

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

**A FRAMING ANALYSIS OF THE REPORTS OF CORONAVIRUS IN AFRICA BY
WESTERN MEDIA – A STUDY OF BBC AND AL-JAZEERA**

BY:

JEROME OTCHERE

MA JOURNALISM (MAJN19006)

**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**

OCTOBER 2020

DECLARATION

I, **Jerome Otchere**, 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.

.....
JEROME OTCHERE

(MAJN19006)

.....
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 MODESTUS FOSU

(SUPERVISOR)

.....
DATE

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family especially my wife, Dr. Josephine Prah Otchere and my children, Joses Kwadwo Otchere and Jean Kuukua Otchere. I am blessed to have you.

God richly bless you

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My sincere gratitude goes to the Almighty God for His mercy and grace.

I also express my deepest thanks to my family the emotional support given to me throughout my study. I also wish to show my utmost appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Modestus Fosu for his immense assistance and contributions towards the success of this work.

Finally, I am grateful to all those who contributed in making this work a success.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
SUPERVISOR’S DECLARATION	i
DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Framing	5
1.2 British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)	8
1.3 Al-Jazeera English	8
1.4 Statement of Problem	8
1.5 Significance of the Study	10
1.7 Organization of the Study	11
CHAPTER TWO	12
LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.0 Introduction	12
2.1 Theoretical Framework	12
2.2 Review of Related Literature	14
4.3 Conclusion	20
CHAPTER THREE	21
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	21
3.0 Introduction	21
3.1 Research Design	21
3.3 Content Analysis	21

3.4 Sampling Method and Size	23
3.5 Data Processing and Analysis	24
3.6 Limitations of the Study	24
CHAPTER FOUR.....	25
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDIES	25
4.0 Introduction	25
4.1 Conclusion	25
4.2 Recommendations.....	26
REFERENCES.....	27

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Algeria recorded its first case of the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) disease on February 25, 2020. That was the first reported case of the virus in Africa. As of today (August 10, 2020), the coronavirus disease has affected at least 20 million people globally with over 735, 000 people losing their lives to the novel virus. The United States of America Alone has recorded over 4 million infections with more than 140,000 deaths whereas Africa has recorded about 620,000 infections with a little over 10,000 deaths. Africa's total infection rate represents 4.3% of the global confirmed cases and 1.7% of the reported deaths globally (CNN, 2020; WHO, 2020). Since Covid-19 was first discovered in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, media reports of the disease have increased exponentially across the globe with world and local media outlets producing extensive coverage and reports on the illness from diverse perspectives (Time, 2020).

Due to the pivotal role of the media in society and the inextricable relationship between the media and society, media scholars have sought to understand and have documented empirical studies that explain how the media is used in various ways to set agenda, frame issues in a particular way or incite conflict among others in a given society (Bratic, 2006; McQuail, 2005; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2011). McQuail (2010) notes that the media serve as a foremost element in shaping the minds, perception, and reality of a group of people in society. McQuail further argues that the media among its many functions, serve as a primary source of information to people. The media are also considered agents of social integration or having the power to subvert social cohesion – having the capacity to unite heterogeneous people with a common set of ideas, values, and identities or disintegrating a homogenous group of people (Ibid).

Some scholars (Alozie, 2006; Scott, 2009; Ikon, 2016) have documented that reports of Africa in the Western media are usually poor, biased, prejudiced, under or over-reported. Wa’Njogu (2009) observed that the stereotypical representation of Africa has a historical underpinning which can be traced to ancient history when in the 5th century BC, the Greek historian Herodotus’s *The Histories* depicted Africa as occupied by non-human creatures and savages. Ikon (2016) and Michira (2002) have also argued that the representations of Africa in the Western media as a dark continent with unprecedented levels of civil wars, political unrest, disease, hunger, corruption and inept leadership can be traced to the days of slavery and colonialism. As chronicled by Jarosz (1992), evidence of the use of the description “dark continent” on Africa, can be traced to the 19th century when Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution depicted Africans as still evolving and did not merit the same status as the West. The description of Africa as a dark continent was again witnessed in 1878 when the famous Welsh journalist and explorer, Henry M. Stanley, published an account of his voyage in Africa titled: “Through the Dark Continent.”

The Economist – a British weekly magazine – on May 13th, 2000 published what many scholars have considered as the persistent negative representation of African by Western media. The cover of the British weekly described Africa as “The hopeless continent”, with countries such as Ethiopia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe labelled as having “degenerated into shambles”, “deluged by floods, famine”, and “succumbed to government-sponsored thuggery”, while “poverty and pestilence continue[d] unabated” (The Economist, 2000:2).

Some other scholars have observed that, the Western media preferably focus on denigrating images of African countries while refusing to report about the positive aspects and achievements of the continent (Ansah, 1984; Quist-Adade, 2001; Swain, 2003; Stock, 2004).

It was noted by Jere-Malanda (2008) that while the Western media portrayed to many households in the West visions of appalling newsreels of civilians and children with scythed limbs in Sierra Leone during the country's civil war, these same Western media produced little or no reports about Sierra Leone as the country remarkably transitioned to peace and smooth transfer of electoral power in October 2007.

Enahoro (1968, cited in Agbese and Ogbondah, 1988:36) similarly notes that Africa has not enjoyed any form of fair reportage between the positive and negative events that occur on the continent. Makunike (1993:1) remarked that: "We hear about famines and coups, but not the rejuvenation of its cities and the cultural vitality of its village life... about oppression and massacres, but not education, economic self-help and political development."

According to Ansah (1984:85), "The year 1979 saw the ousting of three of the most blood-thirsty leaders in Africa – Jean-Bedel Bokassa of the Central African Republic, Nguema Macias of Equatorial Guinea, and Idi Amin Dada of Uganda. These events had all the elements of drama and made 'good' copy; hence the Western press devoted considerable space to the fallen leaders' misdeeds." However, Ansah (1984:85) further notes that during the same period, "Two West African countries – Ghana and Nigeria – were preparing for elections for a return to representative civilian government," but the Western media comparatively gave very little attention to events in these two countries.

Ebo (1992) has argued that the disproportionate and deficient representation of Africa by Western media is a well calculated and systemic process devised by the Western media to select stories that fit the news market economy of the West. Ebo (1992) further asserts that the criteria for selecting stories which are considered newsworthy are largely shaped by the production and distribution of information commodity. That is, news is a commodity and what is considered newsworthy is usually defined by its commercial necessity.

As a result, when Western media reports in Africa select stories for broadcast or publication, they focus on stories that are eccentric and exceptional while ignoring “meaningful development stories about Africa because they are mundane and commercially unattractive” (Ebo 1992:16-17). Consequently, scholars have argued that, the Western media representation of Africa and events on the continent promote myths, stereotypes, negative and racist attitudes towards the continent and its people besides providing insufficient and biased knowledge about the continent and its related issues.

A research conducted by Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) into public understanding of developing countries identified the “Live Aid Legacy” as associated with developing countries (Scott, 2009; VSO, 2001, 2002). The “Live Aid Legacy” is that “80% of the British public strongly associate the developing world with doom-laden images of famine, disaster and Western aid”. The study further noted that, after almost 20 years of the Ethiopian famine (and the Live Aid relief concert), the British still had ingrained in their memory images of these events in Ethiopia and by extension Africa as a whole.

The researchers found the UK media responsible for producing such widespread perception among the public that people living in developing countries are less humans and inferior as compared to those in the developed world. As observed by VSO, “The stereotypes of extreme deprivation and poverty, together with powerful images of Western aid, add up to a strong sense of Africa as the helpless victim, deserving and requiring Western aid in order to survive” (VSO, 2002:4).

As regards investment in Africa, it has also been argued that, the negative representation of Africa by the Western media has prevented Africa from benefiting from global investments. At the 2005 African Presidential Roundtable, sponsored by Boston University’s African Presidential Archives and Research Centre (APARC), 11 former African leaders cited the

negative representation of Africa in the Western media as an impediment to partnership and development on the continent. According to the Heads of State, the negative representations in the Western media “has profound relevance to everything – including the world considering Africa as a worthy investment venue and viewing Africa as a valuable trading partner. It is reasonable to posit that, negative perceptions lead to negative outcomes, namely, lower levels of aid and lower levels of investment” (Boston University, 2005).

Consequently, this long essay seeks to analyse the framing of coronavirus reports about Africa in the Western media particularly the BBC and Al Jazeera. The study seeks to establish the frames used to report the coronavirus incidents in Africa by the Western media as well as examine the tone used in these reports. The idea is to discover whether Western media reportage on the coronavirus pandemic in Africa fits into the jaundiced frame discussed above. This study is relevant because it could provide empirical literature on the framing of Africa by the Western media especially because the coronavirus disease is not exclusive to Africa but is a global outbreak.

1.1 Framing

Media framing is a powerful characteristic of communication that can cause people to accept or choose one meaning and representation over another. The deliberate choice of a frame for media text by media organisation or personnel empowers the media to stress that aspect of reality till it becomes salient. Baran and Davis (2003) argue that our perception and expectation of both ourselves and other people in a social environment is one of the basic elements of social life. Some of these perspectives are stereotyped racial attitudes and biases – ones that are formed as a result of our social interaction and contact with the media.

The framing theory has undergone some rapid developments after its inception in the mid-1970s. The once exclusive sociological theory coined by the 20th century sociologist Erving

Goffman in 1974 has today, become a multidisciplinary theory used in communication study. The underlying idea of the framing theory is that communicators (media personnel) perceive some aspect of reality to be imperative and hence include or place emphasis on that while excluding other aspects of reality in the production and distribution of media text (Goffman, 1974). As argued by McQuail (2005) framing in mass communication presumes that the media do not only pay attention to the events they report but also some aspects (frames) of those events which can ultimately affect the perception and reaction of the public.

The concept of framing has over the years received varied scholarly definitions. Entman (1993: 52) asserts that framing encompasses the selection of “some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommended for items described.” Entman (1993:52) further argues that, media texts “contains frames, which are manifested by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, source of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgements.” Gitlin (1980:7) notes that, framing essentially is about the “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbolic handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual.” Similarly, Valkenburg et al. (1999) further argue that a media frame is a meticulous way in which journalists compose their news stories to improve audience accessibility. Cappella and Jamieson (1997:3940) highlights media frames as “those rhetorical and stylistic choices, reliably identified in news that alter the interpretations of the topics treated and are a consistent part of the news environment.”

These definitions of framing and the many others that could not be captured in this study, all suggestively points to the systematic presentation of events and news in the media to affect how media consumers perceive and understand these news or events. Thus, the media have

established themselves as an important stakeholder in many countries and unequivocally shape public perception and opinion through framing of selected events in a particular manner (De Vreese, 2005). De Vreese (2005: 53) further notes that, a frame refers to “an emphasis or salience of different aspects of a topic” and framing consequently represents how the media or a communication source depicts and describes an event or media text.

Thus, the choice and representation of frames about coronavirus in Africa in the Western media could be techniques adopted by Western media and reporters to reinforce the ideology, values, orientations and views of the West as well as project a specific image about Africa and its inhabitants as some scholars such as Alozie (2007) and Swain (2003) have argued. Baaz (2005) notes how contemporary portrayal of Africa in the Western media are biased and shallow with an aim of presenting events in Africa as extremely primitive. Ogunyemi (2011) asserts that framing is even more relevant in the media because of its implication on sustaining stereotypes and prejudice about a certain group of people or event. That is, media frames represent particular groups, communities, experiences, ideas, or topics from a particular ideological or value perspective which may be inimical to the wellbeing or success of the said group of persons or events. The stereotypes associated with a group of people or events influences the perception and reaction of people towards them. Thus, as regards the framing of coronavirus in Africa, the kind of news frames portrayed by the Western media could eventually result in reinforcing existing stereotypes of Africa as poverty-ridden and disease-stricken. While scholars have documented the magnitude of negative representation of Africa in Western Media (Stock, 2004; Alagiah, 1999; Michira, 2002), particular emphasis has not been placed on public health crisis specifically coronavirus and how the dissemination of information and choice of words by the Western media have impacted the spread of the virus on the continent as well as perception of the world about the continent.

1.2 British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), was founded by the British government in 1922 and it is currently United Kingdom's leading broadcaster with over 270 million global audiences weekly (BBC, 2020). The mission of the international media giants is "to act in the public interest, serving all audiences through the provision of impartial, high-quality and distinctive output and services which inform, educate and entertain" and it provide services via radio, television and online in more than 200 countries and territories across the globe. BBC is also known for its operations in over 40 languages around the world and available in over 300 million homes and 1.8 million hotels globally (BBC, 2020).

1.3 Al-Jazeera English

Al-Jazeera English (AJE) is a subsidiary of the international news channel, Al-Jazeera Media Network, headquartered in Doha, Qatar and it is owned and operated by Qatar's royal family. AJE was established in 2006 as part of the many subsidiaries of Al-Jazeera Media Network which has since grown into an international media outlet in more than 310 million homes in over 100 different countries and territories across the world. AJE is available through satellite, cable and online and it is particularly known for its coverage of events in underreported regions and developing countries (Al-Jazeera, 2020).

1.4 Statement of Problem

The global infection rate for the coronavirus now surpasses 120 million and the death toll also exceeding 735, 000. Africa has however, experienced a small fraction of the global infection rate since its inception in December 2019 while the United States of America, Italy, Spain, Germany and India are among countries with the most infections and death tolls (WHO, 2020; Al-Jazeera, 2020).

Both local and international media have since the outbreak provided first-hand information and in-depth reports on the disease, its origin and impact worldwide. Whereas some media outlets focused on communicating preventive measures and how best to minimise the spread, others rushed to frame the disease differently and stereotypically with “misleading reports and even racist tones” (U.S. News and World Reports, 2020). At this stage, news framing took centre stage in shaping public perception and discourse about Covid-19.

Media scholars have over the years studied the effects of the media on its audience and have observed that the media plays an important role in influencing people’s perception about an event or situation because people depend largely on the mass media for information (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Golan, 2006; Gadarian and Albertson, 2014; Graber, 2002). As such, the representations of Africa in the Western media greatly influence the perception of the people in those parts of the world about Africa and the continent as a whole. This negative perception of the West about Africa, promotes undue stereotype and racism against Africans, African businesses and diplomatic relations between the West and Africa. Whereas previous studies have however extensively focused on the framing of Africa in the Western media in relation to conflict and development (Alozie, 2006; Scott, 2009; Golan, 2008; Franks, 2005), not many studies have focused framing the novel coronavirus pandemic in Africa as an emerging academic discourse, although a fairly recent happening.

This study therefore seeks to examine the framing of the coronavirus in Africa by the Western media with specific emphasis on the online publications of the BBC and Al Jazeera from February to July 2020. The study is aimed at understanding how the coronavirus pandemic in Africa is framed by BBC and Al Jazeera and also to correlate findings with previous studies about the portray of Africa in the Western media.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study seeks to critically examine the representation of Africa in Western media by exploring the framing of Africa using stories about COVID-19 pandemic in Africa. Thus, the study is relevant primarily because it would add to the existing literature on the portrayal of Africa and its inhabitants in the Western media. Again, the study is relevant because it would serve as an important reference on the coronavirus crisis and how the Western Media framed it. And, the study would contribute to filling the void created as researchers have not provided enough empirical data about the coverage of the coronavirus in Africa and particularly in the Western media.

1.6 Research Questions

The following specific research questions guide the study.

- a. What tone did the BBC and Al-Jazeera use in framing the Covid-19 crisis in Africa?
- b. What were the key words/expressions and the dominant frames used by the BBC and Al-Jazeera to report on Covid-19 incidents in Africa?
- c. How does the framing of Covid-19 in Africa relate with existing narratives of Western portrayal of Africa?

1.7 Organization of the Study

This study consists of four chapters. It begins with chapter one which discusses the background to the study, problem statement, the specific objectives of the study, research questions, and significance of the study. The second chapter reviews the theoretical framework associated with the study as well empirical works done by other scholars in this field of study. The third chapter focuses on the methodology, research design, population and the sample size for the study. The final chapter of this study provides reflection on the contributions of this study to literature.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

A review of the most relevant theory underpinning this work would be critically examined in this chapter. Along with that would be a critical review of related works on the representation of African in Western media. The Chapter begins with the theoretical framework after which the review of related literature follows.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Grant & Osanloo (2014) underscores the importance of theories in a research study as the foundation for which all knowledge is built both in the metaphorical and literally form. The theoretical framework serves as the guiding principle for the researcher and consequentially a baseline for the literature review, methodology, and analysis (Ibid). This study is underpinned by two relevant theories that provide a way to understand the framing of the coronavirus pandemic in Africa by Western media. These are the Agenda Setting Theory and the Framing Theory.

2.1.1 Agenda Setting Theory

The agenda-setting theory can be traced as far back as 1922 when the newspaper columnist, Walter Lippmann (1922), in his classic “Public Opinion”, suggested that the media are a powerful tool that can be used to influence thoughts and ultimately behaviour patterns. His assertions were further entrenched when McCombs and Shaw (1972) conducted a study in Chapel Hill, North Carolina and provided empirical data collected from the survey on the 1968 United States of America Presidential elections. It was observed from the study that the voter's agenda was largely influenced by the media's reportage of the election campaign (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Bernard Cohen (1963), however, warned that the press may not be entirely

successful in telling its audience what to think, but it is most often successful in telling its audience what to think about. Littlejohn and Foss (2009) further argue that the mass media have the ability of contributing to or influencing the audience's perceptions, values, focus, and priorities. Accordingly, the audience would form their opinion based on the media's reportage or focus on the issues considered worthy of inclusion in their mental agenda. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) note that through the process of "accessibility", agenda setting occurs. The more frequently and prominently an issue is covered by the media, the more that particular issue becomes accessible in the audience's memory (Ibid).

In effect, the rate at which the mass media provides coverage on the outbreak of the novel coronavirus in Africa would ultimately affect the extent to which members of the society, particularly those in the West, would perceive the severity or geniality of the diseases in this part of the world as well as influence how policymakers at the global level respond to the health needs of those in this part of the world. The mass media, thus, can serve as a powerful tool in shaping the distribution of health relief items to victims based on the type of agenda they set regarding a particular group of people or environment. Through the agenda-setting theory, the Western media can portray a negative or positive picture of the outbreak of the disease in Africa and thereby influencing global policymakers' decisions about the prioritization and distribution of relief items to the African community as against the west. The Western media through agenda-setting can also reinforce negative stereotypes about Africa and cause disdain towards Africans.

2.1.2 Framing Theory

The frame is the prevailing angle of the treatment of the different stories once covered. Framing, like setting the agenda, is ultimately (with or without consciousness) an ideological act. The nature of the story (or the group of stories) would have an effect on how the story is investigated and presented, with whom it can speak, on the questions it poses and the analysis

and reporting of facts. Over the years, Framing has received various definitions. Entman (1993), says that framing comprises the selection of some aspects of the perceived reality and making them more prominent in a communicative text in order to support a defined problem, the cause, and/or the morals and/or treatment recommended for objects described. Framing essentially focuses on perpetual patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation, selection, emphasis and exclusion, by means of which symbolic managers routinely organize discourse, be it verbal or visual, and therefore framing allows news reporters to quickly and routinely process and package information to efficiently transfer them to their audiences (Gitlin, 1980). How news are framed can influence how a certain society thinks or behaves and framing is usually influenced by the ideology of a person or persons. The framing theory thus, suggests media texts are selectively used to influence the thought process of a group of people or society. This can therefore impact how people view or perceive a certain issue. The framing of the coronavirus in the Western media can therefore promote or help reduce racism particularly against Africans. The perception that Africans are less of human beings as portrayed by the west in some of their media reports can further be sustained or questioned based on the framing of news stories about Africa and Africans.

2.2 Review of Related Literature

2.2.1 Media Reports of Health Issues

The media are known for its responsibility of primarily providing information to the society. Beyond providing information about social activities, the media are also the source of information for health-related issues (Duhe and Cho, 2009). As an example, 80% of respondents of a study conducted by Nisbet (2006) noted that they obtained information about avian flu from the media. As a significant source of information, Dudo, Dahlstrom and Brossard (2007) argue the media have the power to influence the decision-making process of

an individual, policymakers or society. Due to their far reaching pragmatic impact, Armstrong, Carpenter and Hojnacki (2006) posit that media outlets prioritize health issues. They further argue that health issues such as Ebola and Zika virus dominated both national and international media landscapes across the globe. As argued by Longest (2005), many medical policies have been reviewed and new ones enacted to address health concerns that emerged from media reports and investigations. Even though the Ghanaian media landscape may not truly reflect this assertion, they do invest a considerable amount of time in providing their audience with information regarding health issues. As an example, since January, 2020. Omni-media, one of Ghana's leading media outlets with Citinewsroom, cumulatively reported well over 1, 400 news stories about coronavirus from January 22 to June 23, 2020 (Citinewsroom, 2020). A similar trend is observed with Multimedia's Myjoyonline.com which reported over 2,000 coronavirus stories from January 18, to June 23, 2020 (Myjoyonline, 2020). For Daily Graphic's online portal, over 900 news stories about the virus was reported between April 3, to June 23, 2020 (Graphic online, 2020).

The works of Gilboa (2005), Robinson (2005) and Livingston (2011) among others, have documented the established link between the media and its effect on policymakers and policy response to issues the media discuss. The classic CNN effect as argued by these scholars illustrates the symbiotic relationship between the media and foreign policy as it relates to politics, health and humanitarian issues. Also, Olsen, Carstensen and Høyen (2003) postulate that the extent of media coverage about a health emergency or humanitarian crisis influences the level of investment global leaders commit to providing emergency assistance particularly if the country involved is less-developed. Scholars such as Armstrong, Carpenter and Hojnacki (2006) have argued that the media activates the agenda-setting role during their coverage of certain issues. They posit that the media can frame health issues differently based on who is involved.

Colby and Cook (1991) further established the effect of the media on both the individual and policymakers. They argue that media coverage of health issues affects audiences and policymakers' perception of the said health issue. In a framing analysis of the media's coverage of HIV/AIDS, they observed a slow public response rate to the disease when media messages were initially focused on public reassurance and less of government's intervention. They however, argue that there was a shift to HIV/AIDS being a priority on policy agenda when the media framed messages about the disease with a focus on government's responsibility and public opinion equally shifted.

2.2.2 Western Media Framing of Africa

Many scholars have criticized the Western media and journalist, for failing to appropriately contextualize African events in their reportage. These criticisms have come about as a result of the findings of many scholarly works on the topic.

In a comparative analysis of two British papers – The Guardian and The Daily Telegraph, by Brookes (1995), it was discovered that irrespective of the two newspapers having different political and ideological perspectives, their portrayal of Africa was similar – stereotyped as a homogenous block occupied by very primitive, and helpless people whose leaders are “power hungry”, and “despotic” whereas, the West is portrayed as “the senior partner or parent who shoulders the burden of responsibility for the helpless, savage, self-destructive and child-like African” (Brookes, 1995:478). Brookes further reported in her findings that Africa was commonly presented by these two newspapers as a recurrent battleground, poverty and disease-stricken area with high levels of witchcraft.

Likewise, in 1995 when Myers, Klak and Koehl studied the press coverage in the United States (US), they reported that while the Western media framed the Bosnia's war as logical and a necessary result of historical events, the Rwandan war was however, reported as basically the

outcome of centuries-old tribal savagery. Their findings further revealed that the Western media's reportage of the conflict in both countries were different. They noted that while the Bosnia's conflict was covered as tactical and strategic, that of Rwanda was simply nothing short of ethnic and tribal violence. Myers et al. (1995:22), noted:

The media have told the war stories through the use of two different "frames", or information ordering devices. We read in The New York Times on 10 April 1994, for example, that Rwanda is embroiled in "tribal warfare", while on the same day the Times tells us that Bosnia is fighting "everyone's war". Further, despite the horrible bloodshed in both conflicts, the media are more willing to describe Rwanda's war as "bloodthirsty" or "savage", with "gangs" engaged in an "orgy" of "terror". In Bosnia, the press is more likely to describe the "tactics" and "strategies" of warfare, thereby suggesting that the conflict is more civilized.

Again, Myers et al. (1995) identified in their study that while within two weeks in 1994, events in the Rwandan conflict was described as an 'orgy' of violence and revenge, the Bosnia's conflict despite extensive evidence of rape, and mutilation of Muslim women, only one of the more than 14,000 articles during the four years of Myers et al.'s study uses the term "orgy".

Wall (1997) studied the news magazines reports of the Rwanda conflict and found that Western media framed the conflict as a deliberate ethnic occurrence. Wall (1997:132) reports that "readers were left to believe that this tribal violence just exploded."

Beattie, Miller, Miller and Philo (1999) similarly, scrutinized the British media's reports of the Rwanda conflict and their findings showed that the attempts made by both The Mirror and The Sun to provide a possible explanation to the events in Rwanda could only suggest that it was a conflict between two groups of "tribes" who were "wild", "Volatile", and "mad" in "nature"

(Beattie et al, 1999: 260). Their findings further indicated that Western television language and headlines used descriptions such as “Misery for thousands”, “Thousands on the move again”, “this is a land emptied of people, a land that has seen in the last two years, only refugees and hunger” to portray images of Africa.

Africa again, was described as a “place of darkness” in McNulty (1999), study of Western (British, French, and US) media’s coverage of the Rwandan war. As noted by McNulty (1999:273), French historian, Gérard Prunier, labelled Africa as “a place of darkness, where furious savages clobber each other on the head to assuage their dark ancestral bloodlusts.” In addition, McNulty reports that two of France’s leading reporters of African affairs, Antoine Glaser and Stephen Smith, described Africa as plugged with “Tribal wars, bloody coups d’état, Biblical famines, savage massacres, devastating epidemics ... Africa is another planet” (McNulty, 1999:273). Beaudoin and Thorson (2001) also documented the framing of African’s in American newspapers and found that Africa was largely portrayed as a homogenous block with power issues.

Ndangam (2002) studied two United Kingdom’s (UK) newspapers’ reports of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and discovered how their media text and headlines regularly described Africa with the metaphor “heart of darkness”. Ndangam notes in her study of 199 news stories about the conflict that the routinely use of the metaphor significantly devalues Africa and as well speaks ill of the practice of journalism.

Robins (2003) conducted a textual analysis of how Sudanese refugees who have resettled in the US were portrayed in the top US newspapers. Her findings revealed that the Sudanese refugees were reported as “coming from a situation beyond understanding, vessels waiting to be filled by US material culture” (Robins, 2003:29). Other news items also addressed the

refugees as “a child-man with glowing dark skin ... who was clad only in tattered rags” (Robins, 2003:35).

In juxtaposing earlier discoveries about the framing of Africa in Western media, a recent study by Scott (2009) discovered in a content analysis of Africa in UK media, that coverage of Africa in Western media was “not as marginalized, negative or trivial as it is often accused of being” (Scott, 2009:534). However, the study also found there were 30 examples of negative framing of Africa in 155 newspaper headlines. A confirmation of the existence and continues expression of negative framing of Africa by Western media.

As established in this chapter, the media are instrumental in providing information about the things that affect all spheres of society. Scholars such as McQuail (2010) have argued that the media serve as a primary source of information to people and as a foremost element in shaping the minds, perception, and reality of people in a society. As a result, some scholars (Ndangam, 2002; Brookes, 1995; Ikon, 2016) have argued the Western media take advantage of the power of the media to shape perceptions, to skew their reports in a way that is detrimental to the development of the African continent and the people of Africa. Evidence from many studies have unanimously found the Western media guilty of a stereotypical representation of Africa in their reports. Among many, the frames of reports of Africa in the Western media include ‘dark continent’, ‘hopeless continent’, ‘deluged by floods and famine’, governed by ‘corrupt’ officials, plugged with ‘tribal conflicts’ and ‘devastating epidemics’. These negative representations do not only affect global political dynamics but invariably affect the psycho-social lives of Africans in Africa and across the globe.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed literature and theories that underpin the the framing of Africa in Western media. The literature reviewed provided empirical analysis of how Africa is portrayed in the Western media and outlined recurring framing themes of Africa in the Western media. Whereas many of the scholars focused on the representation of Africa in conflict situations, a few considered the holistic portrayal of Africa in the Western media. The review identified frames of poverty, conflict, sickness, famine and corruption as the dominant themes in the representation of Africa in Western media.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The methodical approaches and processes used in this paper to collect and analyse data are discussed in this chapter. In this chapter, the research approaches used in this study and detailed analytical procedures to be used to assess the framing analysis of the reports of coronavirus in Africa by Western media specifically BBC and Al-Jazeera English are explained in detail and justified. The chapter provides a more detailed analysis and examination of the research design, sampling method, and data processing.

3.1 Research Design

This paper employs content analysis to study a framing analysis of the reports of coronavirus in Africa by Western media specifically BBC and Al-Jazeera English. Content analysis is employed as the primary data collection tool.

3.3 Content Analysis

Content analysis is a method that can be used to analyze media texts systematically, quantitatively and critically for special purposes of output conflict, effects exploration and media comparisons and over time or content and evidence" (Mcquail, 2009). Holsti (1968) describes content analysis through objective and systematic recognition of particular message characteristics as any means of drawing conclusions. Content analysis incorporates analysis of content with analysis of discourse. It is an outstanding way for the objective, structural and quantitative depiction of mass communication content, and it is one of the methodologies most used in mass communication research (Kaid and Wadsworth, 1989, Stempel, 2003). Content analysis is often a method to assess the existence of certain terms, subjects or ideas in qualitative data. The analysis of the materials helps researchers to quantify and examine the

existence, definitions and relationships of certain words, topics or concepts in this study. The researchers may then draw conclusions on the message of the messages, viewers, society and text times (CUMSPH, nd).

Content Analysis offers a chance in mass media study to find out who says what, how and what consequences it has (Stempel, 2003). Hansen et al (1998) added that the content study has developed into the arms of international media studies conducted in broader discussions and concerns on the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), cultural imperialism and development communication, globalization and information transition and image flows (Srebeny-Mohammadi 1984, Akitanyo 2016).

This method offers the researcher the ability to assess the topic, then the audience to be analyzed as well as the source and the nature of the media. If the population is large, a sample will be carefully selected. For the purpose of categorization of content categories are defined; the sample content is then objectively coded. This helps in the validity and reliability calculation. The results are then interpreted and evaluated using accepted theories in the media (Kaid & Wadsworth, 1989, cited by Akitanyo, 2016). Wimmer and Dominick (2006) assert that the content analysis method is popular with mass media researchers because it provides an efficient way to investigate the content of the media such as the number and types of commercials or advertisements in broadcasting and in the print media and the linguistic impression and or framing of events in the media. Results are gathered through identifiable themes and coding scheduled developed by the researcher. Hence, as regards the framing of coronavirus in Africa by BBC and Al-Jazeera, content analysis of the online publications of media text about coronavirus in Africa by these media outlets would enable the study identify the various framing themes of the virus in Africa.

The essay will take keen interest in the frequency of stories on COVID19 on Africa since the continent first recorded its case, the tone, diction and choice of words as well as the prominence

placed on such stories to determine the frames used for the representation of Africa as regards the outbreak of the virus.

The British Broadcasting Corporation and Al-Jazeera English are sampled purposively based on their wide reach in the world and wide appeal to all groups of people across the globe. A large audience base means these transnational media agencies have the power to shape or sway readers' opinion and ideas on important issues in the society and these opinions can have a huge impact on the continent (Africa).

3.4 Sampling Method and Size

A sample must be of the appropriate size in order to be able to detect any major differences / associations that may be present in the research population. In all studies, determining the minimum sample size needed to achieve the main study objectives is of vital importance (Aamir 2014). Berelson (1952) says the results are as valid as the analysis of a lot more-and spends much less time and effort-with a small and carefully chosen sample of relevant content. The sample size for this study will be the online reports by BBC and Al-Jazeera from February to July 2020 on coronavirus on the African continent. The study would consider about 50 online articles from each media outlet from the period February to July 2020. Aside the larger audience base of these two transnational news agencies, these stations dedicate a major part of their airtime covering Africa (BBC Africa and Al-Jazeera Africa). And as stated earlier, this means the two media entities have the power to shape or sway readers' opinion and ideas on important issues in the society as well as influence the attitude of the viewers due to their wide audience base.

3.5 Data Processing and Analysis

Analyzing data is of utmost significance in content analysis. According to Babbie (2007), this institutes the single unit of which descriptive and explanatory statements are made. It is really what the researcher tallies and groups. Data processed and analyzed will be online content (news articles) from BBC and Al-Jazeera on their report or coverage of coronavirus on the African continent. A thorough analysis will be done on these programs guided by the main objectives of the study. The study took a cue from the coding procedure of Brock (1992), Fair (1993) and Scott (2009) to establish available frames in the sampled programs. As identified in the literature review, the dominant themes in the framing of Africa in the Western media include sickness, poverty and famine and hence, the study is likely to identify similar themes from the online reports of these media outlets about the outbreak of virus in Africa. However, the study is also likely to identify opposing themes such as hope, good health and good governance in the reports of the incidences of the coronavirus in Africa by these media outlets.

3.6 Limitations of the Study

The major challenge for this research is the emergence of the novel coronavirus which restricted the research to a long essay due to government's restrictions on movement and communication. As a result, the researcher had to work with the Institute's guideline for conducting a long essay which excludes data collection and analysis. Another major limitation of the study stems from the limited data on the framing of coronavirus in the media. This is because coronavirus is still an emerging disease and not many scholars have conducted studies on the media's framing of news about the disease.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDIES

4.0 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study and provides recommendations based on the literature review to aid in future research works related to the topic.

4.1 Conclusion

As evident in the literature review, the media's role in society cannot be underrated. The media plays a critical and important role in shaping opinion and policy agenda in almost every society in the world. Through their agenda-setting and framing abilities, the media are said to have a significant influence on people's perception of the world and things that may be considered a reality. As identified in the literature review, the framing ability of the media empowers them to shape the news and information they disseminate in a way that can either reinforce existing stereotypes or help reduce any form of discrimination. As such, the study sought to examine the framing of the novel coronavirus in Africa by the Western media using content from BBC and Al-Jazeera. The agenda-setting and framing theory is used as a theoretical basis. Through a proposed content analysis, the study sought to critically analyse content from BBC and Al-Jazeera as regards their reportage of the novel coronavirus in Africa.

The study identified through the literature review that the framing of Africa in the Western media have often been negative and characterized with unprintable stereotypical words that paints the continent bad both at the international and local level.

4.2 Recommendations

Despite the researcher's inability to collect and analyse primary data due to the Institute's guidelines for the conduct of a long essay, the researcher proffers recommendation based on the review of literature. Firstly, the researcher recommends a detailed comparative study on the framing of the novel coronavirus in the Global South and North. This will provide empirical justification to claims of previous studies about the framing of Africa in the Western media. Again, the researcher recommends that further studies widen the scope of their studies to go beyond just BBC and Al-Jazeera. This will enable them provide extensive literature on the topic as well as refute or affirm existing claims of a negative framing of Africa in the Western media. Finally, the researcher recommends that academic institutions in Africa invest in studying the underlying reasons for the Western media's portrayal of Africa as a negative continent. This will provide sufficient literature on the topic to both students and scholars interested in studying Africa and the Western media.

REFERENCES

- Armstrong, E. M., Carpenter, D. P., & Hojnacki, M. 2006. *Whose deaths matter? Mortality, advocacy, and attention to disease in the mass media*. *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, 31(4), 729-772.
- Agbese, P. and Ogbondah, C. 1988. *The US Press and Political Change in the Third World: The Coverage of Military Coups, Political Communication and Persuasion*, 5(1), 33-47.
- Alagiah, G. 1999. *New Light on the Dark Continent*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/1999/may/03/1>
- Al-Aljazeera English (AJE). 2020. *About us*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/aboutus/>
- Alozie, E. 2007. *What Did They Say? African Media Coverage of the First 100 Days of the Rwanda Crisis*. In Thompson, A. (ed.). *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide* (pp. 211-231). London: Pluto Press.
- Alozie, E. 2006. *Taking Stock of UNESCO's Media Declaration: An Analysis of Selected Issues of Time Magazine's News and Related Coverage of Africa, 1979-1986*. http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/0/9/0/8/7/pages90879/p908791.php
- Ansah, P. 1984. *International News: Mutual Responsibilities of Developed and Developing Nations*. In Gerbner, G., and Seifert, M. (eds.), *World Communications: A Handbook* (pp. 83-91). New York: Longman
- Baaz, M.E. 2005. *The Paternalism of Partnership: A Postcolonial Reading of Identity in Development Aid*. London: Zed Books.
- Beattie, L., Miller, D., Miller, E., and Philo, G. 1999. *The Media and Africa: Images of Disaster and Rebellion*.
- Beaudoin, C.E. and Thorson, E. 2001. *Value Representations in Foreign News*. *International Communication Gazette*, 63(6), 481-503.
- Bratic Vladimir. 2006. *Examining peace-oriented media in areas of violent conflict*. Roanoke, VA
- Brookes, H. J. 1995. *Suit, Tie and a Touch of Juju - The Ideological Construction of Africa: A Critical Discourse Analysis of News on Africa in the British Press*, *Discourse and Society*, 6(4), 461-494.
- British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), 2020. *About us*. <https://www.bbc.com/aboutthebbc>
- Boston University. 2005. *A Survey of African Media Coverage of African Democracies: 1994-2004*.
- Cappella, J. A. and Jamieson, K. H. 1997. *Spiral of Cynicism: The Press and the Public Good*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

- Citineewsroom. 2020. Archives. <https://citineewsroom.com/coronavirus/>
- Colby, D. C., & Cook, T. E. 1991. *Epidemics and agendas: The politics of nightly news coverage of AIDS*. *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, 16(2), 215-250.
- CNN. 2020. *July 23 Coronavirus News*. Retrieved from <https://edition.cnn.com/world/live-news/coronavirus-pandemic-07-23-20-intl/index.html>
- De Vreese, C. H. (2005). *News framing: Theory and Typology*. *Information Design Journal Document Design*, 13(1), 51–62. <https://doi.org/0.1075/idjdd.13.1.06vre>
- Dudo, A. D., Dahlstrom, M. F., & Brossard, D. 2007. *Reporting a Potential Pandemic: A Risk Related Assessment of Avian Influenza Coverage in U.S. Newspapers*. *Science Communication*, 429-454.
- Duhé, S. F., & Cho, S. 2009. *Network News Coverage of Avian Flu: Identifying the Characteristics of Risk*. *Electronic News*, 124-142.
- Ebo, B. 1992. *American Media and African Culture*. In Hawk, B.G. (ed.), *Africa's Media Image* (pp.15-25). Westport: Praeger.
- Entman, R. M. 1993. *Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm*. *Journal of Communication*. 43. 4: 51-58.
- Franks, S. 2010. *The Neglect of Africa and the Power of Aid*. *International Communication*
- Gitlin, T. 1980. *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Goffman, E. 1974. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. New York.
- Golan, G. 2006. *Inter-media agenda setting and global news coverage: Assessing the influence of the New York Times on three network television evening news programs*. *Journalism studies*, 7(2), 323-333
- Golan, G. 2008. *Where in the World is Africa? Predicting Coverage of Africa by US Television Networks*. *International Communication Gazette*, 70(1), 41-57
- Grant, C., & Osanloo, A. 2014. *Understanding, selecting, and integrating a theoretical framework in dissertation research: Creating the blueprint for your "house."* *Administrative Issues Journal: Connecting to Education, Practice, and Research*.
- Graphic online. 2020. <https://www.graphic.com.gh/>
- Ikon, A. O., 2016. *Uk Newspaper Coverage of Africa: A Content Analysis of the Guardian, And The Daily Mail from the Years 1987-1989 And 2007-2009*. July.
- Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. 1987. *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion*. Chicago. IL: University of Chicago Press

Jarosz, L. 1992. *Constructing the Dark Continent: Metaphor as Geographic Representation of Africa*. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, 74(2), 105-115. doi:10.2307/490566\

Jere-Malanda, R. 2008. *And Now... Positive Africa, New African*. 474, 36-40.

Kaid, L. L. and Wadsworth, A. J. 1989. *Content Analysis*. In P. Emmert & L. Barker (Eds.). *Measurement of communication behaviour pp. 197-217*. New York: Longman.

Littlejohn, S. W., & Foss, K. A. (Eds.). 2009. *Encyclopaedia of communication theory (Vol. 1)*. Sage

Lippmann, W. 1922. *Public Opinion*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co

Makunike, E. 1993. *Out of Africa: Western Media Stereotypes Shape Images*. http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article108.html

McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. 1972. *The agenda-setting function of mass media*. *Public opinion quarterly*, 176-187.

McCombs, M., & Shaw, D. 1972. *The agenda setting function of mass media*. *Public Opinion Quarterly*

McQuail, D. 2005. *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory. (5thed)*. New Delhi: Vistaar Publications

Michira, J. 2002. *Images of Africa in the Western Media*. http://www.teachingliterature.org/teachingliterature/pdf/multi/images_of_africa_michira.pdf

Myers, G., Klak, T., and Koehl, T. 1995. *The Inscription of Difference: News Coverage of the Conflicts in Rwanda and Bosnia*. *Political Geography*. 15(1), 21-46

Myjoyonline.com. 2020. <https://www.myjoyonline.com/tag/coronavirus/>

Ndangam, L.N. 2002. *'Heart of Darkness' - Western Media Rhetoric on Africa: Constructing and Associating Meaning over Time*.

Ogunyemi, O. 2011. *Representation of Africa Online: Sourcing Practice and Frames of Reference*. *Journal of Black Studies*, 42(3), 457– 478

Quist-Adade, C. 2001. *In the Shadows of the Kremlin and the White House: Africa's Media Image from Communism to Post-Communism*. Lanham: University Press of America.

Robinson, P. 2005. *The CNN effect revisited*. *Critical studies in media communication*, 22(4), 344-349.

Scheufele, D. A. & Tewksbury, D. 2011. *Framing, agenda setting and priming: the evolution of three media effects models*. *Journal of communication*. 57 (2007) 920 Doi: 10/1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00326. x.

Scott, M. 2009. *Marginalized, Negative or Trivial? Coverage of Africa in the UK Press, Media, Culture & Society*. 31(4), 533-557.

Shih T., Wijaya, R., & Brossard, D., 2008. *Media Coverage of Public Health Epidemics: Linking Framing and Issue Attention Cycle toward an Integrated Theory of Print News Coverage of Epidemics*. *Mass Communication and Society*, 11(2), 141-160

Stempel, G. H. (2003). *Content Analysis*. In G. H. Stempel & B. H. Westley. *Research Methods in Mass Communications*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Stock, R. 2004. *Africa South of the Sahara: A Geographical Interpretation, (2nd Edition)*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Swain, K.A. 2003. *Proximity and Power Factors in Western Coverage of the Sub-Saharan AIDS Crisis*. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 80(1), 145-165.

The Economist. 2000. *Hopeless Africa*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.economist.com/node/333429>

Time. 2020. *News Coverage of Coronavirus in 2020 is Very Different Than It Was for Ebola in 2018*. Retrieved from <https://time.com/5779872/coronavirus-ebola-news-coverage/>

U.S.News and World Reports. 2020. *How Global Media Covers the Coronavirus*. <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2020-02-07/how-the-global-media-covered-stories-about-the-coronavirus-outbreak>

Valkenburg, P.M., Semetko, H.A., and De Vreese, C.H. 1999. *The Effects of News Frames on Readers' Thoughts and Recall*. *Communication Research*, 26(5), 550-569.

Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO). 2001. *Live Aid Legacy: The Developing World Through British Eyes - A Research Report*. http://dochas.ie/Shared/Files/7/The_Live_Aid_Legacy.pdf

Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO). 2002. *The Live Aid Legacy*. London: Voluntary Service Overseas.

Wa’Njogu, J.K. 2009. *Representation of Africa in the western media: Challenges and opportunities*. In: Njogu, K, Middleton, J (eds) *Media and Identity in Africa*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.76–83.

Wall, M.A. 1997. *The Rwanda Crisis: An Analysis of News Magazine Coverage*. *International Communication Gazette*, 59(2), 121-134.

Wimmer, R.D. and Dominick, J.R. (2006). *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*, (8th Edition).

World Health Organization (WHO). 2020. *Coronavirus Dashboard*. Retrieved from <https://covid19.who.int/>

World Health Organization (WHO). 2020. *Covid-19 situational report for the WHO Africa Region*. Retrieved from

https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/333388/SITREP_COVID-19_WHOAFRO_20200722-eng.pdf