

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

**ASSESSING THE COVERAGE OF HEALTH ISSUES IN GHANA: A STUDY OF DAILY
GRAPHIC AND FACEBOOK**

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**A LONG ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND
RESEARCH, GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS (MA) DEGREE IN
JOURNALISM**

SEPTEMBER 2020

DECLARATION

I, **Kantam Joyce Kolamong**, hereby declare that, except for the specific references to other people’s work, this work is the result of the original study done by me under supervision. I further declare that it has neither in whole nor in part been submitted for any degree in this university or elsewhere.

.....
KANTAM JOYCE KOLAMONG
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.....
DATE

SUPERVISOR’S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation of this long essay was supervised by me in accordance with the guidelines of supervision of long essays laid down by the Ghana Institute of Journalism.

.....
DR. EBO AFFUL
(SUPERVISOR)

.....
DATE

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Kantam Kolamong for being my source of inspiration.

To the greatest gift of my life, my little daughter, Empress-Dulcie Yayra Agbley.

I also dedicate this work to my friend and cheerleader, Dr. Harrison Stewart for his support throughout the work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Many thanks and gratitude go to god for giving me the wisdom, strength, knowledge and determination to pursue my study and to make this study possible.

To the Ghana institute of journalism for giving me the opportunity to complete my masters' programme.

A special thanks to my supervisor for his effective supervisory role and tenacity that have led to the successful completion of this paper.

To a friend, Mr. Gyebi Asante for his encouragement from day one till now.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

One of the basic functions of media is to spread information and create awareness among people regarding health-related issues so that they can decide what is good and what is bad for them. Health based articles, features, news, provide information to the audience regarding pre and post care of patients during a particular disease. These days' newspapers and TV channels are full of contents on different diseases suggesting different precautions and treatments available. Since the journalists who write health stories are not expert in the area, there is every possibility of wrong information reaching to the consumers. On several occasions it was found that the information provided by journalists through their columns, features, news were not reliable and accurate. Now the question arises that who should write articles, features etc. on health and health related issues so that accurate information is provided to the audience. It is well known that the mass media is important Social institution in any modern society for the communication purpose. The public learns much about health and health policy from the news media like print, electronic and new media. The mass media can shape the public's opinions about health related issues by emphasizing certain features in their coverage, such as the causes of problems, availability of the treatment, pre and post disease care and precaution. This research is an attempt to highlight the issues covered by newspaper; Daily Graphic and Facebook and accuracy of the content provided to the audience.

In a study by Sarah E. Gollust, Paula M. Lantz on communicating population health: print news media coverage of type 2 diabetes in August 2009, Results demonstrate that the predominant explanation for type 2 diabetes was behavioral factors and obesity. The predominant strategy to address diabetes was individualized behavior changes and medical care. These findings suggest the potential for great variability in public awareness of disparities in diabetes or its social

determinants, with implications for the public's likelihood of supporting policies that may improve population health.

Good health is at the heart of sustainable development in every nation. The United Nations recognizes the importance of good health. Be it Communication or non-communicable diseases, they are at the heart of human resource development. Goal 3 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal stresses the need for nations to commit resources and make frantic efforts at promoting good health. It added that multi-sectoral, right-based and gender sensitive approaches are essential to address inequalities and to build good health for all persons.

United Nations statistics revealed that more than 1.6 billion people live in fragile settings where protracted crises, combined with weak national capacity to deliver basic health services, present significant challenge with global health. Every 2 seconds, the United Nations records that someone aged 30-70 years dies prematurely from non-communicable diseases such as cancer and cardiovascular diseases.

Print Media here refers to any form of material printed (magazine or newspapers) for telling news stories. Some may challenge the importance of print media in Ghana but it is important to note that Ghana's Statistical Service' 2018 data showed that adult literacy rate in Ghana is 80 percent, growing an average 17.02 % annually. Ghana's Graphic Communications Group Limited; publishers of the most circulated newspaper in Ghana and the New Times Corporation; publishers

Whereas the role of print media may be too obvious to the society, much is not known about the contribution of social media (new media) to the society, which has been widely accepted in the 21st century. That notwithstanding, social media continues to determine the pace of information dissemination to the millennials. These newspapers are not the authority to make policy but it

makes ground on which policies are made (Taj, 2018). Taj (2018), further notes that these newspapers have played a vital role in changing mind frame of public and even policy makers.

Currently, a lot of conversations are ongoing on social media. Some are about people's lifestyles whereas others are about public service delivery and government policies regarding health issues. This discursive space provided by social media tools; Facebook which is popular among the African populace is much appreciating as many now use their freedom to express their opinions on health issues.

Though social media cannot be said to be the sole catalyst for social change in health, its role in complementing traditional media cannot be underrated. This new web-enabled communication infrastructure has made possible the expanding of the public sphere, encouraging public participation in news, with non-traditional journalistic platforms becoming important sites for 'alternative' journalism.

The latest statistics from the Pew Internet Project report indicate that 89% of U.S. Internet users between the ages of 18 and 29 use social media. Statistics on teens' use of social networking sites in Ghana are not available, but 2014 statistics on African Internet usage released by Internet World statistics reveal that approximately 1,630,420 Ghanaians are using Facebook. This is about 6.6% of the total population of 24,658,823.

There's no doubt that social media has enhanced national conversations on health and have roped in subaltern voices. The world over, governments now see the need to carry out civic /political engagements through these social media platforms. Though it has its own challenges, Ogola (2015) posits that horizontal participation is still much greater than with mainstream media formats. Ogola (2015), contends that discussion demonstrates the growing institutionalization of the online space

as an important platform for popular expression at the same time offering an indictment of mainstream media's regime of 'closure' to outsider voices.

More than ever, there's the urgent display of need to resort to social media to register one's displeasure about national issues than writing to the editor of a newspaper. This space has given access for thoughts be it for positive social change or radicalization to be shared across.

The media has gained wide patronage worldwide, and it presents a digital platform based on the concept of sharing and discussing information among the online users of the social community. It is an interactive web-based media platform that offers citizens the opportunity and place to connect, share opinions, experiences, views and knowledge. They are part of modern forms of media that centres on social networking which allows users to express themselves, interact and share information with much flexibility as well as share their views on issues via the World-Wide Web (Chun, Shulman, Sandoval, & Hovy, 2010).

According to Abubakar (2011, p. 103), social media has become the main source of personal orientation, communication and interaction on a number of issues that involve health. The rapid use of social media among citizens and civil society organizations and nongovernmental organizations in health offers the possibility of strengthening citizens' voice in health, promoting political activism and government accountability through interaction. Interaction is an important feature of social media which enables people to distribute content, connect with other users, broadcast content from other people, and react to other messages via various functions associated with the applications (Guerrero-Solé, 2018, p.2). The interactive functions associated with the various social media applications serves as an important tool in determining users' interactive behaviour especially when it comes to political deliberations. For instance, retweeting or sharing of a political post are seen as endorsements from people (Guerrero-Solé, 2018, p.2). Interactions

involve “conversational exchange” by parties who have the same interest. Interactions are thus a didactic communication among people who discuss and share opinions on issues that interest them. Compared with the conventional forms of media such as the print media, social media provides features that enable interactions among participants. Though before the advent of social media civic activities were aided by the traditional media, political and civic deliberations were more of a one-way communication where people only have access to information but were denied the opportunity to share, like, comment or counter-comment on those messages (Ariel & Avidar, 2015). Presently, social media applications like Facebook has given the push to promote citizen participation in various political and developmental activities. Social media has the capacity of enhancing civic participation because of the minimum cost associated with its use and the attractive interactive features it provides to engage users (Chatora, 2011, p. 4). This has made most politicians, advocacy groups, interest groups as well as citizens around the world to have all resorted to the use of social media for political and civic activities. In 2011, Zambia’s civil society, “Bantu Watch”, used Facebook and Twitter to monitor the elections by simply encouraging the citizens to report any incidence related to the elections on their social media page (Chatora, 2011, p. 5).

In a 2013 study by Shweta Anand, Mayanka Gupta, Awati Kwatra on Social Media and effective health communication, it concluded that Social media is coming up as a fast-growing tool to reach out to people. The Social Networking sites (SNS) provide cost-effective platforms to communicate with large population. It added that though the earlier submissions are true, with issues related to media literacy, institutional support and available mechanisms it becomes pertinent to review the potential uses social media can be put into especially in context of the developing countries for an effective health communication.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) also refer to social media as a collection of internetbased applications which started from the conceptual and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that grant the creation and exchange of user generated content. According to Mayfield (2008), there are six main types of social media: social networks for example Facebook and My Space; blogs; wikis for example Wikipedia; podcasts, for example Apple iTunes; forums; content communities for example Flickr and YouTube; micro blogging for example Twitter.

1.1 Problem Statement

Social media has contributed phenomenally to development work by building awareness of the need for health communication through virtual campaign, fund raising and mobilization of collective resources for social change. Social media applications, especially text-based blogs, internet forums and social networking sites, are used to generate resources for development and awareness of health issues purposes. They generate social interactions among users to raise awareness about crucial development programmes (Kaplan, 2012).

The use of Print media and social media for health issues in Ghana is limited. Social media relevance and its effective use in the realm of health communication thus remain mostly untapped, and adequate studies that focus on citizen's social media use for politics is limited.

Print media which hitherto was the leading light and avenue for expressing one's view has reduced, giving way for social media to lead.

Hence this study is premised on adding to the available literature by assessing print media and social media and health communication. The findings would result in unearthing the challenges to the use of print media and social media for health awareness and ways of addressing these

challenges to augment citizens' effective use of social media and print media for health awareness and social changes. Ghana's health sector will in no doubt be the benefactor at the end of this study.

1.2 Significance of the study

The media has become one of the most used tools in the world for communication. Right from the days of world to now, the print media has played a vital role in shaping society. From the coast of Ghana all through to Nigeria, Kenya and others, the print was a tool for nationalism and mobilizing people towards uniting against the colonialist (Barton, 1979). A little amount of research is available on the contribution of social media to the development and the dynamism it presents and the obvious contribution of the print media to the development of the country.

As Jayaweera (2004) noted, Communication is a means to sustainable development, not an end in itself. That said, there is the need for a scientific research to be carried out in order document the role of Daily Graphic and Facebook to the development of health Ghana and compare what distinct features each has in order to for all stakeholders to leverage on them.

This study embodies findings and valuable information that will aid the public and politicians as well to utilize print media and social media promoting developmental issues. In both the print media and social media, this study will look at the issues aimed at promoting developmental issues in the newspaper and on their social media pages. Both other stakeholders and citizens would be abreast on the challenges to using both Daily Graphic and Facebook as well as effective ways of using Daily Graphic and Facebook so that they could reap its benefit of enhancing civil and political participation. Again, the benefit from the study in terms of knowledge with regard to

development, the print media and social media would be broadened. The exploration of print media and social media and how it functions together with civil participation and development would help the readers garner the needed skill and knowledge. In addition, it will augment the stock of knowledge on print media and social media networks and its relevance in civil participation and promotion of development and form the basis for interested researchers, scholars and print media and social media network website practitioners to research on.

1.3 Research Objectives

This paper focuses on studying Daily Graphic and Facebook and their role in promoting development issues in distinctive ways. However, this study will focus on doing a comparative study on the contribution of both Daily Graphic and Facebook to promoting the discussion of developmental issues in Ghana.

Specifically, the study will

1. Explore the level of coverage of health issues by Daily Graphic and Facebook
2. Examine the health issues that get covered most by the two media platforms
3. Discuss the factors that influence the coverage of health issues

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Health and its importance to life

“The inadequacies of health demand, the low income per capita, lack of enough research fund in health sectors, lack of enough doctors unless in big cities, lack of enough hospital equipment etc. are the problems faced by the health demand” (Gunduz and Yahaya, 2017). This statement clearly captures some of the pressing issues in the Ghanaian health system.

Regardless of the huge deficit in public officials’ attentiveness to health issues, somewhat fueled by the press treatment of health matters, which is minimal, according to the literature reviewed in this chapter, the health condition of a population is doubtlessly pertinent. This is because, Gunduz and Yahaya (2017) has indicated that “Economic development’s most important indicator is the human factor.” Even though education is also an integral part of this development, without the population being healthy how will they even be educated in the first instance.

According to the World Health Organization, population ageing is increasing in low and middle income countries and as such, it is imperative that health in these countries are treated with the utmost importance. Even though Africa is known to have the most youthful population on the planet, it is important for the continent to take care of its not so minimal ageing peoples.

This assumes paramountcy because as many countries are making strides, no matter how slow towards western styled development, more people are now surviving childhood and childbirth. With gradual development, clearly people will start living longer. As such if the health of the population is not taken into critical condition, the workforce which will undoubtedly become

older than it is now will also require regular medical attention to make sure the capitalist machine is well lubricated. With this in mind, it must be stated without mincing words that, without proper attention to health issues in our society our survival as a people is in limbo.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

To provide a clear and definite direction to the research, the researcher used the Agenda-Setting Theory of the Mass Media.

2.2.1 Agenda-setting Theory

The agenda-setting theory is built on the notion that the media sets the agenda for what the audience and viewers should talk and care about. As Damalie (2019) noted, the mass media generate what its viewers, readers, and audience should talk and think about. The theory was established by two professors McCombs and Shaw in 1972. They explained their point with two (2) assumptions that, “1. The media filters and shapes what we see rather than just reflecting stories to the audience. 2. The more the attention the media gives to an issue, the more likely the public will consider that issue to be important”, (Karell, 2018: 12). Karell (2018) avers that the mass media organizations are not telling the audience what to think or how readers should feel about a story or issue, but are giving audiences certain stories or issues that people should think more about. Health issues have the highest element that makes a news worthy, thus health issues and yet it has some of the least interest in the media space (Amnesty International Report 2019). Meanwhile (Wanta 1997, cited in Wallinger 2010) observed that other angles including: politics, sports, entertainment, business, etc have a channel dedicated to them making health issues reportage of least or a mountain reduced to a hill.

Wanta (1997) noted that the Agenda-setting theory sees the media as a way used to influence the opinion of the public by setting the agenda for public discussion. The theory states that when issues are covered by the media as often as possible, the public would take them to be important (Wanta 1997, cited in Wallinger, 2010). The theory was derived from the work of Walter Lippman in 1922, who argued that “the public responds not to actual events in the environment but to the pictures in our heads” (Little, John and Foss, (2008), that the “news media construct our view of the world” (Coleman et al, 2009). Later, McCombs and Shaw (1972) conducted a research which gave justifiability to the idea which was described by Lippman. The two major assumptions of agenda-setting theory are: 1. The news media do not mirror reality, but instead filter and shape it. 2. Emphasis by the media, over time and on relatively small number of issues, leads the public into perceiving these issues as more important than other issues (Weaver, 1984. Cited in Wanta, 1997). Although the media are said to set the agenda for the public, it is believed that the reverse could be the case, in the sense that sometimes, “the public’s agenda occasionally influences the media’s issue agenda”, (Uscinki, 2009). Uscinki argues that as a result of this, two “competing frameworks compete among researchers: the agenda-setting framework, “in which the news agenda influence the public agenda”, and, “the audience driven framework, in which the audience agenda influences the news media,” In reporting news stories, journalists will consider the relevance of the news story and how appealing the news is to the audience, readers and viewers who mostly prefer “exciting spectacular events such as like violence, conflict, scandal or disaster”(Uscinki, 2009). If news stories are reported based on their relevance to the readers, audience and viewers, it then means that the readers, audience and viewers will exert influence on the media agenda. Uscinki argues that the interest of the public to issues such as “environmental cleanups” will make reporters to report environment-oriented stories. For Straubhaar et al (2010), media agenda could also be

influenced by the actions of prominent people such as the president of a country, whose comment on national agenda could be picked by the media and used as news stories or some interest groups capable of setting the agenda through their stand on an issue. Little, John and Foss (2008) concur and argue that when the media have relationships with the elite, the influence of the elite will affect the media agenda. Besides, the “dormant ideology often reflects in the public agenda”. Even though the news media would tend to report stories based on the preferences of the readers, viewers and audience, the readers, viewers and audience might develop such interesting a particular news based on the information they might have gotten from the media (Wanta 1997) cited in Damalie (2019, p. 11) . In the case of the “environmental cleanups” cited by Uscinki, one could ask: what triggered the concern from the audience, where and how did the audience get the knowledge about the environment? Therefore, although the public could be said to set the agenda for the media in some cases (on a minimal level), it all rests on the media. In the case of the audience preferring “stimulating, entertaining and compelling content” (Uscinki, 2009), the media still decide the news stories that are deemed stimulating. It shows that the public “think about what they are told”, rather than “think what they are told”. (McQuail, 2010).

2.3 Empirical Review

In a content analysis study of how health news is reported by Joy News TV and Ghana Television (GTV), Laryea (2015), sought to find out the attention given to health news in the news bulletins of the aforementioned stations and how those news stories were framed. Laryea made it explicit that, the choice of stations were determined by the polarity of the two media firm, one being state-owned GTV and therefore having an orientation to be citizen centric and Joy News TV being oriented to the dictates of market forces. This, she thought was a fair representation of the media

in the country. To ground the study in theory, the researcher employed framing and agenda-setting theories to guide her in the analysis of the study. According to the data of the study, between 1st July, 2015 and 31st August, 2015 a total of 1,585 stories were covered by the two stations. Out of this number, 199 were about health issues which represents 12.6%. Being more nuanced about what was really covered by the two-news media, the study found out that, strike actions among health professionals received the most coverage (38.1%). Other pertinent health related issues such as, health policy, health insurance and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on the other hand related received minimal attention; 1.5%, 2.5% and 1% respectively.

The crucial role played by the media's agenda-setting attempts cannot be overemphasized, as such the study also sought to find out the prominence which was attached to health stories in that same period of the research. It found out that, 21% percent of the 199 health stories appeared in the headlines of both TV stations. However, 60% of the stories were presented between 30 and 120 seconds. Health stories were covered using more episodic frames (65%) than thematic frames. The study concluded that the television stations did not attach enough attention to health-related stories. The reason for choosing two media organizations firms with different orientations was to figure out how both of them will covered their individual stories.

The findings revealed that, both stations gave more attention to labour unrest in the health sector. But Joy News TV gave more attention to stories to the labour issues, 58.2 %, compared to GTV which devoted 24.6% of their health news to the labour unrest among health professionals.

With the purpose of determining how the Ghanaian news media arm citizens with knowledge on health issues for them to make better health decisions to improve their livelihoods, Diedong (2013) content analysed three newspapers in the country. Two state papers -Daily Graphic and Ghanaian Times – were selected by the researcher because of their nationwide circulation reach. A private

newspaper, Public Agenda was also chosen but its selection was contingent on the fact that it focuses on health matters than other issues. By focusing on published stories in the newspapers from 2003 to 2005, Diedong was able to glean 154 published articles on health.

Out of that number, 18 were found to be features. According to the researcher, the feature writers used both concrete evidence and their own insight to analyze the health issues as they saw it and their implications. However, these features made no policy recommendations. In the articles, the researcher gleaned that, when a disease was discussed, its causes, symptoms and how it is treated were given prominence. Also, in such articles were recommendations on life style changes including foods that must be jettisoned or inculcated by citizens to help improve their health.

Even though the Public Agenda's primary focus was on health issues the study found out that the Daily Graphic published the highest number of articles on health, 85 (55.19 per cent) followed by 45 articles (29.22 per cent) in the Ghanaian Times and 26 (16.88 per cent) in the Public Agenda. After finding out that the dominating source of health news articles (24.02 per cent) were from state officials, 14.93 per cent from other media, 10.39 per cent from professionals and interest groups, and 9.74 per cent from Non-Governmental Organisations, the researcher focused on a cardinal purpose of the paper; to analyse the contents of the selected articles and to ascertain how issues relating to health were framed to make readers employ better health practices.

The study identified two main framing categories and sought to ascertain which of the two were used often by the newspapers. The framing categories were informational and medical. The findings of the research indicated that the three newspapers used informational framing in their reportage of health issues in the country. Same as Laryea (2015) found out that health issues are less reported on juxtaposed to other issues, Diedong (2013) pointed out that "Though the study's focus was not to assess space allocation to health issues as compared to other sectors, in analyzing

health reporting in print media it emerged that that health news reporting was much limited in scope and depth as compared with other sectors such as political news and scandals.”

Owusu-Addo et al (2018) frame analysed how the media frame Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) by content analysing both print and electronic media sources. This is because according to the researchers, VAWG is an important public health issue. This study is also important because how the news media frames public health issues determines the attention given to designing effective health promotion interventions by public authorities. Since there had been very little research in this particular field in especially developing countries, the researchers sought to examine news coverage of VAWG in Ghana, and the implications of this for health promotion.

Because of the limited research literature on media coverage of VAWG in Ghana the study employed qualitative content analysis for the frame analysis. This is because already established categories that would have been fall upon by a quantitative analysis was largely non-existent due to the dearth of research in the area.

As this study was by and large stepping into uncharted waters it took data from a variety of sources to enrich its conclusions. The Ghanaian Times, Daily Graphic and Daily Guide were the newspapers chosen for the enquiry. The websites of two FM stations - Peace FM and Joy FM - that are listened to across the nation, peacefm.com and myjoyonline.com were also added in the frame analysis. Also, the website of the only wire service of the country, the Ghana News Agency (GNA) was also searched by the researchers.

After searching all the six media outlets, 215 articles that are pertinent to the study were found. Two media outlets were noted to have dominated the coverage of cases relating to VAWG. The Ghanaian Times and Myjoyonline.com covered 60% of the cases with 35% and 25% coverage

respectively. Importantly, the study found out that most of the articles were pithy and focused more on what happened when compared to the in-depth analysis of the issue. Also, cases that were followed intensely by the media were few but were found to be murder cases arising from VAWG. Reports on rape also received a lot of attention and defilement cases also followed.

The study is limited in a couple of ways in that, the newspapers from which the news articles were sampled were only from English sources. It is possible that if non-English media sources, were included some sort of framing that is prevalent in those forms of news would have been gleaned as well. Also, VAWGs are not only limited to physical violence but the study focused on the coverage on that form in the media reports it perused.

With regard to the kind of information on VAWG provided by the media, the results indicate that the media covered areas such as the nature of violence, the victims and the perpetrators involved in the act, the immediate cause of the violence, and the actions taken against the perpetrators. These findings require further investigation in order to assess their contributions to the VAWG literature particularly in terms of how the provision of these information would shape the public's perception of VAWG as a public health issue. In relation to how the media framed VAWG, the findings point to dominant frames: victim blaming and episodic framing.

Thompson and Yeboah (2013) embarked on a study to find out how the review of newspapers on Ghanaian radio morning shows were promoting or not promoting health communication. The study describes this phenomenon as a "converged" platform and further investigates whether the audience of this platform had much interest in health issues or were engulfed in the ever escalating political discourse which was alluded to by the papers reviewed above.

To prove or disprove these assumptions, the researchers used the qualitative content analysis in the process of collecting the relevant data. Two prominent newspapers in the country were chosen for this study- Daily Graphic and Daily Guide. The most popular radio morning show, which airs on Peace FM and dubbed, Kokrokoo was selected to compliment the newspapers. This converged platform was to be examined to find out the extent to which newspaper stories on three health conditions (malaria, HIV/AIDS and hepatitis) were given prominence or neglected as they were relayed to the audience of the morning show.

Purposively, three editions of both Daily Graphic and Daily Guide were selected out of a particular week during a period of three months. For more accuracy, the selection focused on the months in which the aforementioned health conditions are celebrated around the world i.e. April, July and December for malaria, hepatitis and HIV/AIDS respectively.

For more emphasis on how the media treated these commemorative days, the exact editions published on World Malaria Day, World Hepatitis Day and World AIDS Day which falls on 25 April, 28 July and 1 December, respectively were selected for both newspapers and Kokrokoo. But the final editions of each publication, both print and electronic were three as the researchers randomly chose two other days from each week in which the commemorative days fell. This helped the researchers to glean stories that may have been used to prime the celebrations, or to offer post-celebrations coverage. After the study, the researchers concluded that, the converged platform was not promoting health issues or creating the needed the dais for health education or communication.

Nwagbara (2017) set out to find out different ways midwives could collaborate with the media to make information on maternal and child health issues readily accessible to the Nigerian public especially women. Employing both quantitative and qualitative research tools, the researcher found that, the media and midwives' partner in several ways to make information about maternal

and pediatric issues available to the Nigerian public. These channels include but are not limited to news reports about the activities of the midwives, news commentaries and feature stories. On radio and TV, programmes such as discussions or magazine programmes, teaching sessions, songs, drama and announcements are used to disseminate information about health issues.

Three prominent newspapers - The Punch, The Guardian and the Pioneer - were content analysed for three months to find out the prevalence of health issues in their publications, particularly maternal and child health issues. From the result, the three newspapers analysed had a total of 145 reports on health matters. 81 of the reports which represent 56% of all the health stories in the newspapers were on maternal and child health matters.

The study also revealed that a whopping 95% of the midwives were confident of the potency of the mass media in relaying important information about mothers and their children. According the study, the midwives admitted that they had access to all mass media particularly, billboards and the radio. Issues concerning contraception and birth control, breastfeeding, best motherhood practices, immunization among others are made available to the public via these channels. However, the midwives and the journalists which were interviewed by the researcher explicitly said the central reason there is a dearth of health programmes on the airwaves is because of lack of funds, as radio stations depends on advertisements and most advertisers are reluctant to support health programmes.

Andrews (2009) studied how Ghana's National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) was framed and represented in Ghanaian newspapers from 2005 to 2007, which marks the early years of the implementation of this health policy. Also, the dominant themes that were implanted in news reportage about the NHIS were also studied by the researcher to help him ascertain how the health

policy was promoted in the country's media. The culture and ideology that shaped media practitioners' reportage of issues bordering on the NHIS were also investigated.

To ground the research in theory, the researcher employed Framing analysis especially news frame as his central theoretical tool for the study. Concepts such as framing and ideology were also interrogated by the researcher to find out how they shape the production of news stories. Another theory the researcher fell on is the social constructivism theory. The theory posits that news stories that are produced in a particular society is a direct reflection of the social realities a group of people live in.

The study blended both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect relevant data. Not only did the researcher content analysed the four most circulated Ghanaian newspapers - Daily Graphic, the Ghanaian Times, Chronicle and the Daily Guide – for the study but he interviewed three journalists and three public relations officials to aid in the analyses of the stories from the newspapers. After the inquiry, the study found that, the themes that dominated the news stories were around the central issues of NHIS. These include the urging of Ghanaians who have not registered to register among other pertinent issues. Nonetheless frames around corruption, citizen apathy to the policy among others were also used albeit significantly below frames concerning the core mandate of the policy. But the study also discovered that most of the stories concerning the NHIS were not given the prominence other political and social issues were given as most of them were not placed on the front pages of the newspapers. The sources that the media relied on in telling their stories were dominated by official sources. This finding corroborates Diedong (2013) finding that, the news media rely on official sources more than other sources in the production of news stories. The study's third and final finding suggests that, the NHSI was covered responsibly by the media. This, the researcher alluded to the fact that that erstwhile attitudes that were

unfavourable to health reporting were waning in newsrooms of the newspapers. However, albeit the researcher interviewing other voices, the study failed to inculcate oppositional voices in the inquiry. This therefore creates a slanted discourse which may dwarf other pertinent perspectives.

Smith and Tietaah (2016) investigated how the media reported on outbreaks of meningitis in Ghana by two online outlets, *graphiconline* and *myjoyonline*. Similar to all the studies reviewed above, the researchers also set out to explore the news frames, level of prominence and sources of information of the media outlets. The surveillance function of the media during the outbreak of diseases that are infectious were also looked at by the study. Again, as seen in the above studies, framing theory dominated this study and therefore was the cardinal theoretical framework that shaped the study. Even though most of the studies combined quantitative and qualitative methods, this study only employed the content analysis method to evaluate 60 published news articles during a four-month period, December 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016.

The dominant frames that the study gleaned from its analysis was that the media focused on “action and consequence” as their major frames in the reportage on meningitis outbreaks in the country. Also, evidence from the already reviewed papers which suggests that health issues are not ascribed with much importance compared to other stories in the media were corroborated by this study, as stories about the meningitis health crisis were not displayed prominently on the perused online sites. The study also gleaned that, albeit online publications generally known for promoting multimedia content, few news stories combined podcasts, photos and videos in their reportage. Also, the sources that dominated the online stories about the outbreak of meningitis, were largely government representatives and health officials. According to the study, the journalists did very little to engage the actual communities and people who were affected by the disease. Another failure on the part of the online media was that, they were not able to fulfill their surveillance

function of reporting on trends and alerting the public of severity of the outbreak in Ghana. Based on the findings the researchers recommended that journalists who are interested in reporting on health issues must be given extensive media training in order to report trends and perform their surveillance role.

Knowing the potency of newspapers in generating health awareness on numerous issues such as immunization, pandemics, epidemics, hygiene, environmental pollution, and communicable and non-communicable diseases, Paul and Singh (2016) embarked on a journey to find out how often and the types of health-related articles that are covered by newspapers in Manipur, India. Using the 10 most regularly published newspapers in Manipur, the researchers conducted a cross-sectional study from February 2011 to January 2012. They then perused and collected the newspapers for health-related articles published in the newspapers. A total of 10,874 health-related articles were published in the year and the first month, February recorded 12.8% of the articles which represent the highest number of published articles compared to the other months. The day that recorded the highest number of published health-related articles was Wednesday, as it recorded (16%) of published articles. A little below half of the health-related articles were concerned with injury followed by public health articles. The maximum number of public health and injury-related articles were published on Monday. The researchers selected 4 English papers and 6 Manipuri newspapers. The study revealed that both languages published public health articles more than medical topics. Most of the Public health (72.9%) and injury-related articles (95.9%) were published in the news items section. However, medical topics (45.8%) were largely published in the health section of the newspaper. The length of the articles did not vary much regardless of them being in English or Manipuri Newspapers; both were of small sizes. In summary, the researchers recommend that, the newspapers, both English and Manipuri improve

with regards to the number of health-related articles they publish and the space allocated to those articles.

Ciboh (2010) content analysed the health sections of four newspapers for a period of two years in Nigeria. The study sought to find out how the news articles in the newspapers constructed the issues and problems relating to health. How the health issues and problems were conceptualized by the press, what solutions the articles offered, and whether newspaper articles were written in a manner that empowered its readers to be more health conscious. The study found that problems of health policies and management as well as high cost of medicines, fake and adulterated drugs, HIV-AIDS, cardiovascular ailments, cancer and reproductive health issues topped the agenda of newspapers during the two-year period. In addendum, most of the articles in the newspapers provided readers with cogent information and knowledge on health matters which they could use to shape their everyday lives. The articles, according to the study used and backed scientifically proven natural health remedies for the management of diseases and ailments regardless of their limitations, the study. Contrary to most of the findings in this review, this study found that newspapers in Nigerian are attentive to issues and problems regarding the country's health sector. The researcher suggested more research in magazines. This he thinks will aid in the broad comprehension of how the print media in the country are prioritizing health issues.

Mental health issues are mostly portrayed negatively in the media. Team Up (2012) selected 10 English-language, California-based news organizations to review based on their influence in the region they are in and doubtless their circulation power. The study focused on how the media cover mental health issues in California. Also, news articles from Spanish language newspapers and online sites were collected from 2010, 2011, January and February 2012, in the same time frame as the English newspapers were perused. Albeit selecting and reviewing only 10 English

newspapers, a total of 21 news sources were recorded. The researchers ascribed the jump in sources as a result of other newspapers republishing the stories of the news outlets. The 10 English-language news outlets were: Appeal Democrat (Sutter and Yuba counties), Inland Valley Daily Bulletin (Ontario), Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles Daily News, Oakland Tribune, San Francisco Chronicle, San Jose Mercury News, Bakersfield Californian, Gilroy Dispatch, and Monterey County Herald. Results from the English scan showed 1,465 articles that included one or more of the six search terms used by the researchers. Due to limited resources, the articles were narrowed to 655 articles. However, the ratio of each search term was maintained as found in the original 1,465. In the end, the researchers settled on 178 articles as relevant.

The study indicated its results were consistent with the existing literature on the subject, in that, they depict individuals with mental illness negatively in media reports. On the other hand, they gleaned some positive results, as more than half of the English language articles included information on services and treatment, prevention and assistance available to help people with mental health issues. In percentage wise, 37 percent of the English-language newspapers and online outlets, framed mental illness and persons living with mental illness in a negative light whereas positive depictions made up 23 percent of the articles. Perceived dangerousness in regard to behavior is discussed in 62 percent of the articles. In addition, reporters wrote about mental health services and treatment in 51 percent of stories, and 61 percent of articles contained information about assistance available for treating mental health conditions. The scan of Spanish-language newspapers showed that 70 percent of articles used negative language in discussing mental health-related illness, while one quarter (25%) contained positive descriptions. Perceived dangerousness in regard to behavior is discussed in 42 percent of the articles. In addition, reporters mentioned mental health services and treatment in 14 percent of stories, and 36 percent of articles

contained information about actions to help the individual. When more stories about people with a mental illness contain negative portrayals than positive ones, the public is likely to get a skewed picture of individuals living with mental illness and the experiences of recovery. For this reason, these results suggest that when identifying a person in a news story as having a mental illness, it is critical that the information is relevant to the story and from a reliable source. Finding opportunities to cover stories with a positive angle of hope and recovery is another important way of balancing out the overwhelming negative coverage and providing an alternate perspective on people living with mental illness.

Obeng-Quaidoo (1998) becomes relevant even though it was published a little over two decades ago because most of the endemic issues highlighted by the recent research concerning health reporting are captured in it. The study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods to content analyse a sample of mass media, and solicit information (through focus group discussions — FGDs) from media personnel in Ghana in an attempt to find out how socio-economic factors affect their performance. The newspapers include, People's Daily Graphic, the Ghanaian Times, the Pioneer and the Christian Messenger. The research focused on April, June and July 1988 news articles in the aforementioned newspapers. It found that, overall, both qualitative and quantitative analysis revealed a very poor coverage of health issues in comparison to politics, agriculture, business and sports news. It concludes that, among the topmost impediments to proper and adequate coverage of health-related issues are lack of specialization and professionalism among Ghanaian journalists. But systemic factors such as the state of the economy, lack of financial resources and equipment also adversely affect journalistic performance.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Research Design

The study employed the descriptive approach to research. This was to ensure that the understudied area was given sufficient attention from study tools including descriptive statistics. The statistics was collected based on the various variables that would yield the required results to meet the purpose of the research. The research used quantitative method under which the research exploited the following in data collection: a) Content analysis of newspapers (Quantitative). This is a form survey guided with coding sheet or guide and coding schedule. Quantitative content analysis was the primary data collection method from The Daily Graphic and Facebook. According to McQuail (2009), content analysis is ‘a technique for the systematic, quantitative and objective description of media texts, that is useful for certain purposes of classifying output, looking for effects and making comparisons between media and over time or between content and “reality”’. Holsti (1968, cited in Riffe et. al, 1998:23) defines it as “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” This methodology combines content and discourse analysis. “It is an exceptional way to describe mass communication content objectively, systematically, and quantitatively, and it has become one of the frequently used methodologies for mass communication research (Kaid and Wadsworth, 1989, Stempel, 2003). Moreover, Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e. text) Otchere, 2020). (Columbia University Mailma school of Public Health, 2015). Avers that this method is employed in this study because content analysis allows researchers to quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such certain words, themes, or concepts. Researchers can then make inferences

about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of surrounding the text Content Analysis in mass media research gives an opportunity to establish who says what to whom, how, and with what effects (Stempel, 2003).

(Hansen et al ,1998:91), cited in Dias (2013, p.83) argued that content analysis allows the researcher to ‘describe and analyse media content in a more comprehensive way, a way less prone to subjective selectiveness and idiosyncrasies. Hansen et al (1998) cited in Damalie (2019) adds that “content analysis grew to become an important component in the armoury of studies of international media flows, carried out within wider debates and concerns about a New World Information and Communication Order and about cultural imperialism, development communication, globalization, and transitional information and image flow (Srebeny-Mohammadi, 1984, Akitanyo, 2016: p.12). Content Analysis affords the researcher the chance to determine the subject of study, then spells out the population to be studied, as well as the media source and span. In the event that the population is huge, a sample is cautiously chosen (Otchere, 2020). The findings will then be interpreted and analyzed with accepted media theories (Kaid &Wadsworth, 1989 as cited by Akitanyo, 2016). With news stories used as units of measure, news stories such as editorials, columns, and letters to the editor were examined and content analysis was deemed appropriate for the research. As a result, the researcher conducted a physical search for manifest health related content and noted the relevant details and trends of health content as covered by the Daily Graphic and Facebook.

3.1 Sources of Data

The main sources of data for this research were the Daily Graphic Newspaper and Facebook. These sources were chosen by the researcher because, the Daily Graphic newspaper circulates to most parts of the country and characterize the major print media.

3.2 Sampling Technique

The Daily Graphic and Facebook were sampled purposively based on their wide coverage, and reach for the study. Thus, the above chosen newspaper and Facebook were very important for sampling purposes and for consistency in terms of data collection and analysis. Content Analysis was used, as it is the necessary tool that would enable the researcher to analyse the content on health issues that have been published.

3.3 Sample Size for content analysis

The analysis run for a period of three months; the months of June, July, August, [2020] were purposively selected because they do not have any official health related holidays thus envisaged to give a true picture of health coverage. As a result, a total number of 78 Publications will be analyzed. Daily Graphic & JoyNews' Facebook page produced 78&92 editions each between June, July and August, 2020 and all will be considered in the analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Conclusion

As long as the media's ability to determine what is important in society through the importance they attach to the stories they chose to cover is paramount, scholarship in media studies must not neglect its duty to evaluate what the media is prioritizing. It is in this light that, this study sought to find out how the media cover health issues in the Ghana. This is important because, the healthiness of a population is quintessentially important because the progress of an individual and therefore a society can be easily stalled by ill health. To be able to assess how the media cover health matters in the country, the researcher chose to use quantitative content analyses to gather data on how the Daily Graphic, Ghana's leading newspaper, reports health issues and also how health issues in Ghana are reported on Facebook. The study was grounded in the Agenda Setting theory. According to the reviewed works in chapter two, especially the studies conducted on the Ghanaian media's attentiveness to health matters in the country, much more needs to be done to ensure that health issues are given the proper attention they deserve. Another issue that stood out in the reviewed papers is the training of health reporters. Specialty reporters on health issues according to most of the studies are in dire need.

However, what makes this current study distinct from most of the studies conducted in this field is that, it focuses on finding out not only how health issues are reported in the press but also on the world's largest social media platform, Facebook specifically. Doubtless, a plethora of opinions and concerns about health are channeled through this platform and no systematic attempt has been embarked on to glean how the hordes on that platform are treating health issues.

In that sense, this study will step into uncharted waters and help improve how we understanding the treatment of health issues on, Facebook.

Therefore, it will not be out of place for future research efforts in this field to focus on distinct social media platforms, such as Twitter, Instagram and the likes to enable a thorough understanding of how issues relating to health are highlighted on those virtual sites. That in no way suggests that the lenses must be dropped from the mainstream media. Since there have been a lot of studies which have employed quantitative means to collect data on this subject, the deployment of qualitative measures to find out more about this field is recommended also.

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