



INVESTIGATING THE CREDIBILITY OF CONTENT ON MISLEADING MESSAGES IN  
BROADCAST MEDIA IN GHANA

BY

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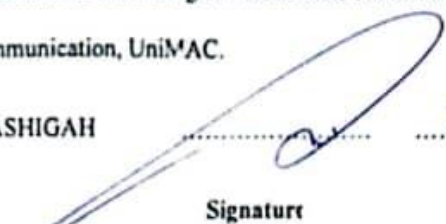
### CANDIDATES DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research is a result of my own original research and that, no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or any other higher education institute. I further declare that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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### CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

This Dissertation/Thesis has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of Dissertation/Thesis laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication, UniMAC.

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the reliability of broadcast media in Ghana, concentrating on the incidence of misinformation and its effect on audience confidence. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, gathering quantitative data from 200 inhabitants in Osu and Kanda, as well as qualitative insights from interviews with journalists and editors from prominent media organizations including TV3, Joy News, and Citi FM. The quantitative results indicate a demographic bias towards younger individuals, who predominantly rely on social media for news consumption, signifying a transformation in news consumption patterns. Significantly, 83% of respondents indicated experiencing deceptive content, implying a substantial decline in trust towards conventional media sources.

Qualitative interviews yielded profound insights on the issues encountered by media practitioners, encompassing time constraints, sensationalism, and the necessity for meticulous fact-checking. Some practitioners recognized these pressures, while others asserted that strict adherence to editing norms mitigated the dissemination of false material. The research underscores the imperative for augmented editorial supervision, continuous training, and refined regulatory structures to maintain media integrity.

It further underscores the imperative for Ghanaian broadcast media to confront the issues presented by misleading content in order to rebuild public trust and uphold the integrity of information shared with the audience.

In terms of recommendations, the study admonished the establishment of rigorous fact-checking protocols, the advancement of media literacy initiatives, and a request for regulatory agencies to impose more stringent accountability standards within the media sector.

## **DEDICATION**

My loving family, who have supported me throughout my academic journey, sacrificing precious moments and providing unwavering encouragement.

My parents, Alhaji Awal Mohammed and Hajia Wasilatu Awal, who instilled in me the value of education and the pursuit of knowledge. My partner, Mrs Hafsatu Alhassan, who has been my rock, offering love, patience, and understanding during the most challenging times. My children, Hanan Haruna, Marouf Haruna and Awal Mohammed Haruna, who inspire me with their curiosity and enthusiasm, reminding me of the importance of this research.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Background of the Study

The globe is currently witnessing a substantial occurrence of fabricated news, false information, deceptive schemes, and deliberate dissemination of false information, all of which have profound consequences on democratic systems of governance (Vukčević, 2024; Rzhavska & Kuzmenko, 2023). Considering the increasing reliance of news consumers on online and social media sources for news and relevant material, this issue is becoming significant and should be taken into account in decision-making at all levels. The rapid pace of news cycles, characterised by constant availability and continuous reporting, has contributed significantly to the rise in demand for false news. This is particularly driven by journalists' strong inclination towards breaking news and shorter-form material. Globally, the problem of misleading information in the media has received much scrutiny. The proliferation of digital channels has expedited the dissemination of misinformation, posing difficulty for viewers in distinguishing trustworthy sources from untrustworthy ones.

Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) have pointed out the details of the information disorder landscape, classifying misleading content into three categories: misinformation (false information shared without intending harm), disinformation (false information shared to cause harm), and malinformation (authentic information used to cause damage). Their work highlights the complex nature of the problem and emphasises the necessity of implementing comprehensive measures to address it.

The influence of misleading content on the credibility of the media has been examined in different situations. Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) conducted a study on the presence and impact of fake news during the 2016 U.S. presidential election. They discovered that fake news was widely circulated and could shape political views and behaviours. In a similar vein, Lazer et al. (2018) investigated the dissemination of incorrect information on social media, highlighting the significance of social networks in magnifying such disinformation and the difficulties it presents in upholding public confidence in conventional media.

The media environment in Africa is characterised by a combination of traditional and digital platforms, which exhibit different degrees of media independence and journalistic standards. Various studies have revealed the widespread occurrence of deceptive content in African media. Wasserman and Madrid-Morales (2018) examined the occurrence of false information in Africa and observed that political, economic, and social issues have a role in the dissemination of fake news. Their research emphasises the necessity of media literacy efforts and strong fact-checking procedures to improve the credibility of media (Gadzekpo, n.d.). Despite the increasing impact of digital platforms, conventional media still hold a prominent position in Ghana for the distribution of information. Ghana's media landscape is characterised by its diversity, encompassing a wide range of television and radio stations, newspapers, and internet news sites. Nevertheless, the trustworthiness of conventional media is progressively jeopardised as a result of the intrusion of deceptive information.

Asante and Nwankwo (2020) highlight the significance of trustworthy media in advancing democratic governance in Ghana. They contend that the existence of misleading information hinders the media's capacity to operate as a vigilant observer and hold authority responsible. Osei-Afoakwa (2019) emphasises the difficulties that Ghanaian media encounter in upholding

credibility, with disinformation being identified as a significant element that undermines public trust.

Empirical research has provided additional clarity on the influence of misleading content on the credibility of media in Ghana. It has been shown that a considerable number of people believe that conventional media is vulnerable to spreading false information. This view is worsened by occurrences of sensationalism and the absence of thorough fact verification in certain media organisations.

In addition, it is worth emphasising that many media outlets in Ghana depend on social media and internet content for their news creation operations, although a significant number of information consumers in the country acquire content through radio. This position presents a significant hazard as the utilisation of social media and online content has become the standard in the majority of newsrooms throughout the country. Consequently, the impact of fake news has extended beyond internet platforms and social media, and it has become a tangible presence in traditional media. Fake news is typically defined as news reports, articles, or stories that are intentionally manufactured to misinform, spread rumours, or deceive readers to cause confusion, affect opinions, or forward a political agenda.

Bardi (2018) posits that there is well-documented proof of the presence of fabricated news in politics for more than a hundred years, albeit it has primarily been in the form of fictional stories.

Nevertheless, the growing prevalence of social media and pervasive internet availability is driving its expansion and extensive influence. Traditional media institutions fulfil the important functions of gatekeeping and watchdog, carefully selecting and monitoring information and material that is consumed by the general public. Nevertheless, the rise in social media usage

has resulted in a surge of user-generated content that is not subject to any editorial restrictions. However, this implies that various types of news and content, including fabricated information, are created and disseminated rapidly. Fake news has become a significant obstacle for journalists and newsrooms, as they must navigate both public distrust and the responsibility of journalism as the “Fourth Estate” to expose the truth to those in positions of authority (Richardson, 2017). The credibility of broadcast media content is a crucial concern in the quickly changing media environment, especially in traditional media contexts (Gadzekpo, 2018; Ansah, 2018). Ghana, a nation characterised by a dynamic media landscape, has experienced substantial transformations in its media ecosystem in recent decades. Due to the increase in the number of radio and television stations, there is now more competition to attract and keep the attention of audiences. This has resulted in the adoption of several strategies to engage and retain viewers and listeners. Nevertheless, the intense competition has also resulted in the widespread circulation of misleading information, which poses a significant risk to the trustworthiness of broadcast media communications.

Misleading content, commonly known as misinformation or disinformation, encompasses purposefully disseminated misleading or inaccurate information to deceive the audience. This phenomenon has been thoroughly examined in many contexts, namely in the digital media landscape (Lewandowsky et al., 2012; Tandoc et al., 2018). Nevertheless, the extent to which it has affected conventional broadcast media, namely in Ghana, has not been well investigated. The credibility of media messages is of utmost importance as it directly impacts public trust and the efficacy of media as a means for education, information dissemination, and societal transformation (Tsfati & Cappella, 2003).

The prevalence of misleading content in the Ghanaian media ecosystem has been influenced by technological improvements and societal shifts. The proliferation of social media platforms has facilitated the quick dissemination of misinformation (Detecting Fake News, 2020; The

Hidden Costs of social media, 2023). Moreover, the ruthless nature of the media industry has prompted certain publications such as bloggers, online news portals to prioritise sensationalism at the expense of accuracy, thereby further eroding their reputation. Literature on the influence of social media on the credibility of conventional media in Ghana emphasises the dual function of digital platforms as providers of knowledge and conduits for misinformation. It asserts that although social media has the potential to amplify the reach and interaction of traditional media, it also presents substantial obstacles in terms of authenticating content and upholding credibility.

The National Media Commission (NMC) and the National Communications Authority (NCA) in Ghana are responsible for regulating the media industry and ensuring that ethical standards are followed. Nevertheless, the regulatory system frequently has difficulties in effectively combating the swift dissemination of deceptive information. Efforts to bolster the legitimacy of the media have involved advocating for more stringent rules, enhancing journalistic training, and fostering media literacy among the general people.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Research on misleading material or contents in traditional media sources, particularly in the Ghanaian context, is an important and widely recognised field of study that has attracted the interest of numerous scholars and organisations. The current body of work emphasises the substantial influence of disinformation on the legitimacy of the media, the trust of the people, and the ability to make well-informed decisions.

A prominent study conducted by Mensah and Afful (2019) investigated the prevalence of misinformation in Ghanaian media and its potential ramifications on public debate. Their research uncovered a worrisome pattern of misleading information being spread through conventional media outlets, frequently fueled by political agendas or sensationalism.

Nevertheless, their research mostly concentrated on print media and did not extensively investigate the broadcast media environment.

Owusu-Ansah and Akpojivi (2021) conducted a study that examined how social media contributes to the spread of false information and its effects on traditional media in Ghana. Their research emphasised the intricate interaction between social media platforms and mainstream media, wherein misleading content can quickly disseminate and shape public opinion. Nevertheless, their research did not investigate the precise elements that contribute to the production and spread of deceptive information in traditional broadcast media.

Although this research offered helpful insights, there is still a substantial lack of awareness regarding the distinct issues and dynamics of misleading content in Ghana's traditional broadcast media ecosystem. It is essential to address this gap to maintain journalistic integrity, cultivate public trust, and encourage informed citizenry.

The objective of the proposed study is to address this research deficiency by performing an extensive examination of the frequency and consequences of misleading content in traditional broadcast media in Ghana. The study aims to discover the multiple aspects that contribute to the spread of false information within this particular media environment. Moreover, the study aims to comprehensively evaluate the influence of this misinformation on the credibility of the media and the level of public trust in Ghana. The research seeks to examine the impact of deceptive information on public trust and the ability to make educated decisions.

To summarise, the proposed study aims to fill a significant research need by examining the frequency, determinants, and consequences of deceptive information in the conventional broadcast media landscape in Ghana.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

The research objectives of this study are to:

1. Analyse the various factors that contribute to the creation and spread of misleading content within traditional media in Ghana.
2. Evaluate the impact of misleading content on audience trust and perception of broadcast media credibility.
3. Propose strategies and recommendations for mitigating the spread of misleading content and enhancing the credibility of broadcast media messages in Ghana.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

1. Which internal editorial practices within traditional media organisations in Ghana contribute to the production and spread of misleading information?
2. What is the impact of individual journalists and content producers in promoting misleading information within traditional media outlets?
3. How do the organisational culture and institutional norms within traditional media organisations influence the acceptance or rejection of misleading information?

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study holds great significance for multiple reasons. Firstly, this study fills an important research gap by examining the impact of misleading information in traditional broadcast media specifically in the Ghanaian context. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of these intricate relationships is crucial to formulate effective policies aimed at bolstering the credibility of media outlets and fostering public trust. Furthermore, the results of this study could provide valuable insights for media regulatory authorities and legislators in formulating efficient

policies and guidelines to mitigate the dissemination of deceptive information. Furthermore, media practitioners can derive advantages from the insights offered, enabling them to maintain journalistic standards and ethical norms in their professional endeavours.

### **1.5 Organization of Study**

The study is structured into five chapters. They are as follows:

Chapter 1 offers an introductory overview that includes the background of the study, problem statement, research questions and objectives. The scope and significance of the study as well as the organisation of the study also form part of Chapter One. Chapter Two deals with the literature review, which entails a detailed review of related studies and theoretical or conceptual frameworks. Chapter Three covers the methodology used for the study. The content of Chapter Three includes the source of data used, the population, sampling method and sample selection, data collection technique and instruments. Chapter Four presents the data collected, analysis and discussions. Chapter Five contains the summary, limitations, conclusions and recommendations for the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter explores how this study relates to previous studies. It highlights related studies that show the influence of misleading content on media credibility. It further briefly explores the media landscape in Ghana. These underlying processes lead to the dissemination of misleading information in the traditional media and liberalising the airwaves per a constitutional provision. Again, it discusses differing arguments and distinct research conclusions made about the topic in consideration, citing various literature, including (Kiousis 2001), and arguing that this study is unique and therefore a valuable addition to the existing body of knowledge. Finally, some major theories, including *Agenda Setting Theory*, which discusses the media through the ability to identify and publicise content, play a pivotal role in shaping the issues that attract society. The review provides the intellectual context for the study, acknowledging and examining prior knowledge on the topic and appreciating modes of presentation and discussions on research findings (Cano, 2013).

#### **2.1 Review of Related Issues and Concepts**

##### **2.1.1 Components of Media Credibility**

Media credibility pertains to the perceived reliability and credibility of media content as viewed by its audience. The concept encompasses multiple dimensions and comprises various essential elements, namely accuracy, fairness, balance, and the lack of bias (Stroud & Reese, 2008; Hovland et al., 1953). Accuracy pertains to the veracity of the information conveyed, whereas fairness denotes the absence of bias and the equitable treatment in the dissemination of information. Balance entails the presentation of several perspectives on controversial matters,

and the absence of bias indicates a lack of prejudice or favouritism (Meyer, 1988). These components collectively influence the perceived credibility of a media source by the audience.

### **2.1.2 Relevance of Media Credibility in the Context of Broadcast Media**

The credibility of the media is especially important in the realm of broadcast media because of its extensive audience and substantial impact on public sentiment. Television and radio, which are forms of broadcast media, serve as main channels of information for numerous people, influencing their comprehension of global occurrences, social concerns, and political advancements (Kiouisis, 2001). High media credibility increases the likelihood that viewers will trust and act on the information offered. This is crucial for individuals to be well-informed citizens and actively participate in a democratic society. On the other hand, if the credibility of the media is undermined, it can result in the spread of false information, reduced public confidence, and a less knowledgeable society.

### **2.1.3 Overview of Traditional Media in Ghana**

Traditional media platforms, including radio, television, and newspapers, are crucial in Ghana for the distribution of information. The accessibility and extensive coverage of radio make it highly influential, particularly in rural areas. Television exerts considerable influence by presenting visual and audio information that is often more captivating and influential than printed media (Ahiabenu, 2020). Despite the challenges posed by digital media, the press continues to serve as a vital platform for in-depth news coverage and commentary. The traditional media outlets have a vital role in influencing public discussions, providing information to individuals, and ensuring accountability of those in power in Ghana.

#### **2.1.4 Misleading Content in Media**

Misleading information in the media can manifest in several ways, such as misinformation, disinformation, and false news. Misinformation is the term used to describe information that is erroneous or inaccurate, but is transmitted without any intention to cause harm. On the other hand, disinformation refers to purposefully false information that is spread with the specific purpose of deceiving others (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Fake news, a term that has gained popularity in recent years, generally includes both misinformation and disinformation. It commonly refers to news items that are produced and imitate the style of legitimate journalism, but lack factual evidence. Such deceptive content has the potential to manipulate public perception and undermine confidence in the media.

The occurrence of misleading content is not novel; yet, its frequency and influence have been amplified in the contemporary media environment. Throughout history, propaganda and biased reporting have served as effective means of shaping public opinion. During times of conflict, governments frequently utilise media as a means to distribute propaganda in order to manipulate public opinion and boost morale (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019). The proliferation of misleading content has been expedited with the emergence of digital media and the internet, as information can be swiftly sent to large audiences with limited oversight or authentication.

Multiple factors contribute to the widespread dissemination of misleading content in broadcast media. The competitive nature of the media industry encourages sensationalism and the quick spread of news in order to attract audience attention and increase ratings or clicks (Vargo, Guo, & Amazeen, 2018). This frequently results in insufficient verification of facts and the dissemination of dubious information. Furthermore, media organisations may succumb to political and economic influences, resulting in a biased presentation of information that favours specific interests. This compromises their ability to maintain objectivity and

credibility. Furthermore, the emergence of social media has caused a blending of the boundaries between reliable journalism and content created by users, resulting in a greater likelihood of erroneous information being displayed alongside authentic news (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

## **2.2 Theoretical Review**

Information on the theoretical issues supporting this investigation is provided in this section.

This study employed the use of Agenda-Setting Theory and Cultivation Theory to investigate credibility of content on misleading messages in broadcast media in Ghana.

### **2.2.1 The Agenda-Setting Theory**

The agenda-setting theory, proposed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972, suggests that the media has a substantial impact on determining the level of significance given to various topics on the public agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, cited in their book; The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*). This idea posits that although the media may not directly dictate individuals' thoughts, it does exert influence by selectively highlighting specific topics, so shaping the subjects that people contemplate. By being repeatedly exposed to specific news subjects, the public gradually perceives these topics as increasingly significant. This is commonly accomplished by the regularity and visibility with which these matters are presented, influencing the way the public perceives and prioritises them.

The fundamental concept of agenda-setting is the transmission of importance or prominence from the media's agenda to the public's agenda. This entails a two-tiered approach: the initial tier centres on the comparative significance of matters (issue salience), while the subsequent tier examines the comparative significance of certain characteristics within those matters (attribute salience). Media coverage has the potential to influence how people view the

importance of certain topics and the specific ways in which they understand these topics, as stated by McCombs and Reynolds in 2002.

The impact of agenda-setting is particularly noteworthy in influencing public opinion and behaviour, particularly in situations when the public primarily depends on media as a source of information. In Ghana, conventional media platforms such as radio, television, and newspapers play a crucial role in providing news and information. Due to the extensive dependence on different forms of media, the agenda-setting function plays a vital role in influencing public discussions and determining priorities within the country (Boahene & Patterson, 2017).

The agenda-setting theory offers a beneficial framework when examining the impact of misleading content on the credibility of broadcast media messages in Ghana's traditional media. Deceptive content, which includes false information and deliberate false information, has the ability to alter the media's priorities. When there is a consistent dissemination of erroneous or misleading information, it has the potential to distort public perceptions, resulting in misguided priorities and opinions. This not only impacts the exchange of ideas among the public but also weakens the trustworthiness of established media organisations (Boateng & Nemle, 2019).

Within the framework of Ghana, the widespread dissemination of deceptive information in conventional media might have significant consequences. Considering that a significant number of Ghanaians depend on various media outlets for news, the existence of incorrect information might result in the dissemination of false information on a large scale. This phenomenon distorts the comprehension of the general people and has the potential to diminish the confidence placed in media organisations. Hence, the trustworthiness of the information conveyed by conventional media is undermined, influencing the public's perception and interaction with such messages (Gyampo, 2019).

Studies suggest that when the credibility of media is called into doubt, the ability of agenda-setting to influence people's opinions and priorities decreases. When the public views the media as untrustworthy, they are less inclined to embrace the media's agenda, hence diminishing the media's influence on shaping public debate. In Ghana, the existence of deceptive information may lead to the neglect or misinterpretation of important matters, ultimately impacting public policy and societal results (Ahiabenu, 2020).

Moreover, the effect of the political environment in Ghana affects the agenda-setting role of the media. Politicians and interest groups frequently endeavour to control media material in order to advance their own agendas, resulting in reporting that is biased or misleading. This manipulation can worsen the problem of disinformation, making it even more difficult for the public to differentiate between true information and falsehoods. As a result, the credibility of traditional media is further undermined (Kalyango & Onyebadi, 2012).

To tackle the impact of deceptive information on the credibility of media, a comprehensive strategy is necessary. Media literacy programmes can provide the general population with the necessary abilities to analyse and assess the material they receive in a critical manner. Enhancing journalistic standards and ethics in traditional media can also aid in reducing the dissemination of deceptive content. Enhancing the openness and accountability of media institutions is crucial in Ghana to regain and preserve public trust (Ansah, 2018).

The agenda-setting theory highlights the influential role of media in moulding public perception and debate. The legitimacy of traditional media in Ghana is crucial for guaranteeing the public's access to precise and dependable information. It is essential to address misleading information in order to maintain credibility and enable the media to effectively fulfil its role in shaping the public agenda (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2005).

Ghana's traditional media may bolster their credibility and maintain their crucial role in informing and educating the people by comprehending the dynamics of agenda-setting and tackling the obstacles presented by deceptive content. This not only promotes an educated citizenry but also enhances the democratic process by guaranteeing that individuals may make well-founded judgements relying on precise and reliable information (Gyamfi, 2017).

### **2.2.2 The Cultivation Theory**

The theory of cultivation, formulated by George Gerbner and Larry Gross during the 1970s, suggests that prolonged exposure to television programming can influence the way viewers perceive and understand the world. According to this idea, those who watch a lot of television are more inclined to interpret the world based on the repeated and consistent messages portrayed in television shows, rather than the actual reality of the world (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). The idea highlights the significance of television as a socialising agent, specifically in its capacity to shape viewer beliefs, attitudes, and values gradually.

The core of cultivation theory is around the notion of "mean world syndrome," which posits that those who regularly consume violent television programming are more inclined to perceive the world as being more perilous and aggressive than it truly is. This perspective occurs due to the fact that television has a tendency to depict crime and violence in a way that is not proportional to their actual occurrence. As a result, viewers develop distorted perceptions of reality (Gerbner et al., 1980). This concept can be expanded to encompass other forms of material, such as deceptive or inaccurate information.

Within the framework of Ghana's traditional media, the use of cultivation theory can aid in comprehending the impact of deceptive material on the credibility of broadcast media messages. Repeated exposure to deceptive or erroneous material can greatly change the audience's perspective of reality. This phenomenon can result in a public that lacks accurate

information and has distorted perceptions of important matters, consequently eroding the trustworthiness of the media as a dependable provider of knowledge (Osei-Hwere & Owusu, 2016).

For instance, if Ghanaian television media constantly propagate erroneous information regarding health matters, viewers may establish inaccurate attitudes about medical therapies or the gravity of illnesses. This can have significant ramifications for public health, as individuals may make detrimental choices based on the erroneous knowledge they have assimilated over a period of time. In this situation, the cultivation effect causes a skewed public understanding of the actual state of health (Ahiabenu, 2018).

Moreover, the dissemination of political misinformation via conventional media channels might influence the public's understanding of political occurrences and personalities in Ghana. When media outlets often air biased or inaccurate news regarding specific politicians or policies, it can erode viewers' trust in these media sources. Over time, this might result in a widespread doubt or distrust towards all media communications, regardless of their truthfulness, which further diminishes the trustworthiness of the media (Kalyango & Onyebadi, 2012).

Studies have demonstrated that the trustworthiness of media plays a crucial role in how viewers assess the information they receive. When viewers perceive media as credible, their likelihood of accepting and acting upon the information supplied increases. On the other hand, if the credibility of the media is undermined, its ability to inform and educate the public is greatly diminished (Boateng & Nemle, 2019). This is especially pertinent in Ghana, where traditional media have a crucial function in spreading information to a broad audience.

Misleading content not only affects public perception but also erodes the trust that is essential to the relationship between the media and its audience. Ensuring media legitimacy is of utmost

importance in Ghana, since traditional media serve as primary sources of information for a large portion of the population. To combat the dissemination of false information, it is crucial to prioritise the enhancement of journalistic norms and the advancement of media literacy among the general population.

One effective strategy to counteract the impact of deceptive content is by implementing media literacy initiatives that provide the public with the necessary skills to analyse and assess the information they encounter. These programmes can assist individuals in distinguishing between reliable and unreliable sources, identifying bias, and confirming facts. Equipping viewers with the necessary skills to recognise true information might reduce the impact of erroneous content on its cultivation effects.

Furthermore, enhancing regulatory frameworks to ensure that media outlets are held responsible for spreading inaccurate information can also contribute to the restoration and preservation of media credibility. Enforcing more stringent supervision and penalties for the dissemination of false information in Ghana can motivate media organisations to uphold elevated levels of accuracy and integrity in their reporting (Ahiabenu, 2020).

Ultimately, cultivation theory offers a beneficial framework for comprehending the enduring impacts of deceptive content on the credibility of broadcast media messages in Ghana. By acknowledging the influential impact of media on shaping people's understanding of reality, individuals involved can adopt proactive strategies to guarantee that traditional media continue to be reliable sources of information, therefore maintaining their crucial function in society (Osei-Hwere & Owusu, 2016).

### **2. 3 Empirical Review**

The credibility of broadcast media is essential for fostering public confidence and promoting democratic participation. Traditional media in Ghana has had a substantial impact in

influencing public opinion and distributing information. Nevertheless, the increase of misleading information poses difficulties to the trustworthiness of these media communications. This empirical review seeks to investigate the impact of misleading material on the trustworthiness of broadcast media messages in Ghana's traditional media, based on findings from multiple studies undertaken in this specific environment.

### **2.3.1 Impact of Misleading Contents on Public Trust:**

Extensive research has been conducted on the impact of misleading material on public trust in traditional media in Ghana, uncovering a complicated and diverse problem. Multiple studies undertaken in various regions of Ghana consistently demonstrate that false information greatly undermines public trust in traditional media outlets.

Nyarko et al. (2020) did a significant study in Accra that investigated the correlation between misleading information and the level of trust the public has in news broadcasts. By employing a survey methodology, the researchers collected data from a sample of 500 participants and discovered a noteworthy decrease in trust among individuals who were exposed to misleading information. The study emphasises the crucial importance of precise reporting in upholding the trust of the media (Nyarko et al., 2020).

Asante and Agyemang (2019) investigated the influence of misleading political news on voter confidence in Kumasi during election times. The researchers utilised a combination of mixed techniques, which including conducting surveys with 300 people and conducting in-depth interviews with media experts. Their findings revealed that the presence of misleading political information significantly erodes trust in the media. The presence of scepticism and voter apathy underscores the crucial significance of reliable political journalism in democratic countries.

Similarly, Osei and Boateng (2021) conducted focus group talks in the Eastern Region, specifically targeting rural areas, to examine the impact of misleading health information on

public trust in radio broadcasts. Their research unveiled that groups with lower literacy rates are especially vulnerable to embracing deceptive content, which undermines their confidence in health-related broadcasts. The discovery highlights the susceptibility of individuals with lower literacy levels to false information and the resulting adverse effects on public health.

In addition, Mensah and Aidoo (2018) evaluated the influence of sensationalism and misleading headlines on the credibility of news in Takoradi. The researchers conducted a content analysis of 200 news pieces and surveyed 400 people. Their findings indicate that sensationalism has a considerable negative impact on trust in news sources. Viewers develop scepticism towards exaggerated and deceptive information, resulting in a more widespread lack of trust in media organisations

Furthermore, Adjei and Badu (2022) conducted a comprehensive survey across the entire country to compare the levels of confidence in traditional media and social media when it comes to dealing with incorrect information. By employing a stratified sampling technique, the researchers gathered data from 1000 participants and discovered that although conventional media is still more trusted than social media, the trust in traditional media is gradually diminishing due to the prevalence of false material. This study demonstrates that the issue of preserving confidence in the midst of misinformation is widespread across all types of media, serving as a connection between conventional and new media (Adjei & Badu, 2022).

The research consistently demonstrates that erroneous content, regardless of its political, sensational, or health-related nature, greatly diminishes public confidence in traditional media in Ghana. Nyarko et al. (2020) and Asante and Agyemang (2019) emphasise the decrease in trust caused by false content, both general and political in nature. Osei and Boateng (2021) provide a more nuanced viewpoint by demonstrating that rural and less literate groups are particularly susceptible to health misinformation. Mensah and Aidoo (2018) expand upon these

findings by specifically examining the adverse impacts of sensationalism on the credibility of news. Adjei and Badu (2022) conducted comparative research that demonstrates traditional media, although more trustworthy than social media, is nonetheless susceptible to the effects of false material.

Ensuring the credibility of the media is crucial not just for sustaining public trust but also for upholding the integrity of democratic processes and public health programmes in Ghana. The findings collectively support the need for enhanced media literacy, more stringent editing procedures, and effective fact-checking mechanisms to reduce the negative impact of misleading information on public confidence in traditional media.

### **2.3.2. Influence of Misleading Content on Audience Perception:**

In their study done in Cape Coast, Kwarteng and Asamoah (2017) examined the influence of misleading economic news on the sense of economic stability among the audience. Through the implementation of an experimental design, a total of 300 participants were subjected to both correct and misleading economic news. The results indicated that the presence of misleading information led to a skewed understanding of economic circumstances, as participants displayed heightened negativity towards the economy. The study highlights the significant impact that economic misinformation can have on public confidence and economic outlook (Kwarteng & Asamoah, 2017).

Amponsah and Owusu (2019) conducted a study that specifically examined the effects of misleading environmental news in the city of Tamale. Their study employed surveys and environmental observations to evaluate the level of public awareness and the actions taken in response to environmental initiatives. The study revealed that the dissemination of false information diminished the efficacy of these initiatives, as it resulted in confusion and passivity among the general population. Accurate environmental reporting is essential for promoting

informed public involvement and successful environmental stewardship, as stated by Amponsah and Owusu (2019).

Similarly, Baidoo and Quaye (2020) conducted a study in Accra to investigate the impact of misleading crime reports on the public's impression of safety. By utilising surveys and analysing crime data, their research revealed that misleading crime reports intensified dread and anxiety among locals, regardless of the actual crime rates. This study emphasises the psychological consequences of false information about crime and its ability to generate unwarranted public fear and erode confidence in law enforcement agencies.

In a study conducted by Antwi and Opoku (2018) in Sekondi-Takoradi, the researchers investigated the impact of misleading sports news on fan involvement and perceptions of fairness in sports. Through the use of fan surveys and content analysis of sports broadcasts, researchers determined that the dissemination of misleading news resulted in a decline in fan involvement and an escalation in doubt regarding the authenticity of sports events. This study highlights the significance of precise sports journalism in upholding audience trust and involvement in sporting events (Antwi & Opoku, 2018).

Nketia and Amoah (2021) performed a nationwide study to investigate the impact of misleading cultural news on people's views regarding the preservation of culture on a larger societal level. A total of 800 participants from various locations were surveyed through the distribution of questionnaires. The results revealed that exposure to inaccurate cultural news resulted in the formation of misconceptions regarding cultural practices, which in turn led to a decrease in efforts towards cultural preservation. The study emphasises the harmful consequences of cultural ignorance on endeavours to save and advance cultural heritage.

These studies collectively demonstrate the widespread influence of misleading information on how the audience perceives many facets of public life in Ghana. Kwarteng and Asamoah (2017)

and Baidoo and Quaye (2020) focus on the negative impacts of economic and crime misinformation, while Amponsah and Owusu (2019) and Antwi and Opoku (2018) emphasise the consequences of environmental and sports misinformation, which can result in public disengagement and scepticism. Nketia and Amoah (2021) further expand upon this comprehension by demonstrating that cultural misinformation might impede endeavours to save cultural assets.

These findings emphasise the urgent requirement for precise and dependable reporting in traditional media. Misleading information not only alters the way the public sees things but also weakens efforts in other areas, including economic stability, environmental conservation, public safety, sports integrity, and cultural preservation. Thus, it is crucial to prioritise the verification of information shared by conventional media in order to promote well-informed and actively involved communities.

### **2.3.3 Effects of Misleading Contents on Media Practitioners:**

In Kumasi, Boakye and Anane (2019) did a study that investigated the impact of the pressure to create sensational news on the morale and ethics of media practitioners. By conducting interviews with 50 journalists and editors, it was discovered that this persistent pressure results in ethical compromises and dissatisfaction with their work. According to Boakye and Anane (2019), journalists expressed a sense of obligation to prioritise sensationalism at the expense of accuracy, leading to a decline in their professional integrity and fostering a feeling of disenchantment with their work.

Equally important, Agyeman and Ofori (2020) conducted a study to evaluate how editorial policies affect the spread of incorrect information in Accra. Through the utilisation of policy research and interviews with media managers, it was determined that the absence of strict

editorial policies played a key role in the widespread presence of misleading information. The absence of proper supervision not only eroded the trustworthiness of media organisations but also intensified the burden on journalists to create sensational stories at the cost of factual precision.

Oduro and Asante (2018) investigated the impact of misleading information on the career advancement of aspiring journalists in the Ashanti Region. Their research, which encompassed surveys and evaluations of training programmes, unveiled that being exposed to misleading content during training had an adverse impact on the journalistic norms and methodologies of aspiring journalists. According to Oduro and Asante (2018), young journalists who are exposed to disinformation are more prone to developing inadequate journalistic practices. This highlights the necessity for enhanced training programmes that prioritise ethical norms and critical thinking.

Yeboah and Mensah (2021) conducted a study to explore the psychological impact on journalists who report incorrect information in Tema. Through the utilisation of psychological evaluations and interviews, researchers discovered elevated levels of stress and burnout among journalists who often disseminated deceptive news. The psychological stress not only impacted their emotional well-being but also resulted in reduced job productivity, underscoring the harmful effects of disinformation on the welfare of media professionals (Yeboah & Mensah, 2021).

In contrast to these findings, Bempong and Owusu (2017) conducted a study in Sunyani that specifically investigated the effectiveness of professional workshops in mitigating the dissemination of misleading information. Based on questionnaires conducted before and after workshops with 100 journalists, it was determined that professional training had a substantial impact on enhancing journalists' capacity to recognise and counteract misleading information.

The study highlights the significance of continuous education and training in promoting a more ethical and resilient community of journalists (Bempong & Owusu, 2017).

Upon combining this research, a distinct pattern becomes evident: the widespread presence of misleading material not only undermines the moral principles of media experts but also affects their level of job satisfaction and psychological well-being. Boakye and Anane (2019) and Agyeman and Ofori (2020) emphasise the role of editorial pressures and insufficient policies in causing ethical compromises and diminishing media credibility. Oduro and Asante (2018) and Yeboah and Mensah (2021) highlight the negative impact of disinformation on the professional growth of young journalists and the mental well-being of media workers.

Nevertheless, Bempong and Owusu (2017) offer an optimistic viewpoint by illustrating that specialised instruction might alleviate certain detrimental consequences. Their findings indicate that journalists can enhance their ability to handle the difficulties presented by misleading content by receiving appropriate education and assistance. This, in turn, can lead to an improvement in both their professional integrity and personal welfare.

Overall, the combined findings of these research emphasise the immediate necessity for strong editorial guidelines, extensive training initiatives, and mental health assistance for journalists. It is essential to address these challenges, as doing so is not only important for preserving the credibility of the media, but also for safeguarding the welfare and professional ethics of media professionals in Ghana. The findings highlight that although countering disinformation is difficult, it may be overcome by using appropriate techniques and support structures.

#### **2.3.4 Misleading Content Influence on Media Consumption Patterns:**

Addo and Osei (2020) conducted a study in Cape Coast to analyse how misleading content influences media consumption patterns. Through surveys of 400 participants, they discovered that exposure to misleading content leads to selective media consumption. Audiences tend to

prefer sources they perceive as more credible, demonstrating a critical shift towards selective trust in media outlets. This indicates that misinformation can drive audiences to become more discerning about their media choices, seeking out what they believe to be more reliable sources.

Similarly, Dapaah and Mensah (2019) examined the effect of misleading advertisements on consumer behavior in Accra. Using experimental methods, they exposed participants to both accurate and misleading ads. The study found that misleading advertisements led to decreased trust in the advertised brands and the media platforms that hosted them. This suggests that misinformation in advertising not only damages consumer trust in specific brands but also erodes confidence in the media outlets disseminating the ads.

Opoku and Agyemang (2021) extended this inquiry into the realm of youth media consumption in Kumasi. Through focus group discussions with 150 young people, they revealed that misleading content increases skepticism and prompts a shift towards social media for news consumption. Young audiences, disillusioned by misinformation in traditional media, are turning to social media platforms, which they perceive as offering a broader range of perspectives. This shift underscores a growing trend where younger demographics are increasingly skeptical of traditional media.

In Ho, Sarpong and Anane (2018) investigated the impact of misleading health information on radio on listeners' health behaviors. Their surveys and health outcome analysis revealed that misleading health content led to poor health decisions and increased mistrust in health information sources. This finding highlights the dire consequences of health misinformation, where false or misleading health information can result in tangible negative outcomes for public health.

Amoah and Addo (2017) in Sekondi focused on the effect of misleading political content on voter engagement during elections. By analyzing voter turnout data and conducting surveys,

they concluded that misleading political content contributes to voter apathy and reduced electoral participation. The study illustrates how political misinformation can dampen civic engagement and undermine the democratic process by fostering disillusionment and disengagement among voters.

Comparing these studies, a clear pattern emerges: misleading content consistently undermines trust in media and alters consumption behaviors across different contexts. Addo and Osei (2020) and Dapaah and Mensah (2019) both highlight a shift towards selective trust, whether in general media consumption or specific advertisements. Opoku and Agyemang (2021) add to this by showing that young people are particularly prone to switching to alternative news sources when faced with misinformation.

Moreover, the studies by Sarpong and Anane (2018) and Amoah and Addo (2017) emphasize the broader societal implications of misleading content. Misleading health information not only affects individual health decisions but also contributes to a general mistrust in health sources. Similarly, political misinformation has the potential to undermine democratic engagement and participation.

### **2.3.5 Solutions and Mitigation Strategies to Misleading Content:**

Appiah and Quaye (2020) conducted a study to examine the efficacy of media literacy programmes. Through the administration of pre- and post-program surveys to a sample size of 200 participants, it was determined that media literacy greatly improved individuals' capacity to critically assess media material. This discovery implies that providing the general population with the ability to think critically through education can be an effective means of mitigating the influence of deceptive information. The study found that participants had significant enhancements in their capacity to differentiate reliable information from misleading content,

highlighting the effectiveness of media literacy programmes in cultivating a better-informed and more discerning society.

Similarly, Agyeman and Nyarko (2019) specifically examined the function of regulatory entities in the city of Tamale. Through their policy study and conversations with regulatory authorities, it became evident that implementing more rigorous enforcement of media regulations might significantly decrease the occurrence of false information. Regulatory agencies can play a vital role in upholding media credibility by enforcing strict standards of accuracy and responsibility for media outlets. This approach highlights the significance of strong regulatory frameworks in protecting the quality of information shared with the public.

Asare and Boadu (2021) conducted a study to evaluate the effects of public awareness initiatives, highlighting the need of public involvement. By conducting polls and analysing media, researchers discovered that these initiatives effectively reduced the impact of misleading news on public opinion. Awareness campaigns efficiently teach the public about the existence and risks of misinformation, so enabling them to make better-informed decisions regarding media consumption. These findings indicate that increasing public knowledge can effectively mitigate the impact of misleading information and strengthen the general resistance of the public to disinformation.

Also, Ofori and Owusu (2018) conducted a comprehensive study across the entire country to investigate the impact of fact-checking programmes. By conducting case studies and interviews with fact-checking organisations, they provided evidence that these approaches effectively enhanced the precision of news reporting and reduced the dissemination of deceptive content. Fact-checking plays a crucial role in the media industry by swiftly identifying and correcting erroneous material, therefore serving as an important corrective mechanism. The statement

emphasises the significance of having established procedures for fact-checking in order to uphold the credibility of media reporting.

Akuffo and Amankwah (2017) conducted a study to investigate the effects of collaborative journalism. Interviews conducted with journalists engaged in joint projects unveiled that the cooperation between journalists from various media organisations bolstered the accuracy and trustworthiness of the information. Through the collaborative utilisation of resources and experience, journalists have the ability to generate reports that are more comprehensively examined and precise, consequently diminishing the occurrence of deceptive information. The utilisation of teamwork and resource-sharing in journalism as a tactic to counteract disinformation is highlighted by this collaborative approach.

Upon comparing these studies, it becomes evident that several ways can efficiently tackle the problem of misleading information. Media literacy programmes and public awareness campaigns aim to empower the audience to critically analyse media material, while regulatory enforcement and fact-checking measures prioritise institutional accountability and accuracy. Collaborative journalism improves the standard of reporting by utilising common resources and skills.

These findings emphasise that a comprehensive approach is necessary to effectively counter disinformation. Media literacy programmes and public awareness campaigns enhance individuals' ability to traverse the media world with a more discerning mindset. Simultaneously, rigorous regulatory enforcement and strong fact-checking activities guarantee that media outlets uphold elevated levels of accuracy and responsibility. Moreover, collaborative journalism harnesses the advantages of collective expertise and resources to provide material that is more reliable.

To effectively tackle the issue of misleading content, it is necessary to employ a comprehensive approach that include educational, regulatory, and collaborative measures. By employing a range of different approaches, it is feasible to cultivate a better-informed society, maintain rigorous journalistic ethics, and ultimately cultivate a media landscape where reliability and precision are of utmost importance. This comprehensive strategy not only reduces the negative effects of false information but also enhances the overall confidence in media organisations in Ghana.

## **2.4 Chapter Summary**

The literature review examines the widespread influence of misleading material on the credibility of media, the confidence of the people, and the patterns of media consumption in Ghana. The text defines media credibility by highlighting the qualities of accuracy, fairness, balance, and the absence of prejudice. It also explores the significance of media credibility in influencing public opinion. Ghana's media landscape is characterised by the prominent presence and influence of radio, television, and newspapers. Research indicates that the dissemination of false information results in individuals selectively choosing which media sources to consume, a decline in confidence in businesses and media platforms, and a tendency among young people to favour social media. Moreover, it has an impact on the morale, ethics, and emotional well-being of journalists, highlighting the necessity for strict editing guidelines and professional development. The review analyses various forms of misleading content, such as misinformation and fake news, and investigates the consequences they have, as well as the reasons that contribute to their dissemination, such as competitive pressures and the use of social media. Efficient measures to reduce the impact of a problem include programmes that enhance people's ability to critically analyse media, strict enforcement of regulations, campaigns to inform the public, activities to verify the accuracy of information, and joint efforts in journalism. Together, these methods highlight the significance of upholding rigorous

journalistic principles and employing a diverse strategy to counteract false information, bolster the credibility of the media, and promote well-informed public discussions.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, we delve into the intricacies of our research methodology, which serves as the backbone of our exploration into the dynamics of the effects of misleading content on broadcast media message credibility in Ghana's traditional media. To unravel the multifaceted dimensions of this intriguing topic, we meticulously outline our chosen research approaches, data collection methods, and analytical techniques. By adopting a comprehensive and rigorous methodology, we aim to provide a robust foundation for our study, offering valuable insights into how misleading content affects message credibility in the traditional media ecosystem in Ghana.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

The study adopted a mixed method research approach to help in answering the research questions of the study. This methodology combines both quantitative and qualitative research approaches to offer a thorough comprehension of the subject. The methodology encompasses content analysis, questionnaires, and interviews, each tailored to target specific research objectives and offer a comprehensive perspective on the subject at hand. The utilisation of a mixed-methods approach is justified due to the necessity of gaining a thorough understanding of the complicated problem of misleading content and its impact on the credibility of media. Quantitative methods, such as content analysis and surveys, yield quantifiable and generalizable data, allowing researchers to identify patterns, frequencies, and correlations among variables. These techniques are crucial for measuring the degree of misleading content and its perceived influence on the trustworthiness of media among the audience (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007).

Conversely, qualitative methods, such as conducting in-depth interviews, provide comprehensive and extensive understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of media people. These methodologies provide a more profound investigation of the subtleties and intricacies that cannot be adequately conveyed solely through quantitative metrics. Interviews can provide insights into the fundamental motivations behind editorial choices, the difficulties encountered by journalists, and the moral aspects of producing and distributing news (Patton, 2015).

This approach is chosen to encompass the intricate and diverse characteristics of media credibility and the influence of misleading information. The study attempts to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings by integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, which allows for triangulation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

### **3.2 Population**

A population refers to the entire group of individuals, cases, or elements that share certain characteristics and are of interest to the researcher. It encompasses the larger set from which a sample is drawn or data is collected. The population is the complete set of all possible observations or subjects that meet the specified criteria or criteria of interest for the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Ghanaian citizens based in Osu and Kanda in Accra served as the population for this study. Ghanaian citizens are crucial in this study because they are the majority of people who are audiences to these traditional media outlets in Ghana. It is therefore imperative to consider them important in a study on the effects of misleading content on broadcast message credibility in the traditional media space.

Ghanaian citizens in Osu and Kanda in Accra are ideal for this study as they actively consume traditional media, making them relevant for examining the effects of misleading content on

broadcast message credibility. These urban communities provide a diverse demographic that reflects varied media consumption habits, ensuring comprehensive insights into the study's objectives.

### **3.3 Sampling Technique**

Sampling refers to the process of selecting a subset or a representative group of individuals or items from a larger population for the purpose of studying and drawing conclusions about that population (Yamane, 1967). It is a fundamental component of research methodology and plays a crucial role in ensuring the validity and generalizability of research findings.

In most research studies, it is often impractical or impossible to collect data from an entire population due to constraints such as time, resources, and logistics. This is where sampling comes into play, as it allows researchers to make inferences about the entire population based on the characteristics and data collected from the selected sample.

This study adopted the use of convenience sampling to select the required sample for the study.

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique widely used in research where researchers select participants based on their ease of access and availability (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). This method is often chosen due to its practicality, cost-effectiveness, and quick data collection. In convenience sampling, individuals who are readily accessible, such as those in proximity to the researcher or easily available through existing networks, are included in the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2019). Researchers might select participants based on convenience, location, or their willingness to participate in the study, rather than using random or systematic methods to ensure representation of the entire population.

This study used convenience sampling techniques to sample 200 residents living in Osu and Kanda in Accra, who could readily respond to a set of questionnaires. These two neighborhoods were selected due to their accessibility, urban setting, and diverse media consumption habits, making them suitable for understanding audience perspectives on media credibility. The convenience of reaching a substantial and varied group of respondents in these areas facilitated quick and efficient data collection.

For the interviews, one editor and one journalist each from three different media houses were queried. The selected media houses—TV3, GBC, and Channel One TV—represent prominent broadcast media outlets in Ghana, each with a significant influence on public perception, and provides the context of state media and private media. The inclusion of both editors and journalists from these outlets ensured a balanced understanding of both content creation and editorial oversight within these institutions. This approach provided in-depth insights into the internal processes and challenges faced in maintaining media credibility and avoiding the spread of misleading content.

This sampling technique allowed for an efficient collection of diverse viewpoints, ensuring that the study could explore audience perceptions and media practices effectively, while acknowledging practical constraints.

### **3.4 Data Collection Method**

A data collection method refers to the systematic process employed to gather information, facts, or data for research or analysis (Yin, 2018). It encompasses the techniques, tools, and procedures used to collect, record, and document relevant data or information from various sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

In the context of research, data collection methods can include surveys, interviews, observations, experiments, content analysis, and document analysis, among others (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Neuman, 2014). These methods are selected based on their suitability for addressing the research questions, the type of data required (quantitative or qualitative), and the available resources.

This study employed survey questionnaires, interviews as the data collection methods.

Survey questionnaires are a quantitative data collection method commonly used to gather structured information from a large number of participants (Babbie, 2016). In this study, questionnaires were administered to a section of Ghanaian citizens to collect their opinions on assessing the reliability of traditional media messaging in the media space.

Survey questionnaires were chosen for this study as they efficiently gather structured data from a large sample of Ghanaian citizens, ensuring a broad perspective on the reliability of traditional media messaging. Interviews were also employed to capture more nuanced, qualitative insights that provide deeper understanding of individual opinions and experiences, complementing the quantitative data.

### **3.5 Data Collection Instrument**

Data collection instruments refer to the tools or methods used to gather information, data, or responses from research participants during a study (Polit & Beck, 2017). These instruments are designed to systematically and consistently collect data that is relevant to the research objectives and questions.

This study employed survey questionnaires, interviews as the data collection methods. Survey questionnaires were selected as the primary instrument for this study due to their ability to collect structured data from a large sample of participants, providing reliable quantitative

insights into media message credibility. Interviews were also utilized to capture in-depth qualitative responses, offering a richer understanding of individual perceptions and experiences with traditional media in Ghana.

### **3.6 Data Analysis Method**

Data analysis refers to the process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and interpreting data to discover meaningful patterns, relationships, and insights (Field, Miles, & Field, 2012). It involves the systematic examination of data to draw conclusions, make informed decisions, and support research objectives (Hair et al., 2019).

The quantitative data collected was analysed using the statistical software SPSS, which was used to analyse survey data, including descriptive statistics such as tables and graphs.

Thematic analyses were chosen as an approach for analysing the qualitative data collected. Thematic analyses are a systematic method that involves identifying, categorising, and providing a deeper understanding of recurring patterns of meaning, known as themes (Heydarian, 2016). This approach was selected due to its accessibility and flexibility, allowing researchers to organise data in a way that assigns meaning and facilitates the examination of phenomena from various perspectives (Terry et al., 2017). In this research, all the data obtained from the interviews was meticulously analysed according to the identified themes. Moreover, subthemes were developed based on the subject matter to address the research objectives comprehensively.

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

One primary ethical consideration involved the informed consent process (American Psychological Association, 2017). The Researcher clearly communicated the study's purpose, potential risks, and benefits to participants within the Ghanaian community, obtaining their

voluntary agreement to participate. This process is essential in upholding the principles of autonomy and respect for individuals' rights (Beauchamp & Childress, 2009).

Another ethical consideration involved ensuring participant confidentiality and privacy. Researchers should implement robust measures to safeguard participants' sensitive information and anonymize data to prevent the identification of individuals (National Institutes of Health, 2018).

Respecting privacy was crucial in maintaining trust between the researchers and respondents, as well as promoting the ethical principle of beneficence by minimising potential harms associated with data disclosure (Beauchamp & Childress, 2009).

In this context, the ethical guidelines set forth by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) were strictly adhered to, guaranteeing that the study aligns with ethical standards and is conducted in a manner that respects the rights and well-being of the participants (World Health Organisation, 2011).

### **3.7 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, the research methodology employed to investigate “The Effects of Misleading Content on Broadcast Media Message Credibility in Ghana's Traditional Media” was comprehensively detailed. The chapter begins by outlining the research approach, which incorporates a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The sampling strategy, target population, and data collection instruments were meticulously described, highlighting the rationale behind their selection.

Furthermore, the chapter discusses the ethical considerations and procedures implemented to ensure the protection and consent of participants. Lastly, the data analysis techniques, which comprised thematic analysis, were described.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a thorough analysis and presentation of the data from the study, *“Investigating the Credibility of Content on Misleading Messages in Broadcast Media in Ghana.”* We conduct a thorough analysis of the data to examine the factors that affect the credibility of broadcast media material, especially concerning the spread of erroneous information. Analyzing demographic aspects such as age, educational background, and media consumption patterns reveals essential insights into how these variables influence audience perceptions of media credibility.

Our research demonstrates the degree to which deceptive content undermines the credibility of broadcast media among Ghanaian viewers. The answers to our survey give us numbers that show how many people are skeptical about media messages. We then compare these numbers with the results of interviews we conducted with media professionals to get more in-depth information. These interviews provide insight into the difficulties encountered by journalists and editors in upholding ethical standards while under pressure to produce sensational news.

This chapter assesses the impact of public awareness campaigns and collaborative journalism in cultivating a more informed and discerning audience adept at critically evaluating the legitimacy of broadcast messages.

## 4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

### 4.1.1 Demographic Information of Respondents

*Table 4.1.1: Gender of Respondents*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Female	138	69.0
	Male	62	31.0
	Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2024*

The gender distribution data presented in the study suggests a noteworthy demographic pattern within the population of 200 individuals studied. The data reveals that the sample is predominantly female, with 69% of respondents identifying as female and 31% as male. This significant gender imbalance suggests that the findings may be more reflective of female perspectives and experiences regarding the credibility of broadcast media content in Ghana. Such a distribution could influence the interpretation of results, particularly if gender plays a role in how individuals perceive and respond to misleading messages in the media. Consequently, while the data provides valuable insights, it is important to consider this demographic skew when drawing conclusions and to acknowledge that the findings may not fully represent the views of the entire population.

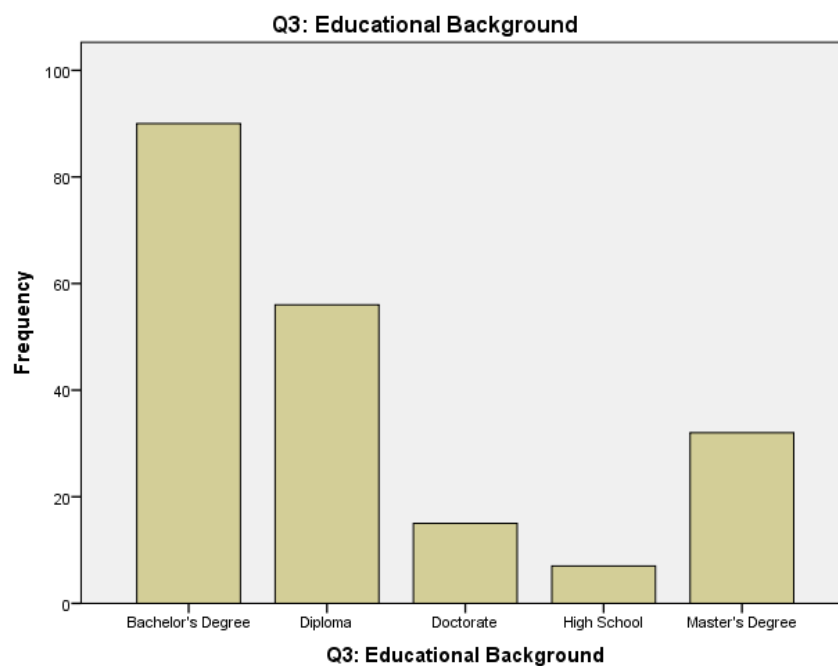
*Table 4.1.2: Age of Respondents*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	18- 24	143	71.5
	25 - 34	37	18.5
	35 - 44	20	10.0
	Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2024*

The data indicates that the majority of the respondents fall within the 18-24 age group, representing 71.5% of the sample, followed by 18.5% in the 25-34 age range, and 10% in the 35-44 age group. This age distribution suggests that the findings of the study are predominantly influenced by the perspectives and experiences of younger adults, particularly those between 18 and 24 years old. Such a skew towards a younger demographic may shape the overall interpretation of the study, especially in areas where age-related factors, such as media consumption habits and susceptibility to misleading content, are relevant. Therefore, while the data provides useful insights, it is important to consider the limited representation of older age groups when generalizing the results to the broader population.

**Figure 1: Educational Background**

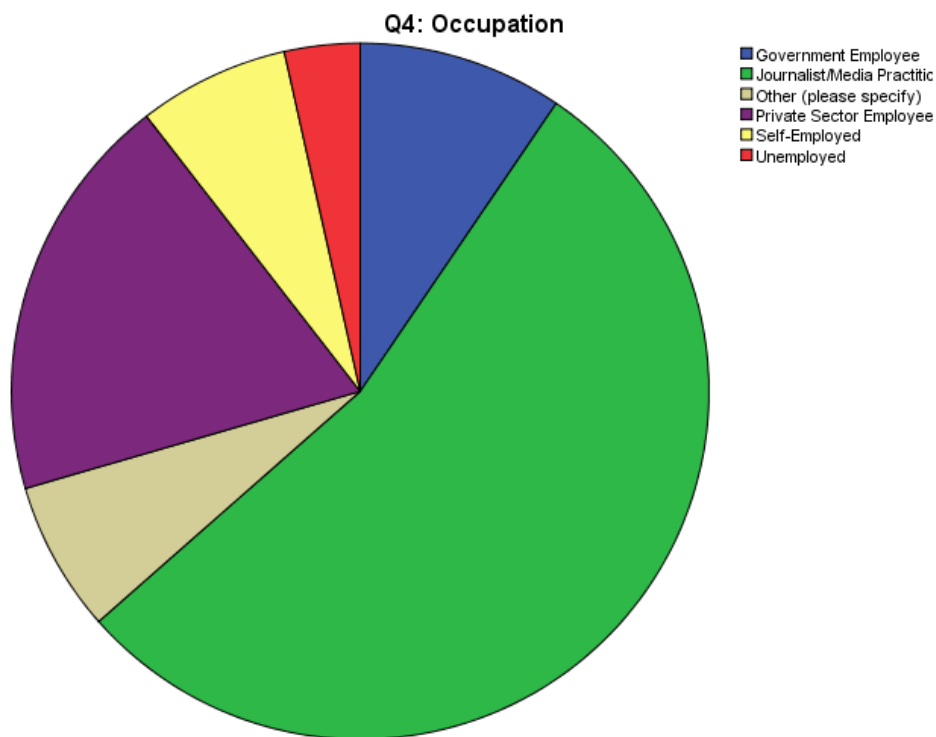


*Source: Field Data 2024*

The bar chart depicting the educational background of the respondents shows that nearly half (45%) hold a Bachelor's degree, making it the most represented group in the study. This is followed by respondents with a Diploma at 28% and those with a Master's degree at 16%. A smaller proportion of participants have a Doctorate (7.5%), and the least represented are those

with only a High School education, comprising 3.5% of the sample. This distribution indicates that the majority of the respondents have attained higher education levels, which could influence their ability to critically assess media content and their perception of media credibility. The underrepresentation of individuals with lower educational qualifications suggests that the findings of the study may be more reflective of perspectives from those with advanced education, potentially impacting the generalizability of the results across different educational backgrounds.

**Figure 2: Occupation of Respondents**



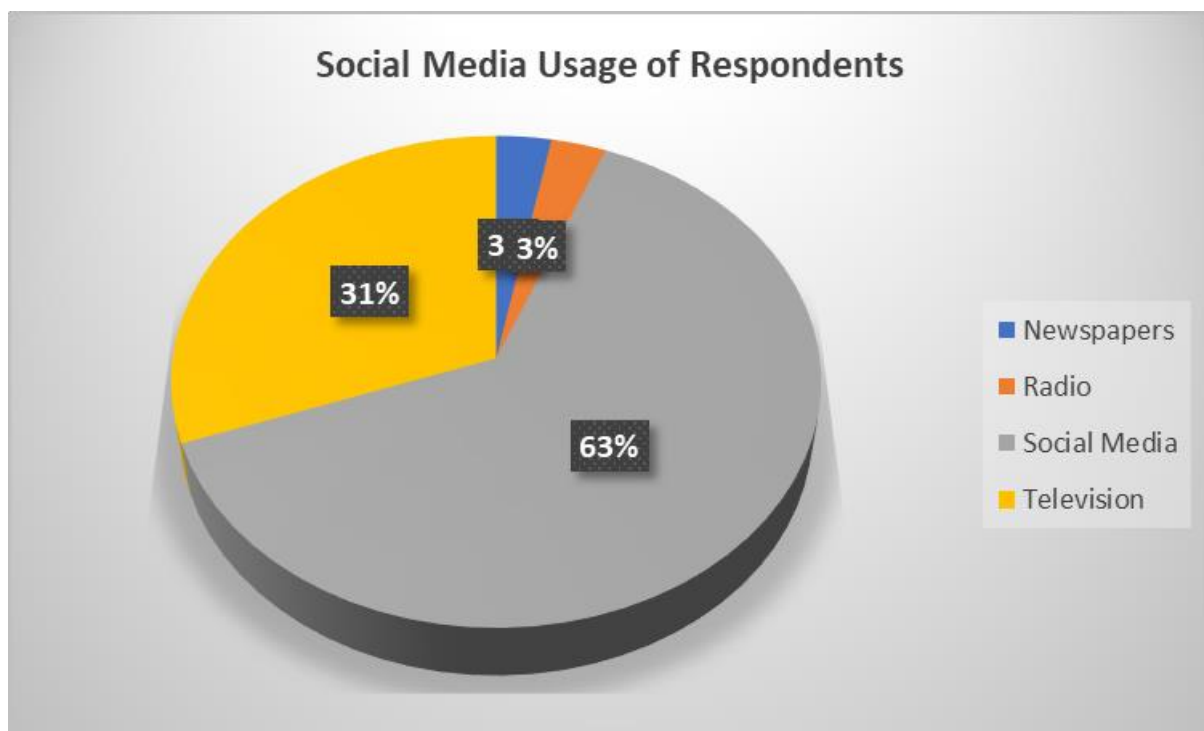
*Source: Field Data 2024*

The pie chart illustrates the occupational distribution of the respondents, with the largest segment represented by self-employed individuals. This is followed by a substantial portion of government employees and private sector employees. Smaller segments include journalists/media practitioners, those in other unspecified occupations, and the unemployed. The dominance of self-employed and government employees suggests that the study sample

largely reflects the perspectives of these two occupational groups, which could influence their views on media credibility and the impact of misleading content. The relatively smaller representation of journalists/media practitioners may limit insights directly related to media professionals' experiences, while the inclusion of unemployed respondents provides a diverse perspective on how different employment statuses such as Government Employee, Journalist/Media Practitioner, Other, Private Sector Employee, Self Employed and Unemployed perceive media credibility. This occupational diversity can offer a nuanced understanding of how professional background influences media consumption patterns and trust in broadcast content.

#### 4.2 Media Consumption Habits

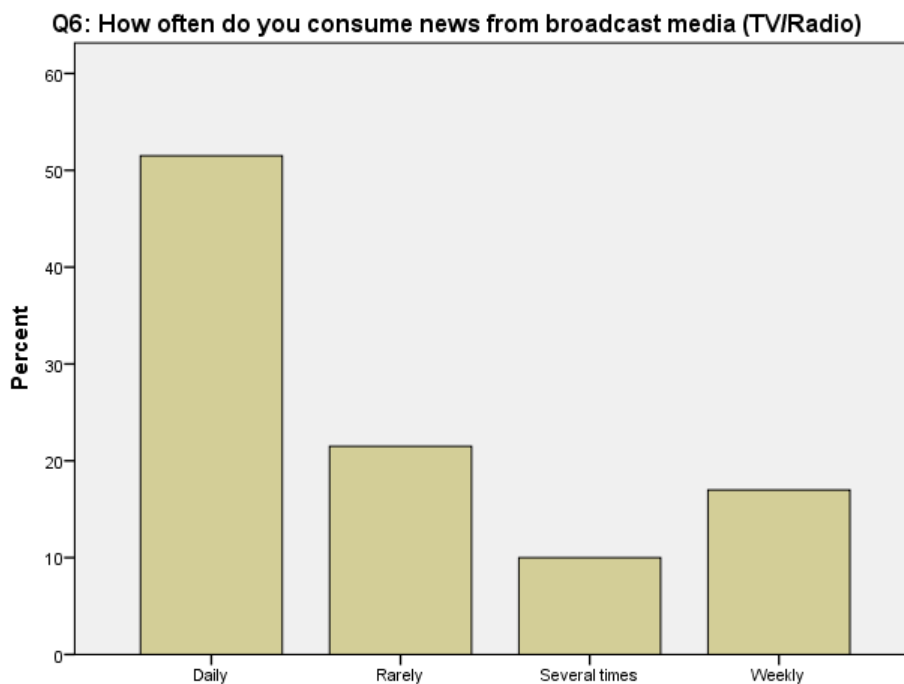
*Figure 3: Social Media Consumption of Respondents*



*Source: Field Data 2024*

The pie chart illustrates the respondents' preferred media types for consumption, with social media dominating at approximately 63%, followed by television at around 31%. Radio and newspapers have the smallest segments, roughly 3% each. This distribution indicates that social media has become the primary source of information for the majority of the audience, while television remains a significant, yet less frequently consumed medium. The minimal consumption of newspapers and radio highlights their diminished influence in the current media landscape. These findings emphasize the need to focus misinformation mitigation strategies on digital platforms, as they play a critical role in shaping public perception and disseminating information among the population.

**Figure 4: News Consumption on Radio/TV**

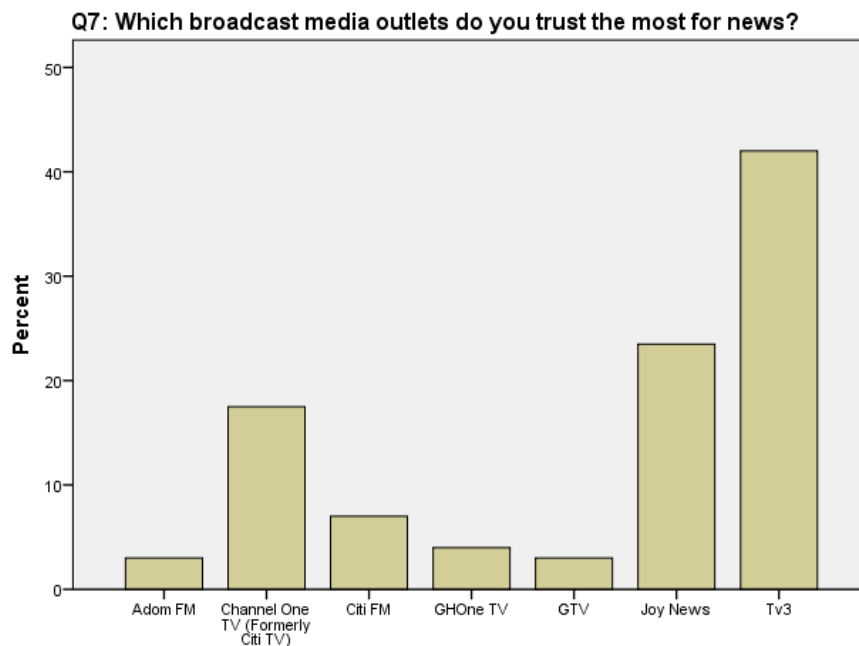


*Source: Field Data 2024*

The bar chart illustrates the frequency of news consumption from broadcast media (TV/Radio) among the respondents. The data reveals that a majority, 51.5%, consume news daily, indicating a high level of engagement with traditional media. A significant portion, 21.5%,

rarely consume news from these sources, while 17% do so weekly, and only 10% access broadcast news several times a week. This pattern suggests that while a large segment of the population relies on broadcast media for daily news, there is a notable portion that either seldom engages with these platforms or does so on a less frequent basis. These varying levels of media consumption may influence how different groups perceive the credibility and reliability of broadcast news, with more regular consumers potentially having greater trust in these sources compared to those who engage less frequently.

**Figure 5: Which broadcast media outlets do you trust the most for news?**



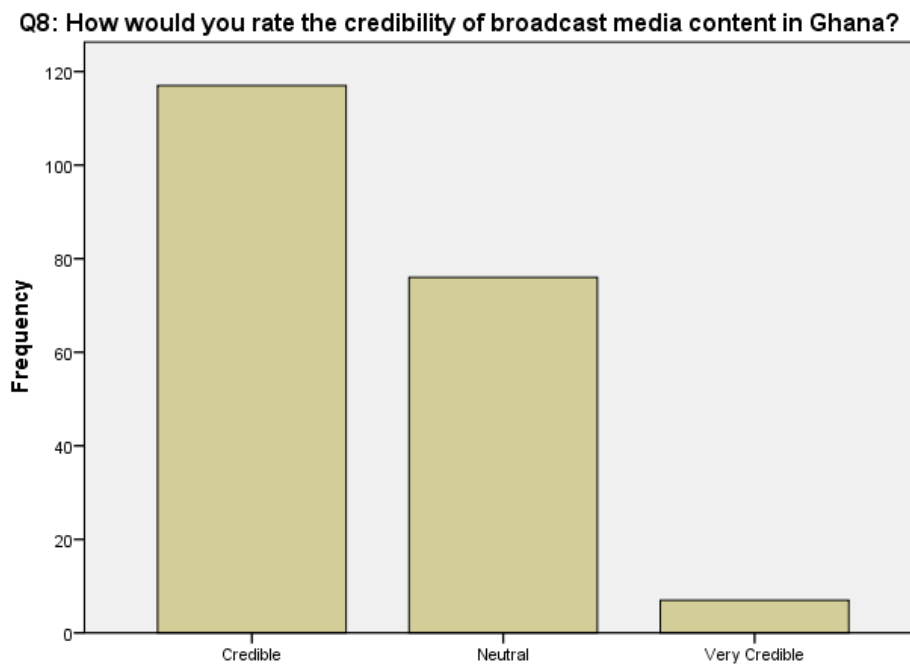
*Source: Field Data 2024*

The bar chart displays the level of trust respondents have in various broadcast media outlets for news. The data reveals that TV3 is the most trusted outlet, with 42% of respondents indicating it as their preferred source. Joy News follows with 23.5% of the trust share, while Channel One TV (formerly Citi TV) is trusted by 17.5% of the respondents. Citi FM, GHOne TV, Adom FM, and GTV have relatively lower levels of trust, with 7%, 4%, 3%, and 3%

respectively. This distribution suggests that TV3 and Joy News are perceived as more reliable and credible sources of news among the audience, dominating the trust landscape. In contrast, traditional radio stations such as Adom FM and Citi FM, as well as other television channels, enjoy less confidence from the public. This pattern indicates a preference for certain TV news platforms, which could be attributed to their perceived journalistic standards, consistent news delivery, or broader audience reach.

### 4.3 Perception of Media Credibility and Misleading Content

*Figure 6: How would you rate the credibility of broadcast media content in Ghana?*

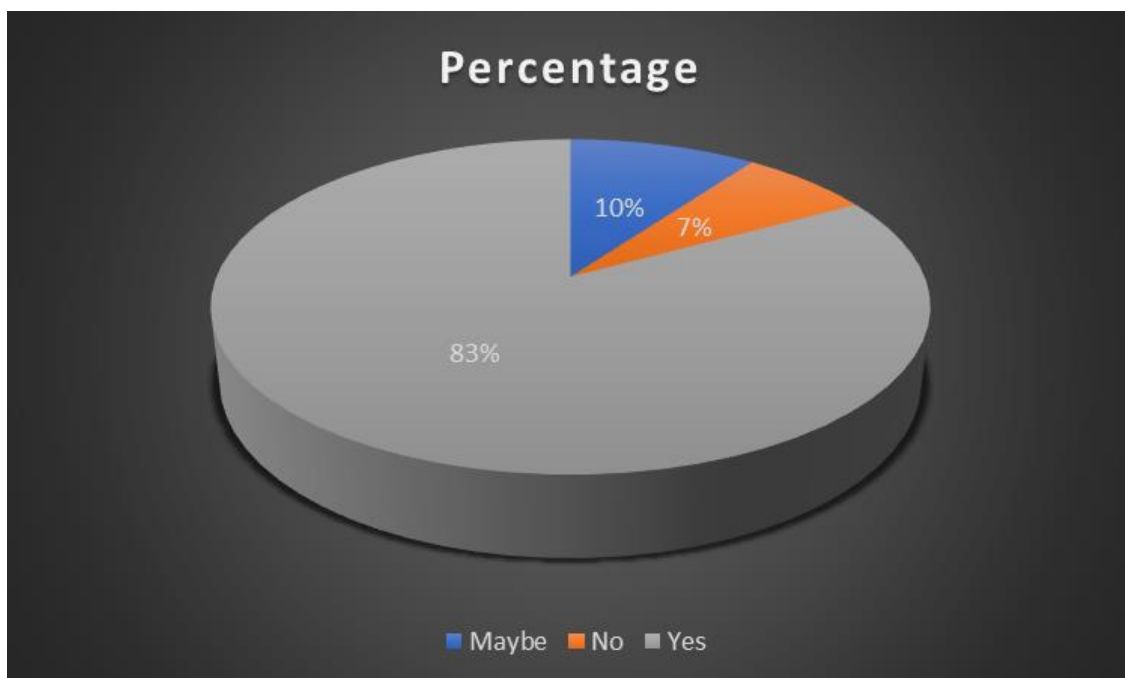


*Source: Field Data 2024*

The bar chart illustrates respondents' perceptions of the credibility of broadcast media content in Ghana. The majority, 58.5%, rated the content as "Credible," suggesting that over half of the participants have a generally positive view of the trustworthiness of broadcast media. Meanwhile, 38% of respondents were "Neutral," indicating some level of uncertainty or mixed feelings about media credibility. Only 3.5% of respondents considered broadcast media content

to be "Very Credible," reflecting a low level of confidence in the media. This distribution suggests that while many Ghanaians view broadcast media as somewhat trustworthy, there remains a significant portion of the population that is either skeptical or undecided about the reliability of the information presented, highlighting the need for ongoing efforts to strengthen media credibility and build public trust.

**Figure 7: Have you ever encountered misleading information on Ghanaian Broadcast media?**

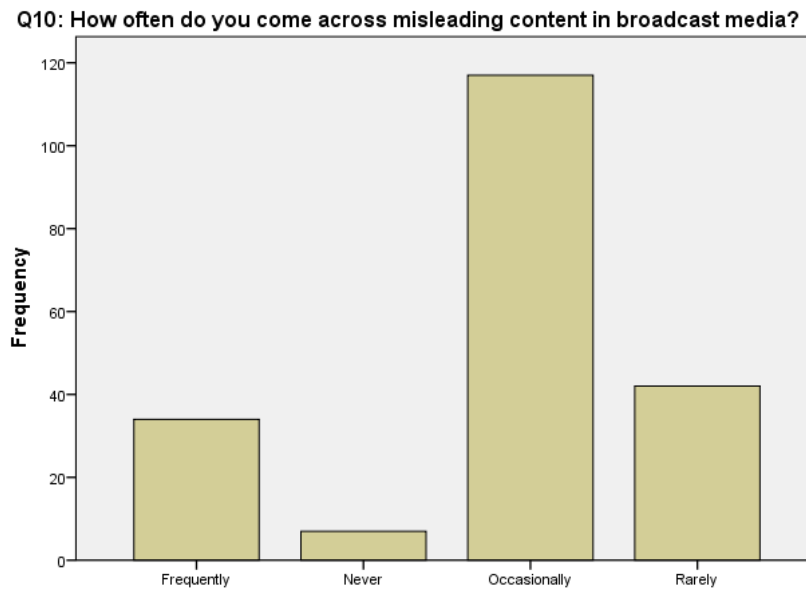


*Source: Field Data 2024*

The pie chart illustrates respondents' opinions on a specific question, with a significant majority, 83%, answering "Yes." This indicates strong agreement or affirmation among the participants regarding the issue in question. Meanwhile, 10% responded with "Maybe," suggesting some uncertainty or indecision, while a small fraction, 7%, answered "No," indicating disagreement. The overwhelming majority of affirmative responses highlights a clear consensus within the sample group, suggesting that the issue resonates strongly with the participants. The relatively low percentages of "Maybe" and "No" responses imply that only a

small segment of the population is either unsure or in disagreement, emphasizing the predominance of the majority viewpoint.

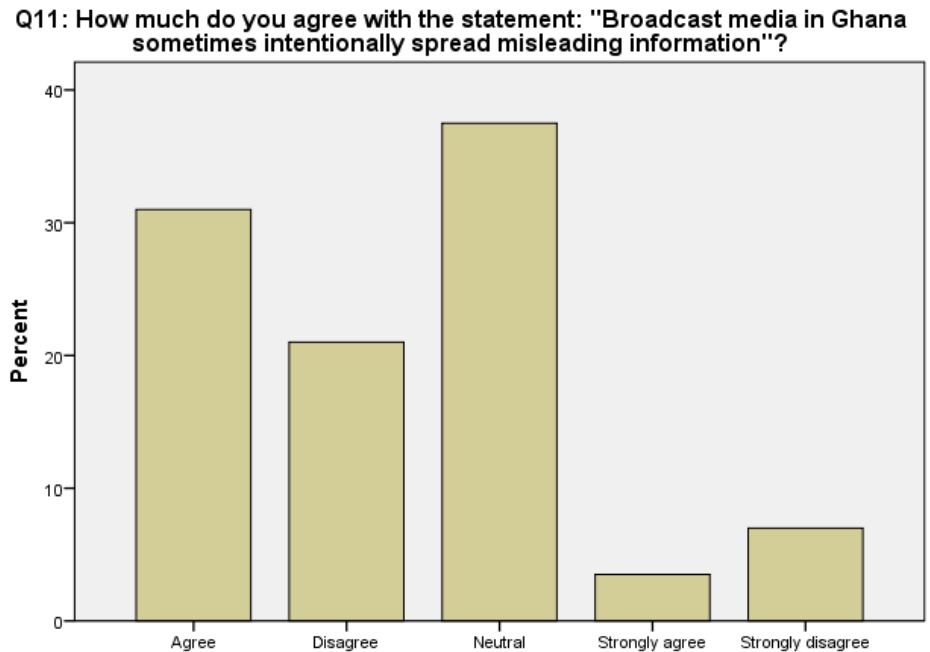
**Figure 8: How often do you come across misleading content in broadcast media?**



*Source: Field Data 2024*

The bar chart illustrates how often respondents encounter misleading content in broadcast media. A majority, 58.5%, indicated that they come across misleading content "Occasionally," suggesting that misinformation in broadcast media is a common but not constant occurrence. Additionally, 21% of respondents reported encountering misleading content "Rarely," while 17% stated they see it "Frequently." Only 3.5% of respondents claimed they "Never" come across misleading content in broadcast media. This distribution suggests that while most respondents are aware of and experience misleading information, the frequency of exposure varies, with a notable portion encountering it regularly, indicating ongoing concerns about the reliability of broadcast media content.

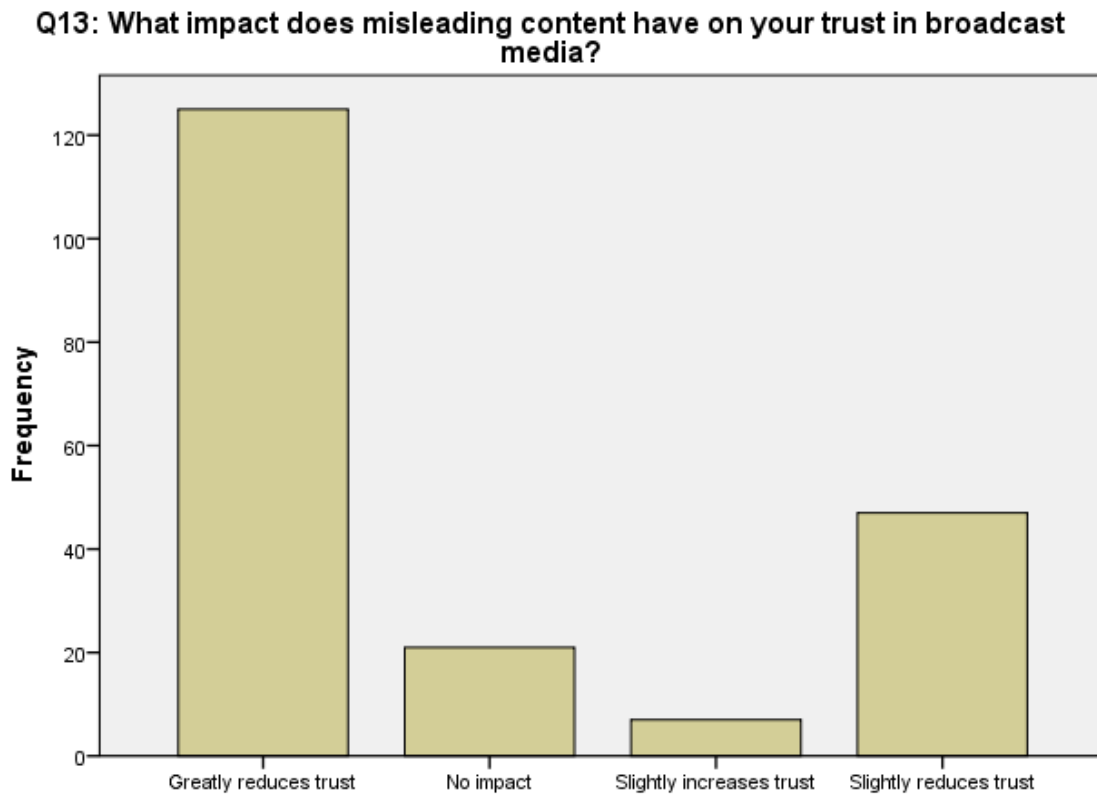
**Figure 9: How much do you agree with the statement: "Broadcast media in Ghana sometimes intentionally spread misleading information"?**



Source: Field Data 2024

The bar chart illustrates respondents' levels of agreement with the statement that "Broadcast media in Ghana sometimes intentionally spread misleading information." The largest group, 37.5%, expressed a neutral stance, indicating uncertainty or ambivalence on this issue. Meanwhile, 31% of respondents agree with the statement, suggesting a significant portion believes that intentional misinformation occurs in broadcast media. On the other hand, 21% disagree, and 7% strongly disagree, reflecting skepticism towards the notion that misinformation is deliberate. A small percentage, 3.5%, strongly agree with the statement. These findings indicate a divided perception among the respondents, with a notable segment acknowledging the possibility of intentional misinformation, while others remain uncertain or disagree, highlighting the complex nature of media trust and the diverse opinions held by the public.

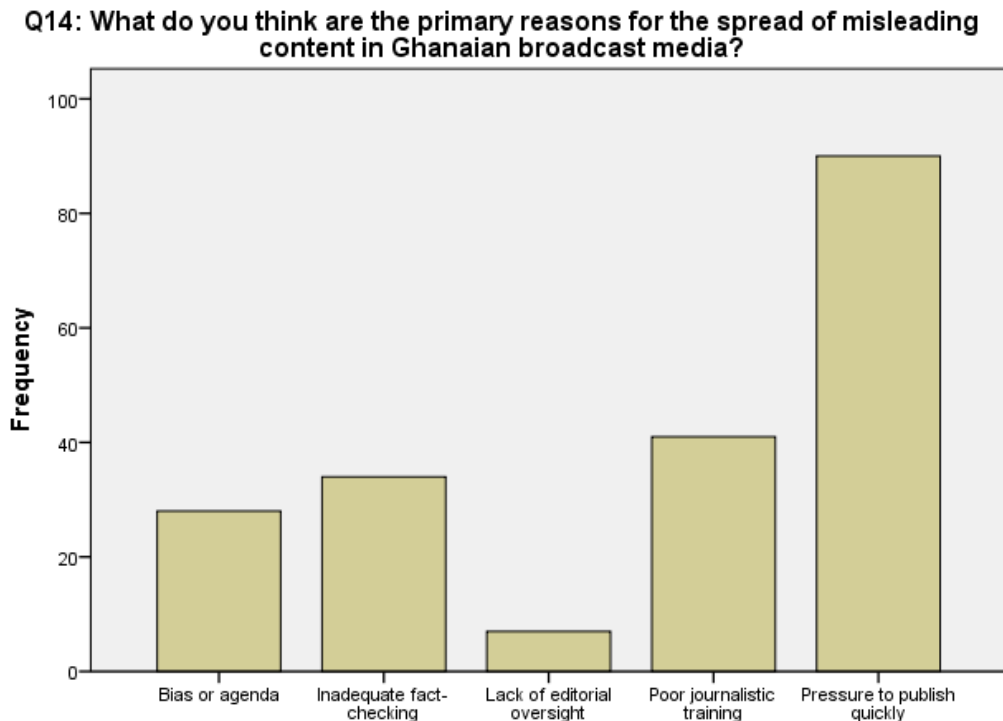
*Figure 10: What impact does misleading content have on your trust in broadcast media?*



*Source: Field Data 2024*

The bar chart illustrates the impact of misleading content on respondents' trust in broadcast media. A substantial majority, 62.5%, reported that misleading content "Greatly reduces trust," indicating that most respondents view misinformation as a severe threat to the credibility of broadcast media. Additionally, 23.5% stated that it "Slightly reduces trust," suggesting that a significant portion of the population is somewhat affected by misinformation, though to a lesser extent. Only 10.5% of respondents believe that misleading content has "No impact" on their trust, and a minimal 3.5% indicated that it "Slightly increases trust." These findings clearly highlight the detrimental effect of misleading content on public trust in broadcast media, with the vast majority perceiving it as a major factor in undermining media credibility.

**Figure 11: What do you think are the primary reasons for the spread of misleading content in Ghanaian broadcast media?**

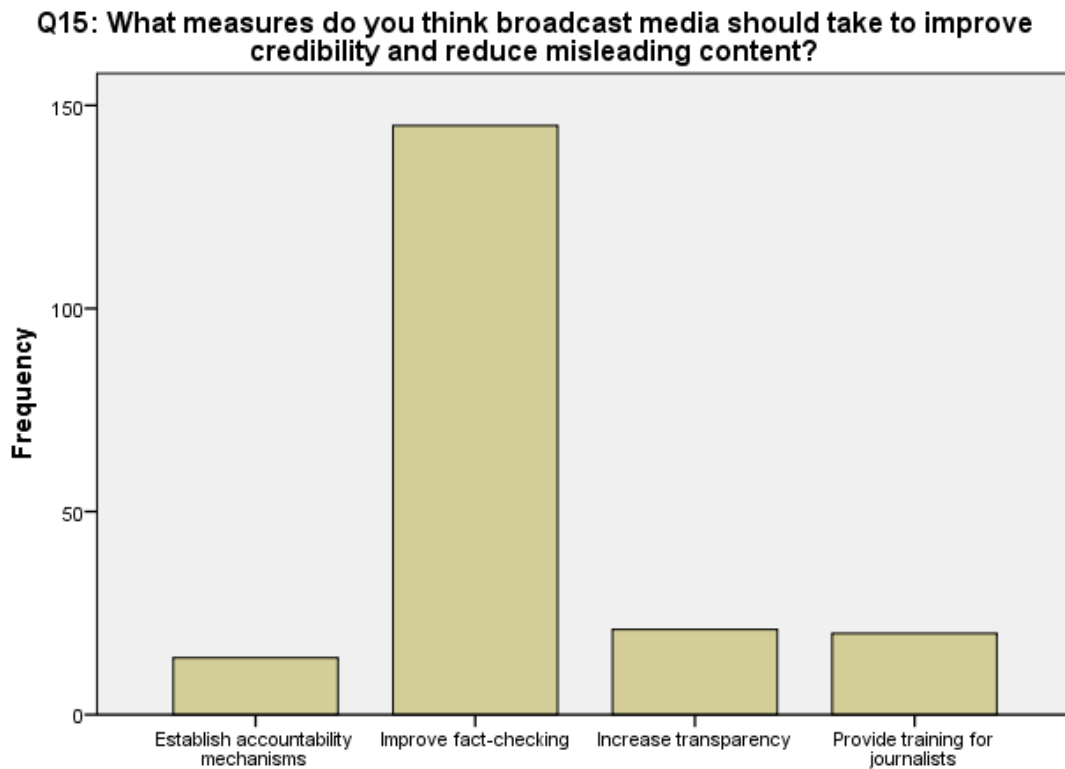


*Source: Field Data 2024*

The bar chart illustrates respondents' views on the primary reasons for the spread of misleading content in Ghanaian broadcast media. The most cited reason, with 45% of respondents, is the "Pressure to publish quickly," indicating that the urgency to release news may lead to inadequate verification processes. "Poor journalistic training" follows, cited by 20.5% of participants, suggesting that a lack of proper training contributes significantly to misinformation. "Inadequate fact-checking" is noted by 17%, highlighting the need for more rigorous verification processes. "Bias or agenda" was identified by 14% of respondents, pointing to intentional distortions. The least cited reason, with 3.5%, is "Lack of editorial oversight," indicating that while it is a concern, it is not perceived as the primary driver of misinformation. These findings suggest that structural issues, such as the pressures of fast-

paced news production and insufficient training, are the main factors contributing to the spread of misleading content in Ghanaian broadcast media.

**Figure 12: What measures do you think broadcast media should take to improve credibility and reduce misleading content?**



*Source: Field Data 2024*

The bar chart highlights the measures respondents believe are necessary to improve credibility and reduce misleading content in broadcast media. An overwhelming majority, 72.5%, suggested that improving fact-checking is the most critical action needed, indicating a strong consensus on the importance of rigorous verification processes to enhance media accuracy. Approximately 10.5% of respondents advocated increasing transparency, and 10% emphasized the need for providing more training for journalists, suggesting that enhancing skills and openness could also contribute to reducing misinformation. Only 7% called for establishing accountability mechanisms, reflecting a comparatively lower priority given to enforcing

responsibility within media organizations. These findings suggest that while various measures are recognized as beneficial, strengthening fact-checking processes is viewed as the most effective strategy to bolster credibility and combat misleading content in Ghanaian broadcast media.

#### **4.4 Factors contributing to the creation and spread of misleading content within traditional media in Ghana.**

##### **4.4.1 Analysis of media practitioners' response to experiences with the creation and distribution of content within your media organization.**

The three responses provided by journalists or media practitioners to the question about their experience with misleading content offer contrasting perspectives that align with findings in the literature on media credibility and misinformation. Additionally, their responses to the question of factors contributing to misleading content further illustrate key insights from the literature regarding the dynamics of media content creation in traditional media.

Respondent 1 admitted, "*Yes, I have encountered situations where the content I was involved in creating or distributing was later considered misleading,*" specifically noting that it occurred "*in the rush to publish a breaking news story,*" which led to reliance on an unverified source. This scenario reflects a key point discussed in the literature, where the competitive nature of the media industry often drives sensationalism and prioritizes speed over accuracy. Vargo, Guo, and Amazeen (2018) emphasize that the pressure to release news quickly can result in insufficient fact-checking and the dissemination of inaccurate information. Respondent 1's reflection on how "*this experience highlighted the importance of thorough fact-checking, even under time pressure,*" and their organization's implementation of "*more rigorous fact-checking protocols*" aligns with literature recommendations to enhance journalistic standards to preserve media credibility.

In the context of the factors contributing to misleading content, Respondent 1 highlighted that "*the rush to be the first to break a developing news story*" was a significant factor, adding that "*sensationalism, which is sometimes employed to capture audience attention, can lead to exaggeration or distortion of facts.*" This aligns with Vargo et al. (2018), who point out that such pressures in the media landscape often led to compromised journalistic standards, where speed trumps accuracy.

In contrast, Respondent 2 stated, "*No, I have not encountered any situations where the content I was involved in creating or distributing was later considered misleading,*" attributing this to their organization's "*strong emphasis on accuracy and credibility*" and ensuring that "*all content goes through a thorough fact-checking process before publication.*" This response reflects the importance of editorial oversight and an organization's commitment to journalistic integrity in preventing the spread of misinformation. It is highlighted that those stringent editorial policies are crucial in minimizing the dissemination of false information, reinforcing how proactive measures within media organizations uphold credibility.

Respondent 2's contribution to the factors of misleading content, though brief, adds another dimension to the discussion. They simply stated, "*Some want more eyeballs,*" suggesting that the desire for higher viewership drives the creation of sensational or misleading content. This statement corresponds with literature on the influence of commercial pressures on media organizations, where higher engagement metrics sometimes push journalists to prioritize attention-grabbing content over accuracy (Ahiabenu, 2020).

Respondent 3 provided a more succinct answer: "*I have normal experience with newsroom content creation and distribution. No. I have not been involved in misleading content creation.*" This brief and more passive response contrasts with the detailed reflections of the

other two respondents. It reflects the variability in media practitioners' awareness or direct involvement in dealing with misinformation, as highlighted in the literature.

Respondent 3 added, "*Unintentionally misleading content may happen as a result of inadequate information and lifting of content from other sources without verifying.*" This underscores a different yet important point made in the literature: the challenge of content aggregation and repurposing in media, which can lead to unintentional errors if proper verification procedures are not in place.

In summary, the contrasting experiences of these respondents mirror the challenges and solutions discussed in the literature. While some media practitioners, like Respondent 1, acknowledge the pressures that contribute to misleading content and emphasize the need for corrective measures, others, such as Respondent 2, maintain that strong editorial standards are key in preventing such occurrences.

#### **4.5 Evaluate the impact of misleading content on audience trust and perception of broadcast media credibility.**

##### **4.5.1 Analysis of media practitioners' response to what influences the accuracy of the content produced by your organisation.**

The responses from the three media practitioners regarding time pressures and ethical dilemmas offer valuable insights that align with the literature on media credibility, particularly the challenges posed by deadlines and sensationalism. Analyzing the responses to both questions reveals the underlying factors influencing the creation and distribution of content and how they impact audience trust in the media.

In response to Question 3 on how time pressures affect content accuracy, Respondent 1 acknowledges that deadlines significantly impact the ability to ensure thorough fact-checking,

stating, *“It affects it in many ways. Sometimes one needs more time to investigate.”* This statement is consistent with the literature, which highlights that the competitive nature of the media industry encourages quick news dissemination at the expense of accuracy. Vargo, Guo, and Amazeen (2018) argue that such pressures often lead to the dissemination of dubious information due to insufficient fact verification. Similarly, Respondent 3 agrees, noting, *“Sometimes strict timeliness can undermine accuracy,”* emphasizing that the pressure to deliver content rapidly can result in incomplete information.

In contrast, Respondent 2 maintains a more optimistic stance, claiming, *“Regardless of the pressure, I always ensure I provide accurate information.”* This reflects a commitment to accuracy despite time constraints, suggesting that some organizations have internal mechanisms that help maintain journalistic integrity. Editorial policies and strict fact-checking procedures within media organizations can mitigate the effects of time pressures, thereby helping to sustain credibility.

The responses to Question 4, which asks whether they have faced ethical dilemmas between sensationalism and accuracy, further highlight the tension between journalistic integrity and audience engagement. Respondent 1 simply states, *“No,”* but adds, *“I believe it is crucial to always prioritize accuracy over sensationalism.”* This view resonates with the findings in the literature that emphasize the long-term risks associated with sensationalism. Sensationalist reporting may attract immediate attention, but it undermines trust and credibility.

Respondent 2 also indicates they have never faced such a dilemma but adds, *“Sensationalism undermines journalistic integrity,”* reinforcing the position of the literature that maintaining trust through accuracy is more valuable than gaining short-term engagement through sensational content. The work by Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) in “Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policymaking. Council of Europe

Report” similarly emphasizes that sensationalism, often used to capture attention, can result in misinformation that diminishes long-term trust.

Respondent 3 takes a strong stance, stating, "*You cannot slaughter accuracy to sensationalize a content*," further reinforcing the importance of journalistic ethics in content creation. This is consistent with findings from Agyeman and Nyarko (2019), who argue that regulatory frameworks and organizational policies are essential to preventing sensationalism and ensuring the integrity of media messages.

Overall, the analysis of these responses shows that while media practitioners face significant pressures to meet deadlines, particularly with breaking news, the commitment to accuracy varies across organizations. Those with stronger editorial oversight, as noted by Respondent 2, seem better equipped to maintain credibility even under time constraints. Misleading content, whether due to time pressure or sensationalism, significantly erodes audience trust, as emphasized in the literature and reflected in the cautious approach advocated by Respondent 3. This illustrates the importance of accurate reporting in maintaining media credibility in Ghana.

#### **4.6 Strategies and recommendations for mitigating the spread of misleading content and enhancing the credibility.**

The responses provided by media professionals to the eight questions shed light on key challenges and solutions for mitigating the spread of misleading content in broadcast media. By contrasting these responses with the literature review, we can propose strategies to enhance the credibility of media content in Ghana.

In addressing Question 1, which focused on the editorial guidelines in place to ensure content accuracy, Respondents 1, 2, and 3 highlighted the editorial processes and checks implemented

in their organizations. For example, Respondent 1 mentioned that “*all stories must conform to GBC NEWS' house style,*” emphasizing the importance of consistency in tone and grammar. Respondent 2 further elaborated that desk editors and chief editors thoroughly review stories, ensuring they adhere to editorial standards before airing. These responses align with findings in the literature, particularly the importance of strict editorial policies in preventing the spread of misinformation. As noted by Agyeman and Ofori (2020), the lack of editorial oversight is a significant factor contributing to the dissemination of misleading content. Therefore, strict editorial processes, as described by the respondents, are crucial in maintaining the credibility of broadcast media.

For Question 2, the editorial process described by Respondents 1 and 3 reflects a structured approach to content creation. Respondent 1 emphasized the importance of checking for accuracy at various stages, while Respondent 3 highlighted how supervisors and heads of news review stories for accuracy. According to Boakye and Anane (2019), editorial pressure to meet deadlines can lead to ethical compromises, but the existence of a multi-layered editorial process can mitigate these challenges.

Question 3 discussed the frequency of editorial meetings and their influence on content decisions. All respondents emphasized regular discussions on accuracy, with Respondent 2 noting that “*editors discuss the importance of accuracy...members are encouraged not to trade accuracy over speed.*” This response resonates with the concerns raised in the literature regarding the balance between accuracy and timeliness. Vargo, Guo, and Amazeen (2018) note that media organizations, driven by competitive pressures, often prioritize speed over accuracy, leading to the spread of misleading content. The daily editorial meetings, as described by the respondents, provide a platform for reinforcing accuracy, which helps to mitigate these risks.

In terms of challenges to credibility, Question 4 brought up common obstacles faced by media organizations. Respondent 1 mentioned the difficulty of cross-checking facts "*speedily*" to ensure timely news coverage, a concern also echoed by Respondent 3, who said, "*we do not get analysts or resource people to interview*," leading to some issues being shelved. This challenge of ensuring timely verification aligns with the findings from Oduro and Asante (2018), who noted that young journalists, in particular, are vulnerable to compromising standards under pressure.

Question 5 addressed the adequacy of training for journalists. Respondent 1 suggested that continuous training is necessary to stay updated with ethical journalism practices, a sentiment also supported by Respondents 2 and 3. However, Respondents 2 and 3 both emphasized that there is room for improvement in training, particularly in ensuring that all journalists benefit from such opportunities.

Questions 6a and 6b explored the impact of time pressure on content credibility. Respondents 1 and 3 mentioned that their organizations prioritize accuracy over speed, even if it means losing the market share. Respondent 3 admitted that sometimes content is published without full verification to stay competitive but acknowledged that "*calls from regulators*" prompt them to remain credible. This ties back to the literature's discussion on the competitive pressures faced by media organizations, which Vargo et al. (2018) identified as a major contributor to the spread of misinformation. The respondents' emphasis on accuracy, despite these pressures, reflects a recognition of the need to prioritize long-term credibility over short-term gains.

In Question 7, respondents provided suggestions for industry-wide changes, with Respondent 1 calling for stronger regulations to ensure integrity, credibility, and professionalism. Respondent 3 suggested empowering the National Media Commission (NMC) to sanction

media outlets that fall short of standards. This aligns with the literature, where Agyeman and Nyarko (2019) emphasized the need for more robust regulatory enforcement to mitigate the dissemination of false information.

Finally, Question 8 addressed how traditional media can adapt to the challenges posed by social media. Respondent 1 emphasized the need for traditional media to remain proactive while maintaining credibility, while Respondent 3 suggested that traditional media should "*verify information on social media to build and make their content better.*" These recommendations resonate with the literature, where Appiah and Quaye (2020) argued that media literacy programs and fact-checking initiatives can help traditional media maintain credibility in the digital age.

In conclusion, the responses from media institutions reflect the challenges identified in the literature regarding the spread of misleading content and the importance of maintaining credibility in the face of competitive pressures. Strategies such as robust editorial oversight, continuous training, and stronger regulatory frameworks are essential to enhancing the credibility of broadcast media in Ghana.

#### **4.7 Discussion of Findings**

The findings on the trustworthiness of material in Ghanaian broadcast media, particularly concerning misleading messaging, provide an intricate understanding of the factors affecting media trust and audience perception. The quantitative data reveals that demographic factors such as gender and age play a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of media credibility. A majority of respondents were female (69%) and fell within the 18-24 age bracket (71.5%), with 45% holding a Bachelor's degree. This demographic profile suggests that younger, educated individuals may demonstrate greater critical awareness of media content due to their higher media literacy levels, as discussed by Stroud and Reese (2008). These findings suggest that

younger audiences may be more likely to identify and challenge misleading content in broadcast media, driven by their engagement with digital platforms and educational background.

Moreover, media consumption trends indicate that a large portion of respondents (63%) rely on social media as a primary news source, while only 31% use television, and a mere 3% use radio or newspapers. This transition to digital platforms highlights the growing challenges for broadcast media to maintain relevance and credibility, as younger audiences increasingly turn to online sources (Kiouisis, 2001). This trend is problematic because misinformation is more prevalent on digital platforms like social media, as discussed by Allcott and Gentzkow (2017). Despite this shift, traditional broadcast media remains significant, with 51.5% of respondents reporting daily news consumption from these platforms, suggesting that broadcast media continues to play a vital role in information dissemination.

In terms of trust in specific media outlets, the study reveals that TV3 (42%) and Joy News (23.5%) are perceived as the most reliable broadcast news sources. This preference can be attributed to their reputation for consistent news reporting and journalistic standards, as cited by Meyer (1988). Conversely, other outlets such as Adom FM and Citi FM are less trusted, possibly due to their perceived alignment with sensationalism or political bias, highlighting the importance of consistent and unbiased reporting to maintain audience trust. These findings underscore the significant variability in trust across different media outlets, echoing the points raised by Kiouisis (2001) regarding media credibility.

From the qualitative analysis, the responses of media practitioners offer further insights into the factors contributing to the spread of misleading content. For instance, Respondent 1 admitted encountering misleading content due to reliance on an unverified source in the rush

to publish a breaking news story. This directly aligns with findings by Vargo, Guo, and Amazeen (2018), who emphasize that competitive pressures in the media industry often lead to sensationalism and the prioritization of speed over accuracy. Respondent 1's reflection on the importance of thorough fact-checking even under time pressure, and the subsequent implementation of more rigorous editorial protocols, reinforces recommendations from the literature that call for improved editorial oversight to mitigate the risks of misinformation.

On the other hand, Respondent 2 did not report any personal experience with misleading content, attributing this to their organization's strong editorial guidelines, which ensure content is rigorously fact-checked before publication. This aligns with the literature by Agyeman and Ofori (2020), which highlights the significance of editorial oversight in preventing the spread of false information. Respondent 3's more passive stance—stating that misleading content may occur unintentionally due to inadequate verification—reflects a point raised by Boakye and Anane (2019), who note that some journalists may not actively engage in creating misleading content but may be influenced by external pressures to produce stories quickly.

Regarding the impact of misleading content on audience trust, the study found that 62.5% of respondents indicated that misinformation significantly diminishes their trust in broadcast media. This mirrors the findings by Nyarko et al. (2020), who demonstrated that exposure to false information erodes public confidence in media institutions. Moreover, 31% of respondents agreed that broadcast media occasionally mislead their viewers intentionally, further exacerbating distrust. This may stem from the sensationalist tactics employed by some media outlets to capture audience attention, as noted by Wardle and Derakhshan (2017).

From the media practitioners' perspective, the pressure to meet deadlines also plays a significant role in the accuracy of content. Respondent 1 acknowledged that "*it affects it in many ways,*" as time constraints hinder thorough fact-checking, a concern echoed by

Respondent 3, who mentioned that "*strict timeliness can undermine accuracy.*" These observations align with the literature's discussion on how tight deadlines often compromise journalistic standards and contribute to the spread of misleading content (Boakye and Anane, 2019). On the contrary, Respondent 2 maintained a firm stance that accuracy should not be compromised, even under time pressure, reinforcing the importance of editorial integrity as discussed by Agyeman and Ofori (2020).

To mitigate the spread of misleading content, the majority of respondents (72.5%) advocated for enhanced fact-checking procedures, highlighting a strong consensus on the need for stringent verification processes. This recommendation is supported by Ofori and Owusu (2018), who argue that institutionalized fact-checking is a crucial strategy for reducing misinformation. Additionally, respondents called for more transparency (10.5%) and improved training for journalists (10%), further underscoring the need for structural reforms in media organizations to restore public trust, as argued by Appiah and Quaye (2020).

In conclusion, the findings of both the quantitative and qualitative analyses highlight the multifaceted challenges facing Ghanaian broadcast media in maintaining credibility. The demographic profile of the respondents suggests that younger, educated individuals are more critical of media content, reflecting broader trends in media consumption and trust. The qualitative insights from media practitioners further illustrate the pressures they face in content creation, particularly the trade-offs between speed and accuracy. To address these issues, the study recommends enhanced fact-checking, improved editorial oversight, and better training for journalists, as key strategies to mitigate misinformation and restore trust in Ghana's broadcast media.

## **4.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter analyzed the results from both quantitative and qualitative assessments, concentrating on the reliability of broadcast media in Ghana and the dissemination of deceptive information. The quantitative research indicated that younger, educated persons predominantly engage in media consumption and exhibit heightened criticality towards media content, demonstrating considerable dependence on social media and television for news. Trust in media varied among channels, with TV3 and Joy News being the most credible, but others experienced diminished credibility, perhaps attributable to sensationalism and political bias. The prevalent dissemination of misinformation, acknowledged by 83% of respondents, substantially erodes faith in broadcast media.

The qualitative investigation, derived from feedback from media practitioners, underscored the internal obstacles that facilitate the dissemination of erroneous content. Participants indicated that time constraints, inadequate fact-checking, and sensationalism significantly contribute to inaccuracy. Some practitioners upheld rigorous editorial monitoring, while others acknowledged that competitive demands occasionally compromised accuracy. To address these concerns, respondents recommended augmented fact-checking, heightened openness, and greater training for journalists.

The chapter emphasized the necessity for media institutions to adopt stringent fact-checking, editorial supervision, and ongoing journalist training to rebuild and uphold the credibility of broadcast media in Ghana.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

The study investigated the credibility of Ghanaian broadcast media with a particular focus on how misleading information impacts audience trust. Data were gathered through a mixed-method approach involving 200 residents of Osu and Kanda, along with interviews with media professionals, including editors and journalists from prominent media houses such as TV3, Joy News, and Citi FM. This study examined the perception of the general public in relation to the media credibility and probed into media organizations' internal practices regarding content creation and verification.

Quantitative findings revealed key demographic insights, with the sample skewing young (71.5% between 18-24 years) and educated (45% with Bachelor's degrees), which aligns with the findings by Stroud and Reese (2008) that younger, educated audiences tend to engage more critically with media content due to higher levels of media literacy. In keeping with Kiouisis (2001), the study found a strong shift toward digital media consumption, with 63% of respondents relying on social media as a primary news source, while only 31% used television, and traditional media like radio and newspapers received the least engagement with 3% each. This shift reflects the global trend where younger demographics prefer online sources, underscoring the challenge for traditional broadcast media to maintain relevance amidst rising social media usage (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Despite these trends, the data showed that broadcast media still play a key role in information dissemination, with 51.5% of respondents reporting daily news engagement.

Regarding trust in specific media outlets, TV3 and Joy News emerged as the most reliable, with 42% and 23.5% of respondents identifying them as preferred news sources, possibly due to perceived commitment to journalistic standards, which Meyer (1988) emphasizes as crucial to media trust. In contrast, other channels such as Adom FM and Citi FM experienced lower trust levels, possibly reflecting concerns over sensationalism or bias, which has been shown by Kiouisis (2001) to be detrimental to media credibility. Furthermore, 83% of respondents reported encountering misleading content in Ghanaian broadcast media, highlighting audience concerns over misinformation and underscoring the findings of Nyarko et al. (2020), which showed a marked decline in public trust following exposure to false information.

The qualitative findings from interviews with media practitioners further highlighted internal pressures affecting content credibility. Respondents acknowledged time constraints, editorial oversight challenges, and sometimes a prioritization of sensationalism over accuracy as factors leading to misinformation. This aligns with findings by Vargo, Guo, and Amazeen (2018), who reported that competitive pressures in media often prioritize speed over accuracy, leading to sensationalism and inaccurate reporting. Some organizations implement stringent fact-checking processes to counteract these pressures, while others face constraints that sometimes lead to compromises in accuracy.

## **5.1 Recommendations**

Based on these findings, the study presents numerous recommendations to enhance the credibility of broadcast media and reduce the dissemination of erroneous content in Ghana:

### **5.1.1 Enhance Editorial and Fact-Verification Procedures:**

Media organizations must prioritize stringent fact-checking methods and editorial monitoring, as emphasized by Agyeman and Ofori (2020), to mitigate inaccuracies and enhance content trustworthiness. Forming specialized fact-checking teams may prove to be a beneficial method, as highlighted by Ofori and Owusu (2018), who observed that institutionalized fact-checking substantially mitigates misinformation.

### **5.1.2 Facilitate Ongoing Training for Journalists and Editors:**

It is worth emphasizing that consistent training and professional development are essential to equip media practitioners with the necessary skills to address evolving challenges in journalism. Continuous media literacy initiatives focusing on ethical journalism, fact-checking, and media literacy can play a crucial role in preparing journalists to handle complex issues effectively while upholding credibility.

### **5.1.3 Augment Transparency and Accountability in Media Operations:**

Disclosure of editorial norms and fact-checking procedures can enhance public trust, as shown by Meyer (1988). Media businesses ought to contemplate disclosing these methods, enabling audiences to comprehend the verification processes implemented. Furthermore, swift rectification protocols for misinformation must be instituted to rectify inaccuracies and uphold audience trust.

### **5.1.4 Adjust to Digital and Social Media Obstacles:**

Conventional media entities must adjust to the rapid dynamics of digital information, in accordance with the suggestions of Allcott and Gentzkow (2017). Media organizations must collaborate with fact-checking entities to authenticate information disseminated on social media and implement a proactive strategy to combat disinformation.

### **5.1.5 Establish and Uphold Regulatory Frameworks for Media Accountability:**

Enhanced regulatory control, as advocated by Agyeman and Nyarko (2019), is crucial for ensuring precision and responsibility inside media organizations. The National Media Commission (NMC) ought to be granted enhanced authority to enforce sanctions on non-

compliant entities, thereby facilitating the establishment of a consistent code of ethics to avert recurrent instances of misinformation.

#### **5.1.6 Advocate for Public Media Literacy Initiatives:**

In an age where social media serves as a principal source of information, media literacy initiatives are imperative. Appiah and Quaye (2020) propose that educating the public to critically assess content can empower audiences, especially younger users, to differentiate between reliable sources and misinformation.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The results highlight the intricate interaction between Ghanaian broadcast media and its viewers, especially with credibility and trust. Although conventional media continues to be a major information source, the widespread existence of deceptive content poses a substantial threat to its trustworthiness. Educated younger audiences, as noted by Stroud and Reese (2008), frequently perceive broadcast media as skewed or sensationalized, highlighting wider apprehensions over media legitimacy in a digitally-driven era.

This study confirms that internal issues inside media organizations facilitate the dissemination of misinformation. Stringent deadlines, competitive pressures for audience engagement, and constrained fact-checking resources foster an environment where accuracy is occasionally compromised for expediency, corroborating the results of Vargo, Guo, and Amazeen (2018) regarding the competitive dynamics of contemporary media landscapes. Participants

underscored the conflict between preserving credibility and adhering to time constraints, supporting Agyeman and Ofori (2020), who stress the importance of stringent editing standards in upholding media reliability.

To restore and sustain public trust in Ghanaian broadcast media, both internal and external actions are essential. Improved editorial protocols, increased openness, and a dedication to stringent fact-checking techniques are vital for maintaining media trust. This study enhances the existing literature by underscoring the necessity of addressing disinformation to safeguard the integrity of broadcast media, along with the recommendations of Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) for a targeted strategy against misinformation in modern media environments.

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## **APPENDIX:**

### **- INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - JOURNALISTS**

#### ***Investigating the credibility of content on misleading messages in broadcast media in Ghana:***

Dear Respondent,

This research aims at investigating the credibility of content on misleading messages in broadcast media in Ghana. Your insights as a Ghanaian citizen are crucial in understanding the level of awareness, perceptions, and suggestions related to broadcast media in Ghana.

Rest assured that your responses will be kept confidential, and the data collected will be used for research purposes only.

Please read each question carefully and provide response to your fullest ability.

Q1: Can you describe your experience with the creation and distribution of content within your media organization? Have you ever encountered situations where the content you were involved in creating or distributing was later considered misleading?

Q2: What, in your opinion, are the main factors that contribute to the unintentional or intentional creation of misleading content in traditional media organisations?

Q3: How do time pressures and the need to meet deadlines influence the accuracy of the content produced by your organisation?

Q4: Have you ever faced ethical dilemmas where you had to choose between sensationalism and accuracy? How did you handle such situations?

- QUESTIONNAIRE

Investigating the credibility of content on misleading messages in broadcast media in Ghana

Dear Respondent,

This research aims at investigating the credibility of content on misleading messages in broadcast media in Ghana. Your insights as a Ghanaian citizen are crucial in understanding the level of awareness, perceptions, and suggestions related to broadcast media in Ghana.

Rest assured that your responses will be kept confidential, and the data collected will be used for research purposes only.

Please read each question carefully and select the most appropriate response.

Q1: Gender

Female

Male

Prefer not to say

Q2: Age Group

18 - 24

25 - 34

35 - 44

45 - 54

55 and Above

Q3: Educational Background

High School

Diploma

Bachelor's Degree

Master's Degree

Doctorate

Other (please specify)

Other...

Q4: Occupation

Journalist/Media Practitioner

Government Employee

Private Sector Employee

Self-Employed

Other (please specify)

Other...

Q5: Which type of media do you consume most frequently?

Television

Radio

Newspapers

Social Media

Other...

Q6: How often do you consume news from broadcast media (TV/Radio)

Daily

Several times

Weekly

Rarely

Never

Other...

Q7: Which broadcast media outlets do you trust the most for news?

Channel One TV (Formerly Citi TV)

Tv3

Metro TV

Joy News  
GHOne TV  
Adom FM  
Peace FM  
Citi FM  
Other...

Q8: How would you rate the credibility of broadcast media content in Ghana?

Very Credible  
Credible  
Neutral  
Not Credible  
Not Very Credible  
Other...

Q9: Have you ever encountered misleading information on Ghanaian broadcast media?

Yes  
No  
Maybe

Q10: How often do you come across misleading content in broadcast media?

Frequently  
Occasionally  
Rarely  
Never  
Other...

Q11: How much do you agree with the statement: "Broadcast media in Ghana sometimes intentionally spread misleading information"?

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Q12: To what extent do you think the following factors contribute to the spread of misleading content in broadcast media? (Rate on a scale of 1 to 3, where 1 is 'Not a Factor' and 3 is 'Major Factor')

Rank 1      Rank 2      Rank 3

Editorial practices

Individual journalists' actions

Institutional pressures

Competition between media outlets

Financial motivations

Q13: What impact does misleading content have on your trust in broadcast media?

Greatly reduces trust

Slightly reduces trust

No impact

Slightly increases trust

Greatly increases trust

Q14: What do you think are the primary reasons for the spread of misleading content in Ghanaian broadcast media?

Lack of editorial oversight

Pressure to publish quickly

Bias or agenda

Inadequate fact-checking

Poor journalistic training

Other (please specify)

Q15: What measures do you think broadcast media should take to improve credibility and reduce misleading content?

Improve fact-checking

Enhance editorial oversight

Increase transparency

Provide training for journalists

Establish accountability mechanisms

Other (please specify)