



# Advancing Women in Leadership

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*Full Length Research Paper*

## **Perceived Incompetent? The Annihilation of Women in Critical National Discourse in the Ghanaian Media**

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**Media reflects and reinforces gender-based disparities. In Ghana, these inequalities exist in the media space. Despite the greater media freedom enjoyed by the Ghanaian media today, the male-dominated nature of media programming and placements has remained relatively unchanged from its experiences under the restricted media era in post-democratic Ghana. This research focuses on gender representations in media programming and placements in the Ghanaian media. We conducted a quantitative content analysis of news data collected over six weeks (July 4th - August 16th, 2022) from five primary Ghanaian TV channels: TV3, Joy News, Citi TV, GhOne, and UTV. Our findings reveal an epistemic injustice toward women, stemming from the overrepresentation of male expertise in media programs. While women appear slightly more often as program hosts, indicating greater on-screen visibility, their expertise is not utilized to the same extent as that of men. We discussed the impact of culture, media objectification, and commodification as factors influencing women's presence in the Ghanaian media.**

**Keywords:** Presumed incompetence, gender, Ghanaian media, underrepresentation, content analysis

Scholarly discussions have long focused on media diversity, equity, and inclusion (Connell, 2005; Hendrickx et al., 2022). Most of these studies have concluded that the media space is gendered, often silencing or trivializing women's voices (GMMP, 2020; Harp et al., 2013). As a result, affirmative action laws in many countries have promoted gender equality across all sectors, including the media, politics, and decision-making contexts. In Belgium, for instance, women accounted for 33% to 48% of media professionals compared to men (Van Bauwel, 2018), signaling some progress in other contexts. However, Ghana's progress on gender equality has been slower, with little change since independence in 1957 (Gadzekpo, 2013; Prah, 2003). Democratic reforms led to improvements in women's rights, including property ownership under the Provisional National Defence Council Law (PNDC Law) 111 and constitutional provisions for equal participation (Constitution of Ghana, 1992), yet patriarchal cultures in Ghana often hinder gender equality (Malik, 2025; Sikweyiya et al., 2020; Thayer, 1980), particularly in terms of women's visibility during important national discussions (O'Brien, 2014; Ocran, 2014).

The Global Freedom Index ranks Ghana as a significantly free country (Freedom House, 2024), with the media enjoying stable freedom (Reporters Without Borders, 2023). However, this freedom does not translate to gender equality. While significant

studies have explored gender, culture, and media portrayals in the Ghanaian media (see, Acquaye, 2022; Macharia, 2016; Ofori-Birikorang & Donkor, 2014) a notable gap exists that focuses on women's participation in discussions centered on critical national issues, such as politics and governance (Beauvais 2020; Tagoe & Abakah, 2015), finance/economics (Kigula, 2024), and health (Capecchi, 2023; Kitzinger et al., 2008) particularly within the broadcast television context, underscoring the need for further exploration in this area. Since these focus areas are understudied in the gender literature, this study aims to explore 1) how women experience injustice in the Ghanaian media and 2) in what ways women's voices are represented or marginalized during discussion of critical national issues on morning breakfast shows. This study signifies (a) an advancement of knowledge in the field of media and gender, as significant scholarships in the field have not examined this phenomena in non-western contexts, and (b) patterns, themes, and insights that are common across cases of media and gender within the context of a critical political, economic, health, and security events where there is a paucity of research. This literal exclusion of women in the media, through their historic silencing and invisibility, generally affects women's participation in key sectors of the nation, demonstrating the importance of this study in enriching knowledge in this novel area of academic inquiry in Ghana.

## Literature Review

### Theoretical Perspectives on Women's Visibility and Voice in the Media

Unequal representation of women in media discourses has been widely documented (Banks, 2018; Elliott & Stead, 2018; Lämsä & Tiensuu, 2002). In the media and gender literature, this unequal representation has been established as an annihilation of women, one that excludes or mutes their relevance, experiences, and outputs within diverse sociocultural, political, and economic contexts (Harding 1991; Malik, 2025; Orbe, 1998; Wood, 2005). Tuchman (2000) describes this exclusion as “symbolic annihilation,” encompassing the trivialization, condemnation, and omission of women. Gerbner and Gross (1976) similarly frame it as the absence of or marginal presence of a group of people in the media, which perpetuates social inequalities. Eventually, such exclusion leads to epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007), when women's expertise are undervalued (testimonial injustice) and their perspectives omitted from the frameworks that shape collective understanding (hermeneutic injustice). According to Byskov (2021), “testimonial injustices wrong someone in their capacity as a speaker or knower because the increased or decreased credibility accorded to their testimony is based not on any relevant concerns, but on prejudices that have nothing to do with whether the speaker or knower should be granted credibility” ( p. 2). The consistent scholarly discovery of the lack of women's prominent coverage in the media constitutes such injustice.

Building on this, feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 1991; Hartsock 1983 ) emphasizes how society is structured by power relations. This results in unequal social locations for certain groups, thereby shaping experiences of people within these groups (Wood, 2005). While men are found to be in the privileged and dominant group, women are found as non-dominant, leading to their marginalization. Because women are found as subordinates, their social locations and experiences are more likely to promote knowledge that is critical and reflective of overlooked realities (Wood, 2005). Thus, women's social positions grant them distinctive standpoints from which to understand and interpret social realities. These standpoints differ from men's opinions and are crucial for a comprehensive and equitable public discourse as they emphasize the lived experiences of women (Lwamba et al., 2021).

Standpoint theory, therefore, offers a critical understanding of how both location and experience shape interpretation of broader social and political contexts (Wood, 2005). As Wood (2005) asserted, “By implication, a standpoint is an intellectual achievement that reflects-and necessarily entails-political consciousness” (p. 62) Yet in the media context, particularly when it comes to discussions centering around politics, health, economy, and security, women's opinions are often marginalized. This does not only lead to their silencing but represents a loss of valuable insights that could enrich national dialogue. The persistence of these patterns is reflected in a 2015

report by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) that stated,

the aggregated data for the 114 participating nations revealed that women still constitute only 24 percent of the people in the news (as sources or subjects) published, broadcast, or posted online – a figure that has been relatively stable since 2005. (p. 193)

Media portrayal of women often excludes their diverse experiences and perspectives, perpetuating stereotypes and limiting their epistemic agency. While women have been involved in newsrooms for decades, the Global Media Monitoring Project shows that the rise of women in the media is associated with their increased objectification for “visual pleasure”, rather than an acknowledgement of their meaningful participation as news sources (GMMP, 2020). Harp et al. (2013) argued that although female journalists tend to integrate women into the news more than their male counterparts, females remain invisible when it comes to news discourse. Similarly, Harp et al. (2011) studied gendered reports of women in times of war. They found evidence concerning the under-utilization of women as news sources and reporters on war. They realized that even when women are cited as sources, they are often recognized as victims in the news, demonstrating a general epistemic injustice of women through trivialization and omission (Harp et al., 2011).

Despite recent advocacies to increase diversity and gender balance in the workplace (Ahmed, 2024; Fine et al, 2020), women are still underrepresented in authoritative roles and are often depicted in narrow, traditional roles (Kulkarni & Mishra,2022; Malik, 2025; Thelma & Ngulube, 2024). Gurrieri (2021) argued that ideas on politics, economics, and security are communicated in a male-dominated power structure, and this contributes to the “trivialization of the complexities of women's lives, omission of those outside of the hegemonic feminine ideal and condemnation of women's corporeality” (p. 364). This marginalization extends to news coverage, where women's voices are often minimized, particularly in discussions of important issues such as politics, the economy, health, and leadership not only distorts gender representation but also entrenches epistemic injustice by silencing women as legitimate producers of knowledge (Malik, 2025). Such discussions of the exclusion of women in the media are relevant, as the media plays a crucial role in shaping, informing, and educating society about the roles of women as actors of development (Gallagher, 2013; Obeidat, 2002).

### Women's Representation in Media: Examining Factors in Ghana

In discussing the representations of women in the media, it is important to clarify two things: the roles women play as media personnel and as panels when discussing critical national issues. In addressing these two issues, while other studies have focused on the unequal representation of women in media discourses (Banks, 2018; Elliot & Stead, 2018), others also argue that there is a gradual shift in the representation of women in the media as

hosts, sources, news anchors, and panelists (Armstrong, 2006). In a progressive society, it is relevant to bring up discussions about the role of the media in shaping, informing, and educating society about critical issues (Gallagher, 2013). However, there exists a huge gap in how women are portrayed and the roles they play during such media representations in the Ghanaian media.

Gendered discourse is not novel in Ghana's media landscape (Diabah & Agyepong, 2022; Malik, 2025). Notable among scholars who have studied women's representation in the Ghanaian media is Gadzekpo (2013). The author argued that there still exist some gross gender inequalities in the Ghanaian media. Since Ghana transitioned to democracy in 1992, women's representation in the political landscape has been a struggle (Verge & Pastor, 2018), and their voices have often been muted in media coverage of critical national issues (Gadzekpo, 2009, 2013). Media representation of Ghanaian female politicians focus on marginalization, sexist, and misogynistic reporting rather than focusing on their contribution to policy issues (Asare & Agomor, 2023; Yeboah-Banin et al., 2024). In newsprint media, coverage of women in politics is low, their stories are placed on the inside pages, and rarely do their names hardly make it to the headlines making them "invisible" (Thuo, 2012). In the discussion of national issues in the media, the expertise of women as guests for media shows is less visible compared to their male counterparts (Baitinger, 2015) as there is a greater proportion of male representation than females in news content (Len-Rios et al., 2005). Women are rarely used as sources in stories of national and international importance and their expertise on critical national issues is less valued, and this signals the social construct that women are not as critical as men when it comes to these issues (Carter & Steiner, 2003; Ross & Carter, 2011; Zoch & Turk, 1998; Mensah & Wood, 2018).

In addition to women being rarely used as sources in stories of national and international discourses, Haynes (2022) and O'Brien (2014) observed that women's representation in the media, especially in the context of political discourse, on the flagships of current affairs show, and Prime Time, are double silenced in the media. This is because, within newsrooms, journalists continue to base their daily decisions on what is considered newsworthy predominantly on traditional masculine news values (Ross & Carter, 2011). While there is evidence of women being marginalized in media and politics in Ghana (Gadzekpo, 2009), this does not imply a total absence of women's expertise in discourse that focuses on politics (Madsen, 2019). Instead, it highlights the ongoing issue of limited visibility for women's participation in political discussions and the media's reinforcement of this trend. Despite their advanced knowledge, women continue to encounter obstacles in attaining equal representation as experts, particularly in comparison to men (Harp et al., 2011). Consequently, their expertise and significant contributions to social and economic issues are frequently sidelined, with journalists often favoring men's viewpoints and expertise as authoritative voices, especially on matters related to business and politics (Ross & Carter, 2011).

It is important to note that sociocultural norms provide ample justifications for media representation of women. The dominant portrayal of male traits in politics hinders the representation of women in this area (Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020). Societal cultures play a role in the media representation of women. Patriarchal norms in society are self-reinforcing and influence women's involvement in politics, which consequently influences their stereotypical representation in the media. Mensah and Wood (2018) examined the types of issues women parliamentarians participated predominantly during parliamentary discussions in Ghana. They found that female members of parliament predominantly contributed to the "soft" sociocultural issues in parliament, while men featured dominantly on the "hard" and critical politico-economic and security issues. When "hard issues" are handled by men, and "soft issues" are handled by women, the media become a conveyor belt within such a construct. Thus, the media alone is not complicit in its gendered representations, but sociocultural factors play important roles in women's stereotypical portrayals.

The silencing of women's voices as experts extend beyond politics but bleeds into the area of health. Studies on women's scientific utility during health crises show an undervaluing or trivialization of women's scientific expertise (Capecechi, 2023; Kitzinger et al., 2008). For instance, Kassova (2020) found that men were quoted five times more than women in health news about the Covid-19, highlighting the undervaluing of women's expert opinions on health. The invisibility of women in the media raises concerns about media diversity and has policy consequences that may intensify gendered inequalities in science (Smith, 2020). Nonetheless, tokenistic media representation of women in the health sector has focused on their bodies and sexualized features (Chimba & Kitzinger, 2010; Momade, 2023). Overall, women's media invisibility persists, highlighting ongoing gender struggles within the media landscape (Akalonu & Ha, 2024; Ross & Carter, 2011; Joubert et al., 2022).

In a study carried out by the University of Ghana on women's status in Ghana's media, it was discovered that women face biased promotion to leadership roles in the media (Yeboah-Banin, 2024). Interestingly, women are not recognized as having the required skills to be given leadership roles in media organizations (Adongo et al., 2023; Elliott & Stead, 2024; Robertson et al., 2021). For example, Adongo et al. (2023) argued that conventional gender roles that are consistent with cultural values, gender stereotyping, family obligations, and cultural views and perceptions of women and attitudes, along with low expectations regarding women's managerial abilities, deter women from assuming leadership roles in societies, which is reflected in the media. Given that media planning and programming are important parts of media work and decisions about news selection and assignment are made by leadership (Byerly et al. 2020), the absence of women leadership in the media explains the perpetuation of stereotypes against women globally. In the organizational setting where men are dominant or heavily represented, research has shown that women's voices

are often muted, irrespective of their intellectual contributions and expertise (Izunwanne et al., 2020).

The literature outlined previously clearly demonstrates the traditional marginalization of women in the media worldwide. In the Ghanaian media, the experience remains constant. However, studies that examined women's participation in the Ghanaian media have often examined their visibility as leaders, news sources, and reporters, mostly analyzing print media. These studies also do not explore gender representation in the broader program genres in the media. Examining gender representation across multiple television programs and their composition is a crucial addition to understanding patterns and trends of gender representation. We addressed this gap by answering the question:

RQ1: What are the patterns in gender representations within the Ghanaian media?

RQ2: What are the trends in gender representations within the Ghanaian media?

## Methods

### Research Design

Personality placement in the media (TV/Radio) forms part of media programming. Such programming does not occur by accident and the choice of programs and personality placements also reveals institutional ideologies which affect media production and content diversity (Hendrickx et al., 2022). In this study, the phenomena of media placement and programming were studied during the early morning breakfast shows. This period is chosen as it represents the time when complex national issues are discussed in the Ghanaian media different from the terrain in other geographic contexts. Given that this study was focused on exploring the patterns and trends in gender portrayal, a quantitative content analysis research design is adopted as the approach to address the key research question in this study. This method is important for this study as the goal of the authors is to discern the frequency by which women's utility are significantly explored by newsrooms in comparison to men, and within what session of media contents are women's utility explored.

### Data Collection

To accurately obtain quantitative data that capture the nature of gender representation in the Ghanaian media, a quantitative content analysis was adopted to code the contents of the breakfast shows within five Ghanaian media outlets. The TV channels and their respective programs included: TV3 (New Day), GHOne TV (Gh Today), United TV (Adekye Nsroma), Citi TV (Breakfast Show), and Joy News TV (AM Show). These media outlets are selected based on their historical value to national discourses, their popularity, diversity of language use (English and local language), attributed credibility, and performances in national awards over the past decades (Avle, 2011; Kpianbaareh et al., 2021; Yeboah-Banin et al., 2019).

### Quantitative Coding Procedure

Two final-year undergraduate students (who served as coders) from a public university in Ghana monitored and recorded their observations of the programming and placement of the media within six weeks (July 4th – 16th August 2022). Coder 1 reported their observations from three television channels and their corresponding programs which included TV3 (New Day), GHOne TV (Gh Today), United TV (Adekye Nsroma) and Coder 2 reported their observations from the remaining two TV channels and their respective programs which are Citi TV (Breakfast Show), and Joy News TV (AM Show). To address the issue of reliability in the different coded TV contents, the two coders were initially taken through a week of interrater reliability coding. To limit bias and inconsistency in the reported data, the coding items were mostly questions that required a Yes or No answer and others required the counting of observed representations in the TV program. To begin with the actual manual coding, and in line with best practices (Lacy et al., 2015), the lead author guided the two student coders to code other similar television programs to ensure a consistent understanding of the coding units. Additionally, all the questions asked in the online Qualtrics codebook were thoroughly explained in writing (Appendix). This aimed at guaranteeing a 100% reliability of the coding metrics across the two coders. After all issues were resolved and coders gained a common understanding of the coding items, they then began the coding of the actual TV programs for the analysis.

The timeframe for the data collection was opportune due to the political party conventions/elections and their characteristic debates and media coverage during the time. Also, the period was characterized by the economic crisis which challenged Ghana to seek a second International Monetary Fund (IMF) intervention. Further, labor strikes, protests, and terrorist insurgency in neighboring countries, Burkina Faso and Nigeria, triggered security concerns in the Ghanaian media at the time and led to a series of discussions. It was also within the same time when the Monkeypox health epidemic had taken root and Ghana's preparedness to tackle it post-Covid-19 became a topical issue in the Ghanaian media. These events triggered media discussions, and it was an ideal time to examine gender participation on these complex issues of national relevance. There has never been a period where the media landscape in Ghana or elsewhere experienced such occurrences within a short time.

### Data Analysis Procedures

From the initial observations, we identified four main segments of the TV program: newspaper reviews, panel discussions, special interview sessions/call-in sessions with experts, and general interviews. The main topics or subjects that are specific to this study's goal include politics/governance, legislation, security, health, finance/economy, and others. The data for this study were analyzed using Qualtrics, primarily through its cross-tabulation function. This function was used to examine patterns and relationships among the categorical

variables—gender, media outlets, program names, and expert/program participants—by comparing the observed frequencies and ratios of gender representation on TV programs during the six weeks of data collection. The aim was to assess gender diversity and representation in the Ghanaian media, particularly in the context of discussions on complex national issues. For this study, and within the current gender context of Ghana, gender was examined in terms of male and female categories.

### Findings

The data for this study were analyzed to explore the representativeness of the genders in the media, especially during discussions of issues that are critical to policy formulation, adjustments, and/or modifications. We analyzed data collected from observations of morning shows aired by five selected media outlets over a 32-day period. First, providing information about the rate of the responses from the five media outlets within the thirty-two days sets a good foundation to note the frequency with which these morning shows were held on those channels. Table 1 presents the results of the responses on the regularity of the morning shows in the five media outlets.

**Table 1**

*Regularity of Morning Shows Broadcasted in the Media Within Six Weeks*

Program Name	%	n
Adekye Nsroma -UTV	21.48	32
TV3 New Day	20.13	30
Citi Breakfast Show- Citi TV	18.12	27
GhToday- GHOne TV	20.81	31
AM Show- JoyNews TV	19.46	29
Total	100	149

Over the thirty-two days of data collection, United Television (UTV) recorded 21.48% responses of the morning shows for this analysis. GhOne recorded a 20.81% response rate for the morning shows for this analysis. TV3 recorded a 20.13% frequency for their broadcast of morning shows within the duration of the data entry. Joy News recorded a 19.33% response rate for the morning shows for this analysis. Citi TV recorded an 18.67% response rate for the morning shows for this analysis. The analysis of the data is based on the percentages from the responses obtained from the respective media and it shows that

within the 6-weeks, all the media outlets held morning shows justifying the necessity for examining gender representational issues in these morning shows.

Further, coders entered their observation for the question concerning the gender of the host of the morning shows. This question contributes to our identification of the equality in gender participation on TV morning shows in the Ghanaian media. Table 2 presents the results of the gender representations within the five media channels during the thirty-two days of data collection.

**Table 2**

*Gender of Morning Show, Newspaper, and Panel Hosts*

Gender	General morning show hosts		Newspaper discussion host		Panel discussion host	
	n	%	n	%	n	5
Male	71	47.65	68	47.22	64	46.72
Female	78	52.35	76	52.78	73	53.28
Total	149	100	144	100	137	100

Morning shows in the Ghanaian media mostly consist of the host of the program for the day, a newspaper review or synthesis, and a panel discussion. The program host for the morning shows could be multiple depending on the occasion and the house style practiced by the media outlet. Here, Table 2 reflects the results from the gender of only the main hosts of the morning shows, including their major compositions. The results in Table 2 demonstrate a higher frequency of women (52.35%) serving as the main hosts for the morning shows than men (47.65%) in the Ghanaian media within the period of data collection. Earlier studies show a depreciated visibility of women in the media and their obscurity with media leadership, even more so in the Ghanaian media (De Vuyst & Raemaecker, 2019; Gadzepko 2013; Gadzepko, 2009; GMMP, 2020). Despite that, the results of this study show a moderate appreciation of women’s role as hosts over men. While statistical data available in the GMMP 2020 reports show an underrepresentation of women in the Ghanaian media, our finding shows a steady increase in women’s visibility during morning shows in the 2022 period when this data was collected. With the gender of the various components of the morning shows established, we went on to examine the nature of topics and their frequency of discussion within the period of the study as presented in Table 3. This helps us to assess the critical nature of the discussions held in the media within the period of data collection. Also, it sets the foundation for us to assess the equal participation of the genders in these critical discussions.

**Table 3***Issues and Frequency of Discussion*

Issues	%	n
Politics	23.89	75
Finance/Economy	28.34	89
Health	1.91	6
Security	1.59	5
Legislative/Policy	21.97	69
Other	22.29	70
Total	100	314

Table 3 provides the values of the national issues discussed during the morning shows within the five media outlets. Political discourses are essential to media programming and central to morning show discussions in the Ghanaian media. In this study, politics is associated with discussions such as the assessment of the strengths and/or weaknesses of the president, ministers, district and municipal heads, issues about corruption and general issues concerning state mismanagement, and elections into political offices. This delimitation of politics is situated in the context of the political climate within the time the data were collected as stated in the methodology. Aside from the delimitation of politics, other issues maintain their original meaning. The data show that within the period, economics/finance (28.34%) was the most spoken-about subject within the media. This is justified since the result reflects the period Ghana returned to the IMF for economic intervention and public sector workers agitated for increased remunerations. Politics (23.89%) was the second most discussed topic in the media. On one hand, political discussions and economic/finance discussions intersected on the basis that the economic challenges experienced within the era also led to criticism of the government and state officials associated with the financial management of the state. On the other hand, discussions about politics largely reflect the political climate. Legislative/policy issues (21.97%) were significant in media discussion within the era. While coders coded health (1.91%) and security (1.59%). Other issues (22.9%) were a combination of topics that were sparsely related to health, security, education, policy issues, politics, and other social issues. Table 4a discusses the result of the presence and the number of panel members on the morning shows. This sets the basis for analyzing the gender balance in panel representations.

**Table 4a***Panel Members Excluding the Host*

Number of Panel Members	%	n
One	27.74	38
Two	32.85	45
Three	35.77	49
Four	2.92	4
Five/ Five+	0.73	1
Total	100	137

Panel members are key to the discussions of critical societal and national issues (Jordan & Robinson, 2008). For television morning shows, panel members are preplanned personalities of experts with knowledge about the subject for the day. Table 4a provides information about the quantity of panel members staged for the morning shows within the six weeks of data collection. Table 4a shows that, excluding the host of the morning shows, the morning shows often hosted three-panel members at 35.77%, two-panel members at 32.85%, and a one-panel member at 27.74%. At 2.92% of the time, the panel consisted of four panel members while at 0.73% of the time, panel members consisted of more than five panel members. This suggests that within the morning shows, there was at least one panel member invited to speak to one or more of the issues in Table 3. After noting the presence of panel members on the morning shows, coders then entered their responses for the question "How many female panel members were present?". Table 4b presents the frequencies of the female panel members out of the total frequencies presented in Table 4a.

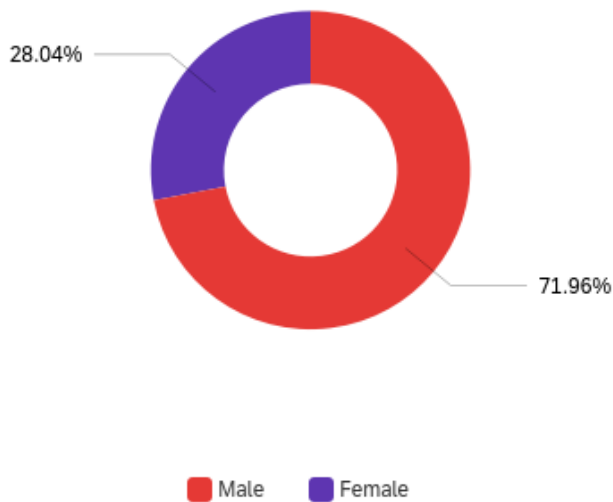
**Table 4b***Frequency of Female Panel Members Present*

Female Panel Present	%	n
One	12.41	17
Two	2.92	4
Three	0.73	1
Four	0.73	1
Five/Five+	0	0
None	83.21	114
Total	100	137

The values presented in Table 4b are the results of the actual values of female/women presence as panel members on the morning show out of the total panel members of both men and women presented by Table 4a. Table 4b shows that when the morning shows had one panel member, 12.41% out of the 27.74% of the time, it was a woman. Which means that 15.33% of the time, it was a male. Further, when the morning show consisted of exactly two panel members, 2.92% out of 32.85% of the time, it included women or had a woman as a panel, showing that 29.92% of males dominated the panel. Also, when the show had exactly three panel members, 0.73% out of 35.77% of the time, a woman was included on the panel which was dominated by males by 35.04%. Similarly, when the morning show had exactly four panel members, 0.73% out of 2.92% of the time, a woman was included, yet dominated by males at 2.19%. While there is some visibility of women on the morning shows in the top five Ghanaian media, the data show that 83.21% of the time, panel discussions did not include a woman in the discussion of the various subjects shown in Table 3. This finding reinforces the patriarchal traditions of the Ghanaian media landscape. More, it suggests the inadequacy, if not incompetencies of the female perspective on these critical national issues. Figure 1 shows the percentage of the special interview component in the morning shows and the frequency of the availability of both genders as guests for the special interview sessions. Figure 1 shows a pie chart representing the presence of male and female special interview guests on morning shows in the Ghanaian media.

**Figure 1**

*Special Interviews*

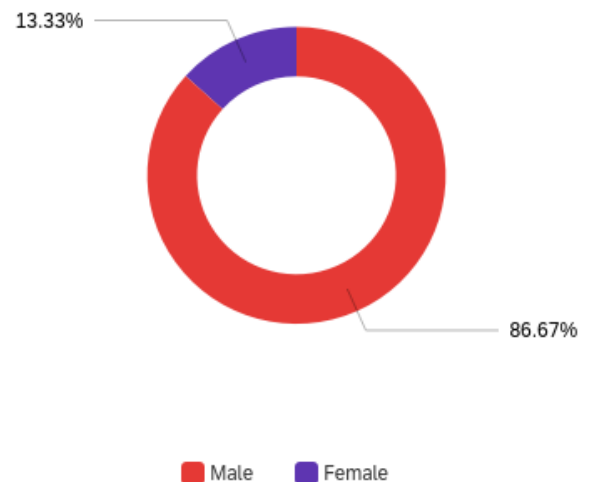


Special interviews are important components of morning shows in the Ghanaian media, and they often consist of, at least, one guest. It is the session where special topics are discussed. Coders noted that within the six weeks of TV breakfast show monitoring from all five media outlets, these special interviews hosted guests including but not limited to celebrities, ministers of

state/cabinet ministers, members of parliament from both incumbent and opposition governments, economists, emergency management officials such as social welfare, human rights experts, and health practitioners. These guests discussed issues concerning their area of knowledge. Figure 1 reveals that 71.96% of males were represented or hosted as guests to special interviews, whereas females 28.04% were hosted. Thus, there is a greater participation of men as guests for special interviews than women in the Ghanaian media during morning shows, especially given the intricacies of the time the data were collected. Figure 2 shows a pie chart representing the frequency of calls to male and female experts on morning shows in the Ghanaian media.

**Figure 2**

*External Experts*



Similar to special interviews are calls made to external experts during the morning shows. Experts have deeper knowledge in their field of specialization and their knowledge has utility for media discussions based on their attributed credibility. The results indicate that calls to external expertise were 21.64% which represents a lower utilization of calls to external experts during panel discussions. However, with the lower utilization of calls to experts during morning shows, there is a higher utilization of male experts (86.67%) in panel discussions during morning shows than women experts (13.33%). The results presented in Figure 2 reinforce the notion that both genders are considered experts in the discussion of issues. Contrary to the number or rate at which men are called on to share their expert knowledge on national issues, the rate for women is significantly low. The wide difference in the rate of women's expertise (13.33%) to male expertise (86.67%) in the Ghanaian media, especially on critical national issues proves that although women are considered in some discussions, women's expertise is significantly lagging. This result justifies Bosch's (2010) argument that although women are not excluded or prevented from participating in deliberations, they are seldom called or

invited as experts to join political deliberation and discussions, or rather, they are invited to participate in the lighter discussions such as on entertainment issues.

### Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate a consistent pattern of male dominance in the Ghanaian media. Numerous studies on gender representation, participation, and equality in the media worldwide, and the Ghanaian media in particular, show a constant depreciation of women's involvement and participation in newsroom decision-making and their continuous invisibility in media leadership positions (Gadzekpo, 2013; GMMP, 2020; Ross & Carter, 2011). The Global Media Monitoring Project report (2020) reveals gender imbalance in the Ghanaian media, especially in the discussion of complex socio-political, health, and economic issues. The decline in the use of women's expertise (31%) especially on critical national issues to the preference for male expertise (69%) as reported in the GMMP report 2020 ascribes to the social phenomenon of women's perceived incompetence which this research has also attested to by the results in Figure 1, Figure 2, and Table 4b. The primary goal of this study was to demonstrate the extent of gender equality in the Ghanaian media. While Ghana's media has transitioned from a state of total invisibility of women two decades ago to a steady increase in the visibility of women in modern times, especially in leadership (Adams et al., 2016), it is popularly assumed that the Ghanaian media has achieved some gender balance, especially on TV. This is because popular names such as Nana Aba Anamoah, Oheneyere Gifty Anti, Portia Gabor, Serwaa Amihere, Aisha Ibrahim, Afia Pokuwaa (Vhim Lady), Akosua Aboagye, Deloris Frimpong Manso, Anita Erskine, Jessica Opare Soforo, and among others are popular media personalities in the Ghanaian TV media in modern times. As Table 1 shows, women dominate as morning show hosts (52.35%), newspaper discussion hosts (52.78), and panel discussion hosts (53.28%) across the five most popular media outlets during morning shows.

Despite this, the role of hosts could mean two things, (a) the acknowledgment of women's competence to lead discussions but also (b) the objectification of women as effective media marketing tools for morning shows. Firstly, the promotion of literacy in Ghana, and the particular focus on women's education in Ghana has positively increased gender advocacy and the call for women's inclusion in every aspect of Ghana's public life (Gadzekpo, 2013; Nartey, 2021; Prah, 2003). Notwithstanding that, the slow adoption of the Affirmative Action bill into law and its perceived implementation challenges stampedes gender equality in Ghana (Appiah, 2015; Bawa & Sanyare, 2013; Bukari et al., 2017). Despite this, there has been a steady increase in women's participation in previously perceived male-dominated contexts such as political leadership, parliamentary discourse, and media practice (Adams et al., 2016; Mensah & Wood, 2018; Musah & Gariba, 2013; Ocran, 2014). The second reason for the role of women as hosts feeds into the age-old phenomena of the commodification and objectification

of women, however, in a subversive form that benefits both the female hosts and media outlets (GMMP, 2020; Resario & Darkwah, 2021). In this study, while Table 1 indicates the utilization of women as hosts for various segments of the morning shows, we argue that women in media leadership roles have not significantly contributed to addressing gender imbalance, the misrepresentation of women, or their low participation in discussions of critical national issues. The results reveal a steady utilization of women as morning show hosts but women's expertise on the issues that matter is not sought after. This confirms earlier studies on the non-utilization of women's expertise in complex national issues, globally (Craft & Wanta, 2004; Baitinger, 2015; Kitzinger et al., 2008; Steans, 2006).

### Conclusion

In this study, we questioned the agenda for using women as morning show hosts yet not as experts on complex national topics. We centered back to the commodification hypothesis of the role of women hosts. As in Vu (2020), the presence of women as morning show hosts in Ghanaian media, as observed in this study, may reflect the use of their bodies and beauty as "roses" with marketable value for media outlets. Such representations contrast with genuine gender equity norms, as they primarily aim to (a) leverage women's physical appearance to attract audiences and generate traffic for media outlets, and (b) use the prominent visibility of women hosts as a branding strategy to present the outlet as an equitable institution. Normatively, this aligns more with marketplace feminism than genuine gender equity strategy. The findings show the characteristic masculinity in the Ghanaian media. The implication of this is that the monotonic and mono-gendered male perspective on these popular media outlets shapes national policy decisions, hence contributing to the gender imbalance in national policies. This approach also silences the feminine voice and enforces the perceived incompetence of women in the discussion of critical national issues (Craft & Wanta, 2004; Gadzekpo, 2013; GMMP, 2020). In this context, the annihilation of women does not imply the total absence of women's expertise but rather the persistent marginalization of women's participation in discussing critical national issues. In a true democracy, all voices must be given priority, especially when discussing national issues. Thus, the absence of women's expert opinions on critical national issues pokes questions about the democratic credentials of Ghana. These findings, like other wide-scale studies, suggest that democracy as practiced within the lens of the Ghanaian media is patriarchal.

The findings make significant contributions to the literature on media patriarchy, and the results are consistent with earlier findings as presented by the Global Media Monitoring Project report (2020). Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. The duration (six weeks) of the data collection does not allow us to study the phenomenon of gender equality in the Ghanaian media over a period. Thus, further studies can examine the phenomenon of gender equality in the Ghanaian media over time during TV morning/breakfast shows where significant

national issues are discussed daily. Again, in this research, our findings complement the study of Gadzekpo (2013) concerning the issue of a gender gap in the Ghanaian media and the need for advanced study in the field. We believe that further research into the existing gendered issues and trends in the media will aid in developing new media and gender equality theories that can consider the dynamics within the Ghanaian media setting and suggest equitable modalities for media operations. We recommend that further studies should be conducted to explore justifications for the male expert preference during discussions of critical national issues in the Ghanaian media. Researchers could accomplish this through an in-depth qualitative interview with media production managers, editors, and directors to unearth the desire for male expertise. This will provide some more profound insights into these findings and further prove the perceived competence or incompetence hypothesis.

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