendas, framing debates, and influencing outcomes.

The study organises the possible moderating role of demographic and professional variables (such as gender, seniority, educational background, party affiliation, and career experience) in shaping how MPs navigate committee spaces. The influence of these factors is analyzed. Intersectionality theory is particularly useful here, as it underscores how women's ability to exercise influence is mediated by intersecting factors. For instance, while senior women MPs or those with high educational attainment may have greater credibility, they still face institutional gatekeeping and symbolic barriers grounded in gendered stereotypes (Appiah, 2015). These intersections of identity complicate blanket assumptions about representation and reveal the differentiated experiences of women within committees.

In sum, the conceptual framework offers a relational and theoretically grounded understanding of how gender asymmetry operates within Ghana's parliamentary committee system. It emphasises that the dynamics of exclusion are mutually reinforcing across structural arrangements, representational practices, and decision-making processes. Addressing these asymmetries requires a dual strategy: structural reforms to institutional rules and procedures, and symbolic interventions that challenge cultural narratives and political norms about women's leadership.



2.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter offered a comprehensive examination of the literature on gender asymmetry and its manifestation within parliamentary committee systems. It began by outlining the three theoretical frameworks that guide the study, thereby establishing a robust analytical foundation. This was followed by a conceptual review that clarified and contextualised the central concept of gender asymmetry. The chapter further synthesised empirical findings from prior research to highlight established patterns, gaps, and debates within the field. It concluded by presenting the conceptual framework, which maps the relationships among the study's key variables and provides a structured guide for the analysis and discussions that follow in subsequent chapters.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the philosophical assumptions and methodological choices that guided the researcher in exploring gender asymmetry, policy-making, resource allocation, and position distribution within the committee space of Ghana's Parliament. It provides a detailed account of the study's data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes. The chapter explains the adoption of the transformative-emancipatory paradigm and offers justifications for this choice. It also examines the study's underlying philosophical assumptions. In addition, the chapter presents the research design and explains why a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate. Overall, it provides a comprehensive overview of the research methodology employed to investigate the implications of gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliamentary committees.

3.1 Research Paradigm

Research is a systematic inquiry into a subject matter, and as such, it must be guided by philosophical assumptions that shape the research process. Kuhn (1962 cited by Daston, 2020), in his work on the structure of scientific revolutions, emphasised that paradigms reflect the fundamental beliefs or worldviews that guide scientific inquiry. Broadly, research paradigms refer to the assumptions that researchers hold about the nature of reality and the appropriate ways to investigate phenomena (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). A paradigm establishes the foundation for research, informing what researchers consider worthy of study and the appropriate methods for investigating research problems. Each paradigm carries distinct philosophical assumptions

regarding ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology, which collectively shape the design and conduct of research.

This study is underpinned by the transformative-emancipatory paradigm as proposed by Mertens (2012). This paradigm aims to address social justice and human rights concerns, particularly for marginalised groups (Mertens, 2012). It is based on four interrelated assumptions: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. Ontologically, it posits that reality is multifaceted and shaped by power dynamics, culture, history, oppression, and context (Mertens, 2010). Researchers are therefore expected to engage with the diverse and intersecting experiences and worldviews of participants and stakeholders.

Epistemologically, the paradigm emphasises a collaborative and participatory approach to knowledge production. Researchers must incorporate participants' values, beliefs, and insights into the study. They are also encouraged to reflect on their own positionality and remain aware of how their identities and assumptions may influence the research process and outcomes.

Methodologically, the transformative-emancipatory paradigm supports the use of qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method approaches, depending on the research context and objectives (Mertens, 2012). Mertens (2010) emphasises that research methods must be culturally responsive and ethically appropriate to address the needs and interests of those involved in the study.

Axiologically, the paradigm is grounded in ethical commitments to social justice and human rights. Mertens argues that researchers must uphold principles such as respect for human dignity, democratic participation, inclusion, empowerment, social change, and action.

Mertens (2010) builds on the framework provided by Guba and Lincoln (1994) to articulate the transformative paradigm. However, while Guba and Lincoln (1994) assert that ontology forms the basis for all other philosophical assumptions, Mertens emphasises axiology as the starting point. In this view, the researcher must respect cultural norms of interaction while rejecting cultural relativism where it undermines human rights or perpetuates injustice. For example, the researcher in this study respects the protocols and cultural norms of Ghana's legislative environment but also challenges norms that reinforce gender disparities. The axiological commitment is further demonstrated by making the researcher's belief system transparent to participants. In this paradigm, the researcher is not considered value-free.

The transformative-emancipatory paradigm is particularly suitable for this study on gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliamentary committee space. It offers a comprehensive and context-sensitive framework for understanding the complexities of gender inequality in parliamentary systems. The paradigm is well-suited for analysing the historical, political, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions of gender representation in committees. It also acknowledges the structural constraints and power imbalances that shape the experiences of men and women in parliamentary work, while recognising their capacity for agency and resistance.

Importantly, the paradigm values the voices of diverse actors, including male and female members of parliament, civil society organisations, the media, academics, and experts. It encourages a participatory research process that respects local knowledge and seeks to empower participants to become active contributors to change. This makes it particularly effective for examining both the causes and consequences of gender asymmetry and for capturing expectations around gender equality from the perspective of parliamentarians.

Lastly, the paradigm aligns with ethical and political commitments to promoting social justice and human rights for women in parliament. It enables the researcher not only to describe existing inequalities but also to propose evidence-based recommendations for increasing women's participation, improving representation, and supporting their professional advancement. In doing so, the transformative-emancipatory paradigm moves beyond diagnosis to advocate for meaningful and lasting change.

3.3 Approach to Reasoning

Two main reasoning approaches in scientific research are inductive and deductive reasoning (Saunders et al., 2019). Inductive reasoning moves from specific observations to general conclusions, in contrast to deductive reasoning, which moves from general principles to specific conclusions.

In this study, the researcher employed inductive logical reasoning to provide rich insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Crotty, 1998). Inductive reasoning involves examining a phenomenon from the specific to the general, drawing on observation, experience, and empirical evidence (Cohen et al., 2007). It enables the researcher to explore the complexity and diversity of social realities without imposing predetermined categories or assumptions (Bryman, 2012). In this context, the researcher engaged directly with members of parliament and former members, including committee chairs and committee members. The paradigm further allows the researcher to incorporate both the perspectives of respondents and her own experiential insights, identifying patterns that inform theoretical conclusions on gender asymmetry in Ghana's legislative committees and its effects on policy-making, resource allocation, and position distribution.

Inductive reasoning is particularly suitable for studying gender asymmetry in the Ghanaian parliament, as it captures the lived experiences and perspectives of stakeholders who are either involved in or affected by this issue. Gender asymmetry in politics is a nuanced and multifaceted phenomenon that cannot be sufficiently explained through deductive reasoning based solely on pre-existing theories or hypotheses. An inductive approach enables the generation of new insights grounded in empirical data and shaped by the specific socio-cultural and historical context of Ghana. It also helps bridge the gap between de jure and de facto gender equality in politics, while identifying both the challenges and opportunities for women's empowerment and participation in decision-making. As such, inductive reasoning supports a comprehensive analysis of gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliamentary setting, providing a solid foundation for informed policy recommendations and practical interventions.

Moreover, the inductive approach proved flexible and adaptable throughout the research process. It allowed for the refinement of research questions and methodological strategies as data collection and analysis evolved. This adaptability was particularly valuable in addressing the dynamic and complex realities of the committee space in Ghana's Parliament. It enabled the researcher to adjust the research design in response to the availability and accessibility of data sources, while also navigating ethical and practical challenges encountered during fieldwork. The approach further allowed the researcher to incorporate emerging themes and patterns identified during data analysis, strengthening the study's responsiveness to context and empirical depth.

3.4 Research Design

Indu and Vidhukumar (2019) define research design as a systematic plan to inquire about a phenomenon. Research designs may be qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods (Creswell &

Poth, 2018). Informed by the paradigm discussed earlier, this study adopted a qualitative research design to investigate gender asymmetry, policy-making, resource allocation, and position distribution within the committee space of Ghana's parliament. The qualitative research approach facilitates the exploration of the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Rooted in the transformative-emancipatory paradigm, the research design incorporated the perspectives and voices of both male and female members of parliament serving on various committees. This approach acknowledged the participants' contextual and cultural realities, recognizing that gender is a complex and socially constructed concept not reducible to determinism. Baekgaard and Kjaer (2012) also argued that the chosen research design helps challenge dominant power structures, values, and narratives that sustain gender disparities and social injustice.

More specifically, qualitative research allows for an in-depth exploration of the complex and multifaceted issue of gender asymmetry in parliament. Through the collection of non-numerical data from in-depth interviews with current and former members of parliament regarding their committee activities, the study explored participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes. This provided a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The design enabled examination of gender asymmetry within its real-life context and accounted for the specific cultural, historical, and political factors that shape gender representation in Ghana's parliament and influence policy-making. By capturing these contextual elements, the study yielded more meaningful and relevant insights into the dynamics of gender asymmetry.

Additionally, qualitative data collection methods allow for probing deeper into the phenomenon, enabling access to rich and varied information such as personal narratives, direct quotes, and detailed descriptions. These data offer insights into the experiences of female parliamentarians, highlight the obstacles they face, and expose the underlying dynamics that perpetuate gender disparities. Unlike quantitative research, which adheres to a rigid structure, qualitative research offers flexibility, allowing the study design to evolve in response to emerging themes, patterns, or issues during data collection and analysis. This adaptive quality can lead to valuable, unexpected findings and open new avenues for further research.

Moreover, as the study aimed to explore the implications of gender asymmetry on policy-making, qualitative research was essential for capturing multiple perspectives, including those of both male and female parliamentarians. This inclusivity enriched the dataset and contributed to a more holistic understanding of the policy-making process. Gender asymmetry and its influence on decision-making processes involve intricate social and political dynamics that may not be easily quantifiable. Qualitative methods are well-suited for examining subjective experiences, social perceptions, and entrenched societal norms, elements that are central to understanding the issue at hand.

The selection of a qualitative research design for this thesis is well-justified. It enabled an in-depth exploration of the research problem, captured key contextual nuances, and generated rich data reflecting the lived experiences of stakeholders. Its flexibility and responsiveness also made it an appropriate approach for addressing the complex, subjective nature of gendered power relations in the committee space of Ghana's parliament.

3.5 Research Strategy

Consistent with the qualitative design, this study adopts a case study strategy to explore gender asymmetry in the committee space of Ghana's parliament. A case study is a research design that facilitates in-depth investigation into a phenomenon, person, group, event, or organisation (Yin, 2014). In this study, the focus is on the implications of gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliamentary committee system. A case study of gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliamentary committee space aims to provide a comprehensive and contextual understanding of a phenomenon through multiple data sources and methods (Yin, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design is appropriate given the nature of the research. Yin (2014) identifies the case study as suitable when "how" or "why" questions are posed, when the researcher has limited control over events, and when the research investigates contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts. These conditions apply to this study's examination of gender asymmetry in parliamentary policymaking.

The study examines gender asymmetry using Ghana's parliamentary select committees as a case. This issue requires a qualitative approach that captures both the complexity of the phenomenon and the lived experiences of those involved in policymaking. Gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament is a multidimensional issue shaped by historical, social, cultural, and political factors (Gyekye-Jandoh, 2021; UNDP-Ghana, 2020). A case study enables detailed exploration of these factors and their effects. It also allows for multiple data sources, such as interviews, observations, and documentary analysis, to generate in-depth insights (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Although gender asymmetry in policymaking is not a new issue, it has gained urgency amid global calls for gender equity in political representation. UN Women (2021) reports that while women

held 25.5 per cent of national parliamentary seats in 2020, full parity remains elusive. Women continue to face challenges such as discrimination, stereotypes, limited resources, and weak support networks. Studying this issue through a contemporary lens thus carries relevance for social justice and development.

Ghana's parliamentary committee system provides a unique case. In the 7th Parliament of the Fourth Republic (2017–2021), women's representation stood at 13 per cent, below the African and global averages of 24 and 23 per cent, respectively (UN Women, 2017). Despite policies such as the 2015 national gender policy and quotas for women's participation on boards and committees, gender parity in parliament has not been achieved. Structural barriers—including patriarchy, poverty, illiteracy, electoral systems, and political party dynamics—continue to limit both the entry and influence of women in politics. A case study allows the researcher to explore how these factors interact and shape gender dynamics within the parliamentary committees.

Case study research also involves naturalistic settings, meaning data are collected in real-life environments (Saunders et al., 2019; Yin, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach allows the researcher to observe participants' behaviour and interactions within their usual work context. In this study, the naturalistic setting is critical to understanding how gender asymmetry is experienced and reproduced within Ghana's parliament. Observing committee members in their offices, during meetings, and at public events allows the researcher to capture verbal and non-verbal cues, social interactions, and contextual dynamics that secondary sources alone cannot reveal. This setting also permits the researcher to study discourse and language use, tools that often reveal hidden power dynamics in policy processes.

The use of a case study design offers multiple advantages. First, it supports a holistic understanding of the phenomenon by integrating diverse perspectives and data sources. Second, it allows the researcher to consider the broader context, including institutional, political, and cultural factors that are beyond the researcher's control. Third, it facilitates the production of rich, detailed accounts that can inform both theory and practice.

Case studies can be descriptive, exploratory, explanatory, or evaluative (Paparini et al., 2020; Yin, 2014). Descriptive case studies aim to depict a phenomenon; exploratory case studies investigate relatively unknown phenomena to generate insights; explanatory studies seek to explain causal relationships; and evaluative case studies assess the impact of interventions. This study employs an exploratory case study design.

Exploratory case studies are used when preliminary knowledge is limited and formal hypotheses have not been developed (Yin, 2014). They are particularly useful for identifying key issues, generating research questions, and deepening understanding of under-researched topics. In Ghana, gender in parliament has received limited empirical attention. As Agyei-Mensah (2019) notes, most studies focus on descriptive representation rather than on the substantive participation and influence of women MPs. Similarly, the internal workings of parliamentary committees remain underexplored despite their critical role in democratic governance.

Gender asymmetry in committees is not monolithic. It varies with party affiliation, regional identity, education, seniority, interests, leadership style, and institutional norms (Yin, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Baxter & Jack, 2008). The exploratory case study design accommodates this diversity by using multiple data sources and analytic methods to uncover variation. The approach also enhances validity and reliability through triangulation, replication, and feedback.

Triangulation involved verifying interview transcripts with participants, who confirmed or clarified earlier responses. Secondary data from parliament's website and library were used to corroborate membership and leadership claims. Replication was ensured by including both current and former committee members. Feedback was solicited from supervisors, gender-focused civil society groups, and policy experts, improving the study's rigour and relevance. The exploratory case study design supports the testing of theories, concepts, propositions, and hypotheses through analysis of empirical evidence. In this way, it contributes to both theoretical advancement and practical understanding of gender asymmetry in parliamentary processes.

3.6 Context of the Study: Ghana's Parliamentary Committees

The research context provides the background necessary to understand the relevance and meaning of the study's problem and objectives (Shehadeh, 2020; Cooksey et al., 2019). It positions the research within a broader framework of theory, practice, and policy, justifying its significance and potential contribution (Shehadeh, 2020). Research context can be micro (focusing on the specific institution studied) or macro (addressing the wider national setting) (Shehadeh, 2020).

This study is set in Ghana, a West African country with a population of about 31 million and a multi-party constitutional democracy. Since the return to civilian rule in 1992, Ghana has been organised for political stability, economic progress, and human development (World Bank, 2020). Nevertheless, it continues to face major challenges including poverty, inequality, corruption, environmental degradation, and social conflict (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019). Gender equality and women's empowerment are national priorities, as reflected in Ghana's constitution, laws, development policies, and international commitments (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social

Protection, 2015). However, persistent gaps and barriers remain, particularly in political representation and leadership (UN Women Data Hub, n.d.; Grameen Foundation, 2021).

This study explores the nature, causes, and consequences of gender asymmetry within Ghana's parliamentary committees and its influence on policy-making, resource allocation, and position distribution. Gender asymmetry in parliament affects not only the representation of women's interests and perspectives but also the inclusiveness and quality of legislation. It also reflects broader socio-cultural norms and institutional structures that limit women's rights and participation in areas such as education, health, employment, and leadership (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2015). Understanding these dynamics is key to addressing the structural roots of gender inequality and advancing women's political empowerment.

Although research in this area is growing, it remains limited. Several studies have explored factors affecting women's political participation in Ghana, including electoral systems, political party structures, quotas, civil society, and media (Bauer, 2019; Madsen, 2019; Adams et al., 2016; Darkwa, 2016; Bawa & Sanyare, 2013). Others have examined the experiences, roles, and impact of women parliamentarians (e.g., Bauer & Darkwa, 2020). However, there is a notable gap concerning how gender asymmetry within parliamentary committees affects policymaking and resource distribution. No peer-reviewed literature currently exists on gendered power dynamics in Ghana's parliamentary committees. This study aims to fill that gap using inductive reasoning to generate new insights grounded in Ghana's socio-cultural and historical realities.

Parliamentary select committees in Ghana serve as important platforms where women in political leadership can exert influence. These committees oversee ministries, departments, and agencies

and examine legislation, policies, and programmes within their sectors (Parliament of Ghana, n.d.). Their role in shaping and scrutinizing public policy makes them central to understanding gender power dynamics in legislative processes. Ghana's select committees offer a relevant case for examining gender asymmetry in parliamentary decision-making. Despite adopting global and national frameworks such as the Beijing Declaration, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the National Gender Policy, implementation gaps persist. One major challenge is the low representation of women in parliament, especially in leadership roles. As of April 2021, only 40 of Ghana's 276 MPs were women (14.5% of the total) below both the global average of 25.5% and the African average of 24.9% (Parliament of Ghana, 2021). Additionally, only 9 of 46 cabinet ministers were women, representing 19.6% (Parliament of Ghana, 2021). These figures underscore the limited access women have to decision-making authority in Ghana's legislature.

Low representation constrains women's ability to influence gender-responsive policy. Moreover, women in politics face obstacles such as stereotypes, discrimination, and political violence. Studying the select committees enables a deeper understanding of these structural barriers and possible avenues for reform. The gender composition of these committees also reveals inequality. According to a 2017 IEA report, only 4 of the 16 select committees were chaired by women: Gender and Children; Employment, Social Welfare and State Enterprises; Environment, Science and Technology; and Local Government and Rural Development.

Some research suggests that women made up only 18.8% of all committee members (IEA, 2017). Some committees such as Defence and Interior; Mines and Energy; Roads and Transport; and Foreign Affairs had no female members at all (IEA, 2017). These patterns suggest that women are often excluded from decision-making on critical national issues. This imbalance may negatively

affect policy outcomes, as gender-diverse perspectives are less likely to be included. Bochel and Defty (2007) found that female MPs in Ghana were more likely to prioritise health, education, water, sanitation, and social protection. Increasing women's participation in parliamentary committees could improve the responsiveness and inclusiveness of policies on such issues.

This study of Ghana's parliamentary select committees provides valuable insights into the causes and effects of gender asymmetry in political decision-making. It also identifies potential strategies to enhance women's participation and representation in governance.

3.7 Research Population

According to Williamson and Johanson (2013), a research population refers to the group under study in which all elements share common characteristics. The population of emphasis in this study includes both past and present male and female members of parliament. Prior to the 9th Parliament of Ghana, there were thirty-one (31) legislative committees, comprising fourteen (14) standing committees, sixteen (16) select committees, and one ad-hoc committee. Most members served on multiple committees. These committees play critical roles in advising, scrutinising bills, overseeing government policies and programmes, conducting inquiries, and holding public hearings on key national issues (www.parliament.gh; <https://ghanamps.com/committees/>). As such, they are central to the legislative process, and the representation of women within them carries important implications for gender equality and women's empowerment in Ghana.

This population was selected because it offers a comprehensive range of perspectives and experiences on gender asymmetry in the Ghanaian parliament. Engaging with this group enables the researcher to develop a holistic understanding of the issue. Additionally, their feedback and insights contribute meaningfully to addressing the study's research questions and objectives.

3.8 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The sampling method used in this study is purposive sampling, a non-probability technique that relies on the researcher's judgment to select units most relevant and informative for the research topic (Sandelowski, 2012). This method involves deliberately selecting participants who can offer insights into the research phenomenon. Purposive sampling allows access to a specific subset of the population that shares relevant characteristics, such as being female, serving on a parliamentary committee, or possessing experience in political decision-making. This focus on information-rich cases helps achieve the study's objectives.

Additionally, purposive sampling enables the researcher to capture the diversity and complexity of gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliamentary committees by including both typical and outlier cases. This facilitates the identification of common patterns and key variations. It also helps address practical and ethical challenges in obtaining a representative sample, such as low response rates, data limitations, or consent issues, by allowing the researcher to select the most suitable and accessible units based on contextual knowledge. Specifically, the study applied purposive sampling, targeting individual MPs with knowledge and expertise on the subject. These included former and current committee members, chairpersons, vice chairpersons, and ranking members.

In qualitative research, meaning and understanding take precedence over numerical representation, so sample size is not predetermined. Instead, data collection continues until saturation is reached, that is, when no new themes or insights emerge. At this saturation point, additional interviews are unlikely to affect the study's theoretical conclusions (Sandelowski, 2012). While data saturation is the guiding principle, scholars have proposed approximate sample sizes. Guest et al. (2006) suggest 12 interviews, Green and Thorogood (2018) suggest 20, and Ritchie et al. (2003) propose

up to 50. However, saturation depends on the nature of the study and the sampling strategy (Hagaman & Wutich, 2017). This study conducted 20 interviews, reaching saturation between the 12th and 15th interviews. Further interviews were conducted to satisfy the researcher's curiosity. Details of the interview participants are provided in the next chapter, which presents the empirical analysis.

3.9 Sources of Data and Data Collection

This study employed primary data collection through in-depth interviews. According to Seidman (2006), interviews provide access to the context of people's behaviours and support an understanding of their lived experiences. Van Thiel (2014) also notes that interviews are a flexible method for gathering data, as they allow the researcher to ask follow-up questions for deeper exploration. In this study, interviews were conducted in a collaborative manner, based on the participants' preferred venues and times, in line with the principles of transformative research (Snyder, 2012).

Interviews were appropriate for this study, as the aim was to understand respondents' perceptions of gender asymmetry within Ghana's parliamentary committees. This method enabled both current and former committee members to share their experiences regarding gender power dynamics and the persistence of uneven representation. Through these conversations, participants' historical, social, and cultural contexts became apparent.

The interviews focused on participants' views of gender disparity in the committee space, its perceived impact on policy formulation and outcomes, and the gendered nature of resource allocation and position distribution in parliament. On average, interviews lasted about 30 minutes.

Some extended to 60 minutes, mainly due to interruptions such as phone calls. Interviews proceeded at a pace that accommodated the participants' schedules and allowed for meaningful engagement. Two pilot interviews were conducted prior to the main data collection to refine the process and enhance data quality.

3.10 Validity and Reliability

The researcher adopted Guba and Lincoln (1985) approach to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. The four criteria used to assess trustworthiness in qualitative research are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Credibility refers to the confidence placed in the truth of the findings. To enhance credibility, the researcher verified interview transcripts with participants to confirm the accuracy of their responses. Secondary information from the parliament's library and website was also used to guide and cross-check interview data. Member checking was employed by sharing preliminary findings with participants to ensure accurate representation of their experiences. The researcher used peer debriefing by discussing findings with knowledgeable colleagues to obtain feedback and insights.

Transferability concerns the extent to which findings can be applied to other contexts. To support transferability, the researcher provided a detailed description of the research context and methodology, allowing readers to assess relevance to other settings. A purposive sampling method was used to select participants who represented the population of interest and offered diverse perspectives on gender asymmetry in parliament.

Dependability relates to the consistency of findings over time. The researcher maintained detailed records of data collection methods, analysis procedures, and decisions taken throughout the

research process to create an audit trail. An independent researcher was also invited to examine the data and findings to confirm their consistency and accuracy.

Confirmability refers to the extent to which the findings are shaped by participants rather than researcher bias. To ensure confirmability, the researcher engaged in reflexivity by examining personal assumptions and documenting reflections in a journal. Negative case analysis was also used to identify and report any evidence that contradicted or challenged the findings.

3.11 Research Ethics

It was necessary to consider the ethical implications of the research for participants, the researcher, and society. This section outlines the ethical considerations required by the University of Ghana for conducting qualitative research, in accordance with the principles of the University's Ethics Committee. Ethical clearance was granted for this study under protocol number ECH 121 23-24.

One of the main ethical considerations in qualitative research is consent, which involves obtaining voluntary and informed agreement from participants. Consent requires providing participants with sufficient information about the research purpose, methods, risks, benefits, and expectations (Saunders et al., 2017). Since qualitative research may evolve during data collection, informed consent can be challenging. To address this, each participant received an information sheet and consent form. The information sheet detailed the research purpose and process, while the consent form sought permission to participate and to allow audio recordings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequences.

Confidentiality is another key ethical issue. It entails protecting participants' identity and privacy and ensuring that collected data is not shared with unauthorised parties or used beyond the research

scope (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saunders et al., 2017). Risks to confidentiality include use of interviewees personal details (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). To safeguard confidentiality, pseudonyms or codes were used, and identifying information was removed from transcripts and reports. Data is securely stored on a password-protected computer, and audio recordings will be deleted after transcription. Permission was obtained from all participants for the use of direct quotations or personal information.

Beneficence is also critical. It involves maximising benefits and minimising potential harm to participants and society. This can be complex in qualitative research, especially when discussing sensitive topics. Since gender power dynamics may be emotionally charged, the interview guide was carefully reviewed to avoid distressing or intrusive questions. Justice is another ethical principle, which requires fair and equitable treatment of participants and the avoidance of discrimination or exploitation (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011; Hayashi et al., 2019). Although the population for this study, former and current members of parliament, does not constitute a vulnerable group, the interviews were conducted respectfully and fairly. The researcher was attentive to gender, ethnic, and educational diversity, ensuring participants were treated with dignity. Equal opportunity for participation was ensured through purposive sampling.

Finally, the role of the researcher as a data collection instrument must be acknowledged. This includes recognising how the researcher's background, beliefs, and behaviours may influence the research process (Alvesson et al., 2022). The researcher practised reflexivity by critically examining personal assumptions, motivations, and interactions throughout the study. Reflexivity enhances transparency, strengthens the credibility and reproducibility of the data, and builds public trust in the research (Saunders et al., 2019). By addressing the above ethical considerations, the

research maintained high standards of quality, integrity, and credibility, while ensuring the rights and well-being of participants and contributing to the broader research community.

3.12 Data Analysis Procedure

This section presents the process of data analysis. The aim of the data analysis was to identify patterns, themes, and insights that reveal the experiences, perceptions, and perspectives of these stakeholders regarding gender asymmetry in the parliamentary committee space and its influence on policy-making, resource allocation, and position distribution.

The study employed thematic analysis, a widely used qualitative method that enables the identification of recurring patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2014). This approach facilitated an in-depth exploration of stakeholders' complex and nuanced experiences, yielding a rich understanding of the research topic. The analysis followed a systematic process: familiarisation with the data, coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and theme presentation. This rigorous method ensured that the findings are consistent, reliable, and accurately reflect participants' perspectives.

The interview data consisted of audio recordings and transcripts from semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to identify, code, and interpret meaningful patterns in the transcribed interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method was chosen for its capacity to capture the diversity of views on gender asymmetry within the committee system and its effects on legislative processes. The six phases of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed. These include familiarisation, coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and theme presentation. The recordings and transcripts were reviewed multiple times to develop a thorough understanding and note initial insights. Data segments were assigned codes

to capture their meanings, aided by NVivo software. Codes were then grouped into broader themes that reflected the main patterns in the data. Sub-themes were also developed to highlight more specific variations. All themes and sub-themes were reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and alignment with the research objectives. Each was clearly defined, and their meanings, significance, and connections to other themes were outlined. Finally, themes and sub-themes were presented with supporting quotations and discussed in relation to the study's research questions, objectives, literature, and theoretical framework.

3.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the methodological framework guiding the study of gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliamentary committee system. It began by justifying the use of the transformative-emancipatory paradigm, which emphasises social justice, participatory engagement, and the empowerment of marginalised groups, particularly women in parliament. The chapter explained how the paradigm's axiological, epistemological, ontological, and methodological dimensions support a reflexive and context-sensitive inquiry into gendered power dynamics.

The study adopted an inductive reasoning approach, enabling theoretical insights to emerge from the lived experiences of committee members. A qualitative design was employed to explore the complex, context-specific realities of gender asymmetry in policymaking. Using an exploratory case study strategy, the research examined how parliamentary committee structures and practices influence women's representation and policy impact. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with purposively selected current and former committee members, including committee leaders. Nineteen interviews were conducted, with data saturation occurring between the twelfth

and fifteenth interviews. Thematic analysis, supported by NVivo, was used to identify recurring patterns in participants' accounts.

The chapter also addressed ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the use of reflexivity to reduce researcher bias. Trustworthiness was established through strategies that ensured credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The chapter concluded by affirming that the chosen methodology was well suited to uncover how gender asymmetry influences policy-making, resource distribution, and position allocation within Ghana's parliamentary committee system.



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

4.0 Chapter Synopsis

This study chapter presents the study results based on the study objectives. The findings contribute to the overall research objectives by providing empirical evidence and an in-depth analysis of gender asymmetry within Ghana's parliamentary committee structures. The chapter is aligned with the broader goals of the research, which aims to understand the extent, implications, and underlying factors of gender asymmetry in the parliamentary system of Ghana. The first section presents results on the nature of gender asymmetry in the committee space of Ghana's Parliament and how gender asymmetry influences the composition of legislative committees. The second section presents results on how gender asymmetry influences policy-making in the committee space of Ghana's Parliament. The third section presents results on how gender asymmetry influences the distribution of positions and resources in Ghana's parliamentary committees.

4.1 Background Information to the Data Analysis

The study utilised a qualitative approach, focusing on primary data, obtained from semi-structured interviews with participants, primarily Members of Parliament (MPs). Initially, the goal was to interview around 25 MPs, but due to various constraints, 20 MPs were interviewed, resulting in a response rate of 80%. This sample size was deemed sufficient based on the principle of saturation and the richness of information obtained. Saturation was reached when the interviews began to yield repetitive themes, with no new themes or sub-themes emerging, indicating that additional interviews would likely not provide further valuable insights (Saunders et al., 2018). Moreover, the richness of the data was attributed to the MPs' extensive expertise and experiences in

parliamentary committee businesses, which provided deep insights into the study's focus. The MPs' lived experiences and expert opinions offered a comprehensive understanding of the topics discussed, reinforcing the value of the qualitative data collected. This approach ensured that the findings were not only representative of the MPs' perspectives but also enriched by their in-depth knowledge and practical experiences in their legislative roles.

The interviews were recorded and meticulously transcribed by the researcher, ensuring that every detail was captured accurately. Once the transcripts were prepared, the thematic analysis process commenced, involving the identification, coding, and interpretation of patterns or themes within the data, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process is rigorous and iterative, beginning with familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, and then searching for themes among these codes. The themes were then reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data. The final step was the presentation of these themes, which was done in a structured manner to align with the study's research objectives and questions. This methodical approach ensured that the analysis was comprehensive and coherent, providing clear insights into the research topic. The thematic analysis allowed for the exploration of complex data in a systematic way, making it possible to uncover deeper meanings and patterns that might not be immediately evident from the translations. This alignment with the research objectives and questions ensured that the findings were relevant and directly addressed the aims of the study, thus contributing valuable insights to the field.

4.2 Demographic Profile of Participants

The study aimed to gather data from both current and former Members of Parliament (MPs) in Ghana's parliament. During the interviews, detailed demographic information was collected and

analysed, including participants' committee memberships, gender, age, educational background, parliamentary experience, positions held within committees, and political party affiliations. This comprehensive demographic profiling provided an understanding of the participants' backgrounds and their perspectives. This demographic analysis was crucial for ensuring that the study's findings were well-rounded and reflective of the diverse experiences and insights of MPs across different committees and political affiliations. Table 4.1 presents the demographic profile of participants.

Table 4. 1: Demographic variables

No.	Gender	Age Range	Education	Experience	Position	Party
R1	M	61 and above	Masters	1 Term	Member	NDC
R2	F	51-60	Diploma/HND	2 Terms	Member	NDC
R3	M	51-60	Doctorate	5 Terms	Ranking Member	NDC
R4	M	41-50	Masters	3 Terms	Ranking Member	NDC
R5	M	41-50	Masters	1 Term	Member	NDC
R6	F	31-40	Masters	2 Terms	Member	NDC
R7	F	51-60	MPhil	1 Term	Member	NDC
R8	M	60 and above	Masters	4 Terms	Ranking Member / Chairman	NPP
R9	M	60 and above	PhD	1 Term	Member	NPP
R10	F	51-60	BA	1 Term	Vice Chairman	NPP
R11	F	41-50	MSC	2 Terms	Member	NPP
R12	M	41-50	Doctorate	1 Term	Member	NPP
R13	F	60 and above	Post Graduate Diploma	4 Term	Chairperson	NPP
R14	F	30-40	MBA	2 Term	Member	NPP
R15	M	41 -50	Masters	5 Term	Member	NDC
R16	M	41-50	Masters	3 Term	Ranking Member	NDC
R17	M	51-60	Doctorate	3 Term	Chairperson	NDC
R18	F	41-50	Diploma/HND	1 Term	Member	NDC
R19	F	60 and above	Masters	4 Term	Member	NPP
R20	F	41 to 50	Masters	2 Term	Member	NDC

Source: Summarized from Field Data (2024)

The demographic profile of the interviewees in Table 4.1 reflects a diverse and representative cross-section of current and former Members of Parliament (MPs) from Ghana's parliament. This

diversity was purposefully sought to capture a range of experiences and perspectives pertinent to the study's focus on understanding how gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament affects the influence of women within parliamentary committees. To ensure anonymity of respondents, the characteristics of 20 respondents associated with the number R1, R2, ...R20.

The analysis presented in Table 4.1 reveals the gender distribution among the Members of Parliament (MPs) participating in the study. The gender composition of the interviewees is notably balanced, with nine females and ten males. This near parity reflects the study's deliberate effort to objectively incorporate diverse gender perspectives into the analysis. The nearly equal participation of male and female MPs ensures that the analysis captures diverse perspectives and experiences related to policy-making, distribution of positions, and resources. The nearly balanced composition is significant as it provided insight into the gender dynamics within the parliamentary committees, reflecting on the broader context of gender asymmetry in Ghana's Parliament. This balanced representation was crucial for understanding the ways in which gender asymmetry manifests and impacts the functioning of parliamentary committees.

The age distribution of the participants ranged from the early thirties to over sixty years, illustrating the inclusion of both emerging and seasoned legislators. Specifically, two interviewees were in the 30-40 age bracket, nine were between 41-50 years, six were in the 51-60 range, and three were aged 60 and above. This spread of age categories ensures that the analysis incorporates the insights of MPs at different stages of their parliamentary careers, from relatively new entrants to veteran lawmakers with extensive institutional memory. The analysis also scrutinised the age distribution of the participants, which was pertinent to the study's objectives. The participants aged 41 to 50 years comprised the largest age group, representing 37% of the total study respondents. Those in

the age ranges of 51 to 60 years and 61 years and above each accounted for 26% of the respondents. Furthermore, 11% of the participants were between the ages of 31 to 40 years. This age range distribution is significant as it reflects the diversity of experience and generational perspectives within the committee space of Ghana's Parliament. The predominance of the 41 to 50 age group suggests a mid-career dominance in parliamentary participation, while the substantial representation of older age groups highlights the presence of seasoned individuals with potentially extensive political and professional experience. The inclusion of a younger age bracket, albeit smaller, indicates emerging participation and perspectives from relatively newer MPs.

Educational attainment among the participants was generally high, with the majority holding postgraduate qualifications. Notably, the majority, 60% (12 participants), have obtained a Master's degree. This reflects the growing emphasis on educational qualifications in Ghana's political elite and suggests a well-educated participant base capable of informed engagement with governance and policy issues. Only one participant held a Bachelor's degree, highlighting the importance of advanced education among the MPs. Additionally, 4 participants (21%) had achieved Doctorate degrees, reflecting the presence of highly educated individuals with a deep level of academic and possibly professional research experience. The varied educational backgrounds among the participants are crucial for understanding the potential impact of educational attainment on legislative processes and decision-making in Ghana's Parliament. It suggests that the committee space is dominated by individuals with substantial academic qualifications. The high proportion of participants with advanced degrees also points to a potential correlation between higher education and political involvement in Ghana's democracy.

The parliamentary experience of the interviewees varied, encompassing a mix of first-term MPs and those with long-standing service. The study placed significant emphasis on examining the experiences of MPs, recognising the importance of parliamentary tenure in influencing legislative effectiveness and policy-making processes. Table 4.1 highlighted a diverse range of parliamentary experiences among the 19 participants. Notably, 37% of the MPs were serving their first term in Parliament, indicating a substantial influx of relatively new legislators who may bring fresh perspectives and new ideas to the workings of the parliamentary committees. Meanwhile, 21% of the participants were in their second term, suggesting a blend of emerging experience and continuity. Moreover, 16% of the MPs were serving their third term, and another 16% were in their fourth term, representing a group with considerable legislative experience and a deeper understanding of parliamentary procedures and dynamics. These lengths of experience are crucial for stability and institutional memory within the committees. Lastly, 11% of the participants were in their fifth term, reflecting a small but significant cohort of highly experienced legislators who have likely played pivotal roles in shaping long-term policies and influencing major legislative decisions over the years. The diverse range of experiences among the MPs is vital for the study as it provides a comprehensive view of the effect of tenure and experiences on the functioning and effectiveness of parliamentary committees in Ghana. This variation in parliamentary tenure enriches the data by incorporating both fresh perspectives and deep institutional knowledge.

In terms of parliamentary roles, the interviewees held a variety of positions within their respective committees. While many served as members of committees, several occupied leadership positions such as Ranking Member, Vice Chairperson, Chairperson, and Chairman. This diversity in committee roles provides a nuanced understanding of how gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament have shaped the influence of female MPs within different committees.

Finally, political party affiliations were split between the two major political parties in Ghana: the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). Specifically, ten participants were affiliated with the NDC, while nine represented the NPP. This near-equal representation across party lines enhances the study's commitment to objectivity and ensures that the analysis reflects a balanced perspective on the dynamics of gender asymmetry. The party distribution is significant as it mirrors the broader political landscape of Ghana, where the NDC and NPP parties are the dominant forces. Understanding the political party affiliations of the participants provides valuable context for interpreting the study's findings, especially concerning how political dynamics influence gender asymmetry, policy-making, and the distribution of positions within Ghana's parliamentary committees. The interplay between political party affiliation and these factors is critical for comprehending the broader implications of the study as well as formulating strategies that promote more inclusive and effective legislative practices.

In summary, the interviewees' demographic profiles, spanning gender, age, educational attainment, parliamentary experience, committee roles, and political affiliations, provide a comprehensive and diverse foundation for analyzing the nature and dynamics of gender asymmetry within the committee space of Ghana's parliament.

4.3. Parliamentary Committee Membership

The current 9th Parliament of the 4th Republic of Ghana which was officially inaugurated on 7 January 2025 has 44 Committees, divided into 20 Standing Committees and 24 Select Committees. During the data collection process, the 8th Parliament had 31 Committees. According to the Parliamentary Standing Orders protocol, every MP is required to serve on at least one Committee in parliament. MPs are allowed to officially serve on two Committees concurrently. MPs could

serve on more than two Committees with the approval of the Committee of Selection chaired by the Speaker of Parliament. Thus, drawing from the data of this study, most MPs throughout their parliamentary careers, had served on multiple committees with the maximum number of committee memberships held by an individual MP reaching six. The multiple committee involvement underscores the extensive responsibilities and varied expertise required of MPs, highlighting their engagement across a broad spectrum of legislative activities and governance issues. This dynamic also points to the potential for overlap in policy influence and the sharing of specialised knowledge across different committees, which can enhance the legislative process and development of well-rounded policies.

4.4. Effects of Gender Asymmetry on the Composition of Committee Membership

The first objective of the study sought to examine how gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament affects the composition of committee membership between male and female members of parliament. The analysis revealed other sub-themes to underscore the understanding of gender asymmetry. Among these sub-themes are the composition of women in committees, determinants of women selection, and perspectives of women representations.

4.4.1 Composition of Parliamentary Committees

The composition of women in parliamentary committees emerged as a critical sub-theme in the analysis of gender asymmetry within legislative bodies. Worldwide, women are underrepresented in parliaments compared to their male counterparts. However, this disparity varies across regions, with certain sub-regions exhibiting even greater levels of gender imbalance. However, this disparity is not uniform across regions, with some sub-regions exhibiting even greater levels of gender imbalance. In the context of Ghana, the study found that the representation of women in

both the Parliament and its committees is notably limited. Table 4.2 below presents the data on the composition of the Standing Committees in the 9th Parliament of Ghana.



Table 4. 2: Gender Composition of the Standing Committees in the 9th Parliament of Ghana

Name of Committee	Chairperson	Gender of Chair	Gender of Vice Chair	Gender of Ranking	Gender of Deputy Ranking	Total Male	Total of Female	Total	% of Females
Committee of Selection	Rt. Hon. Alban S. K. Bagbin	M	-	-	-	11	6	17	35.3
Business Committee	Hon. Mahama Ayariga	M	M	M	M	13	2	15	13.3
Appointments Committee	Hon. Bernard Ahiafor	M	M	M	F	8	3	11	27.3
Committee of Privileges and Immunities	Hon. Bernard Ahiafor	M	M	M	M	12	4	16	25
Standing Orders Committee	Rt. Hon. Alban Sumana K. Bagbin	M	-	-	-	15	1	16	6.3
Committee On Subsidiary Legislation	Hon. Patrick Yaw Boamah	M	M	M	M	14	3	17	17.6
House Committee	Hon. Rockson-Nelson Kwami E. Dafeamekpor	M	M	-	-	15	0	15	0
Committee Of Petition	Hon. Kwame Appiah Kodua	M	M	M	M	14	3	17	17.6
Committee On Office of Profit	Hon. Andrew Asiamah Amoako	M	M	M	F	14	1	15	6.7
Committee On Assurances	Hon. Dominic Bingab Aduna Nitiwul	M	M	M	M	16	1	17	5.9
Finance Committee	Hon. Isaac Adongo	M	M	M	M	16	3	19	15.8
Public Accounts Committee	Hon. Abena Osei-Asare	F	M	M	M	20	5	25	20
Committee On Economy and Development	Hon. Eric Afful	M	M	M	M	16	1	17	5.9
Committee On Ethics and Standards	Hon. Andrew Asiamah-Amoako	M	M	-	-	13	2	15	13.3
Ways And Means Committee	Hon. Kweku Ricketts-Hagan	M	F	-	-	13	2	15	13.3
Committee On Private Member's Bill and Private Member's Motion	Hon. Albert Tetteh Nyakotey	M	M	M	M	14	1	15	6.7
Committee On Human Rights	Hon. Ernest Yaw Anim	M	M	M	M	15	2	17	11.8
Budget Committee	Hon. Kwaku Agyemang Kwarteng	M	M	M	M	14	3	17	17.6
Committee On Back Benchers' Business	Hon. Charles Forson	M	F	M	M	14	3	17	17.6
Special Committee (winnowing Committee)	Hon. Mahama Ayariga	M	-	-	-	11	0	11	0



The composition of the 9th Parliament of Ghana reflects a broader pattern of gender imbalance, with only 14.1% of its members being female. This pattern is echoed within the composition of the Parliament's 20 Standing Committees. An examination of these committees reveals a mixed picture of gender representation, with some committees exhibiting relatively fair inclusion of women while others remain overwhelmingly male-dominated.

On average, female representation across all the Standing Committees is approximately 13.85%, marginally below the overall proportion of female parliamentarians. Nine committees surpass or match this average, signaling a more balanced composition. These include the Committee of Selection, Appointments Committee, Committee of Privileges and Immunities, Committee on Subsidiary Legislation, Committee of Petition, Finance Committee, Public Accounts Committee, Budget Committee, and Committee on Back Benchers' Business. These committees demonstrate a modest effort toward inclusion, with women constituting between approximately 25% and 35% of their members. This representation, though limited, highlights a recognition of the need for gender diversity in parliamentary committee work.

However, the majority of committees fall short of this benchmark, with female membership falling below the average. The Business Committee, Standing Orders Committee, Committee on Office of Profit, Committee on Assurances, Committee on Economy and Development, Committee on Ethics and Standards, Ways and Means Committee, Committee on Private Member's Bill and Private Member's Motion, and Committee on Human Rights exhibit low female participation, some with as little as 6.25% representation. Notably, two committees, House Committee and Special Committee (Winnowing Committee), have no female members at all. This complete

absence of women underscores a particularly glaring gender gap, highlighting committees where opportunities for female participation are entirely lacking.

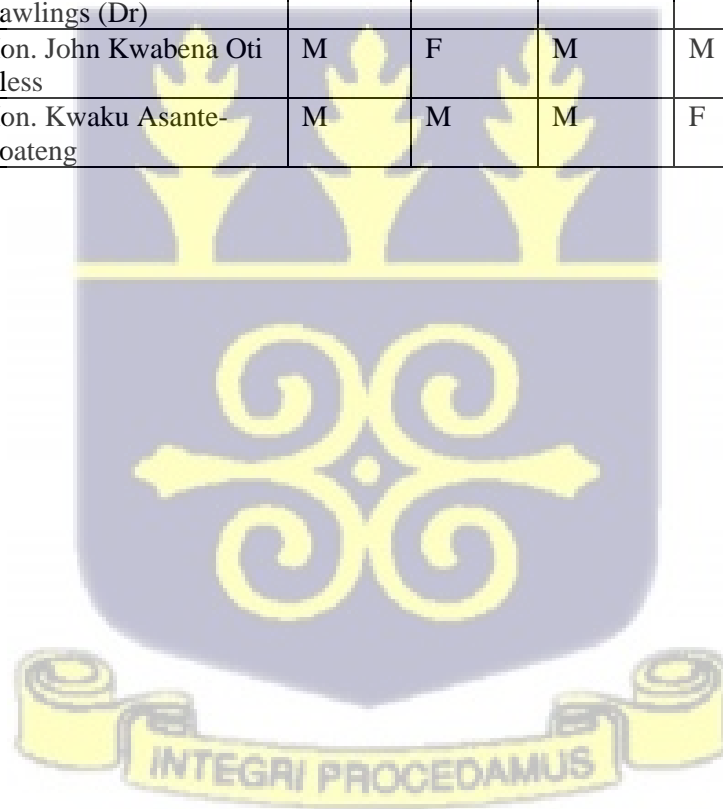
In summary, the gendered composition of the Standing Committees of Ghana's 9th Parliament highlights both progress and persistent challenges. While a few committees exhibit a degree of gender inclusivity, the majority fall short of reflecting the demographic composition of Parliament, let alone the broader society. The existence of two committees with zero female members serves as a stark reminder of the need for stronger efforts to ensure gender equity. The study also analyzes the gender composition of the 24 Select Committees of Parliament. The nature of the composition of the Select Committees is presented in Table 4.3 below.



Table 4. 3: Gender Composition of the Select Committees in the 9th Parliament of Ghana

Name of Committee	Chairperson	Gender of Chair	Gender of Vice Chair	Gender of Ranking	Gender of Deputy Ranking	Total Male	Total Female	Total	% of Females
Committee on Gender, Children and Social Welfare	Hon. Helen Adjoa Ntoso	F	F	F	F	6	11	17	64.7
Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs	Hon. Shaibu Mahama	M	M	M	M	13	0	13	0.0
Committee On Food, Agriculture and Cocoa Affairs	Hon. Dr Godfred Seidu Jasaw (Dr)	M	M	M	M	14	3	17	17.6
Committee On Lands and Natural Resources	Hon. Collins Dauda (Alhaji)	M	M	M	M	19	0	19	0.0
Committee On Health	Hon. Mark Kurt Nawaane (Dr)	M	M	M	M	17	0	17	0.0
Committee On Works and Housing	Hon. Vincent Oppong Asamoah	M	M	M	F	15	2	17	11.8
Committee On Local Government and Rural Development	Hon. Queenstar Pokua Sawyer	F	M	M	M	14	3	17	17.6
Committee On Information and Communications	Hon. Bandim Abed-Nego Azumah	M	M	M	M	17	0	17	0.0
Committee On Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration	Hon. Alfred Okoe Vanderpuije	M	M	M	M	12	5	17	29.4
Committee On Employment, Labour Relations and Pensions	Hon. Joseph Appiah Boateng	M	M	F	M	14	3	17	17.6
Committee On Defence and Interior	Hon. James Agalga	M	M	M	M	13	4	17	23.5
Committee On Trade, Industry and Tourism	Hon. Alexander Roosevelt Hottordze	M	M	M	M	16	1	17	5.9
Committee On Environment, Science and Technology	Hon. Yaw Frimpong Addo	M	M	M	M	17	0	17	0.0
Committee On Education	Hon. Peter Kwasi Nortsu-Kotoe	M	M	M	M	13	4	17	23.5
Committee On Youth and Sports	Hon. Ernest Henry Norgbey	M	M	M	M	15	2	17	11.8

Committee On Energy	Hon. Emmanuel Kwasi Bedzrah	M	M	M	M	17	2	19	10.5
Committee On Roads and Transportation	Hon. Isaac Adjei Mensah	M	M	M	M	14	3	17	17.6
Committee On Independent Constitutional Bodies	Hon. Mahama Ayariga	M	M	-	-	15	2	17	11.8
Committee On Parliamentary Affairs	Hon. Kwabena Okyere Darko-Mensah	M	M	M	M	13	4	17	23.5
Committee On Judiciary	Hon. Joseph Frempong	M	M	M	M	16	1	17	5.9
Committee On Chieftaincy, Culture and Religious Affairs	Hon. Fred Kyei-Asamoah	M	M	F	M	14	3	17	17.6
Committee On Security and Intelligence	Hon. Zanetor Agyeman Rawlings (Dr)	F	M	M	M	16	1	17	5.9
Committee On Sanitation and Water Resources	Hon. John Kwabena Oti Bless	M	F	M	M	14	3	17	17.6
Committee On Public Administration and State Interests	Hon. Kwaku Asante-Boateng	M	M	M	F	15	2	17	11.8



Analyzing the 24 Select Committees reveals insights into how gender representation is reflected at the committee level, both in terms of general membership and key leadership roles. On average, female representation across the Select Committees is approximately 14.41%, only slightly higher than the overall parliamentary composition. This indicates a general pattern where committees mirror the broader gender dynamics of Parliament, with women significantly underrepresented.

Among the 24 committees, 11 committees are deemed fairly represented, those whose female membership percentages are equal to or exceed the average of 14.41%. These include the Committee on Gender, Children and Social Welfare, Committee on Food, Agriculture and Cocoa Affairs, Committee on Local Government and Rural Development, Committee on Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, Committee on Employment, Labour Relations and Pensions, Committee on Defence and Interior, Committee on Education, Committee on Roads and Transportation, Committee on Parliamentary Affairs, Committee on Chieftaincy, Culture and Religious Affairs, and Committee on Sanitation and Water Resources. These committees show a relatively higher level of inclusivity, with some, such as the Committee on Gender, achieving female representation as high as 64.7%.

Conversely, 13 committees exhibit below-average female representation, highlighting persistent gender gaps. These include the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs, Committee on Lands and Natural Resources, Committee on Health, Committee on Works and Housing, Committee on Information and Communications, Committee on Trade, Industry and Tourism, Committee on Environment, Science and Technology, Committee on Youth and Sports, Committee on Energy, Committee on Independent Constitutional Bodies, Committee on Judiciary,

Committee on Security and Intelligence, and Committee on Public Administration and State Interests. Strikingly, five committees, Constitutional and Legal Affairs, Lands and Natural Resources, Health, Information and Communications, and Environment, Science and Technology, have no female members at all. This complete absence of women in these committees signals a substantial gender imbalance and a missed opportunity to integrate diverse perspectives into critical policy areas.

In summary, while some Select Committees demonstrate progress toward gender inclusivity, particularly in sectors directly related to social and community welfare, a significant number remain male-dominated, both in membership and leadership. The presence of committees with zero female representation further emphasises the need for deliberate efforts to promote gender equity in committee assignments and leadership appointments. To align with the Parliament's commitment to representative governance, proactive policies and mentoring strategies must be implemented to encourage and support greater female participation in parliamentary decision-making processes.

This scant representation of Women across the Standing and Select Committees of Parliament underscores the broader issue of gender inequality in political participation and decision-making processes, potentially perpetuating gender-based disparities in policy-making and governance. Moreover, the situation in Ghana's parliamentary committees would have been direr if not for certain provisions allowing women to join multiple committees. Despite these provisions, the overall number of women in these committees remains low, raising concerns about the inclusivity and diversity of parliamentary decision-making. Some interviewees revealed that women often receive secondary roles or are placed in committees by default, particularly when men opt-out.

This trend not only highlights the dominance of men in these spaces but also reflects the underlying biases that shape committee assignments, where women are not given equal consideration for primary positions. Respondents in the study further emphasised that representation in parliamentary committees tends to be skewed against women, contributing to the perpetuation of gender bias within the legislative process.

The biased nature of committee composition, where women are often seen as filling gaps rather than being integral members, suggests that systemic barriers continue to hinder gender equity in political representation. This analysis calls attention to the need for deliberate and sustained efforts to address these inequalities, ensuring that women have equal opportunities to participate fully in parliamentary committees and, by extension, in the legislative process as a whole. Four of the participants reiterated that:

R15: *In terms of gender composition, there is a clear divide in certain parliamentary committees. Committees like Food, Agriculture and Cocoa Affairs and Lands and Natural Resources tend to be male-dominated, whereas committees such as gender has more female MPs.*

R16: *Women are always very few and I think this is the first time we have more women in parliament under the 4th Republic. Once the numbers are imbalanced there will definitely be a tilt in both representation and participation. And when it comes to the committees which is what you are looking at, the men are more and the men dominate the perceived powerful committees like the Energy Committee will have one or two women but the gender committee will have many female MPs.*

R6: *Well, fairly enough, it seems that it is only confident women who end up in parliament and they were very bold. That comes from leadership and the background of the person plays a crucial role but those who may lobby or go to particular committees due to their connections, we called them 'protocol' members. But, basically, your education, work and other related experiences gets you to committees upon consideration of your CV.*

R13: *My observation is that in even placing us on various committees, sometimes they bunch up a number of women into one committee. Like the Gender Committee, they will just bunch so many women into that committee. And there are so many other committees that don't have even one female... oh yes, it's the male dominance. It's still the male*

dominance in those committees. But we (females) need us to be exposed. The exposure shouldn't be limited to certain areas alone.

R17: *The representation on the constitutional and legal committee were all men, a reflection on the membership of the committees as well.*

The study exposed the reality of uneven gender distribution in parliamentary committees, revealing that some committees had no female MPs represented as all members were male. The study sought to find out the determinants of female selection into the parliamentary committees. The findings are discussed in turn.

4.4.2 Determinants of Women Selection into Parliamentary Committees

The analysis uncovered several determinants that influence the selection of women into parliamentary committees, shedding light on the modalities that guide this process. The analysis identified several key sub-themes that underscore the selection of female MPs to various committees, including political party alignment, lobbying efforts, commitment to parliamentary duties, academic background, experience, and activeness in parliament. These factors collectively shape the opportunities available to women in parliamentary roles, reflecting the dynamics of formal and informal criteria underpinning the selection process.

Political party alignment emerged as a significant determinant, with the analysis revealing that a female MP's political affiliations and alignment often influence her selection into certain parliamentary committees. The political party affiliation determines the type of committees into which women are placed, indicating a strategic approach by the leadership of political parties and the parliamentary caucuses in positioning female MPs.

Additionally, lobbying plays a crucial role, as women who actively lobby for certain positions or committee assignments are often successful in securing these roles. This aspect of the selection

process highlights the importance of personal agency and the ability to navigate political networks within Parliament. For instance, some parliamentarians have this to say:

R5: *Well, ideally women selection should be fairly distributed but committee leadership also look at those who are committed, activeness and participation. From 1993 to date, it has always been the speakers who have been championing the course of the participation of women.*

R3: *Before one is selected as a member of a committee, they look at your background in academics, and experiences in certain areas. Yes, Sometimes, gender is considered. In my previous capacity as the leader of parliament, sometimes we needed to make sure that there was a mixture of men and women in certain key committees and when people applied as per the norm, we asked the women for their preferred choices, even though we sometimes impose it on people.*

R6: *That (Committee membership) comes from party leadership and the background of the person plays a crucial role but those who may lobby or go to particular committees due to their connections, we called them 'protocol' members, but basically your education, work and other related experiences get you to committees upon consideration of your curriculum vitae. What is interesting is that one joins as a friend of the committee but you may not have the voting right when it comes to voting on issues.*

R7: *Personal courage, feeling a sense of intimidation, and depending on the educational background and lack of leadership, they may be reserved and so the urge to learn and be heard is very key. Taking myself as an example, people try to see if I have been in parliament before. But I am a first-time entrant but I have made 17 major contributions which is significant. Just look for problems, understand and put it across.*

R11: *Before you are admitted into a committee, you will fill out a form and you will indicate the committee that you want to belong to and actually attach your CV and then justify your expertise. You know, the usefulness of your training to that particular committee.*

The insights drawn from these interviews suggest that while gender considerations are occasionally factored into the selection of committee members, they are often secondary to other criteria such as academic background, professional experience, and perceived commitment or participation. R3 explicitly mentions the necessity of ensuring a "mixture of men and women" in key committees, yet also acknowledges that gender balance is not always achieved voluntarily, sometimes requiring "imposition." This indicates that gender parity may be more tokenistic or

symbolic rather than structurally integrated into the selection process. R5 reinforces this view by noting that while fair distribution of women is the ideal, the real determinants are often activeness and commitment, which, though seemingly meritocratic, can inadvertently reinforce existing gender hierarchies if women are systematically excluded from opportunities that develop such competencies. R6's reflection on party leadership influence, educational qualifications, and informal networks (or "protocol" members) suggests that committee assignments are politically negotiated and embedded in a culture of gatekeeping, where access is mediated by connections rather than formal rules. Collectively, these perspectives imply that while formal structures might pay lip service to gender inclusivity, the actual processes of selection favour entrenched power dynamics and may inadvertently perpetuate male dominance in parliamentary committees.

Other important factors that emerged as determinants of women inclusion in the composition of parliamentary committees include socio-cultural context of elections, confidence in parliamentary duties, the influence of women in committee space, and the role of women in leadership positions. These factors are elaborated further below.

4.4.2.1 Socio-cultural factors

The study found that socio-cultural dynamics play a crucial role in shaping the political landscape and often reinforcing traditional gender roles that limit women's participation in governance and decision-making processes. In certain regions of Ghana, deeply entrenched cultural norms and practices restrict women's autonomy, thereby impacting their ability to fully participate in political life. These sociocultural norms invariably are mirrored within the politics and dynamics of the parliamentary space and thus shape selection processes for parliamentary committees. In many parts of the country, societal expectations dictate that leadership and political representation are

primarily the domains of men. These cultural beliefs often undermine women’s potential to hold public office, leading to a preference for the selection of male representatives in parliament. This preference is not just a reflection of individual biases but is deeply rooted in the broader socio-cultural fabric that views men as more suitable for leadership roles, especially in political and public spheres. As a result, women from these regions face significant barriers when attempting to enter or progress within the political arena, which invariably affects their representation in parliamentary committees. Table 4.4 shows the underrepresentation of women in the regional distribution of MPs in the 8th and 9th Parliament of Ghana.

Table 4. 4: Regional analysis of gender representation in Parliament

No.	Region	2020-2024			2025-2028		
		Eighth Parliament			Ninth Parliament		
		Males	Females	Females %	Males	Females	Females %
1	Ahafo Region	5	1	16.66	6	0	0
2	Ashanti Region	42	5	10.64	41	6	12.77
3	Bono East Region	10	1	9.09	9	2	18.18
4	Bono Region	12	0	0	10	2	16.67
5	Central Region	17	6	26.09	17	6	26.09
6	Eastern Region	29	4	12.12	29	4	12.12
7	Greater Accra Region	21	13	38.24	25	9	26.47
8	North East Region	5	1	16.67	6	0	0
9	Northern Region	18	0	0	17	1	5.56
10	Oti Region	7	1	12.5	7	2	22.22
11	Savannah Region	6	1	14.29	6	1	14.29
12	Upper East Region	13	2	13.33	13	2	13.33
13	Upper West Region	11	0	0	11	0	0
14	Volta Region	14	4	22.22	16	2	11.11
15	Western North Region	9	0	0	9	0	0
16	Western Region	16	1	5.89	12	5	29.41
	Total	235	40		234	42	

Source: Parliament of Ghana

From Table 4.4, A close examination of Ghana’s parliamentary composition reveals notable regional disparities in the representation of women. The overall female representation, although it

rose slightly from 40 in the Eighth Parliament (2020–2024) to 42 in the Ninth Parliament (2025–2028), still accounts for a meager 15.2% (42 out of 276 seats). This figure, while marginally higher than the earlier rate, falls significantly short of gender parity and is emblematic of the systemic challenges that women face in entering and thriving within Ghana’s political landscape.

The regional analysis exposes sharp contrasts. Some regions have persistently low or nonexistent female representation. Ahafo, for instance, saw its female representation drop from 16.7% in the Eighth Parliament to 0% in the Ninth Parliament, highlighting a stark reversal. Bono, Upper West, and Western North regions similarly reported no female MPs in both terms, suggesting the presence of deep-rooted cultural norms and practices that effectively exclude women from political leadership. The Northern Region fared only slightly better, moving from 0% to a mere 5.6% female representation, reflecting entrenched patriarchal systems that hinder women’s political participation.

On the other end of the spectrum, Greater Accra and Central regions showed relatively higher, though still unequal, levels of female representation. Greater Accra’s female representation dropped from 38.2% in the Eighth Parliament to 26.5% in the Ninth, while Central Region maintained a consistent 26.1% representation. However, even these more inclusive regions fall short of equitable gender participation, with men continuing to dominate parliamentary seats. Regions such as Volta and Oti illustrate fluctuating patterns, with Volta’s female representation falling from 22.2% to 11.1% and Oti’s rising from 12.5% to 22.2%. These shifts suggest a fragile and inconsistent trajectory of female political participation.

The data clearly shows that in regions where patriarchal norms are strongly embedded, such as Bono, Upper West, Western North, and Northern Ghana, women's political representation is severely restricted. These patterns reflect a broader societal belief that leadership and political participation are inherently male domains, which in turn influences parliamentary selection processes, including committee appointments. Women's potential for public leadership is systematically undermined, with structural and cultural barriers discouraging their political engagement.

While some progress has been made in certain regions, the overall gender landscape of Ghana's Parliament remains skewed in favour of men. The regional data reinforces the argument that sociocultural norms, particularly in more traditional areas, act as significant obstacles to women's autonomy and full participation in political life. These norms are mirrored and perpetuated in the internal dynamics of Parliament, where the selection of members to parliamentary committees continues to favour men, reinforcing gendered hierarchies of power.

The study suggests that these socio-cultural influences extend beyond mere selection preferences and shape the overall perception of women's roles within the political system. In areas where traditional views are particularly strong, there may be resistance to the idea of women participating in high-stakes political decision-making, further entrenching gender asymmetry. This resistance can manifest in various forms, from overt exclusion of women in political processes to subtler forms of bias that limit their leadership opportunities. Consequently, these socio-cultural factors not only hinder the initial selection of women for parliamentary committees but also contribute to

the ongoing underrepresentation and marginalisation of women within Ghana's political structures.

For instance, some of the participant revealed the following socio-cultural explanations:

R3: *In my last contest, the people were saying they do not want a woman to lead them, which is more cultural in our part of the country. and I had to go to Facebook in her defence for the people to stop talking to her about her sex, marriage, and all. This was to save her from the harsh criticisms for them to refer to her as a candidate rather than something else. She did very well I must confess when it got to the votes.*

R1: *Unfortunately, the old norms of men being perceived to be more superior still persist. You know these ideas cuts across all facets of our society and politics is no different. For example, the Akan areas women seem to historically have more rights than women from the communities which are patrilineal like the Northern and Volta regions. So yes, the same situation occurs in parliaments and in particular also in the committees.*

R8: *Despite the obvious influence of our culture which is by way very reactionary, some women MPs have distinguished themselves, in my time the likes of Christine Churcher (former female MP). And, really if you are an extraordinary woman and very confident you can navigate yourself in all these sociocultural nuances. And I think she and others during that time were on the so-called “influential” committees.*

The interviews reveal that sociocultural norms and practices play a profound role in shaping not only the selection of women for parliamentary committees but also the perception of women's legitimacy and authority in political spaces. The testimonies highlight that in many areas, especially those steeped in traditional and patriarchal norms, there is an explicit resistance to women's leadership. R3 illustrates this vividly, recounting a situation where community members openly rejected a woman's candidacy, rooted in cultural biases that defined women by their sex and marital status rather than their competencies. This public opposition required defensive actions on social media to reframe the candidate's image from one tied to her gender to one focused on her qualifications.

R1 reinforces this by pointing out the historical and regional variations in gender norms, noting that in patrilineal areas such as the Northern and Volta regions, cultural beliefs that position men

as superior persist, mirroring the exclusion of women from both public life and parliamentary committees. This suggests that the selection processes for parliamentary committees are not isolated bureaucratic decisions but are deeply intertwined with the cultural fabric of Ghanaian society, which often reserves leadership and decision-making for men.

R8 offers a contrasting narrative, acknowledging that while sociocultural barriers are significant, some exceptional women have managed to navigate these constraints through extraordinary confidence and competence, gaining access to influential committees. However, this pathway is not the norm and indicates that for many women, access to leadership roles is contingent on surpassing exceptionally high thresholds of performance and resilience, rather than on a level playing field.

These perspectives underscore that entrenched cultural biases limit women's participation in parliamentary structures and leadership, reinforcing the notion that gender representation in Parliament, and particularly in committee selection, reflects broader societal attitudes toward women's roles and capabilities. These attitudes not only affect the initial access to parliamentary committees but also perpetuate women's marginalisation within the political system.

4.4.2.2 Confidence and Activeness in Parliamentary Duties

The analysis also pointed out that one's activeness in parliamentary discourses and activities is a key determinant, thus, an MP with a significant presence, regardless of gender, is more likely to be selected for certain committee roles. Although modalities for selection to committees appear to be gender-neutral, the study raises questions about how these criteria are applied in practice and whether they inadvertently reinforce existing gender biases within the parliamentary system.

When the few women who are represented in parliament actively participate in parliamentary duties, it challenges existing notions of gender roles and helps to mitigate the perception of asymmetry. Their active involvement demonstrates their capability and commitment, potentially influencing both male colleagues and the general public to view women as equally competent in fulfilling parliamentary responsibilities. This increased visibility and participation by women can lead to a gradual shift in the traditional gender dynamics that have historically dominated the political landscape.

Women who exhibit strong personal courage in the face of challenges, such as taking bold stances on issues or leading key initiatives, are more likely to be seen as equals to their male counterparts. Conversely, women who may feel intimidated or less confident in their roles could reinforce the perception of gender disparity, as they may be less visible or less vocal in parliamentary activities. This sense of intimidation, often stemming from being in the minority and facing potential bias or discrimination, can hinder a woman's ability to fully engage in her parliamentary duties, thereby perpetuating the cycle of gender asymmetry. A participant shared the following experience:

RI7: *When I was a member of the Constitutional Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, there were two women on the committee from the NPP side, who were very vocal, that is Adjoa Safo and Ursula Owusu. They were extremely vocal and had an opinion on everything that came before the committee. They argued back and held their views firmly on the committee. So again, it depends on the level of competence of the person. For instance, currently I am on the Subsidiary Legislative committee. Most of the time I have to prop the women to speak. they come in and they are silence throughout. I take it that the women who are on my committee now are not Lawyers and most of the stuff that we discuss on that committee is legal. So sometimes they are reluctant to talk. So, most of the time it is the lawyers who talk or those who have expertise in the area of regulation that's when non-lawyers will be contributing.*

The narrative suggests that women's visibility and influence within parliamentary committees are closely linked to their confidence, expertise, and willingness to assert themselves. Women who display boldness and strong opinions, such as the vocal and assertive members mentioned, are perceived as equals to men and are more likely to be respected within the committee dynamics. However, those who are less confident or feel intimidated, often due to the complex and specialized nature of certain committee discussions (e.g., legal matters), tend to remain silent, reinforcing perceptions of gender disparity. This silence, whether stemming from a lack of legal expertise or fear of being overshadowed, perpetuates the cycle of marginalisation where women's contributions are undervalued, and their presence remains peripheral in key decision-making processes.

4.4.2.3 Influence of women in leadership roles

Moreover, the study found that preferential treatment is sometimes afforded to the few women who occupy leadership positions within the various parliamentary committees. This preferential treatment may stem from a desire to ensure that women's voices are adequately represented and heard in a male-dominated environment. It may also reflect the subtle recognition that female MPs, by overcoming significant barriers to reach their positions, bring unique perspectives and value to the committee discussions. While this preferential treatment can be seen as a positive step towards balancing gender representation and influence, it also raises questions about the underlying dynamics of power and whether true equality has been achieved. Nonetheless, the study's findings indicate that beyond the descriptive representation, the substantive participation of women MPs in contributing to and shaping the discourse and decisions within these critical legislative spaces is encouraged. Some Respondents have these to say:

R12: *When a woman was the speaker of parliament, she had control and was not pushed down because she was the legal brain of this country. She did her best and had the knowledge.*

R4: *Yes, my schoolmate was Adjoa Safo (female MP) and we entered parliament at the same time. She served well when her party was in opposition and rose to become deputy majority leader when her party came to power and she became a Minister. Here, we do not care who your father is and where you are coming from. Competence and output are the yardstick for rising to leadership positions.*

R15: *The new Standing Committees recently has a number of women in leadership. I believe Hon Lariba Abudu (female MP) is a deputy Ranking Member on the Committee on Petitions, and Hon Rita (female MP) is also a Ranking member in her committee. I think Hon. Ama Pooma Boateng (female MP) is also in leadership on the Committee for Economy and Development.*

The leadership roles within the various parliamentary committees are not exclusively reserved for male parliamentarians, as the appointment of committee leaders is theoretically open to all members who meet the established criteria. However, the reality observed in the study suggests that leadership appointments within these committees tend to favour male parliamentarians. The study identified that only a few women hold leadership positions in the committees, highlighting a significant gender disparity in power distribution and influence within these legislative committees. While it is acknowledged that the overall number of women in parliament is relatively low, the underrepresentation of women in committee leadership raises concerns about the fairness and inclusivity of the selection process. Parliamentarians interviewed during the study revealed that selecting women for leadership positions is often perceived as an afterthought, rather than a deliberate and proactive effort to ensure gender balance. Despite the availability of qualified female parliamentarians, their appointment to leadership positions appears to be sporadic and inconsistent, suggesting that systemic biases may be influencing the selection process. The study's findings revealed that, even when women meet the necessary criteria for leadership, they may still face barriers that limit their opportunities to ascend to these positions. Some of the study

respondents shared their observations, that women assuming leadership positions on committees whose functions are considered masculine was a rare occurrence.

Nonetheless, it cannot be discounted that the recent inclusion of women into parliamentary committee leadership spaces, although inadequate, marks a positive shift towards greater gender equity within parliamentary committees. However, the fact that this change is only now occurring call for a more comprehensive and intentional approach to dismantling the barriers that have historically prevented women from ascending to leadership positions across all committees. This would involve not only recognizing women's capabilities beyond traditionally "female" roles but also ensuring that the structures and practices within parliament actively promote and support women's leadership more equitably and inclusively. Some participants had this to say:

R19: *During my time in parliament, I did not come across women in leadership position but in recent times, Patricia Appiah-Adjei chairs the privileges committee. So, she will be a very good resource to this research. She has also been a Minister before.*

R15: *From 1992, we have not seen any gender minister who is a man and it has been accepted and has become a sort of written code, even though not enshrined. It is only in recent times the deputy ranking member for the gender committee was given to a man, hitherto they were all women. The men have a lot of opportunities so they do not really care about this one gender committee that may seem to be out of their favour. And in the recent case of having a male as ranking members for the gender committee, it was not a case that they fought for it.*

R13: *My observation is that, in even placing us (females) on various committees, sometimes they just bunch up a number of women in one committee like the gender committee. They just bunch up so many women and there are so many other committees that don't have even one female MP.*

The interviews highlight that while the recent inclusion of women in committee leadership roles signals progress toward gender equity, this change is both belated and uneven. The patterns suggest that women's advancement into leadership has been limited to a few spaces, and at times, their presence appears symbolic rather than indicative of structural change. The continued tendency to cluster women into traditionally "female" committees, coupled with the persistent underrepresentation of women in other committees, underscores the need for intentional and systemic reforms. These reforms must move beyond token appointments to genuinely dismantle the cultural and institutional barriers that have long restricted women's leadership in parliamentary spaces.

4.4.3 Affirmative Action Rules in Favour of Women in Committee Space

To mitigate the problem of gender imbalance in parliament, the parliament has introduced some kind of affirmative action rules allowing women to serve on more than two committees. While this approach provides women with greater visibility and involvement in parliamentary activities, it also risks obscuring the underlying issue of gender asymmetry. By placing women on multiple committees, the parliament may create an illusion of equal participation, even though the fundamental inequities in representation and influence remain unaddressed. Although this affirmative practice, could enhance both the descriptive and substantive representation of female MPs within the committee space, it will necessarily not resolve the deeper structural issues that contribute to gender asymmetry in parliamentary leadership and decision-making processes.

Additionally, the study highlighted these women parliamentarians, like their male counterparts, have the right to attend and observe proceedings in committees to which they are not formally assigned, a practice known as "befriending" a committee. However, this practice does not grant

them the right to vote or actively influence the outcomes of the committee's work. While this allows women to stay informed and involved, it further underscores the limitations on their power and influence within the parliamentary system. The lack of voting rights for "befriended" committees serves as a reminder that, despite their presence, women parliamentarians still face significant barriers to full participation and influence, perpetuating the uneven gender power relations in parliament. Some Respondents shared the following statements below to throw more light on this assertion:

R12: *There are only forty women, and one is allowed to be on only two committees, but for one or two persons who may be on more than two committees but these are usually members who may be in their third to fifth terms in parliament.*

R9: *The women MPs are only 40 which is only about 13 or so percent. How can the women be so effective? The numbers are simply too small. Perhaps a 30 percent could have made some meaningful impact on policies.*

The study found that the Ghanaian parliament acknowledges the issue of gender asymmetry and is actively seeking to address this imbalance through various efforts, particularly by advocating for change at the political party level. Recognizing that political parties play a critical role in the election and representation of women in parliament, there is a concerted push to encourage these parties to adopt more inclusive and affirmative practices.

One of the key strategies discussed involves urging political parties to commit to an affirmation agenda that prioritises the selection and support of female parliamentary aspirants. This includes not only encouraging parties to nominate more women for electoral positions but also to actively create a supportive environment that fosters their success during elections.

In addition to promoting affirmative agendas, there are also efforts to protect the parliamentary seats held by women, ensuring that they are not easily displaced or marginalised within the political process. This protection could involve policies that safeguard the seats of incumbent female MPs, preventing them from being ousted due to party politics or other pressures. The study highlights that these efforts are seen as essential steps towards bridging the gender gap in parliament, recognizing that systemic changes at the party level are crucial for achieving long-term gender parity. By focusing on advocacy within political parties, parliament is taking a proactive stance in addressing gender asymmetry, aiming to create a more balanced and representative legislative body that reflects the diverse population it serves.

R6: *That is a problem, and we have been fighting it individually. Our recent speaker is a pro-woman and does a lot to promote women, but it must be from the party level where seats may be allocated specifically for women. In my view, parliament cannot do much and on the party level, I know the men will not be comfortable with it and will fight it...*

R4: *Yes, affirmation must surely come from the party level as parliament cannot change anything as it is the outcome of what the parties decide. But some members like Hajia Boforo (female MP) were exceptional in their time and became deputy majority whip and later, majority whip and was one of the longest serving members of parliament like Hawa Yakubu, Christiana Appiah Adjei and Ama Benyiwa Doe.*

The study noted that some members of parliament do not support the use of affirmative action strategies to improve female representation in parliament as well as female leadership in Committees. For instance, some study participants stated these:

R16: *I believe in affirmative action but not in that direction, I feel we underrate them (women) if we choose that path and will not make them equal to men by this. I would wish we rather create opportunities for them as we may do for everybody.*

R18: *It will be difficult for parliament to pursue an affirmative action. Currently, how parliament is constituted, who should relinquish his seat for a woman? If there is anything considerations for affirmative actions, it should be at the party level where it may be agreed that no one competes with a woman for a seat or political parties agree to have women*

stand for particular seats in particular constituencies. Allowing only women to take over a woman's seat and when it becomes a statute in the parties, it will be duly respected and I think the men will not protest this if sensitization is done.

The analysis reveals that while affirmative action measures, such as allowing women MPs to serve on more than two committees, have been introduced to increase female visibility and participation, these interventions often serve as surface-level solutions that fail to address the deeper structural inequities in parliamentary representation. The practice may enhance women's descriptive and substantive representation, yet it risks creating a false impression of equality, as core issues of gender asymmetry and limited influence persist. Moreover, the role of "befriending" committees highlights the limitations placed on women's authority, as their involvement in these committees does not equate to decision-making power, reinforcing the imbalance of gendered power dynamics. The small number of female MPs further exacerbates these challenges, with respondents noting that meaningful impact on policies and decision-making would require a substantially larger representation of women in Parliament.

4.5 How Gender Asymmetry in Ghana's Parliament Influences the Distribution of Positions within Parliamentary Committees

The second research objective was to find how gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament influences the distribution of positions within parliamentary committees. The study found that gender asymmetry limits the chances of women for leadership positions in the Standing and Select Committees of Parliament. It also reduces training opportunities for women in parliament.

4.5.1 Leadership Positions in Committees

The composition of leadership in Ghana's parliamentary committees (both Standing and Select Committees) reflects persistent gender imbalances that extend beyond overall membership to the

distribution of power and influence. While strides have been made in promoting female participation in Parliament, a closer look at leadership roles within both the Standing and Select Committees reveals that men continue to dominate these positions. The limited presence of women in key leadership roles suggests that, despite efforts to improve gender representation, the dynamics of parliamentary power remain heavily skewed in favour of men. This pattern raises critical questions about the inclusivity and equity of decision-making processes within Parliament and underscores the need for intentional reforms to address the structural and cultural barriers limiting women's leadership in Ghanaian politics.

A closer examination of the Standing Committees leadership positions (see Table 4.2) reveals an even starker gender imbalance. Of the 20 committees, 19 have male chairpersons, while only one is chaired by a woman, reinforcing the dominance of men in leadership roles within Parliament. The position of ranking member, a key leadership role in committee dynamics, is exclusively male, with 14 men holding this role and no women recorded. Furthermore, while the position of deputy ranking member shows slightly better female representation, with two women holding these posts, it remains predominantly male, with 12 men in this role. This distribution of leadership roles indicates a clear underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions, reflecting entrenched gender hierarchies in parliamentary governance. Leadership positions within these committees are particularly skewed in favour of men, underscoring the need for more proactive measures to promote gender parity in leadership of parliamentary committees.

The gender analysis of the Select Committees leadership (see Table 4.2) further also underscores the negative impacts of gender asymmetry on female leadership in Parliament. Of the 24 Select Committees, 21 are chaired by men, while only 3 are chaired by women. Although there is a

marginal presence of female leadership at the chairperson level, it still reflects an overwhelming male dominance (87.5%). The positions of ranking member and deputy ranking member similarly show skewed representation: 20 ranking members and 20 deputy ranking members are men, while only 3 women hold these positions each. Additionally, one committee has missing data for ranking and deputy ranking members, indicating potential gaps in reporting or documentation. The leadership structure thus remains firmly entrenched in traditional gender hierarchies, with limited opportunities for women to assume decision-making roles within parliamentary committees.

Despite the formal criteria of longevity and experience, the study found that male parliamentarians are more likely to benefit from the allocation of resources and opportunities, largely due to their greater numbers and longer tenure in parliament. Female parliamentarians, though equally capable, often face structural barriers that limit their access to these resources. This unequal distribution not only affects their ability to influence decision-making but also reinforces the gender imbalance within the committees. The study noted that even when women meet the required experience and have served long enough in parliament, they still receive fewer opportunities compared to their male counterparts, which perpetuates the cycle of gender asymmetry. As a result, the progression of parliamentary duties and the associated distribution of resources continue to favour men. Some of the participants reiterated the following:

R5: *I did mention that longevity and experience in parliamentary affairs is key to having leadership roles in parliament and most of the women parliamentarians have not gotten that, yet, the other thing is their numbers.*

R2: *I think it is just about the numbers, as the men get almost all the opportunities because they are more and sometimes if it is a training or an outside travel, they do all men affair and when I get to know, I go there and fight them. Sometimes you do not even hear about it so you always have to be checking and nosing around for information when you find yourself on a committee as a woman.*

The study also noted that the use of longevity as yardstick for the distribution of resources negatively affects women due to their high attrition rate as women parliamentarian: A participant had to say this:

R4: *Attrition is a factor which does not help the quest of women to grow and also add up to the numbers in parliament. And attrition is not exclusive to women. We should have a mechanism in place as it exists elsewhere to retain hardworking and performing parliamentarians who may be rated or polled for them to have a certain level of votes to insulate them from attrition problems.*

The study revealed that, at the committee stage, the distribution of resources is influenced by party affiliation and the interests of the political party in power. This finding suggests that the dynamics of resource allocation within parliamentary committees are driven more by political strategy and the priorities of the ruling party than by considerations of gender equity. In the allocation process, the political alignment of committee members plays a critical role, with resources being directed towards those who align closely with the party's objectives and agenda. This means that decisions about who receives resources are primarily influenced by how well individuals support and advance the party's goals rather than their gender. Consequently, while gender asymmetry is often highlighted in discussions about representation and leadership within parliamentary committees, it appears to be less of a factor when it comes to the distribution of resources. Instead, the party's need to maintain control and push forward its legislative agenda takes precedence, leading to a resource distribution framework that prioritises party loyalty and interests over gender considerations. Some participants mentioned factors beyond gender considerations:

R16: *The reason why gender might not be very relevant is because of party representation, as your gender does not matter when there has to be a line of thought and positioning the party, and the MP has to tow that line.*

R15: *In terms of resource distribution, the men do not make the decision alone and the chairman is not too powerful to decide things. Besides we hardly even vote at the committee*

level and tend to agree on so many things. Also, in most of the committees I sit on agree most of the time and gender does not affect the distributions of resources.

The persistent gender disparities in the leadership of Ghana's parliamentary committees reveal a deeply rooted structural imbalance that extends far beyond mere numerical representation. Despite incremental progress and the existence of highly capable female parliamentarians, entrenched cultural and institutional norms continue to hinder women's access to leadership roles and equitable resource distribution. The analysis highlights how formal criteria such as longevity and experience, which at first glance appear neutral, effectively disadvantage women due to their historically lower representation and higher attrition rates.

Moreover, while resource allocation in committees seems driven more by party loyalty and political strategy than by gender considerations, these underlying dynamics further entrench male dominance by consolidating power around long-serving, predominantly male, parliamentarians. Ultimately, the findings underscore the pressing need for deliberate and transformative reforms, both structural and cultural, to dismantle the barriers that perpetuate gender asymmetry within Ghana's parliamentary system. Only through comprehensive measures that promote inclusivity and equity can Parliament begin to reflect the full diversity and potential of its members.

4.5.2 Women Inclusion for Training Opportunities: Conferences and Seminars

The study found that women in Ghana's Parliament face fewer opportunities for international travel related to workshops, seminars, and other learning opportunities, thereby highlighting an aspect of gender asymmetry within the legislative body. Participants in the study pointed out that while considerations are sometimes made to ensure female representation when conferences explicitly

require it, these instances are exceptions rather than the norm. Typically, the selection process for attending such events may be influenced by the preferences of the committee leader, who holds the authority to decide which members participate in international conferences or seminars. This practice can inadvertently perpetuate gender imbalances, particularly if the decision-making process is not guided by principles of equity and inclusivity.

Additionally, the study found that in certain cases, selection for conference attendance is based on seniority within Parliament. This criterion, while seemingly neutral, does not directly address or rectify gender asymmetry. The seniority-based selection process does not inherently disadvantage women; however, given the historical underrepresentation of women in Parliament, fewer women are likely to hold senior positions, which further reduces their chances of being selected for such opportunities. This underscores a broader issue where the existing structures and selection criteria, although not explicitly biased, can still contribute to the persistence of gender disparities in professional development and international exposure.

Moreover, the study revealed that Parliament lacks a formal policy specifically addressing the participation of women parliamentarians in conferences, workshops, and other similar events. The absence of such a policy means that decisions regarding participation are often ad hoc and subject to the discretion of individual committee leaders, which can exacerbate existing gender asymmetries. While some committees may offer more opportunities to women due to their smaller numbers, this is not a consistent practice across all committees. As a result, the overall picture of conference participation tends to disadvantage women, reflecting their underrepresentation in Parliament. This situation highlights the need for more structured and equitable policies that ensure

women parliamentarians have equitable access to international learning and networking opportunities, which are crucial for their professional growth and influence within the legislative body. Some of the participants reiterated that:

R9: *Women, as part of international trips for workshops, seminars and other learning avenues, women are not many so as per the numbers, men get more opportunities for such, based on proportion of men. But for all such trips, special considerations are made for women to be part. I am of the school of thought which is for merit basis rather than mere affirmative action...*

R14: *I do not see those special considerations for women to have opportunities to go to conferences, seminars and workshops. It has never been that there is someone out there fighting for you because you are a woman, except on occasion that some international conferences or seminars may specify a number of women or it may be mandatory for women to be part of the delegation.*

R6: *Selection of members from committees to attend conferences or seminars is based on the leadership of that committee. The leader may choose based on how long you have been in parliament. The seniority thing works very effectively here in parliament.*

The insights from the interviews reveal that women's access to international learning opportunities in Ghana's Parliament is both limited and inconsistently applied, reflecting deeper structural gender asymmetries within the legislative body. Although there are instances where special considerations are made to ensure women's participation—particularly when mandated by the event or external bodies—these are rare and appear more symbolic than systemic. R9's comment illustrates a merit-based perspective, where participation is perceived to be proportionate to the numerical dominance of men, inadvertently legitimizing the underrepresentation of women by linking it to their smaller numbers rather than addressing structural exclusions.

R14's reflection underscores a lack of institutional advocacy for women's involvement, noting that opportunities for women are largely contingent upon external mandates rather than internal

parliamentary initiatives. This indicates that the absence of formal policies specifically aimed at promoting women's participation in such forums perpetuates their marginalization. R6's observation about seniority-based selection further compounds this dynamic. While the criterion of seniority appears neutral, its impact is gendered due to the historical underrepresentation of women in Parliament, which has systematically limited their opportunities to accrue seniority and, by extension, access international platforms for professional development.

Collectively, these narratives suggest that the structures governing access to international learning and networking opportunities are not explicitly discriminatory, but they fail to account for existing gender disparities. By relying on informal, discretionary practices and criteria like seniority, Parliament effectively sustains a system where men continue to dominate professional growth avenues, while women's participation remains constrained and sporadic. The findings emphasise the urgent need for formalized, equitable policies that intentionally create pathways for women's inclusion and advancement, thereby addressing the systemic barriers to gender parity in parliamentary leadership and capacity-building.

4.6 Impact of Gender Asymmetry on the Influence of Women in Parliamentary Committees

This aspect of the analysis seeks to examine the final research objective concerning how gender asymmetry influences the role of women in policy-making in the committee space of Ghana's Parliament. The analysis highlights various sub-themes such as gender mainstreaming, affirmative action bills advanced by women, and efforts to improve women participation.

4.6.1 Gender Mainstreaming in Policy-making

The narratives collected from participants highlight a consensus that increasing women's representation in parliamentary committees is vital for addressing policy areas that particularly affect women and children. Issues such as combating sexual harassment and exploitation, advocating for the rights and protection of children, and promoting women's empowerment require voices that can speak from lived experience.

As participants observed, a stronger presence of women in committees could enhance both the empathy and depth of debate, ensuring that parliamentary decisions are more inclusive and responsive to the realities of the broader population. The participants highlighted that having more women in these committees is crucial for ensuring that these issues are handled with the necessary empathy and understanding, reflecting the lived experiences and perspectives of women. Several participants expressed their views on this matter, emphasizing that a more substantial representation of women in parliamentary committees could lead to more effective and inclusive policymaking. They noted that women bring unique insights and approaches to governance, particularly in areas that directly impact women and children. By involving more women in these decision-making processes, parliament could better address the needs of a broader segment of the population, thereby promoting a more equitable and just society.

R4: *I think we need to encourage women to step forward and engage in politics and must be well motivated by men. Politics have been seen as masculine in this country from the onset and this perception has been changing.*

R18 *...My observation has been that, there are funding gaps for women. A man can walk over and a man will easily sail through and not even contend with issues of sexual advancements and harassments. This funding gaps and unique challenges affecting our effectiveness as women parliamentarians. And our constituents tend to favour men over us due to the fact that they may secure funds and do the job quicker and better than us. Maybe*

a better and more allocation of funds, a bit over and above that of men for women may bring some form of parity or equity.

Notably, participants like R4 emphasised the need for proactive cultural change, starting from the grassroots level, such as shifting from gendered leadership roles in schools to fostering early gender-neutral leadership opportunities. R18 highlighted how systemic financial and familial barriers, often ingrained from childhood, continue to shape women's experiences and limit their effectiveness in political spaces. Participants pointed to the necessity of lobbying and the challenges posed by entrenched parliamentary traditions, which often impede women's access to influential positions. These insights reveal that gender mainstreaming efforts cannot be effective without simultaneously addressing structural and cultural factors that perpetuate male dominance.

In essence, while efforts have been made to enhance women's participation in parliamentary committees, gender asymmetry remains a formidable barrier. It constrains not only the numerical representation of women but also their substantive influence in decision-making processes. Addressing this imbalance requires a holistic approach that combines policy reforms, targeted financial support, cultural transformation, and active mentoring to foster an environment where women's contributions are fully organised and valued.

4.6.2 Contribution to Public Policy-making

The study participants highlighted several instances where women have played a pivotal role in advancing the policy-making process, demonstrating their influence and effectiveness in this arena. These women have not only participated in discussions but have also led initiatives that have shaped policy outcomes. Their assertiveness and ability to articulate key issues have made them vital contributors to the committees, challenging the traditional notions of gender roles in

such political settings. Furthermore, the participants revealed that women in the committee space have shown a remarkable ability to lobby and influence the policy-making agenda, sometimes surpassing their male counterparts in this regard. This ability to navigate the complexities of the legislative process and garner support for their initiatives underscores the significant role that women play in shaping legislative outcomes. The participants cited examples of women successfully pushing for policies that address critical issues, reflecting their strategic acumen and determination to see their agendas realized.

The findings suggest that women in these spaces are not only active participants but are also leading figures in the legislative process. Their contributions are seen as equal to, if not sometimes greater than, those of their male colleagues. This challenges the conventional narrative of women passiveness in political decision-making and highlights the growing influence of women in the legislative process, particularly within parliamentary committees. The study suggests that women's voices and perspectives are increasingly shaping the direction of policy, contributing to a more balanced and inclusive approach to governance. Some participants shared the following:

R2: *We (female MPs) are more outspoken than the men so we sometimes bully them the women in politics are not cool like you think. We are very outspoken.*

R11: *The few women in parliament are able to advance policies and the cause of women and children in general. One can attend meetings and deliberations and contribute. And such contributions are taken onboard and, in my committees, my contributions are well taken, and sometimes Youth and Sports (Committee) engage me as culture feeds into their work. And, in all cases, gender dimensions are taken. With us being forty now, I am of the opinion that we should be doing more but I am not sure we are doing enough and we should not just wait for special days and events to make statements and others.*

R15: *In my committee for example the women do come to meetings regularly and they speak when they have contributions. In fact, here by principle, we are equal. So no one can stop anybody from speaking. In some cases, the women may not be active because they may not have or lack expertise in that area.*

R7: To a large extent, we manage to make our voices heard. Of course, we are confronted with being few but we are quite a tough cookie. The men sometimes joke that women here are like men and really, I think politics tend to make us that way.

The above views collectively challenge the stereotypical portrayal of women in politics as passive participants, instead revealing the assertive and impactful roles that female MPs are playing within Ghana's parliamentary committees. Female parliamentarians are not only contributing meaningfully but are also demonstrating leadership qualities that sometimes eclipse those of their male colleagues. R2's assertion that female MPs are "more outspoken than the men" directly counters the notion that women are silent or deferential in political decision-making. This boldness reflects a growing confidence and assertiveness among female MPs, which is vital for shaping public policy.

Many participants highlighted the substantive contributions of women to policy discussions, particularly those affecting women and children. This indicates that female MPs are increasingly seen as key advocates for inclusive policies, ensuring that gender considerations are integrated into parliamentary debates. Furthermore, the observation of participants that cultural factors and gender dimensions are being factored into committee discussions signals a broadening of the policy agenda, led by women's engagement and lived experiences.

Participants reinforced the idea that within committees, there is a principled expectation of equality where women are equally entitled to speak and contribute. However, her observation also suggests that technical expertise and subject familiarity can influence participation levels, highlighting the need for continued capacity-building among female MPs to enhance their policy influence. The

perception of some female MPs as being a “tough cookie” underscores the resilience and determination required for women to navigate male-dominated parliamentary spaces. This resilience not only allows women to assert their perspectives but also reshapes perceptions of female leadership within the political sphere. The acknowledgment by male colleagues that women MPs are “like men” further illustrates a shift in gender dynamics, where women’s active and assertive engagement is gradually normalizing within parliamentary culture.

Female MPs in Ghana’s Parliament are increasingly central to public policy-making, driving both the content and direction of legislative processes. Their assertiveness, resilience, and commitment to inclusive governance challenge traditional gender stereotypes and contribute to a more balanced, equitable approach to policymaking. This evolving dynamic signal a gradual but significant shift in the role of women within Ghana’s political landscape.

The study revealed that not all legislative bills are advanced by the larger, more generalized parliamentary committees. In fact, women within these committees have often united to champion specific bills, thereby challenging and diluting the notion of policy-making asymmetry. This collaborative effort among women parliamentarians demonstrates their collective power and influence in driving forward legislation that addresses issues particularly pertinent to women and vulnerable groups. Among the bills that women have successfully advanced are those focusing on critical social issues such as widowhood and the protection of so-called “witches,” family and child protection, child defilement, and the Affirmative Action Bill, among others. These initiatives underscore the proactive role that women parliamentarians play in the legislative process, particularly in areas that directly impact the welfare of women and children. By coming together to advocate for these specific bills, women have effectively highlighted the importance of these

issues, ensuring that they receive the attention and action they deserve. This collective action not only demonstrates the effectiveness of women in the legislative process but also serves to counter the perception of gender asymmetry in policy-making. By successfully pushing for these significant bills, women parliamentarians have shown that they are not merely participants in the legislative process but are key drivers of meaningful and impactful legislation. Their ability to rally around specific issues and advance critical legislation illustrates the growing influence of women in shaping the policy agenda, contributing to a more balanced and equitable approach to governance. A participant mentioned this below:

R2: *There is a bill that we passed in the chamber on widowhood and witches camp in Gambaga, and if the president assents to it, that will be an accomplishment. But we make laws which will shape policy. Whenever the government and ministers bring these policies, we always consider gender.*

Again, women have contributed to other sensitive bills that promoted women's rights. For instance, a participant spoke on the marital rape bill which did not see the light of the day due to strong opposition from some MPs and the larger society:

R4: *The policy on marital rape came from the executive and it did not see the light of day and those who championed that particular bill were not forceful enough as the males. Frankly, this bill could have seen the light of day if there were more women in support. You will be shocked that when it first came to the house, most women did not support it because they thought that it could be a recipe for instability in a lot of marriages in the country. And we saw a dis-united front of the women in parliament on this issue, especially on the issue of marital rape.*

Women have become increasingly aware of the gender representation asymmetry within political structures and have taken proactive steps to advocate for policies aimed at improving their

numbers, from the parliamentary level down to the political party level. Their advocacy efforts reflect a strategic approach to policy reform. The Affirmative Action Act passed in 2024 was at the forefront of these initiatives. Women parliamentarians and their allies understood that the passage of the Affirmative Action bill could be a game-changer, particularly in terms of seat reservation for women. This policy-driven approach underscores the determination of women to not only increase their numbers but also to ensure that their voices are adequately represented in the decision-making processes that shape the nation's future. Through these actions, women are striving to create a more balanced and equitable political landscape, where women representation is not merely an ideal but a reality.

4.6.3 Influence of Women in Parliamentary Committees

The study revealed that despite the challenges of gender asymmetry, there are exemplary women in Ghana's Parliament who are notably resourceful and effective within the committee stage. These women, though few, have demonstrated significant capability and have made impactful contributions to the parliamentary committees they serve on.

Moreover, the study highlights that while many women MPs are making strides in their committee roles, the overall underrepresentation of women in Parliament means that their successes are often isolated examples rather than reflective of broader trends. The fact that only a few women are performing well in committees underscores the ongoing challenges of gender asymmetry within the legislative process. This situation calls for a more strategic approach to committee assignments, one that fully recognises and utilises the skills and expertise of female parliamentarians, ensuring they are given opportunities to thrive and lead within their respective domains. Some study respondents expressed their views as quoted below:

R4: *Yes, the few women I have served with on committees have been very resourceful and currently, I am the ranking member. And Dr. Zenator Rawlings has made immense contributions to the work of the committee. There is another female, Madame Helen Ntosu, very experienced, and she contributes effectively at committee meetings and they are all highly ranked on the committees.*

R3: *You could find women in some committees that they are unable to contribute to. Yes, to put it mildly, some women may have been put on certain committees or may have lobbied to be on somewhere they are not well vexed and may just be cosmetic or tokenistic. You could find women being on more committees than men, some could be on about three committees.*

The responses from participants indicate a significant level of activity and engagement by women in parliamentary committee activities. Female parliamentarians are described as being vocal and assertive within the committee spaces, actively participating in discussions and decision-making processes. This active involvement suggests that within the committee field, women are given equal opportunities to contribute. The perception that women can engage freely and confidently in committee work challenges the broader narrative of gender asymmetry, at least within this specific aspect of parliamentary operations. The participants' observations point to a sense of equality in participation, where women are seen as fully capable and are encouraged to voice their opinions and contribute to the legislative process on an equal footing with their male counterparts.

Moreover, the study highlights that the visible performance of women in committee work is a testament to their inclusion and the recognition of their capabilities within the parliamentary system. The active participation of women in committees not only underscores their competence but also reflects a broader acceptance and integration of women into key parliamentary functions. The study participants' perspectives thus portray a parliamentary environment where women are present and actively shaping discussions and decisions, contributing to a more inclusive and balanced legislative process. This finding is significant as it provides a counter-narrative to the

highlighted challenges of gender asymmetry, thus indicating that women MPs are thriving and making substantial contributions to parliamentary work in certain contexts. Some participants made these statements:

***R5:** The women compared to the men in terms of activeness, they are very active, fortunately, some have been Ministers before, like Honourable Queenstar has been a Minister before and Honourable Doyoe they are very vocal.*

***R9:** Right now, in the Energy Committee, the ranking member is a woman and she speaks. Her participation in committee duties is very high because she attends all meetings and is very vocal too.*

***R1:** Women are given equal opportunity to participate. Most definitely, when you are an MP, there is no doubt that you will not be part as a committee member. And you have to also realised that before one becomes an MP you have to first win primaries and also go for main elections. So, the women who get to come to parliament in my opinion are not the very average Ghanaian women. In fact, most of them are not timid at all, they express themselves.*

The analysis reveals that the visible performance of women in parliamentary committee work demonstrates their increasing inclusion and recognition within the legislative process. Women's active engagement in these spaces reflects their competence, confidence, and ability to shape critical discussions and decisions. Their vocal and regular participation signals not only a shift in parliamentary culture but also an acknowledgment of their capacity to contribute meaningfully to governance. This growing presence in committee work challenges the perception of women as passive participants and indicates their evolving role in shaping public policy.

Notably, women's engagement in traditionally male-dominated committees, coupled with their assertive contributions, suggests that institutional norms may be slowly adapting to accommodate more inclusive participation. Their ability to influence discussions, provide expert perspectives, and engage consistently in committee duties reflects a more balanced and integrated approach to

parliamentary governance. This indicates a shift away from tokenistic inclusion towards substantive participation that contributes to the overall effectiveness and representativeness of parliamentary decision-making.

In sum, while gender asymmetry remains a significant challenge in Ghana's parliamentary system, the active involvement of women in committee work presents a counter-narrative that highlights progress and potential. Their increasing visibility and vocal presence in these spaces reflect a gradual shift in both perception and practice, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable parliamentary environment. To sustain this momentum, continued efforts must focus on removing systemic barriers and promoting meaningful opportunities for women to lead and shape policy within parliamentary structures.

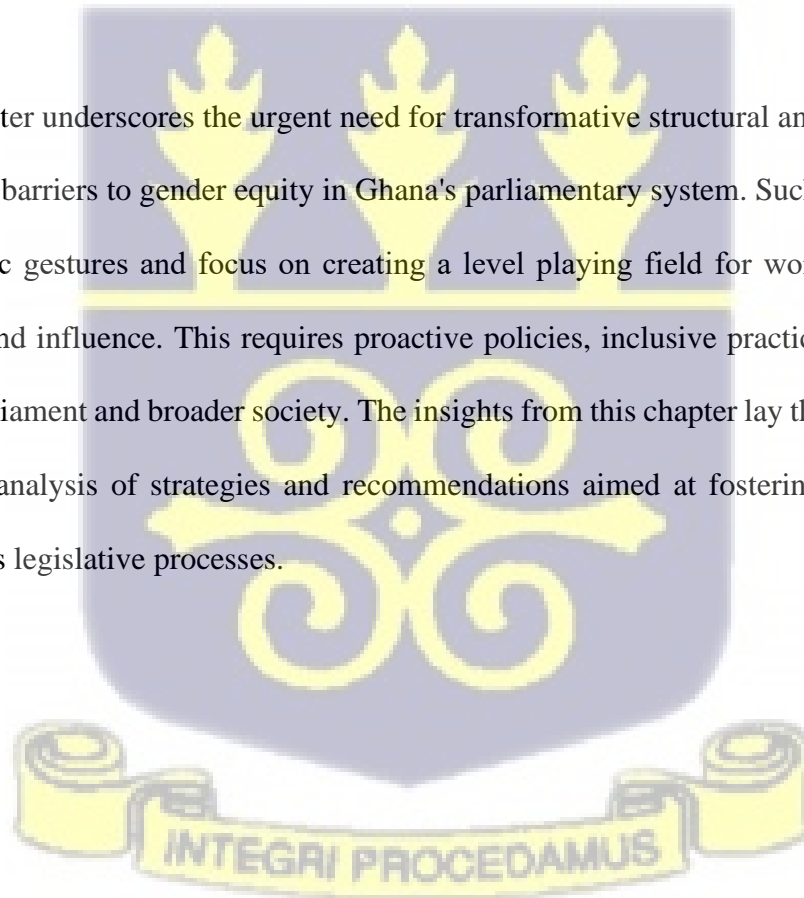
4.7 Chapter Conclusion

The empirical analysis has examined how gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament shapes the influence of female parliamentarians in the committee space of Ghana's parliament. It critically examined the multifaceted nature of the impact of gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament on the influence of female MPs in parliamentary committees, drawing on rich empirical data and insightful narratives from Members of Parliament. The findings reveal a persistent and deeply entrenched gender imbalance in committee membership, leadership, and resource distribution. Despite Ghana's incremental progress towards gender inclusivity, systemic challenges continue to limit women's full and equitable participation in the parliamentary decision-making process. The analysis highlighted how sociocultural norms, institutional structures, and informal practices collectively perpetuate male dominance, especially in powerful and influential committees. While

certain affirmative action measures and exceptional female leadership have created pockets of progress, these efforts remain insufficient to disrupt the broader patterns of gender asymmetry.

Importantly, the chapter has demonstrated that female MPs, when present and actively engaged, significantly influence policy deliberations and outcomes, particularly on issues affecting women and children. However, the limited number of women in Parliament constrains their collective impact, and opportunities for professional development and leadership remain skewed in favour of men. The testimonies underscore the resilience and determination of female MPs, who navigate complex political and cultural landscapes to assert their voices and contribute to governance.

In sum, the chapter underscores the urgent need for transformative structural and cultural reforms to dismantle the barriers to gender equity in Ghana's parliamentary system. Such reforms must go beyond symbolic gestures and focus on creating a level playing field for women's substantive representation and influence. This requires proactive policies, inclusive practices, and a cultural shift in both Parliament and broader society. The insights from this chapter lay the groundwork for the subsequent analysis of strategies and recommendations aimed at fostering genuine gender parity in Ghana's legislative processes.



CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Chapter Synopsis

This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the findings outlined in Chapter Four, linking them directly to the study's research objectives. It explores the nature and extent of gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliamentary committees and examines how this imbalance influences policy-making, leadership appointments, and resource allocation. The analysis critically engages with the underlying power dynamics and structural barriers that contribute to the underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles. It also assesses the broader implications of these disparities for parliamentary governance, including their impact on policy-making.

5.1 Nature of Gender Asymmetry

The analysis of gender asymmetry within parliamentary committees focused on four major themes: understanding gender asymmetry, factors contributing to gender disparities, the impact of women's participation in committees, and initiatives and support mechanisms aimed at promoting inclusivity.

5.1.1 Understanding Gender Asymmetry

The study provides important insights into the composition and dynamics of women's representation in Ghana's parliamentary committees. It found that women's participation remains low, mirroring global patterns of underrepresentation, particularly in West African parliaments. As Ballington and Karam (2005) note, women's representation in many legislative bodies worldwide continues to lag despite efforts to increase diversity. In Ghana, although women are

present on multiple committees, their numbers are limited, supporting the view that gender equality is essential for inclusive policymaking (Asekere, 2020). This suggests that structural and institutional barriers continue to hinder women's access to influential legislative roles. Ngele (2020) similarly observes that male-dominated political environments exacerbate the marginalization of women in parliamentary spaces.

These findings align with existing scholarship that links gender inequality in politics to resistant institutional norms and practices. Dahlerup (2006) emphasises that gender asymmetry in political institutions reflects deep-rooted societal inequalities as well as institutional inertia. The results of this study support that view, showing that gender disparities in Ghana's parliamentary committees are sustained by both structural and cultural forces that favour male dominance (Tretyakova & Khudoydodzoda, 2021). Despite various reform efforts, these barriers persist, limiting women's substantive influence in parliamentary decision-making.

The study further confirms the continuing challenge of gender inequality in parliamentary committees (Mickler, 2017). One core reason for this underrepresentation is the lack of political will to address gender imbalances (Okumo & Asfaw, 2014). Political parties frequently fail to prioritise women's participation in committees, weakening gender-sensitive policymaking. To counter this, some countries have adopted proactive measures such as gender quotas. Rwanda, for instance, has implemented quota policies that have resulted in women holding 61% of parliamentary seats (Lihiru, 2022). In contrast, women comprise only 13.8% of Ghana's Parliament, holding 37 out of 275 seats (Asekere, 2020). This underrepresentation has significant consequences for policymaking, as it limits the inclusion of women's perspectives (Ngele, 2020).

A major milestone in Ghana's political landscape is the recent passage of the Affirmative Action Bill, which mandates a 30% quota for women's representation in Parliament and other decision-making bodies. This legislative reform is expected to significantly increase women's presence and influence in shaping national policy. It signals a critical step toward dismantling systemic barriers and advancing inclusive governance. Another initiative involves the adoption of gender-sensitive language in parliamentary proceedings. Such practices aim to ensure that women's experiences and viewpoints are reflected in policy debates. Training programs on gender-sensitive communication can further raise awareness about unconscious biases and promote more inclusive legislative discourse (UN Women, 2020; Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019).

The study also identified key factors influencing women's selection to parliamentary committees, including political alignment, parliamentary priorities, and personal lobbying. Political affiliation plays a decisive role, echoing the work of Paxton and Hughes (2018), who argue that access to power is closely tied to party dynamics and institutional interests. Moreover, attributes such as education and professional background were found to affect committee appointments. This supports Krook and Norris's (2014) argument that merit-based criteria can be selectively applied in ways that exclude women. The use of personal lobbying as a compensatory strategy reveals the complex navigation required to overcome gendered gatekeeping in committee assignments.

Respondents further noted that committee structures are often skewed in favour of men, with selection processes biased against women. These findings support Krook's (2020) argument that structural and institutional mechanisms continue to marginalise women in political settings. Even when women are assigned to committees, their roles are often limited in scope and influence. This underscores the need to go beyond numerical representation by addressing the deeper cultural and

institutional barriers that constrain women's full participation. Informal mechanisms such as personal lobbying and strategic networking were also found to shape committee placements, consistent with the findings of Childs and Krook (2009) and Ilie (2015), illustrating the significance of behind-the-scenes negotiations in navigating male-dominated structures.

Ultimately, the study concludes that gender representation in Ghana's parliamentary committees remains disproportionately skewed toward male dominance. This confirms the arguments of Phillips (1995) and Goel and Nelson (2020), who stress that gender parity must encompass not only numbers but also meaningful opportunities to influence policymaking. The Ghanaian case shows that long-standing biases continue to define committee selection and participation. Achieving substantive equality will require not only increasing women's presence in these committees but also ensuring their perspectives are organised and integrated into decision-making processes.

5.1.2 Gender Asymmetry and Related Factors

The analysis identified several sub-themes contributing to gender asymmetry in parliamentary committees. These included socio-cultural factors, confidence in parliamentary duties, the influence of women in committee spaces, leadership roles, evolving patterns in female leadership, the status of women in Parliament, and the effect on policy outcomes. Socio-cultural biases, patriarchal norms, and institutional obstacles emerged as key factors that reinforce male dominance in leadership positions. These findings are consistent with studies emphasizing how entrenched social norms perpetuate gender inequality in political representation (Yoon, 2011; Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2017). For instance, Krook (2020) highlights how cultural expectations, which frame political leadership as a male preserve, discourage women's active

participation. In addition, structural barriers such as discriminatory selection practices and the absence of targeted policies to promote women's advancement intensify gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliamentary committees. This underscores the need for comprehensive interventions addressing both cultural and institutional sources of inequality.

In some areas of Ghana, traditional norms continue to restrict women's autonomy, creating a preference for male parliamentary representation. This reflects broader patriarchal systems that inhibit women's political participation across many regions. Tamale (2020) observes that these obstacles often result in systemic exclusion, where women are marginalised in decision-making processes. The persistence of these socio-cultural influences maintains disparities in parliamentary representation and participation.

Confidence and active engagement in parliamentary duties were found to be critical in shaping how gender asymmetry is perceived. The study showed that confident and active women parliamentarians can challenge gendered assumptions, demonstrating that individual agency is vital in resisting structural limitations. Traits such as courage, educational attainment, and resilience were cited as important in enhancing women's performance. Bauer and Burnet (2013) affirm that women who demonstrate competence and assertiveness are better positioned to counteract the expectations that often constrain their roles. Nonetheless, the broader challenge remains that systemic biases persist even when women meet these expectations.

Interestingly, the study revealed that in some committee settings, women not only participate freely but are also heard more than their male counterparts. This finding challenges the assumption that women are consistently marginalised. Ghana's past appointment of a female speaker of Parliament reflects progress, though the gender imbalance in committee leadership remains. O'Brien and

Piscopo (2019) argue that while women may reach top positions, these are often isolated achievements rather than the norm, pointing to the need for systemic reforms in leadership selection processes.

Leadership roles within parliamentary committees continue to favour male members, even though such positions are formally open to all. The study found that appointments of women to leadership positions often appear secondary or symbolic, reinforcing gender bias. This is consistent with Krook's (2010) view that even when formal access exists, informal criteria frequently disadvantage women. Despite the number of available committees exceeding the number of women representatives, men still dominate most leadership roles, highlighting how power and responsibility are unevenly distributed.

Historically, women have been excluded from committee leadership, a trend that has only recently begun to shift. Respondents noted that during their tenure, women rarely held leadership positions, with exceptions like the gender committee, which is traditionally aligned with women's issues. This trend is in line with global patterns where female representation is increasing but remains concentrated in gender-related areas (Paxton & Hughes, 2015). The absence of policies reserving positions for women exacerbates this imbalance. Discussions about reserving seats have yet to yield practical changes, leaving women to compete under unequal conditions. The finding that women can serve on more than two committees provides more involvement opportunities but may obscure underlying disparities by giving an impression of balance without redistributing real power.

5.1.3 Impact of Women in Committees

The analysis provided important insights into the impact of women in parliamentary committees, with emphasis on influence, resourcefulness, participation, and inclusion in developmental activities such as conferences and seminars. The study highlighted that several women in Ghana's Parliament have demonstrated exceptional competence in committee roles. However, some were seen as underperforming, possibly due to misalignments between their qualifications and committee assignments. These mismatches may stem from personal lobbying or other non-merit-based factors, aligning with findings that suggest women's committee placements can be influenced by structural and procedural constraints (Krook, 2010).

Even when women gain access to decision-making platforms, the impact of their contributions can be constrained by the symbolic nature of their appointments. Nonetheless, the study found that women's participation contributes to more inclusive decisions and better reflects diverse interests. Research by Childs and Krook (2009) and Phillips (1995) supports this, showing that increased female involvement enhances policy sensitivity to marginalised groups. Women were particularly noted for advocating issues related to welfare, education, and health—topics that often receive less attention in male-dominated settings (Allotey & Denton, 2020). Despite this, their limited numbers reduce their influence in final decisions. This points to the need for strategies that increase both numerical and substantive representation.

Participants perceived women parliamentarians as vocal and active, with no clear evidence of intimidation during committee activities. This suggests that women operate in a relatively inclusive environment during committee work, contrasting with the gendered barriers evident in leadership roles. This finding challenges broader assumptions of widespread gender discrimination in all

aspects of governance (O'Brien & Piscopo, 2019). However, Dahlerup (2018) argues that presence and participation do not guarantee influence, especially when systemic inequalities remain unaddressed.

The study also revealed that women face limited access to opportunities for international exposure, such as workshops, seminars, and conferences. Male parliamentarians often dominate these spaces, despite occasional gender-based considerations in selection. Decisions regarding attendance are frequently at the discretion of committee leaders or based on seniority, which can disadvantage women due to their smaller numbers. Paxton and Hughes (2015) argue that disparities in access to professional development limit women's political growth and reinforce gender-based hierarchies.

Another significant observation was the absence of a formal policy guiding women's participation in training events. While some committees extend these opportunities to women, these cases remain inconsistent. Without standardized policies, participation often depends on subjective decisions. Tamale (2020) notes that institutional gaps such as these perpetuate gender asymmetry by maintaining informal networks of privilege. The study found that some committees are more proactive in promoting women's participation in such events, but this unevenness points to a need for systematic reform. Krook and Norris (2014) warn that isolated successes may obscure deeper structural inequalities. Thus, addressing gender asymmetry requires comprehensive changes that ensure both fair representation and equal access to all parliamentary functions.

5.1.4 Initiatives and Support Mechanisms

The analysis identified several initiatives and support mechanisms aimed at promoting gender equality, with sub-themes such as institutional policies, advocacy, and capacity development. Political parties have introduced measures like reduced filing fees, reserved seats, and tailored

opportunities for female candidates. These efforts are consistent with research that shows political parties play a vital role in advancing women's representation through supportive measures (Krook & Childs, 2010). However, despite these efforts, deep-rooted barriers often persist. Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2016) note that while quotas and affirmative action are effective, they require complementary cultural shifts and long-term investment in leadership training.

The study identified further initiatives, including capacity-building programs, mentorship for women, and advocacy for quota policies. These align with international practices that advocate for institutional reforms alongside affirmative action (Krook & Norris, 2014; Van Berkel et al., 2017). Still, implementation often faces resistance from entrenched political interests. Research by Ballington and Karam (2005) and Krook and Norris (2014) emphasises that while gender quotas have succeeded in many countries, they are sometimes applied superficially without real commitment to change. This study underscores that advocacy must be paired with political will and accountability to produce lasting outcomes.

The study also found that Parliament acknowledges the issue of gender asymmetry and is taking steps to address it, particularly through engagement at the political party level. Key initiatives include encouraging affirmative action in party nominations and safeguarding women's electoral gains. Paxton and Hughes (2015) argue that party-level advocacy is a critical factor in improving women's representation. These strategies can lead to institutional changes that reduce exclusion and enhance gender equity within Parliament (Krook, 2010). Despite such advocacy, translating commitments into tangible improvements in committee representation remains a challenge (Childs & Palmieri, 2023).

Regarding access to knowledge-building opportunities, the study found no evidence of gender-based exclusion from training and workshops. Committee members of all genders appear to have equal access to resources designed to enhance parliamentary effectiveness. This supports the claim that formal mechanisms for knowledge transfer may be equitably distributed (O'Brien & Piscopo, 2019). However, Sarfo-Kantankah (2021) notes that while access may appear equal, informal biases and unequal networks can affect how resources are utilised and perceived.

Nonetheless, equal access to training does not always lead to equal benefit. Literature suggests that external factors such as societal roles and unequal influence networks may hinder women's ability to capitalize on these opportunities (Franceschet et al., 2012; Ahrens, 2016). Therefore, even where formal discrimination is absent, broader social constraints may limit outcomes. The study concludes that although Ghana's Parliament has made progress in ensuring training access and representation, much work remains in addressing underlying causes of gender inequality. As Tamale (2020) argues, closing the gender gap in politics requires transformation of political culture and sustained efforts to challenge patriarchal norms.

5.2 Distribution of Positions and Resources in Parliamentary Committee Space

The analysis revealed several sub-themes, including the influence of gender composition on resource distribution, challenges faced by women parliamentarians in voicing their concerns, the role of unifying efforts in gender representation, and the intersection of gender asymmetry with parliamentary accountability.

5.2.1 Gender Composition and the Distribution of Resources

Gender asymmetry in the distribution of positions within parliamentary committees affects the diversity of perspectives and priorities represented in policy-making. In many legislatures, women remain significantly underrepresented, leading to potential imbalances in decision-making processes (Ahrens, 2016). This study found that gender does not play a significant role in determining the distribution of resources at the committee level. Instead, party affiliations and political interests dominate resource allocation, suggesting that strategic political considerations take precedence over equitable gender representation (Murray, 2014). This reflects a broader pattern where party dynamics outweigh gender concerns in the distribution of committee responsibilities and resources.

The dominance of party interests in resource allocation complicates efforts to achieve gender equity within parliamentary systems. Research supports this observation, noting that political parties often prioritise strategy and power consolidation over gender equality (Childs & Krook, 2008). While achieving gender parity in committees is important, it does not automatically ensure equitable distribution of resources if underlying political dynamics remain unchanged (Hughes, 2011). The findings underscore the challenge of reconciling gender equity goals with existing political structures and highlight the need for systemic reforms.

To address this, efforts must focus on reforming political and institutional practices that impede fair resource allocation (Krook & O'Brien, 2012). This includes implementing merit-based policies that reduce the influence of party affiliations in committee assignments. In Ghana, women make up only 13 percent of Parliament, a statistic that directly impacts the gender balance within committees (Sarfo-Kantankah, 2021). This underrepresentation suggests that women's interests

may be inadequately reflected in committee deliberations, further limiting the inclusivity of policy outcomes.

5.2.2 Challenges Women Parliamentarians Face in Voicing Their Concerns

Despite being numerically underrepresented, the study found that women parliamentarians are able to effectively voice their concerns and influence policy discussions within committees. They frequently initiate conversations on the importance of female representation and contribute meaningfully to policy deliberations (Krook & O'Brien, 2012). This finding aligns with studies showing that women, even in minority positions, can shape policy outcomes through strategic engagement and advocacy (Caul, 2001).

The research also indicates that committee structures offer women opportunities to contribute ideas and engage in meaningful discussions. This level of inclusivity challenges the perception that gender asymmetry always limits women's participation (Childs & Krook, 2008). By actively participating in policy development, women demonstrate that their presence is impactful and that they can assert influence within existing structures.

The study underscores that challenges faced by women are not solely about numbers but also about how effectively they utilise available opportunities. Their ability to engage proactively reflects resilience and a commitment to shaping policy despite structural disadvantages (Lovenduski, 2005). While gender imbalance remains a concern, women's agency and strategic participation have proven effective in mitigating some of its negative effects (Murray, 2014).

5.2.3 Unifying Efforts and Gender Representation in Committee Spaces

The study found strong support among committee members, particularly women, for pooling resources across political parties to champion women's issues. This collaborative approach reflects a shared recognition of the need for collective action to address gender disparities in parliamentary decision-making. Cross-party cooperation has been shown to enhance the effectiveness of gender-focused advocacy and foster more inclusive policies (Hughes, 2011).

Pooling resources enables women parliamentarians to amplify their voices and exert greater influence in policy debates. The findings suggest that this strategy is viewed positively and is organised as a means of overcoming structural barriers to gender equality. Collaborative efforts allow women to leverage collective political capital, improving the visibility and effectiveness of their advocacy (Krook & Zetterberg, 2014).

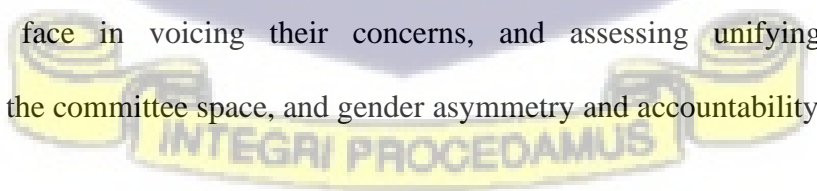
Inter-party collaboration not only facilitates the advancement of gender-sensitive policies but also promotes consensus-building and shared responsibility for gender equality. The study demonstrates that resource pooling is an effective strategy for promoting women's representation and influence in parliamentary committees. By adopting cooperative approaches, women parliamentarians can drive systemic changes that support more equitable and inclusive governance.

5.2.4 Gender Asymmetry and Parliamentary Accountability

The study found that increased gender diversity in parliamentary committees can enhance the quality and effectiveness of policy outcomes. Diverse perspectives enrich policy discussions and result in decisions that are more inclusive and representative of broader societal interests (Eagly

& Carli, 2003; Mojapelo & Faku, 2020). Women bring unique experiences and insights that contribute to more comprehensive policy solutions (Phillips, 2014). However, the study also notes that the effectiveness of gender diversity is influenced by individual capabilities, particularly lobbying skills. Some respondents observed that while women's presence is beneficial, effective policy outcomes often depend on the lobbying strength and strategic acumen of individual members (Norris, 2006). This suggests that diversity alone is not sufficient; the ability to advocate effectively is also crucial.

The tension between the value of diverse representation and the influence of individual skills highlights the complexity of achieving impactful policy-making. While promoting gender diversity is essential, it must be supported by efforts to build the strategic and lobbying skills of all committee members (Krook & Zetterberg, 2014). This balanced approach is necessary to optimise the policymaking process and ensure that diverse voices are not only present but also influential in shaping legislative outcomes (Eagly & Carli, 2003). Overall, the findings indicate that gender diversity enhances accountability and policy responsiveness, but its success depends on combining inclusive representation with individual capacity-building. Both structural reforms and personal development initiatives are needed to support effective and equitable decision-making in parliamentary committees. The analysis revealed various sub-themes such as gender composition applicability to the distribution of resources, assessing possible challenges women parliamentarians face in voicing their concerns, and assessing unifying force, gender representation in the committee space, and gender asymmetry and accountability



5.3 Impact of Gender Asymmetry on Female MPs in Policy-Making in Committee Spaces

This aspect of the analysis sought to measure the second objective that sought to investigate how gender asymmetry influences policy-making in the committee space of Ghana's Parliament. The analysis highlights gender asymmetry and how that influence policy-making in the committee level of Ghana's parliament. Various sub-themes emerged such as gender mainstreaming, policy making process, specific bills advanced by women, Women's efforts to improve women participation, impact of gender on policy outcomes, proportional women representation and policy outcomes.

5.3.1 Gender Mainstreaming in Parliamentary Committees

The analysis highlighted several factors influencing the inclusion of women in political leadership positions, reinforcing the prevailing narrative of gender asymmetry in politics. Among the key elements identified were societal initiatives, financial barriers, and family dynamics, each playing a critical role in either motivating or discouraging women from engaging in politics. The dual impact of societal initiatives was particularly noted; while some initiatives aim to encourage women's participation, others inadvertently perpetuate gender biases that hinder women's political involvement. This finding aligns with the broader literature which suggests that despite the growing number of gender equality programs, deep-seated cultural norms and gender stereotypes continue to restrict women's access to political spaces (Tadros, 2014). For example, societal expectations regarding women's roles often clash with the demands of political life, creating significant barriers for women aspiring to political office (Dahlerup, 2018).

Moreover, the study highlighted the substantial financial burden associated with political activities as a critical factor that limits the participation of women. The high cost of running political

campaigns and sustaining political careers tends to disadvantage women, who often have less access to financial resources than their male counterparts. Research supports this observation, noting that the gender pay gap, limited access to financial networks, and the higher financial risks faced by women all contribute to their underrepresentation in politics (Goetz, 2020). In many contexts, male-dominated networks control campaign financing and resource allocation, further entrenching gender disparities (Bauer & Burnet, 2013). This financial constraint, coupled with the general exclusion of women from influential political circles, significantly curtails their chances of advancing to leadership positions within parliamentary committees.

Family responsibilities also emerged as a significant factor affecting women's political participation, with participants noting that women often face additional pressures related to balancing family and career obligations. This resonates with global findings that highlight how women's domestic responsibilities often limit their availability for political work, making it harder for them to meet the demanding schedules of political life (Erikson & Verge, 2022; Lovenduski & Norris, 2003). The "double burden" of managing both household duties and political responsibilities places many women at a disadvantage compared to their male peers, who are typically not held to the same standards regarding family obligations. Consequently, these structural barriers contribute to the ongoing gender asymmetry within parliamentary committees.

The study also emphasised the importance of involving more women in parliamentary committees, especially given the nature of issues discussed, such as sexual harassment, child protection, women's empowerment, and domestic relations. Participants argued that women are often better positioned to address these issues effectively due to their lived experiences and insights. This view is consistent with the scholarship on substantive representation, which suggests that women are

more likely to prioritise issues that affect women, children, and marginalised groups (Phillips, 1995). When women are included in decision-making processes, policies related to gender equality and social protection are more likely to be considered and implemented (Celis & Childs, 2020). Therefore, increasing the representation of women in committees not only addresses gender asymmetry but also enhances the quality of policy outcomes in areas crucial to societal well-being. However, the persistent underrepresentation of women in these committees indicates that gender asymmetry remains entrenched in the political structure, despite the importance of women's contributions. While efforts to include more women in political decision-making spaces are ongoing, the pace of change remains slow. Structural reforms, such as quotas and targeted support for female candidates, are necessary to create more equitable political environments. Additionally, ongoing advocacy is crucial to challenge the socio-cultural norms and institutional practices that perpetuate gender disparities in political participation (Paxton & Hughes, 2015).

5.3.2 Gender Asymmetry and the Policy-making Process

The study's findings highlight the active role of women within parliamentary committees, noting that women are often more outspoken than some of their male counterparts. This observation is consistent with research suggesting that women, once included in decision-making spaces, are more likely to take assertive stances on issues that align with their priorities and lived experiences (Krook & O'Brien, 2012). The participants in the study cited examples where women took the lead in discussions, driving key debates forward and advocating for policies that address social justice, gender equality, and other areas traditionally under-represented in male-dominated forums. This assertion is contrary to the view that when women are under-represented in decision-making positions, their perspectives and experiences are often overlooked or trivialised (Erikson & Verge, 2022). This suggests that, despite their under-representation, women in these committees leverage

their positions to voice their perspectives effectively and contribute meaningfully to legislative deliberations.

Furthermore, the study found that women within the committee space are particularly skilled in lobbying and influencing the policy-making process, often surpassing their male counterparts in these areas. This aligns with scholarship that indicates women tend to adopt more collaborative and consensus-building approaches in political decision-making, which can be particularly effective in lobbying scenarios (Hassim, 2006; Rabie, 2019). The participants noted that women's ability to navigate the complexities of policy advocacy has allowed them to play a critical role in shaping legislative agendas. These findings challenge the notion that gender asymmetry inherently limits women's influence in policy-making within parliamentary committees. Instead, it demonstrates that women, when given the platform and opportunity, can exercise substantial influence, highlighting the importance of inclusive decision-making processes.

Contrary to the general assumptions of gender asymmetry in political spaces, the study did not find significant gender disparities in the policy-making activities of parliamentary committees. While previous literature has often underscored the marginalisation of women in policy decision-making (Childs & Krook, 2009), the current findings suggest a more balanced dynamic within these committees. Women's ability to contribute equally with their male colleagues indicates progress toward gender parity in these spaces. However, this should not obscure the broader context of underrepresentation; while women within the committees may effectively engage in policy-making, their overall numbers remain limited. When committees are male-dominated, women may be less likely to speak out or participate fully in the decision-making process due to issues such as gender stereotypes, lack of confidence, or fear of backlash (Mojapelo & Faku, 2020).

This can result in a lack of representation and diversity of viewpoints in the committee's decision-making process. This also underscores the need for continued efforts to enhance gender inclusivity at all levels of parliamentary engagement, ensuring that more women can access and influence key decision-making roles. Gender asymmetry can also influence the topics and issues that committees prioritise (Sarfo-Kantankah, 2021). For example, committees with a higher proportion of women may be more likely to focus on issues such as gender equality, reproductive health, and domestic violence, while committees with a higher proportion of men may prioritise issues such as defense and security. Therefore, it is important to have gender-balanced committees to ensure that decisions are made from a diverse range of perspectives and that the voices of women are heard and represented in the decision-making process.

5.3.3 Specific Bills Advanced by Women

The study's findings reveal that women in parliamentary committees have strategically united to advance specific bills, thereby challenging traditional notions of policy-making asymmetry. This trend is consistent with existing literature, which argues that women in politics often prioritise and champion issues that align with their gendered experiences and community needs (Piscopo, 2011). By rallying around bills focused on widowhood, witchcraft accusations, family and child protection, child defilement, and affirmative action, women legislators have actively contributed to shaping the legislative agenda. These collective efforts demonstrate how women, even when underrepresented, can exert significant influence by focusing on issues that may otherwise be neglected in male-dominated spaces. The targeted approach taken by these women effectively dilutes the prevailing assumption that policy-making is skewed against women's interests.

Moreover, the study highlights that women's contributions to legislative processes are not limited to advancing certain bills but also include critical feedback that can either propel or stall legislative initiatives. For example, the case of the marital rape bill, where women refrained from pushing the legislation forward due to concerns over its potential impact on marriages, illustrates the nuanced role women play in policy debates. This finding aligns with the notion that women lawmakers, while advocating for gender-sensitive policies, also consider the broader societal implications of their actions (Franceschet & Piscopo, 2008). The reluctance to advance the marital rape bill underscores the complex decision-making processes that women navigate, balancing their advocacy for women's rights with cultural and societal norms. This complexity reflects a sophisticated understanding of the potential outcomes of policy initiatives, revealing that gender representation alone does not guarantee uniform support for all gender-related issues. The ability of women to advance and stall legislation based on their collective judgment suggests that their influence in parliamentary committees is more significant than mere numbers might indicate. While gender asymmetry remains a concern in many legislative environments, the study's findings indicate that women in these committees are not passive actors but active shapers of the policy landscape. This reinforces the importance of ensuring that more women have access to decision-making spaces, as their presence and collaboration can result in more balanced and representative legislative outcomes (Fokum et al., 2020). Overall, the findings emphasise that when women are empowered to act collectively, they can mitigate policy-making asymmetry, thereby contributing to a more inclusive and equitable legislative process.

5.3.4 Women's Efforts to Improve Women's Participation

The study reveals that women parliamentarians have taken proactive steps to address the existing gender representation asymmetry by advocating for policies that aim to improve their numbers,

both at the parliamentary level and within political parties. This advocacy is not limited to the well-known affirmative action bill but also encompasses broader efforts aimed at increasing female participation in politics. The findings are consistent with studies highlighting how women politicians often spearhead initiatives to promote gender equality, recognising that increasing their representation is crucial to overcoming systemic barriers (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005; Joshi & Timothy, 2019). The proactive stance taken by these women legislators underscores their awareness of the structural challenges they face and their determination to create lasting change through policy reforms.

The affirmative action bill is highlighted as a key mechanism through which gender parity could be achieved in Ghana's parliament. Participants in the study believe that once passed, the bill could ensure seat reservations for women, a critical step toward rectifying the current imbalances. This reflects broader global practices where affirmative action policies have been implemented to guarantee a minimum level of female representation in political institutions (Joshi & Timothy, 2019; Krook, 2006). Fortunately, the bill was passed just recently, and implementation of same will be practicalised. The belief that this bill could lead to reserved seats mirrors similar strategies adopted in countries like Rwanda and Uganda, where quota systems have significantly increased women's political representation. However, the study also implies that without such legislative interventions, gender asymmetry is likely to persist, as voluntary measures alone have not been sufficient to close the representation gap.

Furthermore, the study highlights that women's advocacy efforts extend beyond the confines of parliament to influence political party structures. The drive to push for gender quotas and equitable representation within political parties demonstrates a recognition that change must occur across multiple levels of governance to be effective. Existing literature supports this view, emphasising

that political parties play a critical role in either facilitating or hindering women's political participation (Caul, 2001; Fokum et al., 2020). By targeting both parliamentary processes and party-level dynamics, women in Ghana's parliament are engaging in a holistic strategy aimed at ensuring that gender representation is enhanced not just within the legislative body but throughout the entire political pipeline. These efforts, if successful, could set a precedent for broader societal change regarding gender equity in political representation.

5.3.5 Impact of Gender on Policy Outcomes

The study reveals that the gender composition within parliamentary committees has a noticeable influence on specific policy issues. Women's participation and contributions at this level indicate that they feel empowered to speak freely and actively engage in discussions. This aligns with research showing that when women are present in sufficient numbers within decision-making bodies, they are more likely to voice their perspectives and influence outcomes (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005; Rabie, 2019). The study underscores that women are not only participants but play a vital role in highlighting issues that might otherwise be overlooked. Their involvement, especially during world-marked days, reflects their capacity to bring unique insights and initiatives to the legislative process, enhancing the richness and inclusivity of policy debates. This finding supports the argument that increasing women's representation in political spaces leads to more comprehensive and socially responsive policymaking.

Furthermore, the study finds that despite the under-representation of women in committees, their concerns are regularly addressed during deliberations, suggesting that their voices carry weight even when they are numerically few (Rabie, 2019). This indicates that while women may be under-represented, their contributions are not sidelined, and they are integrated into the decision-making

process. This is consistent with research indicating that when women are part of critical legislative spaces, they often prioritise social issues such as gender equality, health, and education (Childs & Krook, 2009). The study's findings challenge the notion that numerical dominance is the sole determinant of influence, emphasising instead the significance of qualitative participation and advocacy. This outcome also implies that existing committees may be more receptive to gender-sensitive issues than previously assumed, a positive indication of evolving norms within parliamentary practices.

Lastly, the study highlights that women in parliament actively participate in events and initiatives related to world-marked days, showcasing their leadership in bringing attention to critical global issues. By spearheading activities on such days, women demonstrate their engagement in the legislative process, invariably strengthening the visibility of gender-focused policies (Rabie, 2019). This proactive stance is essential in keeping gender issues on the agenda and fostering greater awareness of the societal impact of legislative decisions (Lovenduski, 2005). The consistent inclusion of women's concerns in committee deliberations suggests that there is a growing recognition of the need to incorporate diverse perspectives, even if structural imbalances still exist. The findings indicate that while gender asymmetry remains a challenge, the quality of women's involvement within committees helps to mitigate some of the negative repercussions associated with their under-representation.

5.3.6 Proportional Women Representation and Policy Outcomes

The study aimed to explore the potential differences in policy outcomes if there were increased gender representation in parliamentary committees. It found that equal representation of women and men in parliament could significantly influence policy outcomes, with women recognised as

effective lobbyists. This supports the notion that increasing women's representation in decision-making bodies can lead to more inclusive policies, as women tend to prioritise issues related to social welfare, gender equality, and family concerns (Krook & Childs, 2010). The finding aligns with the view that a balanced gender composition in legislative bodies introduces diverse perspectives that enrich policymaking and lead to more comprehensive and socially responsive decisions.

However, the study also discovered a contrasting perspective where some participants believe that policy outcomes would not necessarily change with more female representation in parliamentary committees. This suggests that factors beyond gender representation, such as political ideology, party alignment, and individual leadership skills, might play a more critical role in shaping policy outcomes. This finding echoes the argument that while gender diversity is important, it is not always sufficient on its own to drive significant changes in policy direction (Dahlerup, 2006). The perceived indifference to gender parity in influencing policy outcomes highlights the complexity of legislative processes, where multiple variables interact to determine the final results.

Additionally, the study found that the larger parliamentary body has acknowledged the importance of female representation to influence policy outcomes, leading to changes in the strategy for selecting committee members. This indicates a growing recognition of the value that women bring to parliamentary work and the need for more deliberate efforts to include them in decision-making spaces. Such initiatives reflect a shift towards more gender-sensitive policies at the institutional level, which are essential for achieving substantive equality in legislative outcomes (Lombardo & Meier, 2016). The changes in selection strategies suggest that there is a conscious effort to create

a more balanced and inclusive environment, which could lead to more equitable policies and better representation of diverse interests.

The strategic changes in committee member selection also highlight the evolving dynamics within Ghana's parliamentary system, where efforts are being made to enhance the role of women in shaping policy outcomes. This reflects broader global trends where legislative bodies are increasingly adopting measures to ensure greater gender parity and inclusivity (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018). The study suggests that such efforts, while still evolving, are steps in the right direction towards ensuring that women's voices are not only heard but also influential in key policy decisions. This progress is critical for addressing longstanding issues of gender asymmetry in political institutions and fostering a more equitable legislative process.

5.4 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has drawn together the study's empirical findings to address the second research objective. It provides important insights into how gender asymmetry influences policy-making within Ghana's parliamentary committees. The discussion shows that although women remain underrepresented, they continue to play active and influential roles in legislative processes. They have mobilized around key bills, engaged in effective lobbying, and participated meaningfully in committee deliberations. These efforts reflect a strategic orientation toward advancing policies related to social protection, family welfare, and gender equality.

The findings also reveal that women's contributions are not limited to promoting new legislation. They offer critical feedback that can shape or stall policy proposals, demonstrating their ability to influence the direction and pace of legislative change. However, their influence is exercised within a political environment marked by financial barriers, limited institutional support, and persistent

gender stereotypes. These constraints continue to restrict the number of women in leadership roles within committees.

The chapter also highlights the proactive steps women have taken to address gender disparities. These include advocacy for the passage and implementation of the Affirmative Action Bill, efforts to influence political party structures, and sustained campaigns for increased female participation in parliamentary processes. While the overall numbers of women remain limited, their voices are increasingly being acknowledged and integrated into committee discussions, especially during nationally and internationally significant events.

Overall, the findings underscore the enduring nature of gender inequality within parliamentary governance, but also point to emerging opportunities for progress. The chapter concludes by reaffirming the importance of institutional reforms that promote gender-sensitive policy-making, increase the representation of women, and remove systemic barriers to participation. These reforms are essential for building a more inclusive and effective parliamentary system that reflects the diversity of Ghanaian society and strengthens democratic governance.



CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, CONTRIBUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Chapter Synopsis

This chapter provides a summary of the entire study, presenting an overview of its rationale, research objectives, and key findings from the data analysis. It also synthesises these findings to conclude, outline the study's contributions, and offer actionable recommendations for policy and future research.

6.1 Summary of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the nature of gender asymmetry in the committee space, investigate how it influences policy-making, and explore its impact on the distribution of positions and resources in Ghana's parliamentary committees. The study was underpinned by three theories: feminist theory (Beauvoir, 2011 [1949]), intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989), and political settlement theory (Khan, 1995). A qualitative approach was employed through semi-structured interviews with 19 members of parliament. The analysis produced the following key findings:

The study revealed critical insights into the nature of gender asymmetry within Ghana's parliamentary committees, particularly regarding women's representation. The number of women on these committees remains low, reflecting broader global patterns of unequal representation, especially in sub-regions such as West Africa. Respondents identified several factors shaping women's inclusion, including political alignment, parliamentary interests, and individual

lobbying. Additionally, the findings indicate that existing parliamentary structures are often biased against women, reinforcing asymmetrical representation.

Several sub-themes were identified that contribute to understanding gender asymmetry in the committee space. These include socio-cultural factors, confidence in parliamentary duties, women's influence in committee settings, leadership roles, the evolving nature of female leadership, the current status of women, and associated policy outcomes. The study revealed that women play influential and resourceful roles in committees, with their participation assessed positively in terms of inclusion, contributions to discussions, and involvement in conferences and seminars. A key theme was initiatives and support mechanisms promoting gender equality in Parliament. This included sub-themes such as advocacy for gender balance and the benefits of knowledge gained through committee membership.

The analysis also identified factors influencing women's inclusion in political leadership roles, reinforcing existing narratives about gender asymmetry in politics. These factors include societal initiatives, financial constraints, and family dynamics, which variously motivate or discourage women from political engagement. The findings emphasise women's active roles in committees and highlight that they are often more outspoken than some male colleagues. Respondents noted that women parliamentarians have strategically collaborated to support specific bills, thereby challenging conventional notions of policy-making asymmetry. Women MPs are also taking proactive steps to address gender imbalances by advocating for increased representation both within Parliament and in political parties. Their advocacy extends beyond the well-known Affirmative Action Act, 2024 (Gender Equity), to broader efforts aimed at enhancing female participation in politics.

The study further reveals that gender composition within committees influences certain policy areas. Women's participation in discussions shows that they feel empowered to contribute and engage actively. The study also sought to understand how increased gender representation might affect policy outcomes. It found that equal representation of men and women in Parliament could significantly shape policy decisions, with women recognised as effective lobbyists.

Regarding resource distribution, the study found that gender does not significantly influence outcomes at the committee level. This is largely due to the dominance of party affiliations and interests in determining how resources are allocated. Nonetheless, the analysis highlighted sub-themes such as the applicability of gender composition to resource allocation, challenges women face in voicing their concerns, the idea of a unifying force, gender representation in the committee space, and gender asymmetry in accountability structures. Despite numerical gender imbalances, women MPs have been able to express concerns and contribute meaningfully to policy debates. Their leadership in discussions around the importance of female representation has often been self-driven.

The study also found strong support, especially among women MPs, for pooling resources across parties to champion women's causes. This collaborative approach reflects a shared commitment to addressing gender disparities and promoting women's interests within Parliament. Ultimately, the study concludes that increasing gender diversity in parliamentary committees is likely to improve both the quality and effectiveness of policy outcomes.

6.2 Conclusion of the Study

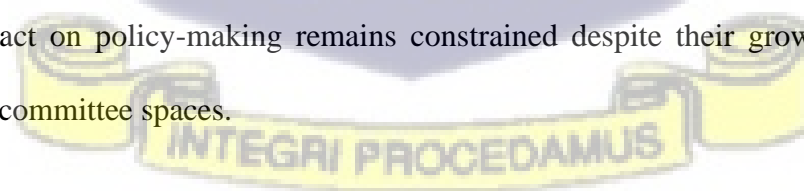
First, concerning the question of how gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament affect the composition of committee membership between male and female Members of Parliament (MPs),

the study draws the following conclusions. The study concludes that gender asymmetry significantly shapes the composition of parliamentary committees in Ghana. Despite a slight increase in the number of female MPs, women remain underrepresented across both Standing and Select Committees. Female membership often clusters in committees deemed "less influential"—notably, the Committee on Gender, Children, and Social Welfare—while male MPs dominate high-profile committees such as Finance, Constitutional and Legal Affairs, and Energy. This skewed distribution reflects entrenched gender biases in committee assignments. Determinants of committee membership include political alignment, personal lobbying, academic and professional qualifications, and visibility in parliamentary debates. However, informal practices such as “protocol” placements and default assignments suggest women are often positioned to fill representational gaps rather than to exercise influence. Socio-cultural norms further constrain female representation, particularly in regions with patriarchal traditions, reinforcing women’s marginal presence in committee leadership and decision-making spaces.

Second, concerning the question of how gender asymmetry in Ghana’s parliament influence the distribution of positions within parliamentary committees, the study draws the following conclusions. The study finds that the distribution of leadership positions within parliamentary committees is also shaped by gender asymmetry. Women are noticeably underrepresented in senior roles such as Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Ranking Member. Although a few women have recently assumed leadership roles, these instances remain the exception rather than the norm. The findings reveal that appointments to leadership positions are often shaped by informal negotiations, political seniority, and perceived competence—criteria that inadvertently favour male MPs. There is limited evidence of a structured or intentional approach to ensuring gender-balanced leadership across committees. Notably, the clustering of women into specific leadership roles within

"gendered" or socially oriented committees suggests that women's leadership is still confined to traditional domains. Affirmative action mechanisms, such as allowing women to serve on more than two committees, offer visibility but do not fundamentally address the power asymmetries embedded in leadership allocation. As such, gender continues to be a marginal consideration in committee leadership distribution.

Third, concerning the question of how gender asymmetry affect the influence of female parliamentarians in policy-making within the committee space, the study draws the following conclusions. The study concludes that although gender asymmetry constrains the overall policy influence of female MPs, many women in committees have demonstrated agency, strategic collaboration, and assertiveness in shaping legislative discussions. Women MPs have successfully used committee platforms to advocate for gender-sensitive legislation and to build cross-party coalitions to support women-centric policy agendas. Some female MPs are recognised as more vocal and effective than their male counterparts. However, the scope of their influence is often limited by structural constraints, such as male dominance in key decision-making spaces, lack of legal or technical expertise required for some committees, and limited voting rights when women participate in committees as "friends" without formal membership. The study finds that increased gender diversity improves deliberative quality and contributes to more inclusive policy outcomes. Nevertheless, without addressing the underlying power imbalances and systemic barriers, women's substantive impact on policy-making remains constrained despite their growing presence and activism within committee spaces.



6.3 Contributions of the Study

The study makes several important contributions to understanding gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliamentary committees, thereby enriching the broader discourse on women's representation in political leadership, particularly within the West African context. First, it highlights the persistent underrepresentation of women in parliamentary committees and situates this within the global landscape of gender disparities in political institutions (Krook & Mackay, 2011). By focusing on Ghana, the study offers a localized analysis of the obstacles women face in accessing legislative leadership roles. This adds nuance to existing literature on gender and politics by unpacking the socio-political and cultural dynamics that sustain gender imbalances in parliamentary representation (Celis & Childs, 2020). In particular, the study's attention to factors such as political alignment, personal lobbying, and parliamentary interests as key determinants of women's inclusion provides a fresh lens through which to understand structural barriers to gender equity in political institutions.

Second, the study sheds light on the strategies women employ to navigate these asymmetries. It challenges the assumption that underrepresentation equates to passivity by documenting the active roles women play in committee discussions. Despite being outnumbered, women parliamentarians are shown to be vocal, strategic, and effective in shaping policy outcomes (Franceschet & Piscopo, 2008). By highlighting the proactive steps women take, such as advocating for specific bills and collaborating across party lines, the study moves beyond merely quantifying women's presence to examining their substantive agency in legislative work (Htun & Weldon, 2012).

A further contribution lies in the study's exploration of sub-themes affecting women's representation in parliamentary committees. By identifying socio-cultural constraints, levels of

confidence in parliamentary duties, and dynamics of leadership, the study offers a more holistic understanding of the factors driving gender asymmetry. This deepens our insight into both structural and cultural impediments to women's participation, while also pointing to actionable areas for reform (Phillips, 1995). In doing so, the study provides a resource for policymakers, political parties, and advocacy groups seeking to address institutional inequalities and improve gender representation in politics (Lovenduski, 2005).

Another significant contribution is the study's analysis of the impact women have on policy outcomes within parliamentary committees. The finding that women's participation enhances deliberation on gender-related issues underscores the substantive value of increasing female representation (Childs & Krook, 2009). The study provides empirical support for the view that women are not merely symbolic figures in the legislative process, but effective lobbyists and policy advocates. This insight challenges prevailing narratives of male-dominated policy-making and reinforces the argument that gender-balanced committees can produce more inclusive and equitable outcomes (Bolzendahl, 2014).

The study also advances the literature on resource distribution in legislative spaces by examining the role of gender in allocation processes. While party affiliations are shown to be the primary influence on resource distribution, the study finds that women parliamentarians have nonetheless succeeded in pooling resources across party lines to advance women-focused agendas (O'Brien, 2012). This finding underscores women's capacity for strategic collaboration in political spaces and their effectiveness in mobilizing support for gender equity. The study thereby adds to scholarly discussions on collective action and gender-based political advocacy (Piscopo, 2014).

Finally, the study contributes to policy debates on gender diversity in political institutions by offering evidence that greater female representation in parliamentary committees enhances the quality and inclusiveness of policy-making. The finding that women's presence fosters more balanced and deliberative discussions affirms that gender diversity is not only a matter of representational justice but also of governance effectiveness (Bolzendahl, 2014). This aligns with global calls for increased women's leadership as a foundation for democratic legitimacy and social justice (Schwindt-Bayer, 2010). By demonstrating the tangible impact of women's participation on legislative processes, the study makes a compelling case for continued institutional reforms to promote gender equality in Ghana's parliamentary committees and beyond.

6.4 Contributions to Theories

6.4.1 Contributions to Feminist Theory

This study contributes to feminist theory by providing empirical evidence of the persistent gender asymmetry within Ghana's parliamentary committees, reinforcing the feminist critique of patriarchal dominance in political institutions (Beauvoir, 2011 [1949]). Feminist theory, which calls for dismantling male-dominated structures and advancing gender equality, is supported by the study's findings that women remain systematically underrepresented in decision-making spaces. By documenting the socio-cultural and political dynamics that sustain this imbalance, the study affirms Beauvoir's claim that societal institutions are structured to perpetuate women's subordinate position in public life. Moreover, the analysis of women's lobbying efforts, political alignments, and their proactive strategies to shape legislative outcomes offers a contemporary extension of feminist thought. It illustrates how women resist marginalization and engage political

structures through strategic participation, aligning with feminist arguments about agency in male-dominated spaces (Bauer, 2012).

Additionally, the study deepens feminist theory by showing that women's representation in legislative bodies substantively influences policy outcomes. It presents clear evidence that women's participation enhances both the inclusivity and effectiveness of decision-making processes. This reinforces feminist assertions that representation is not merely symbolic but a vital mechanism for achieving meaningful policy change that addresses gender disparities. The findings support feminist debates on political agency by revealing that women in parliamentary settings are active and strategic actors. This challenges traditional gender norms and expectations (Butler, 1990), providing empirical grounding for feminist advocacy for inclusive governance structures globally.

6.4.2 Contributions to Intersectionality Theory

The study offers significant contributions to intersectionality theory by revealing how multiple social and political identities intersect to shape women's experiences in Ghana's parliamentary committees (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality theory posits that gender operates in conjunction with other identities, such as class, ethnicity, and political affiliation, in producing complex forms of exclusion or privilege. In the Ghanaian context, the study demonstrates that women's access to leadership roles is not determined by gender alone but is also shaped by factors such as political alignment, socio-cultural norms, and personal lobbying efforts. This nuanced account enhances intersectionality theory by showing how these interrelated variables collectively affect women's participation in political institutions, offering a deeper understanding of power dynamics within parliamentary committees (Benstead, 2021).

The study further contributes to the theory by examining how these intersecting identities influence collective efforts to address gender inequality. It shows that women's ability to mobilize across party lines and advocate for gender-related issues is shaped by the broader socio-political environment in which they operate. This reinforces the need to contextualize gender advocacy within intersecting axes of identity and power. Moreover, the study highlights that gender-based disparities in resource allocation and policy influence are often mediated by political affiliations, demonstrating that exclusion is not solely gender-based. These findings align with Crenshaw's framework by illustrating how multiple dimensions of identity interact to shape complex experiences of marginalization. By grounding intersectionality in the empirical realities of parliamentary politics, the study advances the theory's application to institutional and political settings, particularly in the Global South.

6.4.3 Contributions to Political Settlement Theory

This study also advances political settlement theory by analyzing how power dynamics within parliamentary committees reflect broader patterns of political inclusion and exclusion in Ghana (Khan, 1995). Political settlement theory emphasises the role of elite bargains in shaping political institutions and power distribution. The study's findings illustrate how political alignment and personal lobbying efforts, key mechanisms of elite negotiation, affect women's access to parliamentary committees and leadership roles. This insight confirms that Ghana's political settlement continues to prioritise party interests and elite affiliations, thereby reinforcing exclusionary structures that marginalise women. In doing so, the study contributes to ongoing discussions about how political systems are maintained through settlements that often underrepresent or disadvantage specific groups (Goodhand & Walton, 2022).

Importantly, the study extends political settlement theory by highlighting how women navigate these exclusionary arrangements to assert influence. It reveals that despite structural barriers, women parliamentarians engage in strategic lobbying and build cross-party alliances to promote gender-sensitive legislation and reshape committee dynamics (Goel & Nelson, 2020). This demonstrates that political settlements, while often exclusionary, can also create spaces for negotiation and agency. The study shows that gender dynamics are integral to understanding how power is distributed and contested within political institutions. By incorporating the experiences and strategies of women within Ghana's parliamentary committees, the study introduces a gendered lens to political settlement theory, enriching its explanatory power and relevance for analysing inclusion in democratic governance.

6.5 Contributions to Parliamentary Practice

This study makes several important contributions to parliamentary practice, particularly in advancing understanding of gender dynamics within committee structures. By documenting the persistence of gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliamentary committees, the research underscores the urgent need for more inclusive institutional frameworks that ensure equitable representation. While women remain underrepresented, the study finds that those who do participate in committee work often contribute meaningfully to shaping legislative outcomes. This challenges conventional assumptions about the limitations of female political engagement and reinforces existing literature on the value of gender diversity in legislative processes. It also supports arguments for more deliberate and sustained efforts to integrate women into all aspects of parliamentary practice (Gerring, 2009).

The research further enhances understanding of parliamentary committees as critical sites for policy development and debate. It reveals that committee dynamics, including leadership distribution and resource allocation, often mirror broader societal biases, with male MPs occupying most high-level decision-making positions. This imbalance suggests that enhancing gender parity in committee leadership could enrich the quality and inclusivity of policy discussions. Moreover, the study's findings that political affiliations and party interests exert disproportionate influence over resource distribution highlight the need for greater transparency and scrutiny in committee operations. Aligning resource allocation more closely with the interests of diverse constituencies would improve both fairness and effectiveness in parliamentary decision-making (Bochel & Defty, 2007).

Another key contribution lies in the study's demonstration of how women MPs exert influence within committees despite being numerically disadvantaged. Through strategic alliances and collaborative efforts, women have successfully advanced specific legislative agendas. This challenges the notion that gender-sensitive policy outcomes are only achievable through numerical parity. Instead, the findings show that women can navigate institutional constraints to make substantive contributions to lawmaking. This insight has practical implications for parliamentary practice, suggesting that reforms should not only focus on increasing women's numbers but also on creating enabling environments that support their agency and leadership (Ganzevles et al., 2014).

The study also highlights the transformative potential of increased female representation on the legislative agenda of parliamentary committees. It shows that the presence of women correlates with a greater focus on social welfare, gender equality, and community-centered issues. This

finding supports existing scholarship on how gender diversity broadens the scope of policy discussions and makes legislative practices more responsive to societal needs. The implication for parliamentary reform is clear: improving gender balance in committee membership could significantly enhance both the relevance and responsiveness of parliamentary outputs (Childs & Krook, 2009).

Finally, the study underscores the importance of sustained advocacy for gender equality within parliamentary systems. It documents how women MPs have mobilized not only within Parliament but also through political party mechanisms to address persistent gender disparities. This highlights the essential role of advocacy in driving institutional change and suggests that structural reforms must be complemented by ongoing political mobilization. The findings therefore contribute to broader debates on parliamentary reform by emphasizing that long-term transformation requires a combination of institutional restructuring and active gender advocacy (Waylen, 2010).

6.6 Recommendations

6.6.1 Recommendations for Parliamentary Practices

The study recommends strengthening enforcement of gender quotas and affirmative action. The study highlights the persistent underrepresentation of women in leadership and influential committee positions, despite existing gender policies. To address this, Parliament must take decisive action to implement and enforce minimum gender quotas in committee assignments, particularly in critical policy areas such as finance, defense, and constitutional matters. Additionally, the passage and operationalization of Ghana's Affirmative Action Bill should be expedited, with explicit provisions ensuring equitable political representation in legislative bodies,

including committee appointments. Without enforceable quotas and clear legislative frameworks, gender disparities in decision-making spaces will persist, undermining democratic inclusivity.

Another recommendation is to institutionalize transparent and gender-responsive committee appointment processes. The current process of assigning MPs to committees often reinforces political patronage and male dominance, limiting women's access to influential roles. To reform this system, Parliament should develop clear, merit-based criteria for committee leadership and membership that explicitly incorporate gender balance. Furthermore, an independent oversight mechanism within the Standing Orders Committee should be established to monitor compliance with gender inclusion policies in appointments. Transparent and structured appointment processes will ensure that women have equal opportunities to contribute to legislative decision-making, enhancing the overall effectiveness of parliamentary committees.

In addition, building the capacity of women MPs for legislative influence is a major area of recommendation for parliamentary practice. The study reveals that while women MPs demonstrate agency, many lack the necessary support and resources to fully exercise policy influence. To bridge this gap, Parliament should provide targeted training programs for women MPs, focusing on legislative drafting, negotiation, policy advocacy, and media engagement. Additionally, mentorship schemes pairing newly elected women MPs with experienced parliamentarians should be established to build confidence and institutional knowledge. Strengthening the skills and preparedness of women MPs will enable them to engage more effectively in committee work and broader legislative processes.

The study recommends that there should be engagement of political parties in promoting women's leadership in parliament. Given the gatekeeping role of political parties, their active participation

in gender reform is crucial. The Electoral Commission and advocacy groups should encourage parties to adopt internal gender quotas not only for parliamentary elections but also for committee nominations. Moreover, compliance with gender equity commitments should be monitored and reported as part of electoral accountability measures. By holding parties accountable for gender representation, Ghana can foster a more inclusive political environment where women have equal opportunities to influence policy at all levels.

One of the major recommendations of the study is to enhance data collection and gender audits in parliamentary affairs. A significant challenge in addressing gender disparities in parliamentary committees is the lack of comprehensive gender-disaggregated data on participation. To address this, Parliament, through the Clerk's Office and Research Department, should institutionalize annual gender audits tracking women's representation, leadership roles, and participation rates in committees. Additionally, a dedicated gender observatory unit within the Research or Gender Desk should be established to analyze data, inform committee reforms, and monitor progress. Evidence-based policymaking is essential to ensuring sustained improvements in gender equity.

The study further recommends for the fostering cross-party women's caucus engagement on committee matters. The study found that women MPs often work in silos, limiting their collective influence. To strengthen their advocacy, the Ghana Parliamentary Women's Caucus should be supported and empowered to advocate jointly for fair committee representation and influence across party lines. Encouraging caucus members to engage more proactively in committee assignment processes and leadership nominations will amplify their voices and ensure that gender considerations remain central to parliamentary decision-making.

Promote Civic Awareness and Media Advocacy on Gender Equity in Committees is a call by this study. Public understanding of the importance of committee work and gender inclusion remains limited. Civil society and the media should conduct public education campaigns highlighting the critical role committees play in shaping national policy and the need for gender diversity in these spaces. Additionally, media reporting and scorecards tracking the gender composition and performance of parliamentary committees can enhance transparency and accountability. Raising awareness will foster public demand for equitable representation in legislative processes.

Furthermore, the study recommends the broadening of stakeholder involvement in reforming parliamentary practices. Reforming committee dynamics requires collaboration beyond Parliament itself. It is recommended that Parliament work with civil society organisations, academia, and development partners to co-develop gender-responsive reforms. Establishing multi-stakeholder platforms to periodically review committee practices will ensure inclusive decision-making and sustained progress toward gender equity. A collective approach will strengthen democratic governance and ensure that parliamentary committees reflect the diversity of Ghana's population.

6.6.2 Recommendations for Policy

Based on the study's findings, several key policy recommendations emerge to address gender asymmetry in parliamentary committees and enhance the effectiveness of legislative processes. First, there is a pressing need for policies that actively promote gender parity within committee structures. Governments and political parties should consider implementing mandatory quotas for women's representation, not only to guarantee their presence but also to ensure their placement in influential, decision-making roles. This approach, which has proven effective in other legislative

contexts, can help redress the gender imbalance and enrich policy deliberations with more diverse perspectives (Goel & Nelson, 2020). Institutionalising such quotas is a critical step toward fostering equitable representation and strengthening inclusive governance.

Second, policies must be developed and enforced to create gender-sensitive environments within parliamentary committees. These should address the socio-cultural norms and biases that impede women's full participation. Practical measures could include mandatory gender training for parliamentarians, support for inclusive leadership practices, and the promotion of women's leadership capacity. Such initiatives would contribute to cultivating a more respectful and enabling parliamentary culture, enhancing both the participation and influence of women in legislative work (Krook & O'Brien, 2012).

Third, the study points to the importance of targeted mentorship and capacity-building initiatives for women parliamentarians. Many female MPs encounter structural and confidence-related obstacles that hinder their participation. Policy interventions should therefore focus on equipping women with the skills and support needed to operate effectively within political institutions. Mentorship programs that pair experienced female legislators with newly elected women MPs, alongside structured training in leadership, negotiation, and public speaking, can help build competence and confidence (IPU, 2016).

A further recommendation involves the establishment and strengthening of cross-party women's caucuses focused on advancing gender equity within parliamentary committees. By pooling their resources and influence, women across political divides can collaborate to advocate for gender-sensitive legislative reforms. Policymakers should support these caucuses with the institutional resources and platforms necessary for them to drive change. These caucuses represent a strategic

mechanism for promoting collective advocacy and addressing the structural roots of gender asymmetry.

Finally, it is essential that parliaments adopt robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the progress of gender equality efforts. A comprehensive gender monitoring framework would allow policymakers to assess the effectiveness of existing policies and identify areas requiring improvement. Regular evaluations can help ensure that initiatives aimed at increasing women's representation and influence in parliamentary committees remain effective and responsive over time. Embedding such mechanisms in broader parliamentary reform agendas will be critical to sustaining momentum toward gender equality.

6.6.3 Recommendations for Further Studies

In light of the study's findings, several directions for future research are proposed to further deepen understanding of gender asymmetry in parliamentary committees. First, longitudinal studies are recommended to examine how women's representation and influence in parliamentary committees evolve over time. Tracking changes in gender composition, legislative contributions, and policy outcomes as women's presence grows would offer valuable insights into the long-term effects of incremental inclusion (Krook & Mackay, 2011).

Second, comparative studies across different national and regional contexts would be particularly valuable. For example, comparing Ghana's parliamentary committees with those in other West African countries could highlight regional patterns and reveal how distinct political, socio-cultural, and institutional frameworks shape gender dynamics. Such research would aid in identifying best practices and potentially adaptable strategies for promoting gender equity across legislative systems.

Third, future research should explore how gender intersects with other identity categories, such as age, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, in shaping women's parliamentary experiences. An intersectional approach can provide a more nuanced understanding of the barriers and opportunities women face, revealing how multiple layers of inequality interact to affect political participation and effectiveness.

In addition, further inquiry is needed into the role of leadership styles in shaping women's success in parliamentary committees. Studying how different leadership models, such as transformational or transactional leadership, influence women's ability to navigate parliamentary processes, influence policy, and foster collaboration can offer practical insights for developing tailored leadership training for women in politics.

Finally, additional research should examine the role of male allies in promoting gender equality within legislative institutions. Understanding how gender-sensitive male parliamentarians perceive, support, and contribute to women's representation can help identify mechanisms for engaging men as partners in gender equity initiatives. This line of inquiry would provide a more holistic picture of the institutional and relational dynamics necessary to build inclusive parliamentary environments.

6.7 Limitations

This study has some limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the use of a cross-sectional design captures data at a single point in time, limiting the ability to assess changes or trends in gender asymmetry within parliamentary committees. A longitudinal design would offer deeper insights into how gender representation evolves and affects policy outcomes over time (Bryman, 2012).

Second, the study is context-specific, focusing solely on parliamentary committees in Ghana. While it provides valuable insights into Ghana's socio-political context, the findings may not be generalizable to other countries or regions with different institutional frameworks and cultural dynamics. Broader conclusions about gender asymmetry in global parliamentary systems should therefore be drawn with caution.

Third, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the potential for biases, including social desirability and recall bias. Respondents may have framed their answers in ways they perceived as favourable or appropriate, rather than providing entirely candid reflections. Despite assurances of confidentiality and anonymity, such biases may affect the accuracy of responses, especially on sensitive issues such as gender representation and political influence.

Fourth, the study does not fully explore the intersectionality of gender with other identity markers such as ethnicity, socio-economic status, and party affiliation. Although gender was the central focus, these intersecting factors likely shape women's experiences in parliamentary spaces in important ways. The absence of a deeper intersectional analysis limits the study's ability to account for the full complexity of gender asymmetry.

Finally, while the sample size was sufficient for the study's qualitative scope, it may not fully reflect the diversity of perspectives among women in Ghana's parliamentary committees. The relatively small number of participants could overlook regional, partisan, or generational differences, potentially limiting the study's ability to capture the full range of experiences (Creswell, 2014).

6.8 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has examined the nature, causes, and implications of gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliamentary committees, drawing on qualitative data to address the study's core research questions. The findings confirm a persistent underrepresentation of women in both committee membership and leadership roles, shaped by factors such as political alignment, lobbying dynamics, and entrenched structural biases within parliamentary systems. These constraints reinforce male dominance in influential committee spaces and limit women's access to decision-making authority.

Despite these barriers, the study reveals that women parliamentarians play an active and strategic role within committees. Through coalition-building, cross-party collaboration, and targeted advocacy, many female MPs have influenced legislative priorities and championed gender-sensitive policies. This challenges assumptions of female passivity and underscores the substantive agency women exercise in parliamentary processes, even in the face of numerical disadvantage.

The research also highlights how socio-cultural norms, confidence in parliamentary duties, and the gendered distribution of committee assignments shape women's visibility and influence. Importantly, the study finds that while gender does not significantly affect resource allocation, often dominated by party interests, women have nonetheless mobilized to advocate for equitable policy outcomes, particularly in areas concerning social welfare and gender equality.

These findings align with and extend feminist, intersectionality, and political settlement theories by demonstrating how gendered power relations are reproduced—and sometimes contested—within formal political institutions. They also offer practical insights into how institutional and agency-based factors interact to shape women's experiences in legislative governance.

Finally, the chapter acknowledges several methodological limitations, including the cross-sectional design, contextual specificity to Ghana, reliance on self-reported data, and limited intersectional analysis. These limitations point to the need for future longitudinal and comparative research to better capture the evolving dynamics of gender representation and influence in parliamentary systems across diverse contexts.

Overall, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how gender asymmetry operates within legislative committees and highlights the importance of sustained reforms to enhance women's representation, participation, and leadership in parliamentary governance.



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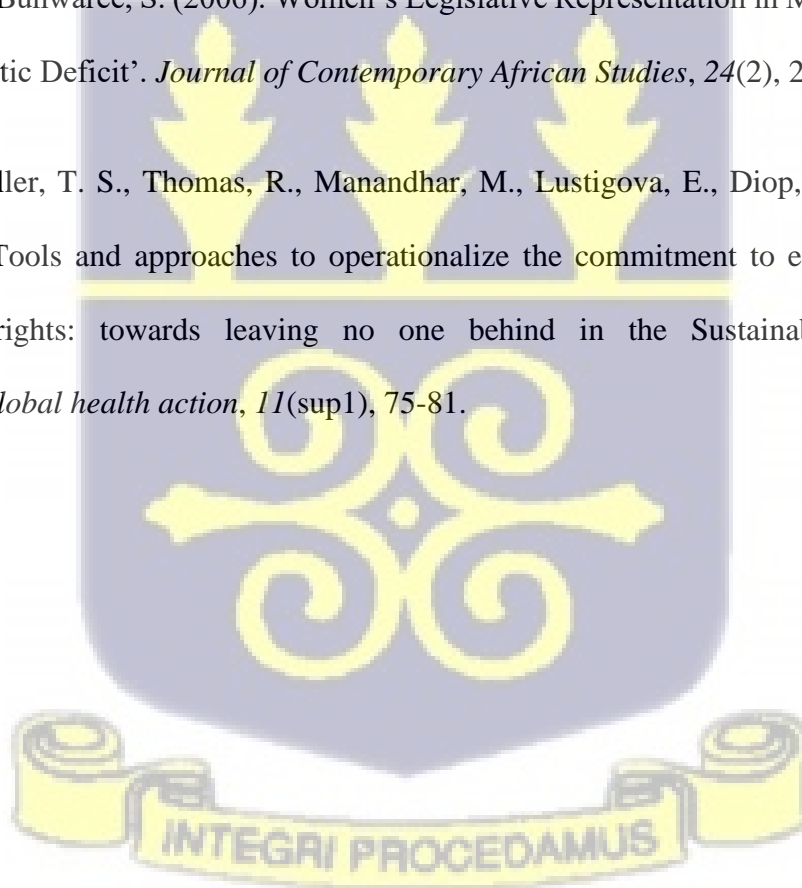
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

My name is Victoria Lakshmi Hamah, and I am a PhD candidate at the University of Ghana Business School, under the Department of Public Administration and Policy Management. I am researching "**Gendered Asymmetries and Power Relations in Parliamentary Committees: A Critical Analysis of Women's Representation and Legislative Influence in Ghana's Parliament**". This interview is conducted for research purposes, and its outcomes will be used solely for research and policy recommendations. I pledge to ensure confidentiality and anonymity by the tenets of the ethics committee of the University of Ghana. The respondent has the right to withdraw from the study at any point he/she desires with no adverse outcomes or consequences to him or her.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Could you please describe your demographic profile based on the following?

1. Gender:
2. Age:
3. Academic qualification?
4. What Political Party are you affiliated with?
5. How long have you been an MP in Ghana?
6. What committee(s) are you affiliated with
7. How long have you been (or did you serve) on this (these) committee(s)?
8. Which leadership positions have you held in Parliament?

RQ1: How does gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament affect the composition of committee membership between male and female members of parliament?

1. Can you describe the composition of parliamentary committees in terms of gender?
(Follow up: Are there specific committees where gender asymmetry is more pronounced, and if so, what are the reasons behind this?)
2. How do socio-cultural factors influence gender representation and roles within parliamentary committees?
3. Have there been any changes in the gender balance within the committee space over recent years, and if yes, what factors contributed to these changes?
4. Have you observed any specific challenges faced by women parliamentarians in participating in committee work?
5. What initiatives or support mechanisms are in place to promote gender equality and women's participation within parliamentary committees?
 - a. (Follow up: In your view, how effective are these initiatives in addressing gender asymmetry and promoting women's involvement in policymaking?)

RQ:2 How does gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament influence the distribution of positions and resources within parliamentary committees?

1. How does the gender dynamics within parliamentary committees affect the distribution of key positions and resources?
2. What are the challenges that hinder women in assessing resources and leadership within committees?

3. How does the agency of female parliamentarians enhance the distribution of resources and allocation of positions?

RQ3: How does gender asymmetry in Ghana's parliament affect the influence of female parliamentarians in policy-making within the committee space?

1. How does the gender power relations within parliamentary committees impact the policy-making process, particularly in terms of gender mainstreaming?

(Follow-up: Are there specific areas where women's voices are more or less represented in policy discussions?)

2. To what extent have women advanced/led some specific policy bills or discussions in Ghana's Parliament?

(Follow-up: How have these efforts contributed to increasing women's participation in policy-making?)

3. How does gender power relations contribute to policy outcomes, particularly those that address gender-related issues?

(Follow-up: How does gender asymmetry, shape the overall effectiveness of policy decisions?)



Appendix B: Ethical Clearance



UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMANITIES (ECH)

P. O. Box LG 74, Legon, Accra, Ghana

My Ref. No: ECH 121/ 23-24

January 12, 2024

Victoria Hamah
Dept. of Public Administration and
Health Services Management
University of Ghana Business School
University of Ghana
Legon

ETHICAL CLEARANCE
(ECH 121/ 23-24)

The Ethics Committee for the Humanities (ECH) conducted a full-board review and approved your protocol titled:

**GENDER ASYMMETRY AND POLICYMAKING IN THE COMMITTEE SPACE OF
GHANA'S PARLIAMENT.**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: VICTORIA HAMAH

Please note that the final review report must be submitted to the Committee at the completion of the study. Your research records may be audited at any time during or after the implementation. Any modification of this research project must be submitted to ECH for review and approval prior to implementation.

Please report all serious adverse events related to this study to ECH within seven (7) days verbally and in writing within fourteen (14) days.

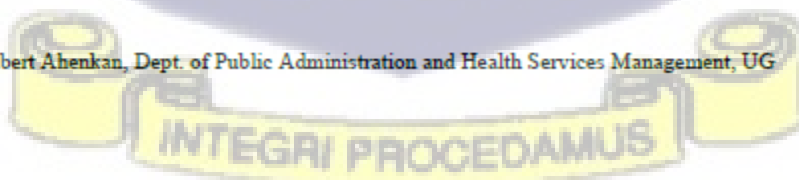
This certificate is valid until January 11, 2025. You are required to submit annual reports for continuing review.

Please accept my congratulations.

Yours Sincerely,

Professor C. Charles Mate-Kole
ECH Chair

Cc: Professor Albert Ahenkan, Dept. of Public Administration and Health Services Management, UG



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