

# **PUBLIC PERCEPTION ON STAKEHOLDER CAMPAIGNS AGAINST ILLEGAL GOLD MINING IN GHANA: THE CASE OF MEDIA COALITION AGAINST GALAMSEY**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper examined stakeholder campaigns against illegal gold mining in Ghana, focusing on public perception on the activities of the Media Coalition Against Galamsey (MCAG), a group led by the media and other stakeholders to champion action against illegal mining. The campaigns were necessitated by the devastating and life-threatening effect of illegal mining in Ghana, and the urgent need to eradicate it. The agenda-setting theory grounded this study in a positivist research paradigm that surveyed and analyzed data from 347 Ghanaian respondents, using percentages, means, standard deviation and one-way ANOVA to present findings. The study discovered that relevant state agencies and authorities had not shown enough interest and commitment in fighting illegal mining in Ghana. Respondents were of the view that Ghana had failed to provide adequate regulatory and legal frameworks and the required political, religious and traditional leadership to effectively combat the menace. Though the Coalition was effective in using public sensitization, advocacy and visual communication strategies to campaign against illegal mining, it was less effective in employing stakeholder engagement, community mobilization, entertainment education and social marketing techniques. The Coalition is encouraged to continue the campaign by aggressively adopting more socially responsive and rewarding communication strategies in its sensitization activities. Finally, it is recommended that political, religious and traditional leaders at all levels go beyond the rhetoric and set national agendas to effectively confront the menace.*

**Keywords:** *Communication strategies, galamsey, media campaign, stakeholder campaign*

## **Introduction**

A vital part of the economic development effort of any nation is its resource capacity since no nation ever develops without adequate resources (Yiridomoh, 2021). Among the resources available for the socio-economic development of nations are mineral resources. Scholars, such as Addison and Roe (2018), and Ericsson and Löf (2019), have noted that in nations that are rich in non-fuel mineral resources, mining significantly contributes to their socio-economic development. Many mineral-rich African countries appear to have witnessed significant socio-economic development over the past decades. For example, in Guinea, the Papua New Guinea Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative observed that, in 2020, the industries contributed 89% to exports, 29% to gross domestic product (GDP), and 10.1% to corporate tax, income tax, dividends, and royalties (Yamarak & Parton, 2021; Yiridomoh, 2021). In Tanzania, Kenya, and other African economies, mining contributes to per capita income through job creation, resulting in improved livelihood among citizens (Apollo et al., 2017; Mwakesi et al., 2020).

However, the correlation between mining and development has not always translated to the public good. Despite its economic value, the mining sector also has the potential to constitute a threat to sustainable development of societies. Christmann (2021), Yamarak and Parton (2021), and Yiridomoh (2021) have argued that if mining is not done in a proper and sustainable manner, it could have deleterious impacts on the environment and human life. Such impacts are already being experienced in many mineral-rich nations, including Ghana.

Ghana has many precious minerals which contribute to her socio-economic development. According to the Minerals Commission of Ghana (2020), the mining sector contributed GH¢1,444.12 million to the Ghana Government in 2018, and GH¢1,899.19 million in 2019 of which GH¢705.47 million in 2018 and GH¢1,006.65 million were paid as mineral royalties. Also, mining

companies paid GH¢470.51million and GH¢581.77 as corporate income respectively in 2018 and 2019. Overall, the sector contributed about 43% to the total merchandise exports of Ghana in 2019 (Minerals Commission, 2020). This affirms the immense contribution of the mining sector to Ghana's exports and overall revenue generation (Atta & Tholana, 2021; Boakye et al., 2021). Currently, Ghana is Africa's second leading producer of gold after South Africa. Exports from gold contribute greatly to Ghana's export earnings (Airo, cited in Tuffuor & Takora, 2024; Berger, cited in Tuffuor & Takora, 2024). Gold production also contributes to job creation especially for the Ghanaian youth (Minerals Commission, 2020; Ofosu et al., 2020).

In Ghana, gold mining activities manifest in two main forms: large-scale multi-national gold mining activities and small-scale gold mining activities (Wireko-Gyebi et al., 2020). The small-scale type can be further grouped into two: legal and illegal gold mining. These two classifications of small-scale mining depend on having legal approval and operational protocols or otherwise (Boateng et al., 2014). This study's focus is on unsustainable small-scale mining and illegal small-scale mining practices (popularly called *galamsey*) due to their ravaging consequences on the environment. *Galamsey* is a clandestine activity that normally occurs in forests, riverbeds, farms and valleys. Persons who engage in *galamsey* require no professional or educational qualifications. It is patronized by men, women, teenagers, and even the aged using crude methods. *Galamsey* entails digging in the forests, valleys and or along the banks of rivers and streams, collecting soil and washing away the smooth sand with water (often from rivers) for the valuable stones (Owusu & Dwomoh, 2012). In the past, illegal miners often adopted less sophisticated tools such as pickaxes, shovels, head pans, sticks, etc. Currently, however, illegal miners employ very sophisticated equipment like bulldozers and excavators.

### ***Multidimensional galamsey and stakeholder campaigns***

Owusu and Dwomoh (2012) attributed the prevalence of *galamsey* in Ghana to poverty and ignorance, especially among the youth. Nevertheless, Ghanaians have sneered *galamsey* due to its disturbing impacts on the country (Asori et al., 2022). On the economic front, *galamsey* deprives Ghana of revenue required for the country's development because illegal miners do not pay taxes and royalties to the state (Tschakert, 2009). *Galamsey* also threatens the sustainability of Ghana's cocoa sector because cocoa plantations and the land for cocoa cultivation are being converted into *galamsey sites* (Boadi et al., 2016; Boateng et al., 2014; Duncan, 2020). Beyond destroying the environment and natural resources, *galamsey* contributes to chronic health conditions in Ghana (Armah et al., 2012). The social consequences of *galamsey*, including dropout among school children, child labor, and teenage pregnancy, also appear inestimably high (Owusu & Dwomoh, 2012). Thus, the adverse impacts of *galamsey* seem to far outweigh its benefits, making it more of a curse to Ghana than a blessing (Kpienbaareh et al., 2021).

Ghana has enacted several laws and regulations for citizens to undertake lawful small-scale mining (Hilson, 2017) and to counter *galamsey* and other illegal mining operations in Ghana. The most recent one being the National Anti-Illegal Mining Operations Secretariat established under the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources in 2025 to coordinate, monitor, and lead intelligence field operations against *galamsey* (Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, 2025). Despite these efforts, the pervasiveness of *galamsey* in Ghana exposes the failure of the country's existing legal and regulatory frameworks on mining. Scholars, Boakye et al. (2021), Bosu (2025), and others, have disparaged the Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703) and the Legislative Instrument (LI) 2462 because they do not adequately address the challenges relating to licensing, fiscal regimes, and small-scale mining. The consequence is that politicians and profiteers take advantage of the

weak legal and regulatory frameworks to degrade the country's forest reserves (Bosu, 2025; Hilson et al., 2014).

*Galamsey* continues to receive massive social and media attention in Ghana (Kpienbaareh et al., 2021) with varying perspectives on the menace. Consequently, diverse campaigns have been undertaken over the years to tackle *galamsey* in Ghana, one being the *#StopGalamsey* campaign began in 2017 by Citi FM – a prominent private media organization in the country. Indeed, other key media organizations and non-media institutions signed up for the campaign leading to the formation of the Media Coalition Against Galamsey (MCAG) in 2017. Thus, the MCAG (also called Coalition in this paper) is a body comprising media and non-media organizations whose aim was to put pressure on stakeholders in the extractive industry to eliminate *galamsey*. It consisted of media outlets including Omni Media (Citi FM, Citi TV), Multimedia Group Limited (MGL) [Joy FM, Joy News, Adom FM, Adom TV], Graphic Communications Group Limited (GCGL) [*Daily Graphic*], New Times Corporation (NTC), Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) [GBC Radio, GTV], and Media General Limited (MGLd) [TV3, 3FM]. The Private Newspaper Publishers Association (PNPA), the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), the Ghana Community Radio Network (GCRN), and the Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association (GIBA), the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) were also part of the Coalition. Additionally, religious bodies including the Ghana Baptist Convention (GhBC), the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG), and the Ghana Catholic Bishops Conference (GCBC) became members of the Coalition. Indeed, the involvement of religious bodies is especially important because of the religious undertones of mining. Ghanaians generally believe that sacred groves, rivers, forests, valleys, and other natural endowments possess spiritual powers. Ghanaians will generally not seek to destroy forest, water bodies and other natural endowments because of their religious beliefs (Addei &

Amankwah, 2011; Sarfo-Mensah & Oduro, 2007). Again, activities of artisanal and small-scale gold miners in Ghana including prospecting and processing of the precious metal are largely shaped by religious beliefs and myths (Addei & Amankwah, 2011). Obviously, the complex religious issues surrounding *galamsey* bolstered by the belief that forests, rivers, valleys and other natural endowments of Ghana possess supernatural powers could have diverse implications for dealing with the menace (Addei & Amankwah, 2011).

The MCAG had three main objectives: to undertake public education on the menaces of illegal mining; to undertake advocacy with relevant stakeholders to promote the eradication of *galamsey*; and to promote sustainable mining (Kpienbaareh et al., 2021). In pursuing these objectives, the MCAG put forth five key demands on stakeholders within the extractive industry: that, a six-month moratorium be put on all small-scale mining activities in Ghana; the state cease the issuance of new mining licenses for a year; a reclassification of mining types be instituted in line with current operational dynamics including the use of sophisticated equipment; stakeholders in the mining sector allow water bodies in Ghana to regenerate in their natural ecology; and stakeholders engage in tree planting and land reclamation projects in the country. The approach adopted by the MCAG was not completely novel as similar collaborative efforts between media houses and other stakeholders had occurred against illegal lumbering in Ghana. However, unlike earlier efforts, the approach by the MCAG received enormous public endorsement (Kpienbaareh et al., 2021).

Though the MCAG has carried out its campaign for over seven years, there are apparent research gaps regarding the work of the Coalition. First, knowledge gaps exist on how Ghanaians perceived the effectiveness of the campaign undertaken by the Coalition, and whether Ghanaians were fully aware of the demands made by the MCAG to the Government and other key stakeholders. Second, little is known about how the citizenry perceived the communication strategies adopted for the

campaign, and whether they were satisfied with the outcomes of the demands of the Coalition. Third, there is no empirical evidence on the level of satisfaction among Ghanaians regarding the contributions of the members that formed the Coalition. Thus, the central question addressed by this study is “How does the Ghanaian public perceive the campaign undertaken by the Coalition against *galamsey* in the country?” Based on this question, the study was designed to examine Ghanaians’ views on the fight against *galamsey*, their level of awareness of the organizations that formed the MCAG, and the demands of the Coalition. It was also designed to determine Ghanaians’ views on the level of effectiveness of communication strategies the MCAG adopted during the campaign, their level of satisfaction with the outcomes of the demands, and their level of satisfaction with the contributions of organizations that formed the Coalition.

### ***Theoretical context***

The analysis of this study was guided by the agenda setting theory (Lippmann, 1922; McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Although theorized to explain voter intentions and actions, the Agenda Setting theory underscored the capacity of mass media in influencing people’s opinion on key issues of political and social interest (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). The theory underscores the relationships between the issues that the mass media emphasized as vital and the public’s reaction to such issues (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). The theory has led to several investigations into how the mass media frames and primes issues to influence their audiences and public opinions consciously or unconsciously (Matsaganis & Payne, 2005).

The agenda setting theory is relevant to the current study because the media’s contribution to the Coalition was to present various perspectives and perceptions, values, foci and priorities of the citizens on *galamsey*. In line with the theory, the campaign undertaken by the MCAG constitutes a strong tool for shaping and influencing the national agenda in the mining sector. Public awareness

and support for policies in the mining sector would increase due to media campaigns (Jacobs & Schillemans, 2016; McCombs & Valenzuela, 2007). The MACG adopted various communication strategies to help set an agenda to successfully influence the citizens to commit to the fight against the menace. Radio, television, newspapers, and other traditional and digital communication tools and techniques were adopted to influence the public's response to *galamsey* in Ghana (Kpienbaareh et al., 2021). Scholars (McCombs & Shaw, 1993; Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006) have suggested that public and political officeholders are vital in setting national agendas in all sectors including the mining sector. Likewise, governments and state agencies have important roles to play in promoting public policy using mass media in setting agendas to deal with *galamsey*.

### **Methods and Materials**

The study adopted descriptive survey design in a quantitative approach that targeted Ghanaians who were 18 years old or above. Going by the minimum statutory age for voting in Ghana, 18 years may imply maturity, when an individual may be discerning and responsible in his or her decisions and actions. The MCAG was widely covered in Ghana's media space for which reason scholars (Armah-Attah, 2017; Kpienbaareh, 2021) suggested that Ghanaians generally had a fair idea of *galamsey* and the stakeholder campaign against it. Data were obtained from Ghanaians using questionnaires distributed via Google Forms on various social media platforms including WhatsApp. Initially, the form was sent to 249 Ghanaians, who were encouraged to forward the form to other Ghanaians on social media after completing the form.

The initial respondents forwarded the form to 187 Ghanaians who met the age criterion and were willing to participate in the study. In all, 436 Ghanaians received the form but 359 filled and returned it. However, 12 of the retrieved forms that were incomplete were expunged from the data. Thus, data from 347 respondents were analyzed. According to Cobanoglu, Warde and Moreo

(2001), online surveys involving tools such as Google Form offer a superior advantage over other forms of survey because of costs, speed, and response rate. The data was collected over a period of three weeks, between July 2023 and August 2023. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.933 obtained after data collection shows that the instrument was highly reliable (Taber, 2018), indicating that the questionnaire could produce similar results when used in similar contexts.

For the descriptive analysis, frequencies (F), percentages, means (M) and standard deviations (SD) were used. The inferential analysis involved a one-way ANOVA test conducted to establish the differences in the views of respondents on the effectiveness of communication strategies based on their educational levels. The ANOVA test was conducted because manifestation of any significant differences in respondents' views based on their educational levels could have implications for the kind of communication strategies the MCAG would adopt towards the fight. As part of ethical considerations, informed consent was obtained from the respondents before data collection. The introductory section of the Google Form required respondents to fill the form only after agreeing to participate in the study. Also, respondents were informed that their participation was voluntary, and that they had the right to stop filling the form without offering any justification for doing so. Finally, respondents were assured that the information provided would be managed confidentially.

## **Results**

The results of the analysis relating to the study's objectives are presented and discussed, but first some insights into the demographics of the respondents (Table 1). The data showed that there were more male respondents (63.1%) than female respondents (36.9%). Also, many (69.1%) respondents were between 20 and 39 years. For education, most (81.0%) respondents had tertiary education. The finding on education is unsurprising because the researchers first distributed the

Google Form on social media platforms, and many of those on such platforms who found the topic appealing to respond to were postgraduate and undergraduate students in Ghana.

**Table 1: Demographic features of respondents**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Sex</b>		
Males	219	63.1
Females	128	36.9
<b>Age</b>		
Below 20years	25	7.2
20-29years	149	42.9
30-39years	91	26.2
40-49years	54	15.6
Above 49years	28	8.1
<b>Educational level</b>		
Basic education	7	2.0
Secondary education	59	17.0
Tertiary education	281	81.0

Source: Field survey, 2023

### ***Ghana's fight against illegal mining***

The study first ascertained the views of respondents on the fight against illegal mining in Ghana. Respondents were asked whether they had heard about *galamsey*. All of them indicated that they had heard about *galamsey* in Ghana. On whether respondents were aware of the forms *galamsey* takes in Ghana, many (73.7%) of them stated that they were aware. They mentioned the various forms *galamsey* takes including digging in the forests (91.6%), valleys (84.3%), along the banks of rivers and streams (72.6%), collecting gravels (62.6%), and washing the collected particles away with water (74.5%) for the valuable stones.

Second, on respondents' views on fighting the menace (Table 2), most (85.3%) of them stated that relevant state agencies and authorities had not shown enough interest and commitment to end *galamsey*, coupled with their strong belief (84.2%) that Ghana had not put in place adequate

support measures to seriously fight against *galamsey*. This finding challenges the effectiveness of the existing institutional and regulatory frameworks framing the fight against *galamsey*.

**Table 2: General views of Ghanaians on the fight against illegal mining**

Item	Yes F (5)	No F (%)	Not Sure F (%)
Ghana should continue the fight against <i>galamsey</i> .	275(79.3)	23(6.6)	49(14.1)
Relevant state agencies and authorities of Ghana consider the fight against <i>galamsey</i> critical on their agenda.	43(12.4)	244(70.3)	60(17.3)
Relevant state agencies and authorities have shown enough interest and commitment to end <i>galamsey</i> .	18(5.2)	296(85.3)	33(9.5)
Ghana has put in place adequate support-measures to enhance the fight against <i>galamsey</i> .	25(7.2)	292(84.2)	30(8.6)
Ghana has appropriate, policies, laws and regulations for the fight against <i>galamsey</i> .	54(15.6)	220(63.4)	73(21.0)
Ghana's strategy for the fight against <i>galamsey</i> addresses the root causes of the menace.	23(6.6)	287(82.9)	36(10.4)
Ghanaian leaders (traditional, religious and community leaders) have shown enough interest and commitment to end <i>galamsey</i> .	43(12.4)	244(70.3)	60(17.3)
Partisan political leaders have shown enough interest and commitment towards the fight against <i>galamsey</i> .	25(7.2)	292(84.1)	30(8.6)
Ghana has shown enough socio-political will towards the fight against <i>galamsey</i> .	19(5.5)	290(83.8)	37(10.7)
Ghana requires a new approach to the fight against <i>galamsey</i> .	280(80.7)	22(6.3)	45(13.0)

Source: Field survey, 2023

Additionally, 63.4% of the respondents perceived Ghana as not having appropriate, laws, policies and regulations for the fight against *galamsey*. About 83% of them said the country's strategy for the fight against *galamsey* does not address the root causes of the menace. Appropriate laws, policies and regulations in this context relate to laws, policies and regulations that tackle the root causes of *galamsey* and promote sustainable mining. Also, the data indicate striking revelations on leadership in the fight against *galamsey* in Ghana, since most (70.3%) respondents stated that Ghanaian leaders including traditional authorities, religious leaders, and community leaders as well as partisan political leaders (84.1%) have not shown enough interest and commitment in

tackling the menace. Despite these concerns, most (79.3%) respondents indicated that the country should continue the fight against *galamsey*, implying that the respondents had hope that the situation could improve.

### ***Awareness of the organizations that formed the MCAG***

In examining the level of awareness of organizations that formed the MCAG, means were calculated using a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1.00-1.59=Very Lowly Aware, 1.6-2.59= Lowly Aware, 2.60-3.59= Moderately Aware, 3.60-4.59=Highly Aware, and 4.60-5.0=Very Highly Aware). The highest mean (M=5) implies that respondents had very much awareness of the membership of the MCAG whilst the lowest minimum mean (M=1) indicates that respondents had very little awareness about the membership of these organizations (Table 3). The respondents were highly aware of the involvement of MGL [M=4.07], MGLd [M=3.82], and Omni Media [M=3.80] in the campaigns undertaken by MCAG.

Again, respondents were not much aware of GBC [M=2.87], GCGL [M=2.80], and NTC [M=2.63] as members of the Coalition. Furthermore, the level of awareness among the respondents with respect to the involvement of the GJA (M=2.76), GCRN (M=2.35), GCBC (M=2.32), and the CCG (M=2.27) was not very encouraging. The relevance of this revelation cannot be over-emphasized because it raises questions about the level of activeness exhibited by these organizations in ending *galamsey*.

**Table 3: Awareness of organizations that were part of the MCAG**

Organization	Mean	SD
MGL	4.07	0.94
MGLd	3.82	1.02
Omni Media	3.80	1.12
GBC	2.87	1.10
GCGL	2.80	1.09
GJA	2.76	1.15
GIBA	2.67	1.10
PNPA	2.64	1.13
NTC	2.63	1.06
GCRN	2.35	1.19
GCBC	2.32	1.21
NCCE	2.28	1.02
CCG	2.27	1.15
GhBC	2.11	1.04

Source: Field survey, 2023

#### *Awareness of the demands of the MCAG*

The research further examined the level of awareness of respondents regarding the demands made by the MCAG. Means were calculated based on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (where 1.00-1.59=Very Lowly Aware, 1.6-2.59= Lowly Aware, 2.60-3.59= Moderately Aware, 3.60-4.59=Highly Aware, and 4.60-5.0=Very Highly Aware). The highest maximum mean (M=5) suggests very much awareness of the MCAG's demands whereas the lowest minimum mean (M=1) implies very little awareness about the demands (Table 4). Respondents were highly aware that the Coalition demanded a six-month suspension on all small-scale mining (M=4.08), reclassifying mining categories to reflect more commitment towards tree planting (M=3.84) and allowing water bodies to regenerate in their natural ecology (M=3.60).

On the contrary, respondents were somewhat aware of the demand for reclassification of mining categories to reflect the use of sophisticated equipment (M=2.95). This implies respondents were not very aware of this particular demand by the Coalition. The overall mean score (M=3.50) shows

that respondents were lowly aware of the main demands of the Coalition, signifying that the MCAG did not effectively highlight all its demands to the public.

**Table 4: Awareness of the demands of the MCAG**

Demand	Mean	SD
Six-month suspension on all small-scale mining in Ghana.	4.08	.98
Cessation of the issuance of new mining licenses for a year.	3.66	1.21
Reclassification of mining categories to reflect the use of new/larger equipment.	2.95	1.23
Reclassification of mining categories to allow water bodies to regenerate in their natural ecology.	3.60	1.11
Reclassification of mining categories to reflect more commitment towards tree planting.	3.84	1.03
Reclassification of mining categories to give attention to reclamation project.	2.87	1.27
Total	3.50	1.13

Source: Field survey, 2023

#### ***Effectiveness of communication strategies of MCAG***

The study analyzed the respondents' views on the effectiveness of the communication strategies employed during the campaign (Table 5). Means were calculated based on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1.00-1.59=Very Lowly Effective, 1.60-2.59= Lowly Effective, 2.60-3.59= Moderately Effective, 3.60-4.59=Highly Effective, and 4.60-5.00=Very Highly Effective). Table 5 shows the Coalition created awareness about the dangers of *galamsey* (M=3.93). This suggests that respondents were exposed to issues surrounding *galamsey* through the campaign undertaken by the Coalition.

Moreover, it was observed that public education and sensitization (M=3.82), and advocacy activities with stakeholders (M=3.78) on the ills of *galamsey* used in the campaign were perceived as highly effective. Respondents believed that the MCAG effectively used visual communication strategies including the use of images to promote positive social change (M=3.93) and positive attitudinal and behavioral change (M=3.86) towards *galamsey*. However, public meetings and interactions on the causes and effects of *galamsey* were not very effective (M=2.74). Additionally,

the Coalition was not very effective in engaging stakeholders at both local and national levels to implement effective measures to tackle *galamsey* (M=3.23) during the campaign.

**Table 5: Views on effectiveness of communication strategies adopted to fight *galamsey***

Communication strategy	Mean	SD
Creating awareness on the ills of <i>galamsey</i> .	3.93	1.04
Public education and sensitization on the ills of <i>galamsey</i> .	3.82	1.14
Advocacy activities to end <i>galamsey</i> .	3.78	1.10
Stepping-up pressure on stakeholders in the extractive industry to end <i>galamsey</i> .	3.70	1.17
Public meetings and interactions on the causes and effects of <i>galamsey</i> .	2.74	1.22
Engaging stakeholders at both local and national levels to take effective measures to end <i>galamsey</i> .	3.23	1.15
Visual communication (using pictures, images) to promote social change towards <i>galamsey</i> .	3.93	1.01
Visual communication (using pictures, images) to promote positive attitudinal and behavioral change towards <i>galamsey</i> .	3.86	1.03
Entertainment education on the dangers of <i>galamsey</i> .	2.54	1.20
Community mobilization activities (using town hall meetings and online forums) to campaign against <i>galamsey</i> .	2.52	1.18
Social marketing activities (using posters, banners and public service announcements) to promote a shift towards alternative livelihoods among illegal miners.	2.48	1.25
Total	3.32	1.13

Source: Field survey, 2023

Additionally, community mobilization activities, including town hall meetings and online forums (M=2.52), and social marketing activities including the use of posters, banners, etc. (M=2.48) were not adequately adopted by the MCAG during the campaign. This finding is not surprising because the overall communication strategies used during the campaign were perceived as moderately effective (M=3.32), suggesting that the communication strategies used were not very effective.

A further analysis using a one-way ANOVA was done to correlate the educational levels of respondents and the effectiveness of the communication strategies used by MCAG (Table 6). Subjects were divided into three groups (Group 1: Basic education; Group 2: Secondary education; Group 3: Tertiary education). The significance level ( $p=0.034$ ) which is less than the alpha value

of 0.05 suggests that there were significant differences on the level of effectiveness of communication strategies MCAG used among respondents based on their educational levels. Thus, significant differences existed in the mean scores and the standard deviations for Group 1 (M=37.87), Group 2 (M=37.66); and Group 3 (M=34.29). However, the effect of the differences (eta-squared=0.020) was small (Cohen, cited in Brydges, 2019). Only 2.0% of the differences in the views of respondents on the level of effectiveness of communication strategies could be ascribed to the disparities in educational levels.

**Table 6: ANOVA test of differences between educational levels and views on effectiveness of communication strategies used by MCAG**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (2-tailed)	Effect size (eta-squared)
Between Groups	513.087	2	256.544	3.411	.034	0.020
Within Groups	24819.387	330	75.210			
Total	25332.474	332				

Source: Field survey, 2023

### ***Satisfaction with the outcomes of the demands of the Coalition***

On the level of satisfaction with the outcomes of the demands made, data were analyzed based on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1.00-1.59=Very Lowly Satisfied, 1.60-2.59= Lowly Satisfied, 2.60-3.59= Moderately Satisfied, 3.60-4.59=Highly Satisfied, and 4.60-5.00=Very Highly Satisfied). Table 7 shows that respondents were moderately satisfied with the reclassification of mining categories to ensure more commitment towards tree planting (M=3.03), implying that the respondents were not very much satisfied with the outcome of the campaign on reclassification of mining categories.

**Table 7: Satisfaction regarding the outcomes of the MCAG’s demands**

Demand	Mean	SD
Reclassification of mining categories to reflect commitment towards tree planting.	3.03	1.25
Six-month moratorium on all small-scale mining activities in the country.	2.84	1.14
Reclassification of mining categories to reflect the allowance of water bodies to regenerate in their natural ecology.	2.16	1.33
Cessation of the issuance of new mining licenses for a year.	2.16	1.21
Reclassification of mining categories to reflect the use of new/larger equipment.	2.05	1.22
Reclassification of mining categories to reflect improved reclamation project.	2.03	1.26
Total	2.37	1.23

Source: Field survey, 2023

However, respondents’ level of satisfaction with the outcomes of the demand for reclassifying mining categories to allow water bodies to regenerate themselves in their natural ecology (M=2.16), and cessation of the issuance of new mining licenses for a year (M=2.16) was low. Overall, respondents were lowly satisfied (M=2.37) with the outcomes of the demands made by the Coalition, signifying that the overall outcome of the campaign undertaken by the MCAG to end the menace was less encouraging.

***Satisfaction with contributions of organizations that formed Coalition***

The level of satisfaction of respondents regarding the contributions of the various organizations that formed the Coalition was assessed using a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1.00-1.59=Very Lowly Satisfied, 1.60-2.59= Lowly Satisfied, 2.60-3.59= Moderately Satisfied, 3.60-4.59=Highly Satisfied, and 4.60-5.00=Very Highly Satisfied). From Table 8, respondents were highly satisfied with the contributions of MGL [M=3.94), Media General Limited [M=3.63), and Omni Media [M=3.61]. Respondents were moderately satisfied with the contributions of the GIBA (M=2.66), GJA (M=2.65), and PNPA (M=2.64), suggesting that respondents were not much satisfied with the contributions of these organizations.

**Table 8: Satisfaction with the contributions of MCAG organizations**

Organization	Mean	SD
MGL	3.94	0.98
MGLd	3.63	1.11
Omni Media	3.61	1.12
GIBA	2.66	1.06
GJA	2.65	1.10
PNPA	2.64	1.06
GCRN	2.43	1.07
GBC	2.42	1.27
GCGL	2.34	1.20
CCG	2.29	1.08
NTC	2.24	1.17
GCBC	2.18	1.13
GhBC	2.14	1.10
NCCE	1.95	1.09
Total	2.65	1.03

Source: Field survey, 2023

Besides, the contributions of GCRN (M=2.43), GBC (M=2.34), CCG (M=2.29, SD=1.08), NTC (M=2.24), GCBC (M=2.18), and NCCE (M=1.95) were perceived as not very satisfactory, indicating that these organizations need to do more towards the campaign against the menace. Respondents were not much satisfied with the overall contribution of the MCAG. However, respondents were more satisfied with the contributions of private media organizations involved in the campaign than public media and religious organizations.

## Discussion

To start with, the finding that respondents had knowledge about *galamsey* and the forms it takes affirms Owusu and Dwomoh's (2012) suggestion that *galamsey* is commonly known in Ghana. Also, the finding that state agencies are not up to the task indicates despondency about the fight. This supports the literature (Armah et al., 2013; Hilson et al., 2014; Kpienbaareh et al., 2021) on state agencies' ineptitude as a contributory factor to the prevalence of *galamsey* in Ghana. The seeming inertia of state agencies in dealing with *galamsey* as perceived by the respondents

contravenes sections 82–99 of the Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703), which enjoin state agencies to institute measures to deal with *galamsey*.

Moreover, concerns about Ghana’s legal and regulatory frameworks in the mining sector reinforce Boakye et al. (2021) and Bosu (2025) who found that the country’s laws and regulations in the mining sector are inadequate. Bosu (2025) particularly called for the revocation of LI 2462 which permits mining in protected forest reserves. Similarly, the revelation on low commitment of leadership across political, religious, and traditional spaces in fighting *galamsey* confirms Hilson et al. (2014) who identified weak political will and political expediency as obstructing the fight against *galamsey*. The failure of political officeholders further departs from earlier studies (McCombs & Shaw, 1993; Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006) which affirmed that political officeholders can set agendas to tackle societal cankers. The concerns about failures of political officeholders render the promises of the 2021 National Consultative Dialogue on Small-Scale Mining organized by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources [MLNR] (2021) as mere rhetoric in the fight against *galamsey*. Nevertheless, the respondents’ call on Ghana to continue the fight against *galamsey* implies optimism that Ghana can succeed in the fight if proper measures and attitudes are instituted to address the issue, especially regarding the legal, policy and regulatory frameworks (Bosu, 2025; Hilson, 2017; Tschakert, 2009).

The study’s revelation that membership of private media organizations in the Coalition was more known to the respondents than state-owned media suggests that private media organizations were more actively involved in the campaign. This result could reflect the nature of the media landscape in Ghana, where the private media often stridently champion such campaigns because of their relative independence from the state, unlike the state-owned media that relatively depend on the government. Importantly, the increased awareness of the inclusion of private media organizations

underscores the capacity of private media organizations in setting national agendas to tackle *galamsey* (McCombs & Shaw, 1993; Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006).

The respondents' high awareness about the MCAG's demand for a six-month suspension on all small-scale mining activities, and a reclassification of mining categories to reflect commitment towards tree planting could be attributed to more coverage on such demands by the Coalition. This finding mirrors previous studies (Armah-Attoh, 2017; Kpienbaareh et al., 2021), which recognized increased media campaigns on *galamsey*.

The study found the Coalition's effectiveness in using awareness creation, public education and advocacy on *galamsey*. The finding confirms Addo's (2022), which recognized that the media has been effective in creating awareness about *galamsey*. Exposure to certain messages provided by the media increases awareness and perceived importance of the issues (Chernov et al., 2011). Besides, the Media Foundation for West Africa (2017) reported that the media effectively educated Ghanaians on the dangers of *galamsey*. The results on public education and advocacy validate the first two objectives of the Coalition (Kpienbaareh et al., 2021) which focused on public education and advocacy.

The Coalition's effectiveness in using visual communication strategies to promote positive social and behavioral change towards *galamsey* confirms Ngigi and Busslo, as cited in Ying (2020). The writers found visual communication effective in enhancing the success of media campaigns towards behavior change. Likewise, the MCAG effectively put pressure on stakeholders in the extractive industry to end *galamsey* which corroborates Kpienbaareh et al. (2021).

However, the result indicating low stakeholder engagement at both local and national levels during the campaign deviates from the National Consultative Dialogue on Small-Scale Mining organized

by the MLNR in 2021. The dialogue recognized stakeholder engagement as critical to ending *galamsey*. Also, low community mobilization during the campaign could deny stakeholders the opportunity to co-produce solutions for behavior change (Odoom & Fosu, 2023). Besides, low reliance on social marketing usage during the campaign would complicate efforts to influence Ghanaians to voluntarily accept or modify their bad attitudes towards *galamsey* (Kotler et al., 2002).

The prominence of MGL, MGLd and Omni Media throughout the campaigns was recognized by respondents, stressing the agenda-setting capacity of these media organizations. This agrees with Mensah, Odoom and Agyepong (2023) who found that Ghanaian media frequently set agenda on issues affecting the sustainable development of the country. However, the low representation of the NCCE in the campaign is worrying since the NCCE is a constitutional body mandated to provide civic education to Ghanaians on matters of national importance including *galamsey*. Finally, respondents were lowly satisfied with the overall efforts of the Coalition, which contradicts Boulay et al. (2008) who expressed that the combined effort of religious and media organizations is critical to the success of public campaigns for behavior change.

### ***Theoretical and practical implications***

The findings of this research have implications for theory and practice. First, the results of this study validate the agenda setting capacity of the Ghanaian media. Respondents recognized the significant role the Ghanaian media played in setting national agendas about *galamsey* using various communication strategies including public education, awareness creation, advocacy and visual communication (McCombs & Shaw, 1993).

However, respondents' low satisfaction with the overall outcomes of the campaign constitutes a major challenge to the Coalition's practical objective of achieving sustainable mining in Ghana (Kpienbaareh et al., 2021). This implies that the Coalition should seriously re-examine its communication strategies. The Coalition is encouraged to aggressively employ diverse communication strategies including public education, advocacy, stakeholder engagement, visual communication, community mobilization, entertainment education, and social marketing during its subsequent campaigns.

Furthermore, the perception that state agencies and authorities are not committed to enforcing mining laws and regulations to help deal with the menace undermines public trust and confidence in the capacity of these state agencies and authorities. Clearly, there is inertia on the part of relevant state agencies and regulatory bodies in the fight, which is an unhealthy development that needs to be quickly addressed. To improve the prevailing situation, relevant state agencies and authorities including the Ministry of Environment, Science, and Technology, the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, the Forestry Commission and the Minerals Commission should collaboratively enforce the laws and regulations in the mining sector devoid of political patronage. Again, to strengthen the existing regulatory and institutional frameworks, these relevant ministries and agencies should team up and effectively re-examine the laws and regulations governing the mining sector to ensure that they adequately reflect not only the culture-sensitive and context-specific nature of the current challenges but also the multi-layered power dynamics and interests in the mining sector.

A critical part of the strategy to end *galamsey* should be critical discussion and provision of sustainable alternative livelihood streams. Ending *galamsey* will remain unsustainable if the strategy fails to consider sustainable alternative livelihood interventions. The government should

collaborate with corporate bodies and other stakeholders to design drastic measures to promote sustainable alternative livelihoods for the teeming Ghanaian youth.

Low commitment of leadership across political, traditional and religious settings suggests systemic leadership failure in the *galamsey* fight. This is troubling because the fight will remain a herculean task if leaders at all levels fail to commit to it. The Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy, and Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources should team up with political, religious and traditional leaders at all levels to devise viable measures to end *galamsey*. Politicians should demonstrate attitudes worthy of emulation, including reporting their members who engage in *galamsey* to relevant state authorities to build public trust in the fight. Traditional rulers should mobilize their subjects to collectively develop strategies for reporting persons engaged in *galamsey*. Religious leaders should use their platforms to preach against *galamsey* and admonish their congregants who may be involved in the act to desist from it. Finally, the National Anti-Illegal Mining Operations Secretariat (NAIMOS), should be encouraged and adequately resourced to execute its mandate devoid of any unhealthy socio-economic, political and religious considerations.

## **Conclusion**

The study concludes that Ghanaians perceived the fight against *galamsey* with mixed concerns. While the awareness creation efforts of the Coalition in the *galamsey* fight, especially by the private media, were positively highlighted, the same cannot be said about other findings of the study. Importantly, agencies and state institutions that should lead the charges to eliminate *galamsey* were found to exhibit low commitment, thereby hindering public trust and confidence in the fight. Also, public awareness on the demands made by the MCAG during the campaign is generally low despite the public education, advocacy and visual communication strategies used by

the Coalition. This implies that the coalition, heavily represented by professional communicators, were unable to design and use appropriate and effective communication strategies to reach and include the public in the fight. Notwithstanding, members of the Coalition were encouraged to continue the campaign against *galamsey* using new communication strategies which are context-specific and technologically relevant.

Nevertheless, as a limitation, the study's lack of a qualitative dimension may hinder an in-depth appreciation of the issues, although the findings and conclusions remain relevant to the issues addressed. Future studies on the topic should consider qualitative methods to help achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the issues.

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