

Research on Media Framing in Ghana: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

This systematic review interrogates the present state of framing research in Ghana. The purpose is to synthesise the existing literature on media framing in the Ghanaian context and to detect the gaps that needs to be filled. A qualitative content analysis of seventeen open-access journal articles retrieved from five databases (International Knowledge Sharing Platform, Taylor and Francis Online, Semantic Scholar, Research Gate, Sage Publications) is conducted to examine the issues discussed in the articles, the mass media type analysed and the research methods used in addressing the issues in the articles. The articles identified were published between 2013 and 2022. Content analysed data were thematically discussed to answer the research questions. The study revealed that research on media framing in Ghana centred on health and sexuality, politics and elections, environmental issues and others. The review further identified fifteen empirical studies out of the seventeen articles retrieved. Researchers also focused more on exploratory (qualitative) than explanatory (quantitative) research methods. In addition, most of the identified studies were skewed more toward print media and online media (traditional media websites) than broadcast media and other forms of online media, such as blogs. This review paper is the first of its kind; hence, will provide significant knowledge on media framing in the Ghanaian context to future researchers. It will also set the premise for other reviews to be conducted on various aspects of the concept in the Ghanaian context.

Keywords: framing, frames, media, Ghana, content analysis, systematic review

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1. Introduction

Framing research has become a growing area for communication researchers (Cacciatore et al., 2016) as they investigate the various means through which issues, policies, personalities and events are (re)presented and prioritised over others by the media in the news. This growth in popularity of the concept is seen not merely in the scholarly literature but also in the public's imaginations (Reese, 2007). Therefore, the media's role in building interpretive schemas for the public, which guide how they think about issues, cannot be underestimated (Lopez-Rabadan, 2021). Currently, framing studies are prevalent in Journalism and Political communication (Entmann & Usher, 2018). Most studies on media framing are approached in two ways; by exploring the content of news (frame building) and examining the effect news has on the audience (frame setting) (de Vreese, 2005; Lecheler & De Vreese, 2019; Lukyanova, 2018; Thankachan & Thomas, 2021). Regarding frame building, a plethora of empirical studies have been conducted exploring the media's framing of issues such as public health (Chiang et al., 2020; Kenterelidou, 2012; Ogbodo et al., 2020); politics, elections and politicians (Araujo & Prior, 2021; Lambert, 2018; Groshek & Al-Rawi, 2013); environmental issues (Bowe et al., 2014; Olsen, & Osmundsen, 2017; Weathers, & Kendall, 2016); social movements (Mendes, 2011; Sheoin, 2013) and conflict/war (Vladislavjevic & Voltmer, 2017; Atanesyan, 2020; Makhortykh & Sydorova, 2017). Other studies (Andersson, 2022; Anipah, 2017; Thuo, 2012) have also addressed generic issues.

Several reviews have also been conducted on framing studies. For example, Vladislavjevic (2015) critically reviews the literature on media and conflict by exploring how contemporary media frames various forms of political conflict. The author's findings revealed a fractured field where most of the literature examined how western media framed foreign conflicts whilst little focus was placed on the media's framing of domestic conflicts within non-western contexts. Matthes (2009) also conducted a systematic review of media framing studies in fifteen international journals. Based on his quantitative content analysis of 131 articles, he identified problems in framing research to include the lack of precision in the operational definition of the theory, the descriptive focus of most of the analysis conducted in the selected articles and the neglect of visuals. Dan and Raupp (2018) systematically reviewed frames used in reporting health risks in 37 journal articles pruned from the Communication & Mass Media Complete database on EBSCOhost. Temmann et al. (2021) reviewed responsibility frames and their effect within the health context from 2004 to 2009 using sixty-eight journal articles from five databases. Borah (2011) systematically reviewed the conceptual issues related to the framing theory. The author content analysed 93 journal articles from 1997 to 2007. The study found that more content analyses were done on framing research than any other design. Lopez-Rabadan (2021) also conducted a

systematic review of seventy-eight scientific articles retrieved from Google Scholar from 2011 to 2021 to examine the influence of social media on the evolution of framing studies. The author's findings revealed that although political journalism is the main area for framing research, there has been an imposition of a global vision of the framing processes which situates it better within both the journalism and political communication realm.

All of the aforementioned studies addressed the concept of media framing from a broader and global perspective. Although scholars have reviewed some literature on media framing in general, there appears to be no country-specific reviews, especially in emerging economies like Ghana. This study is relevant because apart from aiding researchers in tracking previous trends and patterns in the existing literature, it will also assist in making "better decisions about what research needs to be designed next" (Potter & Riddle, 2007, p. 90). The current study, therefore, provides a systematic review of media framing studies conducted in the Ghanaian context to help identify gaps and make suggestions for future research. Based on the review of available literature, this study is guided by the following research questions:

Q1. What are the issues discussed in the selected articles?

Q2. What were the type of media explored in the selected articles?

Q3. What methodological approach to framing was employed in the selected articles?

2. Media and the concept of framing

In a democratic nation, citizens cannot be coerced to behave towards a particular singular outcome. For this reason, they are influenced indirectly to think in a particular manner, eventually directing their opinion and views about specific issues. One way of influencing the public is through the media. The news media is an indispensable tool for information and communication (Cissel, 2012). The media place salience on some issues at the expense of others and further provide specific "schemata of interpretations" through which the public construe familiar and unfamiliar events (Vaughan & Johns, 2021, p.59). This schema of interpretations (frames) directs citizens' contributions to public discourses. The media's subtle power in shaping how we think about issues is also influenced by specific ideological biases from societal norms and values, organisational pressures, professional routines, ideological perceptions of journalists themselves and other external factors (Nelson et al., 1997; Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). The media's framing, therefore, provides multi-faceted angles through which issues and events are addressed (Anipah, 2017).

According to Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007), framing theory is rooted in Psychology and Sociology. Under sociology, the theory began with Gregory Bateson in 1955 and was further built on by Erving Goffman in his 1974 book titled *Frame Analysis*. According to Goffman (1974), people struggle to make meaning and interpret their personal experiences and environment. They, therefore, refer to already existing schemas (primary frameworks) in their heads which aid in grouping and making meaningful interpretations of new events and encounters. To frame, therefore, means to select and make salient, aspects of perceived reality within a specific communication context by defining the problem, interpreting the cause, making moral evaluation and suggesting recommendations for the identified problem (Entmann, 1993). Framing theory assumes that how the media cover an issue and the meaning they give to such issues influences the audience's perception of the issue (Lukyanova, 2018). Therefore, journalists and media organisations frame to simplify complex issues and events (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Tankard (2010) defines frames as central organising ideas in news content that give more understanding to issues through selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration. Iyengar (1991) suggests two types of frames in news content, i.e. thematic and episodic. News that is thematically framed cover stories from a general and more extensive perspective, whereas episodically framed news focus on an individual's experience or a specific event. To Iyengar (1991), when stories are framed episodically, it makes it easy for public officials to escape accountability for the existence of specific problems. Episodic frames add more understanding to a story and become difficult to change when grasped by the audience (Arthur, 2012). However, stories framed thematically are likely to be more fair and balanced than those framed episodically (Blankenship, 2011). Communication scholars and political scientists use the term 'frame' in two ways; frame in communication and frame in thoughts (Scheufele, 1999). *Frame in communication* (media frame) refers to the "words, images, phrases and presentation styles that a speaker (e.g., politician, a media outlet) uses when relaying information about an issue or event to an audience" (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 100). Thus, frame in communication explores the importance that senders of messages place on issues which is evident in how they portray communication messages.

On the other hand, *frame in thought* (individual frame) refers to "an individual's cognitive understanding of a situation" (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 101); thus, the effect of framing on an individual. To Druckman (2011), framing effect occurs when frames in communication directly influence the audience's frames in thought. Similarly, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) aver that when an essential part of a message, its organisation, content selection or structure of themes, makes it possible for people to think and evaluate the issue in a

particular manner, framing effect occurs.

2.1 The framing process

By reviewing framing studies conducted within 75 years, Scheufele (1999) delineated that framing is a process involving four stages; frame building, frame setting, individual-level of frame effect and a relationship between individual frames and media frames. Thus,

(a) "frame building," which focuses on the dynamics of how speakers, such as media outlets, choose specific frames in communication; (b) "frame setting," which concerns the influence of frames in communication on frames in thought and the precise psychological processes at work; (c) "individual-level effects of frames," which refers to the impact of frames in thought on subsequent behaviours or attitudes; and (d) "journalists as audiences," which looks at how citizens' actions affect the initial frame-building process. (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p.101).

According to de Vreese (2005), frame building occurs through the constant interaction between journalists and elites or social movements, which manifests in the frames that are evident in news content. Frame building depends on internal factors such as ownership, editorial policies, news values and external factors such as advertisement. Frame setting, on the other hand, projects the extent to which audiences reflect the frames made available to them through communicative texts such as news. Thus, the attitudinal and behavioural effects of the journalistic news frames the audience is introduced to through the media (de Vreese, 2005).

2.2 Identifying frames in the news (methodological approach)

When conducting any framing research, scholars often apply operational definitions that fit the purpose of their specific studies. For this reason, there appears to be little agreement on how best to identify frames in communicative texts (de Vreese, 2005). In gathering data from media outlets (especially news) to determine the frames used in projecting specific issues and events, researchers often employ content analysis of media texts (especially news). The content analysis of such texts can be approached either inductively or deductively. The inductive approach to content analysis involves the researcher going into the data with an open mind, intending to identify frames that will emerge from the analysis. Thus, the researcher begins the content analysis with "loosely defined preconceptions of the frame" (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p.94). This approach is qualitatively inclined and cannot be easily replicated.

On the other hand, the deductive approach involves the pre-definition of specific frames to ascertain their existence in the news stories to be analysed (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Going into the analysis with pre-determined frames prevents the researcher from forgetting some important frames should they depend solely on the inductive approach. The deductive approach is the quantitative approach to frame analysis favoured by most scholars (de Vreese, 2005). When frames are identified deductively, de Vreese (2005) suggests that the question 'what news story constitutes a frame?' should always be posed.

Framing devices or techniques in communicative texts include metaphors, catchphrases, visual images, slogans, stories, traditions, slogans, jargon, artefacts, contrasts and spin (Bajracharya, 2018). Similarly, some focal areas for identifying news media frames proposed by Tankard (2010) include headlines, images, sub-headlines, photo captions, stories' leads, statistics and charts, selected sources, logos, and quotes concluding statements and paragraphs. Frame selection is, therefore, not limited to the written text alone.

2.3 Issue-specific news frames and generic news frames

In order to synthesise the various frames identified in the framing analysis studies conducted globally, there is the need to group frames based on their specific features, nature and content (de Vreese, 2005). Some researchers refer to these groupings as types when discussing frames employed in the media. According to de Vreese (2005), frames pertinent to a particular issue or event are known as issue-specific frames. In contrast, those that go beyond specific themes and transcend other topics are also called generic frames. Issue-specific frames allow specific issues to be discussed in detail, whilst generic frames offer a systematic avenue for comparison across issues. Thus, generic frames are seen as established frames that tend to recur continuously in most framing studies. For example, in their study, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) explored five frames that recurred in framing literature over time. These include conflict frame (highlights the conflicts between individuals, groups, organisations etc.), responsibility frame (presents an issue by attributing its cause or solution to an individual, a group or government), economic consequence frame (stresses on the economic implications of an event to a person, a group, institution or a nation), human impact/interest frame (portrays an issue by centralising the emotions or circumstances of an individual) and morality frame.

3. Methodology

This study employs a systematic review to address the research questions posed in the introductory part of the paper. A systematic review involves researchers employing publishable papers as data to answer specific

research questions (Jesson et al., 2011). A systematic review, thus, helps to identify critical studies conducted in a specific field, appraises the quality of those studies and provides a summary based on predefined scientific measures (Khan et al., 2003). According to Jesson et al. (2011), systematic reviews are relevant in revealing areas within the field where scientific consensus was reached and where there was disagreement. To better synthesise the literature on media framing in Ghana, I adopted a systematic literature review that follows a clear-cut scientific procedure. This review type can aid in gaining more credible information about a subject. Another distinctive feature influencing a systematic review is that it employs detailed search strategies and procedures, which are derived beforehand to decide on the studies that will be selected for research (Uman, 2011). The key phases of a systematic review are – mapping the identified field to ascertain what is known and unknown; conducting a comprehensive search on the topic; doing a quality assessment to identify the articles that will be included; extracting the data; synthesising the data and coming up with a write up based on the synthesis made (Jesson et al., 2011). In a similar vein, I mapped the area of media framing through literature review and identified that there were no country-specific reviews which delineates the framing studies conducted by researchers in specific countries. I therefore did an in-depth search of studies on media framing in Ghana. Through a systematic search, the articles that will serve as data were retrieved and an analysis was done based on the research objectives to produce a write up.

3.1 Study selection

The study selection followed a two-stage process of electronic search and manual screening. In order to identify the corpus of studies that will be added to the systematic review, an electronic search was conducted on Google Scholar as employed by Lopez-Rabadan (2021). The advanced Google search style of using “AND” between words to identify specific words in a particular search result was adopted. The keywords used for the search were ‘media framing AND Ghana’ and ‘framing AND Ghana’. The initial search, which was done on 25th August, 2022 identified 415 results, consisting of dissertations from academic institutions, reports from organisations, book chapters, articles from conference proceedings and non-academic sites. However, the study was limited to open-access peer-reviewed articles. According to Jesson et al. (2011), academic peer-reviewed articles are the best data sources for systematic literature review. Similarly, academic peer reviewed-articles were used as sample for the study because Belal and Momin (2009), in their review on Corporate Social Reporting, asserted that most academic papers go through rigorous review processes, producing credible and authoritative content. Based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria, 17 peer-reviewed articles were retrieved from five databases through the Google Scholar search. Two articles from International Knowledge sharing Platform, five articles from Taylor and Francis online, four articles from Semantic Scholars, three articles from Sage Publications and two articles from Research Gate. Table I below shows the inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting articles.

Table I: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for media framing articles in Ghana (2013-2022)

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	Papers in the English language	Any other language apart from English
Population	Papers conducted in the Ghanaian context using Ghanaian media as data source.	Any paper outside the Ghanaian context.
	Comparative studies that included data from Ghana	Comparative studies that do not include data from Ghana
The paper type	Empirical, conceptual and review papers	Any paper apart from empirical, conceptual and review papers
Access	Open-access peer-reviewed papers	Any paper that did not give access to full papers
Context	Papers that used framing within the context of how the Ghanaian media made salience of specific issues	Papers that used the words ‘framing’ and ‘Ghana’ as examples in the context of other topics

Although the initial search did not limit the process by date especially because this is the first systematic review to be conducted on media framing in Ghana, the 17 articles selected were, however, between 2013 and 2022. Thus, the earliest journal article retrieved was published in 2013, whilst the latest was in 2022. All eligible articles were downloaded and saved.

3.2 Procedure

I conducted content analysis of the seventeen articles that fit into the inclusion and exclusion criteria of this study by reading them severally to acquaint myself with their content. This was done following other systematic reviews (Amo-Mensah, 2019; Dan and Raupp, 2018; Mathes, 2009) that employed the same data analysis method. Specifically, qualitative content analysis was adopted for the study. According to Hsieh and Shannon

(2005), qualitative content analysis emphasises the language of communication (content) by grouping large amounts of texts into categories with related meanings. Similarly, manually derived categories such as *author name, year of publication, paper type, journal name, title, method, focus of study and the media type used* in the selected articles were tabulated on an excel spreadsheet to help map the research conducted in the domain of media framing in Ghana. Discussions of the findings were thematically done and themes identified were inductively derived from the review of the seventeen articles. The research rate was generally analysed before the research questions were tackled. For the first research question, themes derived included; *print media (i.e. newspapers); broadcast media (i.e. television); online media (websites of traditional media and other news sites) and mixed media (a combination of print and online media or print and broadcast media or broadcast and online media)*. For research question two, themes derived were *politics and elections, health and sexuality, environmental issues and other issues*. The themes generated for the third research question were *explanatory (quantitative) and exploratory (qualitative) methods*.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section discusses the study's findings, which aim to map research on media framing in the Ghanaian context. The paper answers the research questions: What were the types of media explored in the selected articles? What are the issues discussed in the selected articles? What methodological approach to framing was employed in the selected articles? To begin, I provide Table 2, which gives an overview of the seventeen articles reviewed for the study.

Table 2: Published journal articles on media framing in Ghana (2013 -2022)

Name of Author/ Year	Journal Name	Methodology	Focus of study (issue discussed)	Ghanaian Media Source for data collection
Thompson (2020)	Journalism Practice	Quantitative content analysis	Election petition (politics)	Online media Myjoyonline.com Peacefmonline.com
Yeboah-Banin et al. (2019)	African Journalism Studies	Content analysis Qualitative	Chinese aid in Ghana	Mixed media (Print and Online) The Daily Graphic Daily Guide Myjoyonline.com Peacefmonline.com
Smith & Tietaaah (2017)	Athens Journal of Health	Content analysis	Meningitis outbreak	Online media Myjoyonline.com Graphiconline.com
Diedong (2013)	International Journal of Humanity and social science	Content analysis	(Generic framing) Health issues	Print media Daily graphic Ghanaian Times People's Agenda
Kumah-Abbiw (2017)	Commonwealth and comparative politics	Conceptual paper	Micro-level Electoral violence	-----
Demuyakor & Abdul-Rahaman (2021)	International Journal of Advanced Mass Communication and Journalism	Framing theory Quantitative content analysis	Talensi conflict Presidential candidates John Mahama Nana Addo Danquah-Akuffo Addo	Broadcast media Joy News and United TV
Fianko et al. (2017)	The Journal of Pan African Studies	Case study Content analysis as a data analysis method	Election petition	Print media Daily Graphic

Name of Author/Year	Journal Name	Methodology	Focus of study (issue discussed)	Ghanaian Media Source for data collection
Baisley (2015)	Canadian Journal of African studies	-----	LGBT rights	Mixed media (Print and online media) Daily Graphic Ghanaian Times Daily Guide Ghanaian Chronicle Ghanaweb.com
Adade Yeboah (2019)	International Journal of creative research and studies	Quantitative content analysis	Banking crisis	Online media Ghanaweb.com
Gakpe and Mahama (2014)	New media and mass communication	Cross-sectional design Quantitative content analysis	Disaster Fire outbreak	Print media Daily Graphic and the Chronicle
Ajaero & Anorue (2018)	African population studies	Content analysis interviews with their editors	Climate change	Print media Daily Graphic, Daily Guide The Ghanaian Times, Ghanaian Chronicles
Midttun et al. (2015)	Energy and Environment	Content analysis	Climate change	Print Media Daily Graphic Daily Guide Business and Financial Times
Sobel (2015)	The International Communication Gazette	Quantitative content analysis	Female genital cutting	Print media The Ghanaian Chronicle
Ofori-Parku, 2014	Ecquid Novi: African Journalism studies	Qualitative content analysis 100 questionnaires	Environmental sanitation	Broadcast media TV 3
Nartey (2022)	Media, culture and society	Content analysis	LGBT	Online media citifmonline.com; myjoyonline.com; peacefmonline.com; adomonline.com; ghanaweb.com; graphic.com; starrfm.com.gh; modernghana.com

Name of Author/Year	Journal Name	Methodology	Focus of study (issue discussed)	Ghanaian Media Source for data collection
Dedzo & Ofori-Birikorang (2020)	New Media and Mass Communication	Qualitative content analysis	Personalities (female spouse of presidential candidates)	Online media ghanaweb.com; myjoyonline.com; pulse.gh.com; peacefmonline.com; citifmonline.com; graphicgh.com
Ofori-Birikorang (2019)	Research on Humanities and Social Sciences	Theoretical paper	Framing Ideology	-----

Source: Author (compiled for the study)

4.1 Research Rate

From Table 2 above, it is evident that one article was published in 2013, 2018 and 2022 respectively, making 16.8%; two articles were published in 2014, 2019, 2020 and 2021 respectively, making 44.4% and three articles were published in 2015 and 2017 respectively making 38.8% of the total number of articles reviewed for this study. No paper was identified in 2016 per the review conducted. The years, 2015 and 2017 ranked first with three papers each on media framing. The analysis further reveals that there has been a steady growth of studies conducted on media framing in Ghana since 2013; however, there appears to be a decline after 2017. The number of papers published after 2017 dwindled. This further implies that although some researchers (Gardell & Ihlen, 2018; Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016) contend that framing theory is the most popular concept used in Communication and Media scholarship, the same cannot be said in the Ghanaian context as research on the concept appears low. Ghanaian researchers are, thus, not publishing enough peer-reviewed journal articles on framing based on the articles identified within the study period of 2013 and 2022. The study further revealed that researchers in Ghana published their framing papers in many academic journals without restricting themselves to communication and media-related journals alone. This practice will give future researchers an avenue to have a wide range of journal options to gather literature for their studies. 50% of the papers were published in Communication and Media-related journals, whereas the other 50% were published in health, politics and Africa studies journals. Apart from Dedzo and Ofori-Birikorang (2020) and Gakpe and Mahama (2014), who published in the *New Media and Mass Communication* journal, all the other fifteen papers appeared in fifteen different journals. The analysis again revealed that out of the seventeen papers retrieved, fifteen (88.2%) were empirical studies, whereas the remaining two (11.8%) (Kumah-Abbiw, 2017; Ofori-Birikorang, 2019) were conceptual and theoretical papers, respectively. Three (Anorue, 2018; Midttun et al., 2015; Sobel, 2015) out of the seventeen papers were comparative studies, whereas the remaining fourteen concentrated on the Ghanaian context alone.

4.2 Issues discussed

Analysis of the retrieved articles indicates that studies on media framing in Ghana were centred on *politics and elections, health and sexuality, environmental issues and other issues*. Five (29.4%) out of the seventeen articles were on *politics and elections*, five (29.4%) on *health and sexuality*, three (17.6%) on *environmental issues* and four (23.6%) on other individual themes that appeared once. Again, of the 15 empirical studies conducted, only one (Diedong, 2013) was generically framed. The rest were all issue-specific.

4.2.1 Health and Sexuality

In the analysis of issues, the theme of health and sexuality ranked first with 29.4%. Papers that examined the framing of specific health issues and diseases and sexuality-related issues about Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgenders (LGBT) were categorised under this theme. Of the 5 articles, 2 were about LGBT, whereas the remaining 4 were on health issues. In Baisley's (2015) study, she identified that decolonisation and human rights frames were "appropriated, challenged and dominated" by individuals who opposed LGBT rights which made it difficult for LGBT activists to use them (p. 382). Her work tossed the coin by not exploring how the media framed LGBT rights but how opponents and activist movements framed it based on how the media presented it to them. This reaffirms Lopez-Rabadan's (2021) assertion that though most framing studies analyse content from the media, others look at social movements as well. Nartey (2022) investigated how the media's prejudiced means of framing LGBT people put them in a minority position in Ghana. The findings revealed that LGBT people were framed as expendables and undesirable, affecting national cohesion and unity. Sobel (2015) examined how the media in four countries, including Ghana framed female genital mutilation (FGM). Their study revealed that all the media from the four countries framed FGM as a harmful practice that adversely

affected ladies. Diedong (2013) investigated how health issues are framed in newspapers. His findings revealed that the identified stories were framed around medical intervention and information. On the other hand, Smith and Tietaah (2017) explored how online media framed the meningitis outbreak in Ghana. Their findings also revealed that the frame of action and consequence were predominantly used in reporting stories on the outbreak. This review of the five articles under health and sexuality buttresses the assertion that most research on framing generally concentrates on health communication (Leask et al., 2010).

4.2.2 Politics and Elections

The theme of politics and elections also shared the first position with the theme of health and sexuality with 29.4%. Articles under this theme tackled issues on politics, political figures and elections. Dedzo and Ofori-Birikorang (2020) examined the coverage of female spouses of presidential candidates during Ghana's 2016 general elections on selected online media. Their study revealed that the female spouses were framed around partisan politics, policy direction, gender, philanthropy, motivation and assertiveness (p.15). Their study further concluded that the female spouses were framed positively and given enough coverage in terms of quality which went contrary to what earlier studies had indicated. In terms of elections; issues on election petitions, electoral violence, and the 2020 general elections in Ghana were discussed in the articles. Thompson (2020) and Fianko et al. (2017) explored the media's framing of Ghana's 2012 and 2013 presidential election petitions respectively. Thompson (2020) identified the frame of conflict and game as predominantly used in portraying the 2012 election petition. Using cartoons in a selected print media as data, Fianko et al. (2017) concluded that political cartoons formed an effective means of shaping and communicating a political agenda. Kumah-Abiwu (2017) draws on framing theory to conclude that issue framing by political elites determines micro-level electoral violence in Ghana. It was a conceptual paper. Demuyakor and Abdul-Rahaman (2022) also employed both thematic and episodic frames to ascertain how media organisations framed the two presidential candidates of the National Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC). Their study found that the two presidential candidates were framed episodically by emphasising their corruption scandals, controversies and integrity and instead relegated their manifesto policies. These five studies on politics and elections reinforce the contention by Lopez-Rabadan (2021) that framing remains a powerful tool for research in the field of political communication.

4.2.3 Environmental issues

The next issue that recurred in three of the articles had to do with environmental issues. These were issues that concentrated on sanitation and climate change. Overall, three (17.6%) of the total stories were about the environment; two stories were on climate change, and one was on environmental sanitation. The two climate change articles (Midttun et al., 2015; Ajaro & Anorue, 2018) were comparative studies between Ghana and other countries whereas the environmental sanitation article (Ofori-Parku, 2014) used the context of only Ghana. Midttun et al. (2015) investigated how Norway, China and Ghana framed climate change in their media. Their findings revealed that Ghana framed climate change around the threat to agro-forestry, flood, food security and disaster management, climate as poverty etc. Ajaro and Anorue (2018) also explored how Ghanaian and Nigerian media framed climate change mitigation. Their findings were that issues on climate change were given less coverage in both countries. Nigeria framed its stories predominantly around action frames, whereas Ghana used the environment frame often in its reportage. Ofori-Parku (2014) also examined how television covered stories on environmental sanitation. The findings revealed that stories about environmental sanitation were framed around 'waste disposal and management, 'choked and filthy drains', 'plastic wastes', 'water pollution' and 'air pollution' (p. 40).

4.2.4 Other issues

Articles that covered other issues aside from the three discussed above were categorised as 'other issues'. For this theme, four articles about Chinese aid (Yeboah-Banin et al., 2019), banking crisis (Adade-Yeboah, 2019), news construction (Ofori-Birikorang, 2019) and disasters, i.e. fire outbreak (Gakpe & Mahama, 2014) were addressed. Out of the four, Ofori-Birikorang (2019) was a theoretical paper that interrogated framing and ideology as related concepts that shaped news constructions as hinged on social constructionism. Gakpe and Mahama (2014) investigated how Ghanaian media covered fire outbreak and fire safety issues between June, 2009 and 2010. Yeboah-Banin et al. (2019) explored how local media framed 'China in Ghana' based on their negative activities such as illegal mining in most towns in the country. Adade-Yeboah (2019) also probed in to how the keys actors in the 2018 banking crisis were framed in the media.

4.3 Media Analysed in selected articles

The themes derived for this research question were *print, broadcast, online and mixed-media*. Articles that content-analysed texts from two media types such as print and online media, were operationalised as mixed-media. Six (35.2%) articles analysed print media content, specifically newspapers; Two (11.8%) analysed broadcast content, specifically television; five (29.4%) analysed online media content, whereas two (11.8%) also analysed both print and online content. Two articles were conceptual and theoretical papers, so they did not

analyse media contents. More studies were conducted using print media as data source than any media type. Even though online media ranked second amongst the seventeen articles, it became evident that the online media which were mostly used were either the websites of traditional broadcast media or print media. For example, *graphiconline.com* which belongs to the newspaper, Daily graphic; *myjoyonline.com* belonging to the radio station Joy FM; *citifmonline* belonging to the radio station, Citi FM recurred in most of the studies. Other online news websites that were included in some of the studies were *ghanaweb.com* and *pulsegh.com*. Joy News, UTV and TV3 were the broadcast media used most. Yeboah- Banin et al. (2019) and Baisley (2015) used mixed media in their analysis. The analysis revealed that even though there are other online media such as blogs, such platforms were ignored by scholars in the Ghanaian context.

4.4 Methodology

Another relevant study finding reveals that framing researchers in Ghana concentrated more on empirical studies than conceptual/ theoretical or review papers. Of the seventeen articles reviewed, fifteen, representing 88.2%, were empirical studies, whereas the remaining two (11.8%) were conceptual/theoretical papers. There were no review papers in the identified studies. The conceptual/ theoretical papers were published in 2017 and 2019, respectively. Eight of the studies deductively chose their frames, whereas the remaining nine articles chose their frames inductively. Out of the fifteen empirical studies, five (33.3%) were approached quantitatively using content analysis, whereas the remaining ten (66.7%) articles approached the research using qualitative content analysis with interviews in certain instances. This finding reaffirms Borah's (2011) assertion that almost all framing studies employ content analysis. There was no mixed-method approach to any of the studies. Thus, it is evident that studies on framing in Ghana tilt more towards the interpretive approach than the positivist approach; thereby refuting the assertion by de Vreese (2005) that most framing research opt for quantitative and deductive methodological approaches. There is also evidence of more individual studies than collaborative studies, even though the difference is not so vast. Thus, nine of the 17 papers were sole-authored whereas eight were co-authored.

5. Conclusion

The literature revealed that no country-specific reviews have been conducted on framing. This study, therefore, aimed to synthesise and map works done in the Ghanaian context on media framing. The search revealed seventeen open- access articles from five databases and sixteen journals within and outside the Communication and Media field. Fifteen out of the papers were empirical studies, and two were conceptual/theoretical papers. Researchers using framing approach in Ghana addressed more political and health issues in their studies. The findings further revealed that more studies were conducted on print (newspapers) and online media (specifically news websites of traditional media). The observations made in this review point to more studies to be conducted on topical issues aside from politics and health, such as conflicts, disasters and social movements which are also relevant to researchers and Ghanaians at large. More studies are also needed in the conceptual/theoretical and literature review dimensions. Further studies that will content analyse more broadcast and online media such as blogs are needed since the advent of the internet has led to most media audience resorting to blogs and other online sources for information. It is important to reiterate that this study was limited to only published open-access peer-reviewed journal articles found online (specifically Google Scholar). There is the likelihood of identifying more media framing works in the Ghanaian context in local print journals and other databases which I could not reach due to time limit.

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