

# **Legislators' pathway to power in Ghana: Intra-party competition, Clientelism and unresponsive representatives**

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## **Abstract**

An important quality of representative democracy is the strength of the linkage between citizens and the state. In order to provide a strong incentive for this relationship, Ghanaian legislators are elected on simple plurality (First-Past-The-Post) system in single member constituencies which in principle, fosters close links between legislators and their constituents. In contrast to this expectation, there is a wide disconnect between the country's legislators and their constituents. Based on public opinion data and semi-structured interviews with legislators in Ghana, this paper investigates why the country's electoral system is producing a starkly different outcome and which explanations could account for the gap between representatives and the represented. Previous research do not attempt to assess or mis-specifies patron–client networks mediating legislators' pathway to power in Ghana and how it complicates the expected effect of electoral institutions. The paper argues that the relationship between legislators and their constituents in Ghana is mediated by the strong presence of clientelistic networks in intra – party primaries that temper with the constraining effects of formal electoral rules.

**Keywords:** Representation, Democracy, Parliament, Intra–party primaries, Clientelism, Ghana

## 1. Introduction

If electoral institutions condition legislators' behaviour in a uniform manner, then how do we explain behavioural outcomes that diametrically diverge from scholars' long held expectations? A common assumption is that the effects of electoral institutions tend to vary between established and emerging democracies. But, what exactly is it about new democracies that produce dissimilar outcomes even under similar electoral rules? By investigating the underlying features of intra-party competition in Ghana, this paper answers the question; when and how does clientelistic candidate selection affect legislator-constituents' relationship in contrast to the expectation of formal electoral institutions. The analysis demonstrates how patronage networks mediating legislators' pathways to power in one of Africa's renowned democracies produce distinct types of legislators who largely operate independent of the constraints of electoral institutions.

Over the past two decades, a growing number of observers have labelled Ghana as an exemplar of peaceful, robust democracy in the West African sub-region (Gyimah-Boadi, 2009; Sithole, 2012) which has been infamously christened as the "coup d'état belt of the African continent" (Olukoshi, 2001:1). But while it is true that the country's democratic accomplishments are remarkable, it is equally true that it has been less successful in many ways. Key is the weak linkage between Members of Parliament in Ghana (MPGs) and their constituents. Coincidentally, legislator – constituents' relationship remains a notoriously under-researched subject in African politics in general and Ghanaian politics in particular, save for Mates and Chiwandamira (2004). Linkage between legislators and their constituents may depend on many factors such as the formers' own conception of their constituents (focus of representation) and how they choose to represent them (style of representation). Although elections provide the most common linkage mechanism by giving legislators the incentive to align their activities with the preferences of their constituents (Miller and Stoke, 1963; Pitkin 1967), actual proximity between the two is thought to be determined by the electoral system under operation.

While Ghana's simple plurality (First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) electoral system is candidate based and was specifically adopted to foster a close relationship between representatives and the represented (Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2012; Ninsin, 1992), a contrary effect is being witnessed. Existing evidence over the years has exposed a weak linkage between Ghanaian legislators and their constituents. This gap, I argue may be due to the presence of informal clientelistic networks that do not only riddle intra – party candidate selection but also temper with the constraining effect of formal electoral institutions. To be sure, it is not my claim that clientelism matters in shaping legislators' behaviour in Ghana. In that case, this analysis would be conventional. In fact, Africanists have long emphasized the presence and influence of patron – client networks on political outcomes (e.g. Bratton and van de Walle, 1997; Lindberg, 2010). Rather, it is surprising how little attention has been paid to how informal patronage structures function alongside formal electoral institutions in one of Africa's most celebrated democracies and how the former compromises scholars' long held expectations on the effects of formal rules. Thus, while there is wide acknowledgement that informal and formal institutions

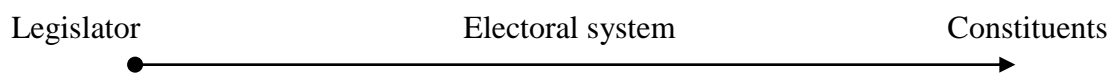
intricately coexist in African politics, we do not yet know which set of institutions dominate in explaining legislator – constituents’ relationship, when and how. This paper thus represents one of the first steps towards addressing this very important neglect. The rest of the argument proceeds as follow: First, I outline the theoretical framework employed in the paper after which the data and methods are explained. I then pay a brief attention to the political context of Ghana. The last two parts discuss the agency of clientelistic candidate selection in two political parties in Ghana and how they temper with the effect of electoral rules and conclusion.

## 2. Electoral system, clientelistic candidate selection and MP-constituents linkage

Legislatures are designed to be popular institutions that bridge the gap between citizens and the state. This connection is ensured through regular elections which are indispensable conditions for representation. Through elections, legislators derive the incentive to serve their constituents and to maintain closer and visible ties. This may take the form of doing errands, giving advice, obtaining information, sponsoring community development projects, explaining activities in the capital, holding office hours for the constituents among several others<sup>1</sup>. Service to constituents remains the most widespread activity legislators in most modern democracies engage in (Loewenberg, 2011; Lindberg, 2003) and thus remains a good a proxy for congruence (Andre et’al, 2014; Barkan, 2009; Fenno, 1978; Jewell, 1982).

We know however from existing studies that there are wide variation across contexts and among individual legislators relative to the importance they attach to constituency work. The arguments I develop in this paper for what determines these variations depart from leading explanations emerging from advanced democracies. These explanations have primarily focused on the effects of electoral systems in particular and formal institutions in general<sup>2</sup>. As in Figure 1, MPs’ representational focus and style are thought of as depending on the structure of the incentives present in the electoral system presiding over their elections.

**Figure 1: The mediating role of electoral systems in legislator-constituents linkage**



Thus, the majoritarian model is usually said to make representatives constituency-centric due to the direct electoral interface between the MPs and their constituents and the ease with which the voter can sanction the legislator in case of unresponsiveness. With the closed list proportional model on the other hand, representatives depend more on the party and less inclined to the voter since parties control access to the list and also voters cast their ballots for their preferred parties rather than individual candidates. The prominence MPs’ attachment to constituents may thus depend on electoral institutions.

<sup>1</sup> For discussions on constituency service, see Fenno (1978) and Loewenberg, (2011)

<sup>2</sup> See Carey & Shugart (1995), Shugart et al. (2005), Sieberer (2006), André & Depauw (2013)

The main theoretical point of departure laid out in this paper is that electoral systems may not be sufficient in explaining legislator – constituent outcomes. Factors like informal socio-political networks and party variables could compromise the effects of electoral system variables and condition legislators’ constituency behaviour in ways that diverge from the effects scholars expect. Party candidates do not emerge out of the blue to contest parliamentary seats. They undergo a series of candidate selection processes in their parties to secure the ticket to contest on the party’s label. While candidate selection processes are hugely important for the type of behaviour that MPs eventually exhibits, it remains a rarely chartered territory for both academic research and national regulation. In most new democracies as it is in their advanced counterparts, there are no laws defining how parties choose their candidates as each party makes its own rules freely (Rahat, 2007)<sup>3</sup>. But crucially, since in majoritarian systems, in particular, safe seats are abundant (Hazan, 2014), it is intra-party candidate selection and not necessarily inter-party elections that determines who eventually becomes an MP. Candidate selection thus has two basic effects in this regard. On the one hand, legislators’ mindful of securing their seats in may deem the successful crossing of this stage their most primary preoccupation. On the other hand, representation and how it is carried out is largely determined at this stage too. In intra – party competitions, re-election seeking legislators may employ either programmatic or clientelistic strategies for vote mobilisation (Kitschelt, 2000). While clientelism involves “direct”, private and club material exchange relations; programmatic strategies are “indirect” and public (Lemarchand and Legg, 1972). Clientelistic exchanges suffice in situations where a legislator distributes material benefits to only a subset of individuals and imposes costs on others. Since clientelistic networks are constructed around particularistic connections between individuals, “the loyalties involved remain linked to persons and are not transferred to formal institutions” (Lauth, 2000:33). Consequently, clientelism exists in tension with the formal electoral institutions and in some instances, formal decision-making procedures could to be subordinated to the clientelistic logic. This is especially so in situations of dire poverty where such otherwise petty gifts as sugar, clothing and money are enough to buy votes. As already highlighted, since the most crucial process that defines legislators’ pathways to power is the candidate selection stage, party delegates become the targets for such clientelistic exchanges. This means that candidates who become the eventual winners of primaries are usually either the richest or the highest bidders and not necessarily the most electable (Bruhn, 2010). Thus, clientelistic exchanges serve to de-link legislators and their constituents and rather recast this relationship with their party delegates as in Figure 2 below. As a result of the fact that in “many democracies, in a majority of elections and in a majority of parties, selection is equal to election” (Hazan, 2014:214), parliamentary candidates reverse the direction of responsiveness in rather to their party’s delegates.

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<sup>3</sup> The few that do have such legislation include the United States, Germany, New Zealand, Norway (until 2002), and Finland

**Figure 2: Clientelistic candidate selection and legislator-constituents relations**



Thus candidate selection processes that give primacy to the distribution of selective benefits to few party delegates to the neglect of the entire constituents may end up insulating elected representatives from the consequences of post-election actions. This insulation leaves the electoral process impotent in effectively providing an avenue for retrospective judgement and thus compromises the expectations of electoral systems.

### **3. Data and method**

To establish how clientelistic intra-party competition tempers with the effects of formal electoral rules and widens the relationship between MPs in Ghana (MPGs) and their constituents, this paper performs a systematic two-step analysis relying on two main sets of data. In the first step, Afrobarometer dataset which measures the attitudes of people towards democracy and political leadership in Africa is used to gauge public opinions on the nature of the relationship between MPGs on one hand and their constituents on the other from the Round 2 of the survey in 2002/2003 to Round 6 in 2013/2014.

The Afrobarometer data is complemented with semi-structured interviews conducted with 16 MPGs over the period of August and October, 2018. The interviews had two main aims; first was to establish the primary representational focus of the MPGs and secondly to highlight how they construct their relationship with their constituents on one hand and their party's delegates on the other. The questions were semi-structured and open-ended to afford the MPGs the opportunity to espouse their thought without operating in pre-coded response categories. The interviews in total lasted for 18.11 hours, meaning an average of 1.13 hours per interview. They were tape-recorded, self-transcribed and coded using the mixed approach. This implies that both theory-derived and open codes were generated in the process (Campbell et al, 2013). An interpretive textual analysis strategy was adopted, placing premium rather on the meaning and content of the MPGs' constituency activities than the quantitative generation of frequencies for given keywords. The coding strategy particularly focused on whom or what the beneficiaries of each interviewed MPG's representational activities are. This also means that where a specific MPG does not explicitly mention a representational focus, a code is, all the same generated on the basis of the typical activities or the individuals the said MPG engages with in line with her representational activities.

The second step of the analysis focuses on how clientelistic exchanges in intra-party competitions in the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) explain the distance between Ghanaian MPs and their constituents in contrast to expectations of the country's electoral institutions.

#### 4. The Ghanaian context: A celebrated democracy with weak MP–constituents linkage

A confluence of international and domestic factors drove Ghana’s 4th attempt at democratisation in 1993. The immediate post-independent democracy relapsed into one party state in 1960, inviting a coup in 1966. This opened the floodgates for a series of coup d’états interspersed with three brief periods of democratic rule until 1992. The current democratic dispensation is close to three decades old and has superintended over seven uninterrupted presidential and parliamentary elections with three turnovers. The country is now rated “Free” in Freedom in the World Reports of Freedom House. This status has been maintained since 2000.

**Table 1: Elections, political parties and seat distribution in parliament, 1992 - 2016**

Year of election	NPP	NDC	CPP	PNC	PPP	Ind.	Others	# of seats
1992	0	189	0	0	0	2	1	192
1996	61	133	5	1	0	0	0	200
2000	100	92	1	3	0	4	0	200
2004	128	94	3	4	0	1	0	230
2008	107	116	1	2	0	4	0	230
2012	123	148	1	1	0	2	0	275
2016	171	104	0	0	0	0	0	275

*Source: Electoral Commission of Ghana*

With the exception of the transition election of 1992 which was not only botched but resulted in the opposition parties boycotting the first parliament 4th republic (Oquaye, 2004), subsequent elections have enjoyed considerable inter-party and international acceptance. Although the constitution of Ghana allows for multi-party competition, the electoral space as shown in Table 1 has been dominated by two parties; the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC). Even though there are smaller parties, they have scarcely won more than 5% of seats in the country’s parliament since 1996. In 2016 for instance, no other party except the two dominant parties won seats in the legislature. As a result of the country’s pre-4<sup>th</sup> republican experience of military coups; constitutional engineering in the democratization period particularly focused on designing mechanisms that do not only stimulate effective political participation but also fosters a closer link between representatives and their constituents. The country therefore settled for First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) system in Single-Member Constituencies (SMC) (Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2012; Ninsin 1992). The expectation has been that, with this system, the relationship between constituents and representatives would not only be typically close, but would also guarantee the constituents opportunities to periodically sanction unresponsive legislators. After close to three decades, the country is ripe for some analysis. The question therefore has to do with the evolution of the relationship between legislators and their constituents and how this relationship has developed in consonance with the expectations of the country’s electoral system.

#### 4.1 MPG – Constituents’ relationship: Evidence from Afrobarometer

By first looking at the time Ghanaian MPs spend in their constituencies, we realise a significant gap. From Table 2, an average of 37.1% of respondents claim that their MPs “never” spent time in the constituency between 2005 and 2009 which is one full electoral term. On the contrary, only 3.3% claim that their MPs spent almost all the time in the constituency. The finding that the MPs never spend time in their constituencies (37.1%) or only do so annually (23%) or monthly (26.6%) is alarming and surprising given the central importance MPs’ constituency presence for representative democracies and candidate based electoral systems.

**Table 2: MPs’ Time spent in constituencies (%)**

Category	Total	R3 2005/2006	R4 2008/2009
Never	37.1	38.5	35.7
At least once a year	23.0	21.1	24.9
At least once a month	26.6	30.7	22.8
At least weekly	9.9	8.2	11.5
Almost all their time	3.3	1.5	5.0
Missing	0.1	-	0.1
(N)	2,032 (100%)	991 (100%)	1,041 (100%)

*Source: Ghana Afrobarometer survey, 2005/2006, 2008/2009*

It is worthy of note that, beyond physical presence, the MPs could equally hone their constituency visibility by maintaining constant contacts with their constituents. This could be possible through constituency offices with staff whose primary duty is to connect the people to the MP or the use the media or personal webpages. Although such mediated contacts could create layers of communication and a potential hierarchy between the MPs and their constituents, they are nonetheless very essential in bridging legislator-constituents’ contact gap. In Ghana, the evidence suggests that MP – constituents’ contacts in whatever form, whether mediated or direct is woefully on the low. An average of 85.8% of Ghanaians “never” had contacts with their legislators in the period between 2002 and 2014. As if this is not alarming enough, the rates of contacts decreased with time within the period covered in the survey.

**Table 3: Frequency of MP – Constituents contact (%)**

Category	Total	2002/3	2005/6	2008/9	2011/2	2013/4
Never	85.8	86.8	82.9	84.6	86.0	87.1
Only one	4.6	5.4	4.0	4.2	5.2	4.2
A few times	6.0	4.8	8.3	6.1	5.7	5.9
Often	2.7	2.0	3.8	4.0	2.2	2.4
Don’t know	0.8	1.0	0.9	1.2	0.9	0.3
(N)	8395	1200	1196	1200	2400	2399
	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)

*Source: Ghana Afrobarometer 2002 - 2014*

Perhaps the low rate of contact between Ghanaian MPs and their constituents could be explained by how much the constituents think their MPs listen to their concerns. As shown below, MPs in Ghana hardly listen to their constituents. It is therefore logical to expect little MPG – constituents’ contact when the former exhibits a non – listening habit. Only an average of 6.7% of 7,388 respondents claims their MPs always listen to them. This is against an average of 49.7% who claim that their MPs “never” listen to them and 31.6% who indicate that they are listened to “only sometimes”. Over the years between 2002 and 2013, the listening gap has widened from 37.2% to 50.6% while the numbers who listen to their constituents “always” have also shrunk from 6.7% to 5.8% with an all-time low of 2.6% in 2011/2012.

**Table 4. How much MPs listen to their constituents (%)**

Category	Total	2002/2003	2005/2006	2008/2009	2011/2012	2013/2014
Never	49.7	37.2	36.7	39.0	66.0	50.6
Only sometimes	31.6	41.7	33.6	33.9	23.3	33.1
Often	11.6	15.9	18.4	12.6	8.2	9.4
Always	6.7	5.2	11.2	14.4	2.6	5.8
Missing	0.3	-	0.1	0.1	-	1.1
(N)	7,833	1,105	1,049	1,123	2,297	2,259
	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)

*Source: Ghana Afrobarometer 2002 – 2014*

From the foregone, we could conclude on a certain pattern of MPG–constituents’ gap in Ghana. A large majority the MPs are found to spend little to no time in their constituencies while at the same time not maintaining any form of contacts with the constituents. In situations when the constituents finally make contacts with their MPs, it is found that the latter hardly “listens”. This finding diametrically contrasts with scholars’ long held expectations concerning the constituency activeness of legislators in candidate based electoral systems such as Ghana’s.

#### **4.2 MPG – Constituents’ relationship: Evidence from the interviews**

Building on the public opinion survey, an in-depth look was taken into the constituency activities of individual MPs using semi-structured interviews. The main aim was to establish how they view and construct their relationship with their constituents. With respect to their primary “focus” as legislators, a large majority claimed to be more locally oriented than having a national/universal or partisan focus. For instance, when asked how they spend their week, some responded;

“I am always in the constituency. From Monday to Friday, I am always in the constituency... I move from here to parliament and come back. So Mondays I do my office work at (*name of constituency*) here... that’s what I am doing now (AS, 01: Interview, 25 August, 2018).



“... Most weekends you may come back to your constituency. Especially Saturday mornings you set off to the constituency, join the party people, attend this party, attend this funeral, wedding and inspect this problem” (OF 01, Interview, 20 August, 2018).

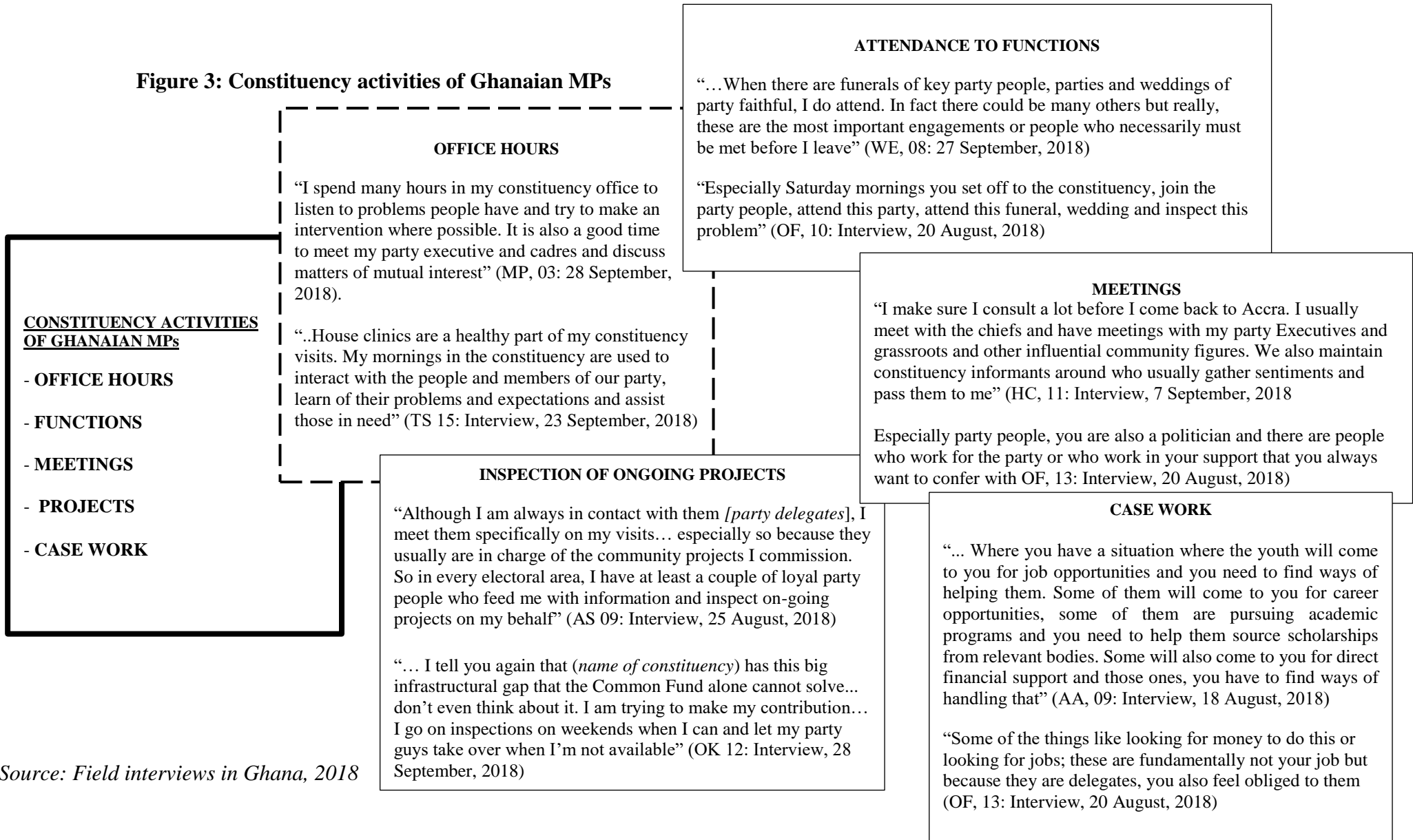
**Table 5: Ghanaian legislators’ focus of representation (%)**

<b>Focus</b>	<b>Universal</b>		<b>Partisan</b>	<b>Local</b>	
	God & all Ghanaians	The voiceless	Political Party	Geographic constituency	Primary/ personal
<b>Frequency</b>	12.5	6.2	6.2	12.5	62.5

This finding both contradicts and corroborates the public opinion data in two fascinating ways. On the one hand, it is true from Table 5 [and in contrast to the public opinion data] that local constituency work is the most widespread activity of Ghanaian MPs. On the other hand, it is also true that these constituency engagements are largely designed to function in the interest of sub-sections of the constituents (primary or personal constituency) rather than the general (geographic) constituency in consonance with the findings of the opinion survey.

Overall, if a large majority of the MPGs commit most of their time to constituency work, then why do we get the sense that they are less active in the constituencies and why do they come across as maintaining very little contacts with their constituents? How do we reconcile the findings between the public opinion data and the interviews? First, it is important to interrogate the very nature of the MPGs’ constituency work and particularly find out how widespread or all-encompassing it is. As presented in Figure 4 below, there are wide variations in the constituency activities of individual MPGs. Yet, at least five core themes stand out. These comprise attendance to constituency functions, holding of meetings with party officials and community leaders, holding of office hours to interact with constituents, inspection of on-going community or local projects and attending to individual caseworks.

**Figure 3: Constituency activities of Ghanaian MPs**



Source: Field interviews in Ghana, 2018

In general (see Figure 3), the constituency activities of many of the MPGs are not only restricted but also highly sectional. The MPGs rather particularly pay attention to the delivering of private and club goods to a minute section of the constituents rather than procuring public goods that target the entire geographic constituency. Aside from holding “office hours” which is opened to the general public, the rest of their constituency activities such as meetings, attending functions and case works are restricted to such specific groups as “party people”, “foot soldiers”, “cadres”, “delegates” “grassroots” “loyal members” among several others as shown in the quotes. Although, the “inspection of on-going projects” is a constituency-wide activity, it is also left in the hands of “loyal party people” (AS 09: Interview, 25 August, 2018) or “party guys” (OK 12: Interview, 28 September, 2018). This means that even when the MPGs claim to commit the bulk of their time to constituency work, they actually do not refer to the entirety of the people in the geographic districts but rather specific, intimate individuals and loyal sub-groups within the broader constituency.

**Table 6: Openness or restriction of the MPGs constituency activities**

Activity	Open	Partially restricted	Fully Restricted
Attendance to functions			✓
Meetings			✓
Office Hours	✓		
Inspection of on-going projects		✓	
Case work			✓

A key reason for the general neglect of constituency-wide engagements or the over concentration on the “primary constituency” by many of the MPGs is discernibly electoral. As was made apparent in the interviews, the MPGs largely care about their electoral survival and thus have an incentive to cater to their party “delegates”, “party people”, “foot soldiers”, “cadres”, “grassroots” and “loyal members” whose responsibility it is to select parliamentary candidates for the local parties in general elections. These groups thus become the prime focus of the MPGs’ constituency activities. Some MPGs put this in a clearer perspective when asked about the people or groups they usually engage with in the constituency:

“...they are delegates, you also feel obliged to them. Because of election and more or less they decide your future in the office; you have a certain feeling of responsibility towards them. So you are more inclined to collect their CVs, go and look for admissions for them...” (OF, 10: Interview, 20 August, 2018).

“... but if a party member or executive requires support, you cannot turn him away because that is not how politics work (...) if you will go to these same people every four years to ask for their mandate, why would you turn them down if they come to you today? They will also reject tomorrow. Yes. This is politics... It is a reciprocal game” (MN, 05: Interview, 28 August, 2018).

Two things are noteworthy here; first is the view that the political future of legislators rests in the bosom of their party's delegates, rather than the general constituency voters. Secondly, and as a consequence of the first, they lose nothing by disregarding popular constituency preferences in their activities. The office of the Ghanaian MP in this case relies on the dispensing of patronage to party delegates in exchange of political loyalty and continuous electoral support. This relationship eventually cuts the MPG from the constituents and rather gives a close attention to party delegates. As some MPGs summarized, the comparative attention paid to the entire constituency voters and that of party delegates differ for the same electoral reasons espoused above;

“(...) voters have a good say but in this case I mean your own party officials have to see you around and see you at their events and even their homes when you are around... And I said that if you don't do these things, your seat will be one day up again for competition and you may suffer. (HC, 12: Interview, 7 September, 2018)

“I don't go by the opinions of the constituents. And I am sure no MP ever does that, because you are likely to serve no one if you take direct instructions from your constituents” (MN, 05: Interview, 28 August, 2018).

It must however be mentioned as a cautionary note that individual electoral vulnerabilities were also found to lead to dissimilar patterns of MPGs – constituents' linkage. Electoral safety was found to particularly immune the MPGs from catering to the entire geographic constituency. In the interview with some of the MPGs representing electorally vulnerable constituencies however, their focus is broader and encompasses the primary and especially the geographic constituency. As some indicated,

“Winning the primaries isn't all... the real deal is the general election” (AC, 03: Interview, 28 September, 2018).

“...the grassroots are for me (...) I can tell you, but to remain in this House, I have to strategize and be appealing to all, especially the floating voters” (DO, 12: Interview, 01 October, 2018)

The above quotes illustrate how MPGs representing swing constituencies have incentives to cater both to the primary as well as the geographic constituencies. It is thus pretty not surprising that MPG – constituents' relationship in Ghana is rather weak in general except in electorally vulnerable constituencies, while same is strong between the MPGs and their party's delegates in safe districts for intra-party electoral reasons. In the section below, we focus on the NDC and NPP parties and demonstrate how clientelistic exchanges in intra – party competitions in these parties serve to de-link representatives and their constituents and rather recast this relationship between the MPGs and their party delegates.

## 5. Clientelistic intra-party competition and MP – Constituents gap in Ghana

Both the NPP and NDC have gradually adopted intra-party competition as the mechanism through which legislative candidates are selected (Öhman, 2004, Ichino and Nathan, 2012; Osei, 2016). For several years after democratization in 1992, candidate selection in both parties was not popularly held. National party executives basically handpicked and imposed their preferred candidates on constituencies (Ichino and Nathan, 2012) usually under the guise of consensus candidates (Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2012). Although in the NPP, local party involvement in the selection of parliamentary candidates was enshrined in their constitution<sup>4</sup>, the process was largely controlled from above and in some cases, competitive primaries were not held at all (Ichino and Nathan, 2012). On the part of the NDC, candidate selection in the constituencies did not take place until after their defeat in the 2000 general election. Given the need to instil more transparency into the selection mechanism, the two parties reformed its processes, introducing more formal procedures. By 2004, the responsibility for candidate selection had completely been laid in the bosom of the constituencies.

Selection in both parties follows almost a uniform trend. First, interested aspirants file applications with the constituency executive body. After vetting the application papers, qualified applicants are invited to proceed to be vetted by the regional and national officers. Where more than one candidate cross this stage, they are presented to the delegates to be voted upon. The size of the delegates is however a recipe for patronage. The size makes it easy for aspiring candidates to buy the support and loyalty of individual delegates (Lindberg, 2010). It is noteworthy that political competition between the NPP and the NDC are often hinged on similar policy programs and intra – party competition especially is a policy-free domain (Riedl, 2014). The accountability relationship between party delegates and re-election seeking MPGs is everything but programmatic. For this reason, the “exclusive focus”<sup>5</sup> of party primaries in the two parties is the ability to award personalised goods such as pocket money, payment of bills or school fees, monetary assistance for and attendance of funerals and weddings and so forth. Competition over who represents the party is more about the highest bidder than the candidate with the most elaborate program. Delegates thus possess “enormous leverage to extract personalised goods from the candidates” (Lindberg, 2010:125). The concentration on clientelistic relationship cuts the MPG from the entire constituents and recasts this relationship between the MP and party delegates. In fact a key character of party primaries in Ghana is the increasing nature of the personalised goods extracted by party delegates. With the passage of time, the size of goods expected to be

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<sup>4</sup> Article 11 of the NPP’s constitution 1998

<sup>5</sup> See Lindberg (2010)

awarded for re-selection increases so that in recent primaries, delegates go as far as expecting the distribution of even cars (Lindberg, 2010).

Because the pathway to power for the MPGs involves huge abilities to win intra-party competition through clientelistic networks, their main post-election preoccupation remains on catering to this network and not the general geographic constituency as seen in Figure 4. After all, more than 75% of the constituencies in Ghana are strongholds for either the NPP or the NDC and thus uncompetitive. The actual competition for parliamentary office therefore happens at the intra-party primaries level, rendering inter party competitions in many constituencies less relevant. This explains the concentration of many MPGs' constituency activities on a few party delegates and influential sub-groups. As highlighted in the interviewees, they rely on the establishment of mutual pacts of loyalty with their party delegates and these are based on dispensing patronage for their political survival. To be sure the huge number of safe seats provides a good incentive for Ghanaian MPs to concentrate all energies on the provision of clientelistic goods and special attention to the local party elites. It was therefore not at all surprising when an MPG indicated in the interviews that his political future depends on his party delegates and thus has "a certain feeling of responsibility towards them" (OF, 10: Interview, 20 August, 2018). The implication of this is that, instead of the MPGs being accountable to their constituents, they rather reverse the direction of responsiveness and accountability to their party's delegates because inter-party competition in general elections means less to them. Clientelistic candidate selection in Ghana ends up insulating many elected representatives from their geographic constituencies. This leaves the inter-party electoral process impotent in effectively providing an avenue for retrospective evaluation and thus compromises the expectations of electoral systems. The incentives for close MPG – constituents' relations embedded in Ghana First-Past-The-Post electoral system thus ends up being less relevant in many of the MPGs' pathway to power.

As highlighted in the interviews, the effects of clientelistic candidate selection processes on the responsiveness of Ghanaian MPGs varies with the electoral vulnerabilities of specific districts. While the MPGs from marginal electoral districts equally commit similar resources to their clients at the intra-party level, they additionally seek to establish close relationships with the entire constituents. This is as a result of the dependence of their legislative office not only on the party nomination but also on general constituency elections. The absence of guarantees in marginal districts and the looming potential of defeat in the general elections even after a successful intra-party nomination pitch the MPGs in swing districts with the overall geographic constituents. The constituency activities of such MPGs are thus opened to all and beneficial to all. They are inclined to represent the median voter or risk losing marginally to the opposing candidate. Thus the constraining effects of Ghana's electoral system is pronounced rather in districts where nomination is unequal to election.

## 6. Conclusion

In order to understand the effects of formal electoral institutions on legislator – constituents’ relationship, there is the need to nuance the picture with contextual and party-specific variables. This analysis thus presents one of the first discussions on how clientelistic intra-party candidate selection affects legislator-constituents relationship in contrast to the expectation of formal electoral institutions in the African context. Utilizing Afrobarometer public opinion data and interviews with Members of the Ghanaian parliament, the paper highlighted the weak linkage and frail relationship between legislators in Ghana and their constituents. This flies in contrast to the expectations of the country’s majoritarian (FPTP) electoral system in single member constituencies. The analysis has demonstrated how clientelistic and patronage networks mediating Ghanaian legislators’ pathway to power produces distinct types of legislators who largely operate independent of the constraints of electoral institutions. It is shown that the exclusive focus of intra-party competition in the two leading political parties in Ghana; the NPP and NDC is the ability of candidates to award personalised goods to local party elites. For this reason, intra-party competition is usually bereft of programmatic strategies but rather more about the highest bidder. This is shown to be the case as more than 75 percent of the constituencies in Ghana are strongholds for either the NPP or the NDC and thus uncompetitive. The actual competition for parliamentary office therefore happens at the intra-party primaries level, rendering inter party competitions in many constituencies less relevant. This explains the concentration of many Ghanaian MPs’ constituency activities on a few party delegates and influential local figures. Such patron - client exchanges serve to de-link representatives and their constituents and rather recast this relationship between MPs and their party delegates. This situation leaves the electoral process impotent in effectively providing an avenue for retrospective judgement and thus compromises the expectations of electoral systems. It is further brought to the fore that the importance of clientelistic candidate selection processes on the responsiveness of Ghanaian MPs varies with the electoral vulnerabilities of specific districts. MPs from electorally marginal districts, while they equally commit similarly huge resources to their clients at the intra-party level, additionally seek to establish close relationships with the entire constituents.

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