



**EXAMINING THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN PREVENTING FOOTBALL HOOLIGANISM IN  
GHANA: MEDIA NARRATIVES, PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS, AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

**BY**

**RUTH NAA AMANOA ASAMOAH**


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## DECLARATION BY STUDENT

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

RUTH NAA AMANOAH ASAMOAH	MADC24032		12/12/2025
<b>Student</b>	<b>Index Number</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>

## CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

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

DR. JOSEPH OBENG-BAAH		12/12/2025
<b>Supervisor</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>

## **DEDICATION**

To the game that kept its promises

When people sometimes didn't

Twenty-two players, one ball

So many memories of joy created

Infinite ways to come home

This book is my way

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of the media in preventing football hooliganism in Ghana, with emphasis on media narratives, public perceptions, and policy implications. Guided by Framing Theory and Cultivation Theory, the study investigated how Ghanaian media construct and present football-related violence, how such portrayals influence public attitudes toward football safety, and the extent to which media coverage shapes policy and disciplinary responses within the football governance structure. The study adopted a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative phase employed structured questionnaires administered to 200 respondents, comprising football fans. The qualitative phase involved in-depth interviews with ten participants, five sports journalists and five officials of the Ghana Football Association (GFA), to explore perceptions and experiences related to media reporting and institutional response. Findings revealed that the Ghanaian media play a dual role in the construction of football hooliganism. Quantitatively, 69% of respondents reported that violent incidents are frequently highlighted by the media, while 45.5% believed coverage tends to be exaggerated. Moreover, 60.5% agreed that continuous exposure to reports of hooliganism makes them more cautious about attending matches, and 71.5% strongly supported collaboration between journalists and football authorities to prevent hooliganism. Thematic analysis corroborated these results, showing that sports journalists often frame hooliganism as “a blot on Ghana’s football reputation,” while GFA officials emphasised that sensational reporting distorts public understanding and undermines institutional credibility. However, both groups acknowledged that responsible media practices, grounded in ethics, accuracy, and collaboration, can promote peace, accountability, and preventive education. The study concludes that media framing significantly influences public perception, fan behaviour, and policy response. While current reporting often amplifies moral panic, the same media platforms possess immense potential to cultivate positive fan culture and institutional reform through deliberate peace-oriented communication. The study recommends stronger collaboration between the GFA and media organisations, ethical guidelines for sports reporting, media literacy for fans, and the adoption of peace journalism frameworks to guide narrative construction.

**Keywords:** Media Narratives, Football Hooliganism, Framing Theory, Cultivation Theory, Ghana Football Association, Sports Journalism, Public Perception, Policy Reform, Peace Journalism, Fan Behavior.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

GFA – Ghana Football Association

FA – Football Association

FIFA – Fédération Internationale de Football Association

CAF – Confederation of African Football

MoYS – Ministry of Youth and Sports

SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

HFG – Hooliganism Framework in Ghana

MSD – Mean Standard Deviation

TV – Television

FM – Frequency Modulation (Radio Broadcasting)

SM – Social Media

NMC – National Media Commission

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the study that seeks to examine the role of the media in preventing football hooliganism in Ghana, focusing on how media narratives influence public perception and policy responses. It outlines the background of the problem, the statement of the problem, research objectives and questions, significance, scope, and structure of the study, establishing a foundational understanding for the investigation that follows.

### 1.2 Background of Study

Football has played a significant role in shaping national identity and fostering unity in Ghana and across Africa. In post-colonial Ghana, football transcended ethnic differences and became an integral part of the national identity (Horner, 2010). However, the persistent issue of football hooliganism, characterised by aggressive, violent, and disorderly behaviour by fans, poses a threat to its communal and developmental potential. Contemporary research increasingly explores how the media's framing of football-related violence can influence public perception, behaviour modification, and policy responses (Ncube & Munoriyarwa, 2021).

The media in Ghana plays a dual role as both informant and influencer. Its coverage of football events can either exacerbate tensions or promote peaceful engagement. Ncube and Munoriyarwa (2021) observed that media framing can sometimes intensify rivalries, but when responsibly managed, it becomes an essential vehicle for peacebuilding. In Ghana, particularly, broadcast and social media is pivotal in shaping narratives and offering platforms for community discourse about sportsmanship and conflict resolution (Kusi & Santiaguel, 2024).

Studies across Africa support the idea that positive media narratives can curb violence by promoting dialogue, transparency, and tolerance. In Zimbabwe, for instance, biased media coverage was linked to escalated fan tensions during high-stakes games (Ncube & Munoriyarwa, 2021). Meanwhile, in Ghana, responsible sports journalism and sensitisation campaigns have been found effective in promoting attitudinal changes among fans (Kusi & Santiaguel, 2024). This positions the media not just as a watchdog but as a proactive agent in cultivating civic sports behaviour.

Public perception of football-related violence in Ghana is significantly shaped by how incidents are reported. Sensational headlines and partisan reporting often lead to misinformation and increased aggression among fans (Chirambaguwa et al., 2022). Akpabli (2023) emphasised that when media narratives spotlight youth as agents of change rather than instigators of violence, societal attitudes begin to shift constructively.

Beyond shaping perception, the media also functions as a policy actor. Its influence can galvanise public opinion and prompt institutional responses. Mohammed (2018) identified how the Ghana Football Association (GFA) leveraged social media following violent episodes to condemn actions and call for reform. This responsiveness highlights the growing role of media in setting policy agendas, particularly in sports governance. When combined with legal frameworks and educational outreach, media narratives can directly inform regulatory action (Watson, 2013).

Global studies provide a broader context, revealing that effective hooliganism prevention strategies often include media collaboration. For instance, Dinani et al. (2023) emphasised using media platforms for psychological awareness campaigns targeting football fans in Iran. Lessons from Europe (Dunning, 2000) and Cyprus (Yiapanas et al., 2019) further suggest that

consistent public engagement via media reduces repeat offenses by discouraging antisocial behaviour and encouraging community policing.

In Ghana, the policy implications of media influence are profound. Rockwood (2008) asserts that fan engagement strategies should prioritise narrative inclusion, allowing marginalised voices to express grievances constructively, thus reducing the lure of violence. Integrating sports psychologists and journalists in violence prevention task forces may further enhance outcomes (Dinani et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, caution is warranted. Media ownership and editorial biases may compromise neutrality, thus undermining peace efforts. Ncube and Munoriyarwa (2021) warned against media silence or complicity in the face of aggression, arguing for ethical journalism grounded in factual, peace-oriented storytelling.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Football transcends ethnic and cultural differences, serving as a significant means of expressing unity and nationalism in Ghanaian society (Peterson Horner, 2010). The sport also holds importance for youth, who view football as a pathway to social mobility and improved life chances through migration (Ungruhe & Esson, 2017). However, this unity is periodically disrupted by episodes of hooliganism and violence at football events, notably the 2001 Accra Sports Stadium disaster, which claimed over 120 lives (Mohammed, 2018). Media, as a critical actor in shaping public discourse, has been recognised globally for both exacerbating and mitigating football-related violence. While some studies acknowledge the role of Ghanaian media in broadcasting violent incidents, there is limited empirical research evaluating how media narratives actively contribute to violence prevention (Chiweshe & Choto, 2024; Kusi & Santiaguel, 2024). Extant research has explored football culture, fandom, and violence in African contexts, with regional studies linking media portrayals to the normalisation of

aggressive behaviors (Ncube & Munoriyarwa, 2021). Yet, such analyses remain scarce in Ghanaian scholarly discourse, and most narratives are reactive, centered on post-event reportage rather than proactive strategies (Acheampong, 2023). Moreover, media framing in slum areas such as Nima has been found to reinforce stereotypes rather than foster constructive engagement or conflict de-escalation (Chiweshe & Choto, 2024). These portrayals potentially shape public perception in ways that either stigmatise supporters or fail to highlight institutional and structural drivers of hooliganism. Hence, the communication strategies employed by the media warrant critical investigation in the Ghanaian setting, particularly in terms of their alignment with conflict prevention and peacebuilding goals.

Although some African-based studies examine fan behavior and media narratives in Zimbabwe and Nigeria (Choto, Chiweshe, & Muparamoto, 2019; Onwumechili & Oloruntola, 2014), there is minimal focus on Ghana, and even less on the intersection between media influence and public policy in addressing hooliganism. As highlighted by Darby (2013), football has historically been used as a political tool in Ghana for nation-building, yet the role of media in shaping or challenging these agendas remains under-theorized. Furthermore, the growing digital media landscape in Ghana introduces new dynamics in how hooliganism is narrated and countered (Mbassi Elong, 2023). There is thus an urgent need to investigate whether the shift toward social media engagement has altered public perception and what implications this holds for public safety and policy-making.

A critical gap in current scholarship lies in the lack of interdisciplinary studies that triangulate media narratives, audience reception, and governmental policy responses to football hooliganism. While Chirambaguwa and Chiweshe (2022) have discussed the mediatization of football in Africa, their analysis does not extend to policy implications or public perception in Ghana. This limits our understanding of how media could be harnessed in multi-stakeholder strategies involving clubs, fans, media practitioners, and regulatory bodies. Addressing this gap

is crucial, especially given the changing nature of fan engagement and the high stakes involved in maintaining order at stadiums and viewing centres.

This study seeks to fill the identified research gaps by examining the role of Ghanaian media in preventing football hooliganism, focusing on three interlinked dimensions: media narratives, public perception, and policy implications. It will analyse how traditional and social media platforms frame incidents of football violence, assess public reception of these narratives, and explore how such communication influences, or fails to influence, preventative policies by institutions like the Ghana Football Association and law enforcement. By doing so, this research will offer a nuanced understanding of the media's potential as a strategic actor in conflict prevention and peace promotion within Ghanaian football culture

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The broad objective of this study is to examine how media narratives influence the prevention of football hooliganism in Ghana, focusing on public perception and policy implications. The specific objectives are;

1. To analyse the dominant media narratives surrounding football hooliganism in Ghana.
2. To assess how public perception is shaped by media coverage of football-related violence in Ghana
3. To evaluate the extent to which media coverage informs or influences policy and institutional responses to football hooliganism.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. What are the dominant narratives in Ghanaian media regarding football hooliganism?
2. How does media coverage of football-related violence influence public perception in Ghana?

3. To what extent does media coverage influence policy and institutional responses to football hooliganism in Ghana?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

First and foremost, this study will contribute significantly to the academic discourse on media influence by offering empirical insights into how Ghanaian media frames football hooliganism and its implications for violence prevention. While media studies in Ghana have focused extensively on political reporting and development communication, few have critically examined the intersection of sports journalism and social control. By exploring how narratives in print, broadcast, and digital platforms may reinforce or deter violent fan behaviors, the study provides valuable content for journalism, communication, and cultural studies scholars seeking to understand media's role in shaping public discourse and moral responsibility in sports contexts.

Secondly, the findings of this study will be highly relevant for stakeholders such as the Ghana Football Association (GFA), Ministry of Youth and Sports, National Media Commission, and law enforcement agencies. By identifying the ways in which media coverage influences both public perception and institutional action, this research can help inform targeted policy interventions that leverage the media as a proactive partner in violence prevention. It will also assist in developing strategic communication frameworks for crisis management, fan education, and media engagement protocols during high-risk football matches.

Furthermore, understanding how the media shapes societal attitudes towards football violence can help design more effective public awareness campaigns and fan sensitisation initiatives. Through analysing public responses to media narratives, the study will uncover areas where misconceptions or emotional bias may escalate tensions. This will be particularly useful in promoting responsible fandom and reducing the stigma toward particular supporter groups or

clubs. Consequently, the research supports the broader goal of fostering a peaceful and inclusive sporting environment in Ghana.

### **1.7 Scope of Study**

This study focuses on examining the role of the media in preventing football hooliganism in Ghana, with particular emphasis on media narratives, public perception, and policy implications. It will cover both traditional media (television, radio, newspapers) and digital platforms (social media and online news portals), analysing how these channels portray incidents of football-related violence. The study will target media content from the past five years and gather public perceptions through interviews and surveys involving football fans, sports journalists, and security personnel. Geographically, the research will be limited to major urban centres in Ghana where football hooliganism incidents have been most reported, such as Accra, Kumasi, and Tamale. The study will not cover broader forms of sports violence unrelated to football, nor will it investigate international football events or fan behaviour outside Ghana. The study will last for a duration of 8 months.

### **1.8 Limitations of the Study**

First and foremost, the study employs a qualitative approach with a relatively small, purposively selected sample of journalists, football fans, and policymakers. As such, the findings may not be generalizable to the wider Ghanaian population or to all media and policy contexts, but rather offer deep insights specific to the selected participants.

Secondly, gaining access to certain key informants, such as high-level policymakers or media gatekeepers, may be challenging due to their tight schedules or reluctance to discuss sensitive topics such as media bias or policy inefficiencies. This may limit the diversity and depth of perspectives captured in the study.

Finally, as with most qualitative studies, there is the potential for researcher bias in the collection, interpretation, and analysis of interview data. While efforts will be made to ensure objectivity through triangulation and rigorous thematic analysis, subjective interpretation remains a limitation inherent to qualitative research.

### **1.9 Organisation of Study**

This study is organised into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the study, presenting the background, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance, scope, and organisation of the study. Chapter two reviews relevant literature, including theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and key concepts such as media framing, football hooliganism, and public perception. Chapter three outlines the methodology, detailing the research approach, design, population, sampling techniques, data collection, and analysis methods. Chapter four presents and discusses the findings based on interviews conducted with key stakeholders, including media professionals, fans, and policymakers. Chapter five concludes the study by summarising the key findings, drawing conclusions, offering policy and practical recommendations, and suggesting areas for future research.

### **1.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter introduced the study by contextualising football hooliganism as a growing social concern in Ghana, particularly during high-stakes matches involving major local clubs. It outlined the research problem, highlighting the limited exploration of media's role in preventing football-related violence, and justifies the need for a study focused on media narratives, public perceptions, and policy implications. The chapter also presented clear research objectives and questions aimed at guiding the investigation. It also detailed the significance of the study for media practitioners, policymakers, and sports authorities, and

establishes the scope and limitations. The chapter concludes by presenting the organizational structure of the entire study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews existing scholarly literature on media, football, and hooliganism in both Ghanaian and broader African contexts, identifying commonalities and differences in research findings. It also engages with theoretical perspectives such as Cultivation Theory and Framing Theory, which provide conceptual tools for analysing how media narratives construct realities around football violence. Together, the literature and theoretical framework form the foundation for critically examining the role of Ghanaian media in preventing football hooliganism and shaping policy implications.

#### 2.1 Review of Related Literature

Football hooliganism has been a recurring global concern, with incidents of violence in and around stadiums often attracting significant scholarly interest. In Ghana, while football is celebrated as a unifying force, it is equally linked with episodes of violence that disrupt the sport's social harmony. Scholars such as Spaaij (2006) and Igbinovia (1985) emphasize that hooliganism is not merely a sport-related issue but a broader social phenomenon influenced by culture, politics, and media framing. Both authors agree that the media has historically amplified the image of hooliganism, shaping public discourse around it. However, whereas Spaaij (2006) situates hooliganism within European contexts and identifies how media constructs the label of "hooligan," Igbinovia (1985) examines African football hooliganism and criticizes local media for emotionally charged and sensationalist coverage that exacerbates tensions. The difference in context, European versus African, offers useful comparative perspectives for understanding Ghana's challenges.

In Ghana, media outlets play a critical role in how football hooliganism is narrated, often

oscillating between portraying fans as passionate supporters and as violent agitators. Acheampong (2023) explores how football is tied to development narratives but acknowledges the rising role of media in framing violent incidents during matches. Similarly, Mehler (2008) points out that in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, football coverage often carries political undertones that influence how violence is perceived by the public. Both works agree that media discourses are influential in shaping public understanding of football violence, but Acheampong (2023) emphasizes development and modernization, while Mehler (2008) highlights political manipulation of football narratives.

The connection between media ownership and editorial policy has also emerged as a critical dimension in the study of media coverage of football hooliganism in Ghana. Danso (2025) demonstrates that media ownership structures in Ghana influence editorial lines, often determining whether coverage of football-related violence is framed critically or softened to protect political and economic interests. This aligns with Ncube and Munoriyarwa (2021), who, studying Zimbabwe, argue that the press often avoids fully interrogating football hooliganism when political and commercial interests are at stake. Both works highlight the constraining role of ownership and state influence, though Danso (2025) focuses on Ghana specifically, while Ncube and Munoriyarwa (2021) provide a broader regional lens.

From a historical standpoint, Otoo (2014) and Darby (2013) situate football in Ghana as a tool for nation-building during the Nkrumah era, where the sport was used to rally national unity. While their focus is less on hooliganism per se, both highlight the central role of media in constructing national narratives around football. These works demonstrate that the Ghanaian media has long been instrumental in framing football not only as entertainment but also as a political and social instrument. The commonality is the acknowledgment of media's agenda-setting power, but the difference is in orientation: Otoo (2014) emphasizes domestic football narratives, while Darby (2013) explores pan-African policy dimensions of sport.

The relationship between social media and football hooliganism in Ghana is an emerging area of research. Kusi and Santiaguel (2024) investigate how high social media consumption among Ghanaian fans affects stadium attendance and contributes to new forms of online fan violence. Similarly, Mbassi Elong (2023) examines how West African football fans use Twitter to construct communities and identities, which sometimes escalate into online hostility that mirrors physical hooliganism. Both studies highlight the transformative role of digital media in fan cultures, but Kusi and Santiaguel (2024) emphasize declining attendance and its implications, while Mbassi Elong (2023) stresses identity and community construction.

Violence in Ghanaian football is not isolated but tied to wider African and global discourses. Hand (2002) and Onwumechili and Oloruntola (2014) argue that transnational media narratives strongly shape how African football violence is represented, often exaggerating its scale. While Hand (2002) critiques European media for perpetuating negative stereotypes of African football, Onwumechili and Oloruntola (2014) explore how Nigerian football fans interpret global media portrayals of violence and identity. Both works share a concern with representation, but Hand's (2002) emphasis is on external misrepresentation, whereas Onwumechili and Oloruntola (2014) focus on internal responses to such portrayals.

At the policy level, Mohammed (2018) highlights how FIFA and CAF attempt to use football to promote peace, though media coverage often undercuts these efforts by amplifying violence during tournaments. Similarly, Cleland (2023) demonstrates that sporting diplomacy in Africa, including Ghana, is undermined when media emphasize violent episodes instead of peace-building narratives. Both works suggest that while football policy frameworks seek to foster peace, media logic prioritizes sensational stories of conflict. The difference lies in scope: Mohammed (2018) focuses on international organizations, whereas Cleland (2023) examines continental tournaments like AFCON.

African case studies reveal significant similarities in how media frame football violence. Ncube

and Munoriyarwa's (2021) "Battle of Zimbabwe" study found that local newspapers often downplayed or selectively covered football violence, mirroring Ghanaian tendencies identified by Danso (2025). Both show that African media often act cautiously when political or economic interests are tied to football clubs. However, while Ncube and Munoriyarwa (2021) argue that silence and selective reporting undermine accountability, Danso (2025) stresses that such practices directly shape public perceptions of hooliganism in Ghana.

From a sociological perspective, Baller (2015) and Lamptey (2019) emphasize how football media in Africa create gendered and class-based narratives that influence perceptions of violence. Baller (2015) explores how African football media construct masculinities tied to aggression, which may normalize hooligan behaviors.

On the question of public perception, Akpabli (2023) provides insights into how young Ghanaians supporting European clubs construct their identities, sometimes through violent posturing. This finding resonates with Bailard's (2016) study on how foreign media influence African public opinion, showing that imported narratives shape fan behaviors. Both works highlight the globalization of football cultures, though Akpabli (2023) emphasizes grassroots Ghanaian fans, while Bailard (2016) examines macro-level shifts in African public opinion.

Comparative studies also highlight the media's role in defining the very concept of hooliganism. Spaaij (2006) argues that "football hooliganism" is a media construct that varies across contexts, while Igbinovia (1985) highlights that African hooliganism is often framed through moral panic in local newspapers. Both works agree that hooliganism is discursively constructed, but Spaaij (2006) focuses on Western Europe, whereas Igbinovia (1985) grounds his critique in African realities, making it highly relevant to Ghana.

The role of media in setting public agendas about football violence is well established in Ghana. Danso (2025) and Acheampong (2023) both argue that public perceptions of football violence are largely shaped by how media frame incidents, with audiences often taking media portrayals

as factual accounts. The difference lies in their analytical focus: Danso (2025) critiques ownership and political bias, while Acheampong (2023) emphasizes development narratives and modernization.

Scholars also agree that sensationalist reporting fuels violence rather than prevents it. Ncube and Munoriyarwa (2021) and Igbinovia (1985) both criticize media outlets for emotional coverage that heightens tensions among fans. However, while Igbinovia (1985) calls for media restraint in Africa, Ncube and Munoriyarwa (2021) argue that such restraint must be balanced with accountability reporting to ensure that perpetrators of violence are not shielded. This points to a policy dilemma: how to encourage responsible media reporting without silencing critical voices.

Policy implications in the literature show mixed perspectives. Mohammed (2018) and Cleland (2023) emphasize that football governing bodies must collaborate with media to promote peace narratives. Conversely, Spaaij (2006) warns that over-regulating media could lead to censorship, which undermines transparency. The commonality is the recognition of media as central actors in policy implementation, but the difference lies in balancing freedom with responsibility.

The reviewed literature shows consensus that media play a decisive role in shaping public perceptions of football hooliganism in Ghana. Across studies, there is agreement that sensationalist and politically influenced reporting exacerbates violence, while balanced and peace-oriented reporting could help reduce it (Danso, 2025; Acheampong, 2023; Mohammed, 2018). Differences emerge in emphasis: some scholars highlight ownership and political bias (Danso, 2025), others stress development and modernization (Acheampong, 2023), and others emphasize transnational representations (Hand, 2002; Onwumechili & Oloruntola, 2014). Together, these insights suggest that preventing football hooliganism in Ghana requires not only better policies but also a deliberate shift in media narratives.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

The present study is anchored in two complementary media theories, Framing Theory and Cultivation Theory, which together provide a robust framework for examining how the Ghanaian media shape narratives, perceptions, and policy responses to football hooliganism. Framing Theory explains how media outlets select, emphasize, and construct particular aspects of reality, thereby influencing how audiences interpret and understand football violence (Entman, 1993). In the Ghanaian context, the tendency of the media to sensationalize hooligan incidents or, conversely, downplay them under political or commercial influence highlights the importance of framing in constructing public meaning. Cultivation Theory, on the other hand, emphasizes the long-term effects of repeated media exposure, showing how consistent portrayals of violence can cultivate widespread fears, normalize aggressive fan behavior, and shape expectations of institutional responses (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). When combined, these theories provide a powerful lens for analysing how Ghanaian media narratives about football hooliganism not only influence immediate public perceptions but also cultivate enduring societal attitudes that drive policy interventions

### **2.2.1 Framing Theory**

Framing theory, originally advanced by Goffman (1974) and later refined by Entman (1993), explains how media select, emphasize, and organize certain aspects of reality to shape how audiences interpret events. At its core, the theory suggests that the way an issue is presented, its “frame”, influences public perception, often more than the content itself. Entman (1993) identifies four key functions of framing: defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments, and suggesting remedies. In the context of football hooliganism, framing theory is particularly relevant because media outlets act as primary narrators of violent fan behavior, deciding whether to depict it as isolated misconduct, a broader social crisis, or a political problem. For example, studies on British press coverage have shown that hooliganism is often

portrayed through oversimplified and moralizing frames that highlight fans as “mindless thugs,” shaping public hostility toward certain supporter groups (Poulton, 2005). This aligns with research by Giulianotti and Armstrong (1998), who argue that the construction of notoriety around football hooligans was less about the frequency of violence and more about how the media repeatedly highlighted and dramatized their actions.

Similarly, scholars emphasize that framing is not a neutral process but one embedded with cultural, political, and institutional biases. Tsoukala (2006), in her analysis of British press discourses, demonstrated how football hooliganism was constructed as a social “threat” by selectively emphasizing aggression while minimizing structural causes such as poor stadium infrastructure or inadequate policing. This insight resonates with the Ghanaian context, where football media coverage often oscillates between portraying hooliganism as an unfortunate yet isolated act and framing it as a moral crisis requiring urgent state intervention. Moreover, Spaaij (2011) notes that mainstream and online media representations frequently reinforce negative stereotypes of hooligans, presenting them as irrational mobs rather than contextualizing their behaviors within socioeconomic frustrations or club politics. Thus, framing theory is highly relevant to Ghana because it highlights how the narratives constructed by journalists and commentators influence whether the public sees hooliganism as preventable through policy reforms or simply as criminal deviance demanding punishment.

Additionally, framing theory provides insight into how media not only construct meanings but also legitimize institutional responses. For instance, Rookwood and Gow (2008) showed in their study of English football that the framing of hooliganism often excluded fan perspectives, thereby privileging narratives that justified heavy-handed policing. Likewise, Ncube and Munoriyarwa (2021) found in Zimbabwe that selective media silence on violent incidents reflected elite interests, shaping public perceptions while legitimizing government neglect of structural reforms. Applying this to Ghana, one might argue that when media sensationalize

hooliganism by framing fans as inherently violent, they reinforce calls for punitive policies such as stadium bans or police crackdowns, while marginalizing debates about poor governance within football administration. Framing theory thus enables researchers to critically assess not only the narratives themselves but also the policy consequences that flow from them.

Framing also intersects with the concept of moral panic. Cohen's (1972) theory of moral panic argues that media exaggerations produce societal fear and stigmatization of groups labeled as "folk devils." Poulton (2007) further supports this by showing how the press used "brutal, shorthand, and simplifying" frames to narrate football hooliganism in England, resulting in widespread fear and disproportionate responses from authorities. In the Ghanaian case, radio and television programs sometimes frame hooliganism at matches between Kotoko and Hearts of Oak as existential threats to national unity, amplifying panic among the public and policymakers. This illustrates how framing theory not only explains representation but also complements other theories like moral panic to uncover how exaggerated portrayals can shape disproportionate public responses. Thus, framing becomes central to examining the Ghanaian media's role in both preventing and, paradoxically, amplifying the fear of hooliganism.

Another critical dimension of framing theory relevant to this study is the role of journalists as active agents in shaping narratives. Sultan, Amir, and Hasan (2024), in their study of Indonesian football supporter violence, found that media actively framed fans as perpetual instigators of violence, often relying on stereotypes that neglected fans' grievances about poor stadium management or heavy policing. This finding mirrors Ghanaian realities, where sports journalists often emphasize "bad behavior" by fans while underreporting institutional failures by football authorities or security agencies. Moreover, Braun and Vliegenthart (2008) argue that repression and media coverage reinforce each other, as negative frames legitimize police crackdowns, which in turn generate more sensationalist coverage. In Ghana, this dynamic is

evident when media focus on isolated fights at stadiums, framing them as national crises, while less attention is given to structural reforms proposed by the Ghana Football Association (GFA). Thus, framing theory helps situate the Ghanaian case within global media practices that prioritize sensationalism over context.

Framing theory is also essential for understanding audience perceptions and how they mediate media influence. Research by Spaaij (2011) demonstrated that alternative and online media sometimes counter dominant negative frames by offering fans' perspectives, but mainstream outlets typically retain more influence due to their reach. In Ghana, although social media platforms like Twitter and WhatsApp allow fans to challenge mainstream media narratives, traditional outlets such as radio and television remain the most powerful agenda-setters in framing hooliganism. This dynamic mirrors findings in European contexts where new media allow contestation but do not fully displace dominant frames (Zaitch & de Leeuw, 2010). Consequently, framing theory provides a lens to examine how Ghanaian audiences negotiate between competing frames, whether adopting the "violent hooligan" stereotype promoted by mainstream media or engaging with fan-driven counter-narratives that highlight governance failures.

Framing theory is highly relevant to the study of media's role in preventing football hooliganism in Ghana because it offers a nuanced framework for analysing how narratives are constructed, circulated, and received. By explaining how the Ghanaian media define the problem of hooliganism, identify its causes, make moral judgments, and propose remedies, the theory directly links media narratives to public perceptions and policy outcomes. Its relevance is further strengthened by global and African studies that illustrate common patterns: oversimplified depictions of hooliganism (Poulton, 2005, 2007), selective silences shaped by elite interests (Ncube & Munoriyarwa, 2021), and sensationalist reporting that legitimizes repressive policies (Sultan et al., 2024). For Ghana, applying framing theory ensures that the

analysis goes beyond describing hooligan incidents to critically examining how media constructions themselves shape both societal reactions and state policies. Thus, the theory provides a comprehensive analytical tool for understanding the complex relationship between media narratives, public perceptions, and policy implications in Ghanaian football.

### **2.2.2 Cultivation Theory**

Cultivation theory, developed by George Gerbner in the 1960s, posits that prolonged exposure to media content shapes an individual's perceptions of reality, often aligning them with the mediated version of the world rather than actual lived experiences (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). The theory was originally applied to television, where heavy viewers were found to perceive the world as more dangerous than it actually was, a phenomenon termed the "mean world syndrome" (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). This basic premise has since been extended to news media, sports coverage, and digital platforms. Within the Ghanaian context, football occupies a central place in society, with media coverage extending far beyond the field into issues of nationalism, identity, and violence (Acheampong, 2023). Cultivation theory thus provides a powerful lens to explore how consistent exposure to narratives of hooliganism in Ghanaian football media may cultivate public fears, stereotypes about fans, or even normalize violence as an inevitable part of the sport.

Similarly, research on cultivation effects in sports contexts shows that when media emphasize conflict and aggression, audiences tend to adopt exaggerated perceptions of violence in the sport (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 2002). For example, Apuke and Shadrach (2018), in their study of Nigerian football fans in television viewing centers, found that consistent exposure to European football coverage influenced local fans' attitudes and behaviors, often resulting in aggressive displays during matches. Their findings align with the idea that heavy consumers of mediated football develop a skewed view of the game, in which confrontation is overemphasized. By extension, Ghanaian audiences who consume frequent

media reports of stadium violence, referee assaults, or clashes between Kotoko and Hearts of Oak fans may gradually cultivate an exaggerated perception that hooliganism is inseparable from Ghanaian football. Such cultivated perceptions can contribute to a cycle where fear reduces stadium attendance (Kusi & Santiaguel, 2024), while sensationalist reporting reinforces the association of football with violence.

Moreover, cultivation theory is particularly relevant when considering how Ghanaian media frame football hooliganism through repeated coverage of high-profile violent incidents. One example is the tragic 2001 Accra Sports Stadium disaster, where 126 people died in a stampede following police use of tear gas (Mohammed, 2018). Media coverage of this event and subsequent violent episodes has contributed to a persistent narrative that stadiums are unsafe spaces. Research in related African contexts shows similar trends: Ncube and Munoriyarwa (2021) observed in Zimbabwe that newspapers often portrayed football fans as inherently violent, thereby cultivating moral panic among the wider public. In Ghana, repeated focus on violent imagery and sensationalist headlines likely shapes public perceptions of football hooliganism as not only common but inevitable. This suggests that cultivation theory can help explain how long-term exposure to such narratives influences both fan behavior and policy responses.

In addition, cultivation theory emphasizes the importance of long-term cumulative exposure, which is particularly significant in Ghana given the dominance of football in mainstream and digital media. With football being broadcast daily on television, radio, and online platforms, the repetitive focus on conflict, corruption, or violence has a magnifying effect. Chiweshe and Chirambaguwa (2022) argue that transnational football media in Africa, especially from European leagues, often glamorize aggressive rivalries, which local audiences absorb and reproduce. When Ghanaian fans watch these portrayals alongside domestic coverage of violent clashes, the cultivation effect may reinforce aggressive fan identities and normalize violent

rivalries. Thus, cultivation theory offers a framework for understanding how both local and international football narratives converge to produce distorted public perceptions of Ghanaian football as inherently violent.

Furthermore, cultivation theory is not only about exaggerating the prevalence of violence but also about shaping attitudes toward solutions. Morgan, Shanahan, and Signorielli (2015) argue that heavy exposure to media cultivates shared assumptions about how institutions should respond to perceived threats. In Ghana, when media consistently highlight football hooliganism, the public may pressure policymakers into reactive measures such as heavy police presence at stadiums or punitive sanctions against clubs, rather than addressing structural issues like poor infrastructure or inadequate fan education. Studies such as Quansah (2024) confirm that narratives about unsafe stadiums, amplified by media, influence both public and policy attitudes toward football governance. Cultivation theory thus helps explain why Ghanaian policy responses may lean toward immediate security interventions instead of long-term preventive measures.

Similarly, cultivation theory provides insights into the psychological consequences of consuming repeated violent football narratives. Spaaij (2006), in his comparative study of hooliganism, highlights how media depictions contribute to constructing violent fan identities that are internalized by both supporters and wider society. In Ghana, this dynamic is evident in the portrayal of rivalries between Kotoko and Hearts of Oak fans, where media-fueled narratives cultivate stereotypes of dangerous supporter groups. McGee (2015) adds that Ghanaian youth exposed to global football media often reproduce aggressive fandom practices locally, reinforcing the cultivation process. These studies collectively demonstrate that cultivation effects operate both at the individual level, shaping fan behavior, and at the societal level, shaping policy debates and public fear.

Cultivation theory is highly relevant to examining the role of media in preventing football

hooliganism in Ghana because it bridges the gap between media narratives, public perceptions, and policy implications. By emphasizing the cumulative effect of repeated violent portrayals, the theory explains why Ghanaian fans and the wider public may overestimate the prevalence of hooliganism, why stereotypes of violent fans persist, and why policymakers adopt reactive security-focused measures. While some African studies emphasize structural issues like governance and corruption (Wiegatz, 2024), cultivation theory adds a crucial psychological and cultural dimension, showing how media consumption cultivates long-term perceptions that shape both behavior and policy. Thus, applying cultivation theory allows the study to critically analyze not only how media narratives are constructed but also how they resonate with and influence Ghanaian society over time.

### **2.3 Chapter Summary**

this chapter has critically synthesized existing empirical research on media and football hooliganism, highlighting the recurring role of media in both amplifying violent narratives and shaping preventive discourses in Ghana. The review emphasized that while some studies portray media as a catalyst for moral panic and exaggerated perceptions of hooliganism, others underline its potential for education, peacebuilding, and policy advocacy. Theoretical frameworks such as cultivation theory and framing theory, were explored to provide interpretive lenses for understanding how media influence public perceptions and institutional responses. Together, these perspectives demonstrate that media are not merely observers of football culture but active agents that shape fan identities, public fears, and policy priorities. The chapter thus lays the groundwork for situating the current study within established scholarly debates, while providing a robust framework for analysing how media narratives can either contribute to or mitigate the problem of football hooliganism in Ghana.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the research methodology adopted to examine the role of media in preventing football hooliganism in Ghana, focusing on how media narratives shape public perceptions and influence policy responses. The chapter details the philosophical assumptions, methodological choices, and systematic procedures that guided the study. It begins by explaining the adoption of a pragmatist philosophy, which accommodates multiple perspectives and integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The chapter then justifies the use of a mixed-method sequential explanatory design, combining descriptive survey data with thematic qualitative insights to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. It further describes the study's population, sampling strategies, specifically convenience and purposive sampling, data sources, and methods of collection and analysis. Ethical considerations guiding the research are also discussed to ensure integrity, credibility, and respect for participants' rights. Overall, this chapter establishes the methodological framework necessary to produce valid, reliable, and contextually grounded findings on how media can be leveraged as a tool for mitigating football hooliganism in Ghana

#### **3.1 Research Philosophy**

The study adopted the pragmatist research philosophy, which emphasises the practical application of research in solving real-world problems and allows the integration of multiple methods to achieve a comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Morgan, 2014). Pragmatism posits that knowledge is derived from both observable facts and human experiences; thus, it values the coexistence of objectivism and subjectivism within one study (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). In the context of this research, examining the role of media in preventing football hooliganism in Ghana requires

understanding not only measurable public perceptions but also the deeper meanings embedded in media narratives. Pragmatism provides the flexibility to use both quantitative and qualitative methods without being constrained by the philosophical rigidity of positivism or interpretivism. As Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) argue, pragmatism focuses on “what works” in addressing the research question, making it suitable for studies seeking to bridge empirical evidence with contextual insight. Consequently, the pragmatic worldview supports this study’s sequential mixed-method strategy, enabling the researcher to integrate objective data on media influence and subjective perspectives from journalists and policymakers.

Furthermore, the choice of pragmatism is justified by the complex, multifaceted nature of football hooliganism and its relationship with media representation in Ghana. Issues of violence, identity, and perception are simultaneously social, psychological, and cultural, and cannot be effectively understood through a single epistemological stance (Bryman, 2016). The pragmatic approach allows the study to move beyond philosophical debates and instead prioritise the generation of actionable knowledge that can inform media policy, public education, and social harmony. This orientation is consistent with Creswell’s (2014) view that pragmatism enables researchers to draw on multiple data sources to answer practical “what,” “how,” and “why” questions. In this study, pragmatism ensures that both numerical data on public perceptions and qualitative insights into media practices are considered valuable in understanding how media can either prevent or perpetuate football hooliganism in Ghana. Hence, the pragmatic philosophy strengthens the study’s validity by combining the strengths of positivism (objectivity and generalisation) with interpretivism (contextual depth and meaning).

### **3.2 Research Approach**

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative techniques to achieve a holistic understanding of the research problem. The quantitative phase used descriptive statistics to measure public perceptions of football hooliganism and the media's influence, while the qualitative phase utilised thematic analysis to explore media narratives and policy perspectives. According to Creswell (2014), mixed methods combine the strengths of both numerical precision and narrative interpretation, enabling a richer understanding of complex social phenomena. This approach is particularly appropriate for this study because football hooliganism is a multifactorial issue shaped by social behaviour, media representation, and institutional policy. Quantitative data provide generalizable trends, whereas qualitative data uncover the meanings and motivations behind those trends. Scholars such as Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007) assert that the mixed-methods approach enhances the robustness and credibility of findings by triangulating different forms of evidence.

The justification for adopting a mixed-method approach lies in its compatibility with the study's pragmatic foundation and sequential explanatory design. Football hooliganism in Ghana involves measurable audience attitudes and interpretive journalistic practices that cannot be fully captured by a single method. The approach begins with a quantitative survey to identify key patterns in public perceptions, followed by qualitative interviews and content analysis to explain and elaborate on these findings. This sequence is consistent with the recommendations of Ivankova, Creswell, and Stick (2006), who suggest that qualitative data should follow quantitative results to provide contextual depth and explanation. Moreover, the approach enhances internal validity through methodological triangulation, reducing biases inherent in any single method (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In summary, the mixed-method approach ensures that the study captures both the breadth of public attitudes and the depth of

professional and policy perspectives regarding media influence on football hooliganism in Ghana.

### **3.3 Research Design**

The research adopted a Sequential Explanatory Design, a subtype of mixed methods where quantitative data collection and analysis precede qualitative inquiry (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In the first phase, a structured survey gathered quantitative data from football fans in Ghana to measure perceptions of media influence and exposure. In the second phase, qualitative interviews and content analysis explored the narratives used by journalists and policy actors to frame football hooliganism. This design allowed for integration between numeric data and interpretive findings, providing comprehensive insight into how media narratives shape public understanding and policy decisions. The sequential design was particularly suitable for this topic, as it enables the researcher to use qualitative insights to explain patterns found in quantitative data. According to Fetters, Curry, and Creswell (2013), this design strengthens interpretation by connecting measurable trends with lived experiences and contextual explanations.

The justification for this design lies in the dynamic interaction between public perception and media framing. Football hooliganism in Ghana cannot be fully understood through surveys alone, as media narratives are contextually constructed. The explanatory sequential design provides flexibility to explore nuances uncovered in the first phase. For instance, if survey results show that higher media exposure correlates with negative perceptions of football safety, follow-up interviews can uncover the journalistic motives or editorial processes driving such portrayals. This layered design aligns with Morgan's (2014) argument that pragmatism allows for iterative inquiry, where one phase informs and refines the next. Thus, the sequential explanatory design ensures both breadth (quantitative) and depth (qualitative) in examining the complex interplay between media narratives, public perceptions, and policy actions in Ghana.

### **3.4 Population**

The target population for this study consisted of football fans, media practitioners (journalists and editors), and policymakers in Ghana. These three groups represent the critical actors in the interaction between media narratives, public perceptions, and institutional responses to football hooliganism. Football fans are the primary consumers of media messages and the group most directly affected by violent incidents. Journalists and editors shape the framing of football-related violence, while policymakers from bodies such as the Ghana Football Association (GFA) and the Ministry of Youth and Sports influence policy interventions. Including these diverse participants allowed the study to address its three core components: media, audience, and policy. According to Creswell (2014), defining a population that reflects all dimensions of the research question enhances construct validity and ensures that findings can be meaningfully interpreted across stakeholder groups.

The choice of this population is justified by the study's conceptual framework, which views football hooliganism as a socially constructed phenomenon influenced by media framing and public interpretation. As Bryman (2016) explains, identifying the relevant population ensures representativeness and contextual accuracy. Football fans will provide quantitative insights into public perception, while journalists and policymakers will contribute qualitative depth about professional practices and policy processes. Focusing on urban centres like Accra and Kumasi is appropriate, as these are the main hubs of football fandom and media activity in Ghana (Acheampong, 2023). The diverse population structure supports the mixed-method design, enabling cross-validation between audience attitudes, media narratives, and institutional strategies.

### **3.5 Sample and Sampling Technique**

This study employed a combination of convenience sampling and purposive sampling, consistent with mixed-method research conventions (Etikan & Bala, 2017). For the quantitative

phase, convenience sampling was used to select approximately 400 football fans attending matches or viewing centres in Accra and Kumasi. This technique allowed the researcher to access respondents who are readily available and willing to participate, particularly in large, diverse populations. Convenience sampling is justified here due to its practicality and efficiency in reaching football audiences within limited time and resource constraints (Creswell, 2014). It is particularly appropriate where random sampling is difficult due to the dispersed nature of fans across various social settings.

For the qualitative phase, purposive sampling was employed to select 15 participants comprising sports journalists, editors, and policymakers with relevant experience in media reporting or football regulation. Purposive sampling ensures that participants possess the specific knowledge required to provide rich, contextual insights into media practices and policy responses (Patton, 2015). The use of these two techniques aligns with the study's sequential explanatory design: convenience sampling supports generalisation in the quantitative phase, while purposive sampling provides depth and relevance in the qualitative phase. Combining both enhances methodological complementarity and ensures that the data collected are both broad and meaningful.

### **3.6 Sources of Data**

The study draws from both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was obtained directly from respondents through questionnaires and interviews, while secondary data included content from newspapers, online articles, television transcripts, and official documents from the GFA and Ministry of Youth and Sports. According to Yin (2018), using multiple data sources enhances construct validity by allowing triangulation of findings across different evidence types. The primary data captured the lived experiences and perceptions of Ghanaian football fans and stakeholders, while secondary data will establish historical and contextual backgrounds of media narratives and policy efforts related to football hooliganism.

This combination is justified by the need for both empirical evidence and contextual understanding. As Creswell (2014) explains, triangulating data sources strengthens validity by cross-verifying findings. Secondary data will provide insight into how the media have historically portrayed football violence, complementing primary data on current public perceptions and policy attitudes. Moreover, the integration of multiple data sources reflects the pragmatic philosophy underpinning the study, ensuring a holistic understanding of how media narratives, audience perceptions, and policy interventions interact in Ghana's football ecosystem.

### **3.7 Data Collection Method**

Data were collected through structured questionnaires for the quantitative phase and semi-structured interviews for the qualitative phase. The questionnaires contained both closed and Likert-scale questions designed to measure respondents' levels of media exposure, perceptions of hooliganism, and attitudes toward prevention policies. This approach allowed the collection of standardised data that can be statistically analysed (Kothari, 2011). The qualitative phase used semi-structured interviews with journalists and policymakers to obtain detailed insights into media framing practices, ethical considerations, and policy formulation processes.

The justification for using these methods lies in their alignment with the sequential explanatory mixed-method design. Questionnaires are efficient for gathering large amounts of data, while interviews provide deeper context and meaning. According to Krippendorff (2013), content analysis enables systematic examination of communication patterns in media texts, making it ideal for identifying framing tendencies. Combining these methods ensures that both numerical patterns and narrative interpretations are captured, supporting comprehensive analysis of how media and audiences interact around issues of football hooliganism in Ghana.

### **3.8 Data Collection Procedure**

Data collection proceeded in two phases corresponding to the sequential explanatory design. In Phase One, structured questionnaires were distributed to football fans at stadiums, public viewing centres, and online fan forums. Data collection was facilitated with the assistance of trained research assistants to ensure consistency and minimise response bias. In Phase Two, interviews were conducted with selected journalists, editors, and policymakers. Interviews were recorded (with consent), transcribed verbatim, and analysed thematically. The two-phase procedure ensures logical progression from quantitative measurement to qualitative exploration (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

This structured procedure is justified because it facilitates systematic data integration and enhances research reliability. The sequential approach ensured that themes emerging from the quantitative phase informed the design of the qualitative interviews, allowing deeper exploration of identified trends (Saunders et al., 2019). Conducting fieldwork in football-dominant urban centres ensures access to relevant participants and an accurate reflection of Ghana's football culture. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent and confidentiality, will guide the entire process to protect participants' rights and promote data integrity.

### **3.9 Data Analysis Method**

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means, to summarise demographic variables and perceptions of media influence. (Creswell, 2014). The results were presented in tables and charts for clarity. Qualitative data from interviews and media content analysis were analysed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process: familiarisation, coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting.

The combination of descriptive and thematic analysis is justified because it complements the mixed-method approach by merging statistical generalisation with contextual understanding. Descriptive statistics quantify trends in audience perceptions, while thematic analysis interprets the meanings behind journalistic and policy narratives. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), integrating quantitative and qualitative results enhances analytical depth and interpretive validity. This dual-analysis method allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how media narratives shape perceptions and policy approaches to football hooliganism in Ghana.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical integrity underpinned all stages of this research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after clearly explaining the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study. Participants had the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured through coding and secure data storage. Ethical approval was sought from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the researcher's university, in line with global research ethics standards (American Psychological Association [APA], 2020). These principles are critical given the sensitive nature of media and policy-related discussions.

This ethical framework is justified by the need to protect participants' welfare and promote trustworthiness in the research process. According to Bryman (2016), ethical considerations strengthen research credibility and ensure compliance with academic and legal standards. Protecting journalists and policymakers from reputational risk and ensuring fans' privacy fosters openness and reliability in responses. As Creswell (2014) emphasises, ethical transparency enhances validity and public confidence in social research findings. Consequently, strict adherence to ethical protocols will ensure that this study upholds the highest standards of academic and professional integrity

### **3.11 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has systematically presented and justified the methodological framework used to explore the intersections between media narratives, public perceptions, and policy implications surrounding football hooliganism in Ghana. The study's foundation in pragmatism was crucial in supporting a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative strands to capture both measurable patterns and contextual meanings. Through a sequential explanatory design, quantitative data from football fans were complemented by qualitative insights from journalists and policymakers, providing depth and triangulation. The chapter also explained the rationale behind the chosen population, sampling techniques, data collection tools, and analysis methods, including descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Ethical principles such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were emphasised to ensure the study's credibility and adherence to research standards. Altogether, the methodological choices outlined in this chapter provide a coherent and rigorous foundation for analysing how media influence public attitudes and policy actions in the prevention of football hooliganism in Ghana.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents, analyses, and interprets the data collected to examine the role of the media in preventing football hooliganism in Ghana, focusing on how media narratives, public perceptions, and policy implications intersect. The analysis combines both quantitative and qualitative findings, reflecting the study's sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were drawn from survey responses of football fans, while qualitative insights were obtained through in-depth interviews with sports journalists and Ghana Football Association (GFA) officials. The integration of both data sources provides a comprehensive understanding of how media framing and coverage influence public attitudes, institutional trust, and policy responses regarding football-related violence. The chapter begins with descriptive statistics summarising respondents' demographic characteristics and their views on key variables such as media influence, collaboration, and perceptions of safety. This is followed by an interpretive analysis of interview transcripts using thematic analysis, which identifies recurring patterns, meanings, and relationships across participants' narratives. Findings are discussed in relation to the study's theoretical framework, Framing Theory and Cultivation Theory, to explain how media narratives shape both perception and institutional behavior. The chapter thus moves beyond mere data presentation to interpret how the Ghanaian media's construction of football hooliganism impacts public discourse, fan engagement, and policy reform, laying the foundation for the discussion and recommendations in the next chapter.

#### **Presentation of Findings**

##### **4.1 Demographic Data**

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents who participated in the quantitative aspect of the study. Understanding respondents' backgrounds is essential for

interpreting the subsequent findings within their appropriate social and professional contexts. The demographic data provide insight into the composition of the sample in terms of gender, age, educational level, occupation, and experience with football-related media consumption. These variables help establish the credibility and representativeness of the data by illustrating the diversity of perspectives captured in the study. They also allow for more nuanced interpretations of how demographic attributes may shape individuals’ perceptions of media influence, public safety, and football culture in Ghana

**Table1: Gender**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Female	36	18.0
Male	162	81.0
Prefer not to say	2	1.0
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The gender distribution presented above, where 81% of respondents were male, 18% female, and only 1% preferred not to say, clearly demonstrates that football consumption, and by extension discussions around football hooliganism in Ghana, remain overwhelmingly male-dominated. This pattern aligns with prior research showing that the football public sphere in Ghana and sub-Saharan Africa has historically been masculinised (Lampety, 2019; Baller, 2015). Men are more active participants in football fandom and more likely to be exposed to both media narratives and live-match environments that may foster or prevent hooligan tendencies (Owusu-Ansah, 2014). The overrepresentation of men in this study corroborates previous findings by Acheampong (2023), who noted that Ghanaian football coverage primarily targets male audiences and reinforces gendered perceptions of the sport. This trend reflects the Framing Theory’s central argument that media selectively construct social realities by emphasizing certain aspects of a phenomenon while downplaying others (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974). Ghanaian sports media frequently frame football as a “male cultural domain,” often neglecting female voices and perspectives in discussions about violence or fan culture

(Lampzey, 2019). This selective visibility not only shapes who participates in public discourse but also reinforces the societal frame that men are the “legitimate” football commentators and fans. Consequently, the high male participation rate in this survey is not coincidental but reflects broader media-framed gender hierarchies that limit female engagement in football narratives. Therefore, these results substantiate the relevance of Framing Theory, as the media’s portrayal of football as a masculine space perpetuates gender imbalances that influence who perceives, experiences, and responds to football hooliganism.

Moreover, the findings correspond with Cultivation Theory, which posits that long-term exposure to particular media portrayals shapes individuals’ perceptions of social reality (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994). Since Ghanaian sports media have historically presented football through hypermasculine frames emphasizing competition, aggression, and male dominance, men are more likely to internalize and reproduce these portrayals in both discourse and behavior (Poulton, 2005; Spaaij, 2011). The 81% male representation in this data suggests that men, as the primary media consumers and football participants, are more susceptible to cultivating perceptions about fan identity and violence shaped by persistent media narratives. For instance, research by Baller (2015) and Acheampong (2023) shows that Ghanaian sports commentary and coverage consistently glorify male football heroes while dramatizing violent fan behavior as an expected expression of masculinity. This media-driven cultivation of norms around aggression and rivalry aligns with Spaaij’s (2011) observation that repeated violent imagery in football reporting leads audiences to view hooliganism as a normal, even inevitable, part of fan culture. Conversely, the relatively low female representation (18%) indicates that women remain peripheral in football’s mediated public space, as their limited exposure and participation reduce their cultivation effects and perceived involvement in football-related violence. The data, therefore, corroborate existing literature that associates football hooliganism with gendered patterns of media consumption and identity formation

(Lampzey, 2019; Baller, 2015; Owusu-Ansah, 2014). In sum, these findings substantiate both Framing Theory by showing how media narratives privilege masculine frames and Cultivation Theory by illustrating how long-term exposure to such narratives reinforces male-dominated perceptions of football and its associated violence. Thus, the gender imbalance reflected in this study not only mirrors social and media realities but also underscores the theoretical linkage between media exposure, audience interpretation, and the perpetuation of gendered understandings of football hooliganism in Ghana.

**Table 2: Age range**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
18-25 years	28	14.0
26-35 years	68	34.0
36-45 years	72	36.0
46-55 years	24	12.0
56 and above	8	4.0
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The demographic data reveal that the majority of respondents (70%) fall within the active adult age range of 26–45 years, while the youthful group aged 18–25 years accounts for 14%, and only 4% are aged 56 and above. This age distribution suggests that perceptions of football hooliganism and exposure to media narratives are predominantly shaped by young and middle-aged adults groups that constitute the most active football spectators and social media users in Ghana (Kusi & Santiaguel, 2024). The preponderance of participants in the 26–45 age range is consistent with findings by Acheampong (2023), who observed that media discourses around football in Ghana appeal more strongly to economically active citizens, who also dominate football viewership. This aligns with Framing Theory (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974), which posits that the way issues are presented influences how audiences interpret and prioritize them. In the Ghanaian football context, this means that adult viewers those in the 26–45 bracket are more likely to internalise and discuss media frames around hooliganism, either as a moral threat

or a social problem requiring regulation. Furthermore, Mehler's (2008) study on Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire corroborates this by asserting that football narratives are politicised through media frames that emphasise conflict, competition, and identity, resonating strongly with middle-aged audiences who see football as both social entertainment and national pride. Therefore, the dominance of this demographic in the sample reinforces the idea that those most frequently exposed to football coverage are also those most susceptible to the framing effects of media narratives surrounding hooliganism. The framing of violent incidents as either isolated misconduct or widespread cultural decay is thus likely to shape their perceptions and policy preferences more than those of older, less media-active citizens (Poulton, 2005; Tsoukala, 2006).

Moreover, the findings align strongly with Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1969; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010), which argues that prolonged exposure to certain media portrayals shapes individuals' perceptions of social reality. The fact that 84% of respondents are below 45 years underscores that the majority belong to age groups most active on digital media platforms such as Facebook, X (Twitter), and WhatsApp, where narratives of football violence circulate rapidly (Mbassi Elong, 2023). This supports the argument by Spaaij (2011) that modern football fans' understanding of hooliganism is increasingly mediated through recurring images of aggression, fan clashes, and sensational reporting rather than first-hand experience. In Ghana, middle-aged and younger adults' repeated exposure to such narratives cultivates heightened awareness and often exaggerated fear of hooliganism, influencing both public discourse and expectations for stronger policy enforcement. This corroborates findings by Danso (2025), who noted that frequent media framing of football violence in Ghana leads audiences to perceive hooliganism as a pervasive crisis rather than sporadic incidents.

**Table 3: Educational Level**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Basic Education	1	.5
Postgraduate	67	33.5
Secondary/SHS	19	9.5
Tertiary	113	56.5
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The data indicate that a substantial proportion of respondents (56.5%) possess tertiary education, followed by 33.5% with postgraduate qualifications, while smaller segments completed secondary/SHS (9.5%) or basic education (0.5%). This distribution suggests that the dominant audience engaging with media narratives around football hooliganism in Ghana are highly educated individuals who are likely to consume diverse forms of media including online, print, and broadcast with critical interpretive skills. This finding corroborates earlier scholarly observations that media effects are mediated by education and literacy levels. For instance, McQuail (2010) emphasizes that educated audiences engage more critically with media messages, evaluating frames and representations rather than accepting them passively. Similarly, Acheampong (2023) found that educated Ghanaian audiences were more capable of discerning developmental and moral undertones in football reportage. Consequently, the finding aligns with Framing Theory, as proposed by Entman (1993) and Goffman (1974), which posits that individuals' interpretive capacities influence how they perceive the frames presented by the media. In this case, highly educated respondents are more likely to detect the sensationalist or moralizing frames that the Ghanaian media often use when reporting football violence (Poulton, 2005). Therefore, the high proportion of tertiary and postgraduate respondents suggests that the study's participants can offer informed reflections on whether the media contribute to preventing or exacerbating hooliganism, given their likely exposure to and comprehension of framing cues across various media platforms.

Furthermore, this educational composition resonates strongly with Cultivation Theory, which explains how repeated media exposure shapes audience perceptions of social realities (Gerbner, 1969; Gerbner et al., 1986). Highly educated audiences tend to engage more frequently with news and analytical programs, especially on television, radio, and online platforms, which are primary conveyors of football narratives in Ghana (Boateng, 2018). According to Spaaij (2011), sustained exposure to violent or conflict-driven portrayals of football can cultivate heightened perceptions of insecurity and aggression among audiences, even if actual incidents are infrequent. In the Ghanaian context, where media coverage often dramatizes football-related violence (Donkor, 2021), educated viewers may interpret such portrayals either as genuine societal threats or as mediated exaggerations, depending on how deeply they understand framing processes. This aligns with Tsoukala’s (2006) assertion that audiences with higher cognitive and educational capacities can recognize the media’s role in constructing moral narratives around sports violence.

**Table 4: How often do you attend football matches?**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Never	7	3.5
Occasionally	36	18.0
Rarely	15	7.5
Regularly	142	71.0
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The results from the survey show that a large majority of respondents, 142 participants representing 71.0% attend football matches *regularly*, while only a small proportion attend *occasionally* (18.0%) or *rarely* (7.5%), and an even smaller fraction (3.5%) have *never attended* a football match. This distribution indicates a deeply embedded football culture in Ghanaian society, which aligns with Acheampong’s (2023) assertion that football in Ghana functions as a social ritual and a significant component of everyday identity. The high rate of regular attendance suggests strong emotional investment among fans, consistent with Darby’s

(2013) and Owusu-Ansah's (2014) findings that club loyalty especially toward Accra Hearts of Oak and Asante Kotoko transcends sport and often reflects social belonging and communal pride. However, the data also suggest an inherent risk for heightened emotional responses and potential hooliganism during live matches, where crowd energy and loyalty converge. Mehler (2008) argued that the Ghanaian media's framing of matches between rival clubs tends to amplify competitive tensions, portraying these games as "clashes of supremacy" rather than sports events. Such media framing could influence how frequently fans attend and how they interpret aggressive behavior in stadiums. The data thus support the argument advanced by Framing Theory (Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1993), which posits that media narratives shape public interpretations of events by highlighting certain aspects while downplaying others. In this case, the Ghanaian media's sensational framing of rivalry matches may simultaneously sustain interest and attendance (by heightening emotional appeal) while also normalizing confrontation as part of the football experience.

In linking these findings to Cultivation Theory, the regular attendance rate (71%) demonstrates the potential for long-term exposure to football media and live environments to shape attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors. Gerbner and Gross (1976) explain that continuous exposure to specific media narratives "cultivates" particular worldviews and normalizes certain behaviors. In the Ghanaian football context, where media narratives often depict rivalry, aggression, and sensationalism (Danso, 2025; Ncube & Munoriyarwa, 2021), regular match attendance combined with heavy consumption of football commentary on television and radio may reinforce perceptions that confrontational behavior is a legitimate or expected part of fandom. This finding corroborates Mbassi Elong's (2023) and Kusi and Santiaguel's (2024) observations that online and offline football media interactions in Ghana construct identity-based rivalries that fans internalize over time. Furthermore, consistent attendance supports Spaaij's (2011) claim that sports audiences "learn" acceptable norms of aggression through

repeated exposure to media and peer behavior within sporting environments. From the Framing Theory perspective, this regular attendance may also be a product of media-induced enthusiasm, where journalists frame matches as national spectacles or sites of glory, enticing fans to participate as part of a shared national or club identity (Poulton, 2007).

**Table 5: How often do you follow football-related news in the media (TV, radio, social media, newspapers)?**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Daily	166	83.0
Never	1	.5
Occasionally	17	8.5
Rarely	7	3.5
Weekly	9	4.5
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The data indicate that an overwhelming majority of respondents (83%) reported following football-related news in the media *daily*, with only a negligible proportion indicating “never” (0.5%), “rarely” (3.5%), or “occasionally” (8.5%). This finding underscores the extensive media engagement of Ghanaian audiences with football content across platforms such as television, radio, newspapers, and increasingly, social media. This high rate of media consumption aligns with Cultivation Theory, which posits that consistent exposure to media messages gradually shapes individuals’ perceptions of social reality (Gerbner, 1969; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986). In the Ghanaian context, where football occupies a central cultural role, sustained exposure to football-related media can cultivate specific perceptions both positive and negative about the sport and its associated social behaviors. For instance, Acheampong (2023) found that football media narratives in Ghana often blend elements of development discourse with sensationalized reporting of fan violence, which over time can normalize the perception that hooliganism is a defining feature of football culture. Similarly, Spaaij (2011) argues that repetitive media coverage of violent football incidents in Western contexts creates a “symbolic reality” where hooliganism becomes perceived as ubiquitous,

even if the actual frequency of such events is limited. Thus, the Ghanaian public's daily engagement with football news provides fertile ground for cultivation effects, suggesting that the dominant media frames surrounding football whether they stress unity, passion, or violence likely shape how audiences perceive hooliganism and what policy interventions they consider necessary.

Furthermore, the prominence of daily exposure also corroborates the role of Framing Theory in understanding how media construct meanings that influence audience interpretation (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974). The finding that 83% of respondents follow football news daily indicates that the public is highly exposed to the interpretive frames chosen by media producers. This supports Danso's (2025) argument that Ghanaian media ownership and editorial priorities influence how stories about violence are presented either to sensationalize conflicts for attention or to downplay incidents to protect institutional interests. Similarly, Mehler (2008) found that Ghanaian sports coverage often embeds political and moral undertones, framing football incidents as extensions of national identity or political rivalry rather than isolated behavioral issues. Such framing processes, when repeatedly encountered, reinforce cultivation effects, as audiences gradually internalize specific interpretations of football hooliganism. For instance, the frequent framing of hooliganism as a "moral threat" (Poulton, 2005; Tsoukala, 2006) can cultivate a public perception that views football violence less as a governance or security management failure and more as an inherent fan characteristic, influencing public support for punitive rather than preventive policies.

#### **4.2 Research Question One: What are the dominant narratives in Ghanaian media regarding football hooliganism?**

This research question seeks to explore the ways in which football hooliganism is framed and represented across various Ghanaian media platforms, including print, broadcast, and online

outlets. It aims to uncover the recurring themes, linguistic choices, metaphors, and framing patterns that shape how incidents of football-related violence are reported and understood by the public. By investigating the dominant narratives, the study examines whether media representations are predominantly sensational, balanced, or reform-oriented, and how these portrayals influence the national discourse on football safety and discipline.

**Table 6: Ghanaian media frequently report incidents of football hooliganism**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	21	10.5
Disagree	13	6.5
Neutral	28	14.0
Agree	56	28.0
Strongly Agree	82	41.0
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The results presented above reveal that a substantial majority of respondents (69% combining *Agree* and *Strongly Agree*) perceive that Ghanaian media *frequently report incidents of football hooliganism*, while only 17% (*Strongly Disagree* and *Disagree*) hold an opposing view, and 14% remain neutral. This finding demonstrates that public audiences in Ghana are highly exposed to recurrent narratives of football-related violence across media outlets. The result corroborates Acheampong’s (2023) assertion that Ghanaian media increasingly focus on sensational football stories, particularly those involving chaos, confrontation, or misconduct among fans. Similarly, Mehler (2008) found that football in Ghana is not merely reported as sport but as a political and moral spectacle where violent episodes dominate coverage. The data therefore affirm the argument by Danso (2025) that ownership and commercial pressures drive media to prioritize emotionally charged narratives such as hooliganism to attract audiences. Moreover, this outcome supports the premise of Framing Theory, which posits that the manner in which events are presented influences how they are understood by audiences (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974). By continuously framing football through the lens of violence and disorder,

Ghanaian media reinforce a social image of football culture as inherently volatile. This framing, as Poulton (2005) observed in British contexts, not only dramatizes hooliganism but also constructs it as the defining feature of football fandom. Consequently, the predominance of agreement in the data suggests that Ghanaian audiences are attuned to and perhaps influenced by this selective and repetitive framing of football incidents.

The data also have strong implications when viewed through Cultivation Theory, which argues that repeated media exposure cultivates long-term perceptions of social reality (Gerbner, 1969; Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2015). The finding that over two-thirds of respondents agree that Ghanaian media frequently report hooliganism suggests a high degree of exposure that could shape how fans and citizens perceive the safety and morality of football in Ghana. As Kusi and Santiaguel (2024) empirically demonstrated, excessive exposure to negative football narratives discourages stadium attendance and promotes public fear of violence. Similarly, Spaaij (2011) observed that sustained coverage of hooliganism creates a symbolic association between football and aggression, leading audiences to internalize fear even when incidents are isolated. This aligns with Entman’s (1993) framing perspective that media do not merely reflect reality but actively construct it through selection and emphasis. In Ghana’s case, the repetitive framing of hooliganism contributes to what Cohen (1972) termed *moral panic*, where fans are portrayed as “folk devils,” and the sport becomes associated with social breakdown.

**Table 7: The media often exaggerate the extent of violence at football matches**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	37	18.5
Disagree	30	15.0
Neutral	42	21.0
Agree	43	21.5
Strongly Agree	48	24.0
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The data in Table X show that a significant proportion of respondents, 43 (21.5%), agree and

48 (24.0%) strongly agree that the media often exaggerate the extent of violence at football matches in Ghana. Combined, these figures indicate that approximately 45.5% of respondents perceive exaggeration in media portrayals of hooliganism, while only 33.5% (those who disagreed or strongly disagreed) think otherwise, and 21.0% remain neutral. This trend suggests a public consensus that the Ghanaian media amplify the severity of football-related violence beyond its actual occurrence. These findings resonate with Acheampong's (2023) assertion that Ghanaian media tend to dramatise football incidents, blending development and conflict narratives to attract audience attention. Similarly, Mehler (2008) found that Ghanaian and Ivorian media often politicise football stories, which leads to sensational coverage of violent episodes. In addition, Danso (2025) notes that ownership and political affiliations influence editorial framing, making exaggerated or dramatised reporting common in competitive media environments. These empirical findings collectively affirm that the Ghanaian public's perception of exaggeration is not baseless but rather consistent with scholarly critiques of African sports journalism. The data, therefore, corroborate earlier literature that identifies media sensationalism and selective framing as central features of football reporting (Ncube & Munoriyarwa, 2021; Spaaij, 2011). This pattern also supports Framing Theory, which posits that the media highlight certain aspects of reality such as aggression or disorder to define problems, assign blame, and suggest remedies (Entman, 1993). By consistently framing football violence as a national crisis or moral failure, the media potentially distort public understanding, creating an exaggerated perception of hooliganism's prevalence. Thus, the data affirm that framing devices, whether intentional or not, contribute to magnified perceptions of violence within Ghana's football culture.

Furthermore, the finding that a majority of respondents perceive media exaggeration aligns closely with the principles of Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1969), which explains how prolonged exposure to specific media content shapes audiences' views of reality. In this case,

repetitive portrayals of violence in Ghanaian sports media cultivate a perception that football hooliganism is far more widespread and severe than it truly is. As Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (2002) observed, sustained exposure to violent or dramatic media messages tends to heighten fear and perceptions of danger, even in relatively safe contexts. This phenomenon is mirrored in the Ghanaian football landscape, where continuous emphasis on violence by the press and radio talk shows has arguably created a “mean world syndrome” among fans, leading to fear and disengagement from live matches. The data further echo Poulton’s (2005, 2007) studies in the UK, which found that football hooliganism was amplified through media moralization that simplified complex social issues into dramatic storylines of “thugs versus order.” Similarly, Sultan, Amir, and Hasan (2024) demonstrated that Indonesian media representations of football violence shaped public anxiety and legitimised stricter policing. In Ghana, this cultivated perception of pervasive violence may explain declining match attendance (Kusi & Santiaguel, 2024) and growing public distrust toward fan groups.

**Table 8: Media reports focus more on negative aspects than positive football stories.**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	29	14.5
Disagree	31	15.5
Neutral	34	17.0
Agree	44	22.0
Strongly Agree	62	31.0
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The data indicate that a significant majority of respondents, 53% (31% strongly agree and 22% agree), perceive that Ghanaian media focus more on the negative aspects of football than on positive developments. Only a minority, 30% (14.5% strongly disagree and 15.5% disagree), contest this view, while 17% remain neutral. This suggests that the public perceives an imbalance in football coverage that privileges conflict, violence, and sensational incidents over narratives that celebrate sportsmanship, teamwork, and development. This interpretation aligns with existing empirical literature in Chapter Two that demonstrated similar media patterns.

Acheampong (2023), for example, found that Ghanaian football journalism often oscillates between developmental rhetoric and sensationalism, while Mehler (2008) showed that political undertones and dramatization dominate Ghanaian and Ivorian football coverage. Similarly, Danso (2025) and Ncube and Munoriyarwa (2021) argue that African media institutions tend to prioritize commercially profitable and politically resonant narratives, such as violence, over constructive reporting. These studies corroborate the current findings that the Ghanaian media's dominant framing of football events reinforces negativity. Using Framing Theory (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974), this perception reflects how media construct and emphasize specific dimensions of football, shaping what audiences consider important. By repeatedly highlighting violent fan clashes or administrative controversies, the media frame football not as a space for unity but as a site of chaos and disorder. This selective emphasis supports Entman's (1993) assertion that framing involves defining problems, diagnosing causes, and making moral judgments that shape public interpretation. Hence, respondents' agreement with the statement that "media reports focus more on negative aspects than positive stories" demonstrates how the Ghanaian media's framing processes influence public perception and may unintentionally perpetuate fear, distrust, and moral panic surrounding football (Cohen, 1972; Poulton, 2007).

Furthermore, these findings resonate with the tenets of Cultivation Theory, which argues that sustained exposure to repetitive media content cultivates long-term perceptions that align with media portrayals (Gerbner, 1969). In the context of Ghanaian football, continuous exposure to negative news such as reports of hooliganism, corruption in the Ghana Football Association (GFA), or violent fan clashes may lead audiences to perceive football as inherently unsafe or socially corrosive. This interpretation supports studies such as Spaaij (2011), who found that repeated depictions of violence in European football media cultivated exaggerated perceptions of hooliganism, influencing both fan behavior and policy. Similarly, Sultan, Amir, and Hasan

(2024) showed that in Indonesia, constant exposure to violent sports coverage led to the normalisation of aggression among fans. In Ghana, the current findings reinforce this logic: over half of respondents perceive a dominant negative focus, suggesting that cumulative exposure has cultivated a public image of football as conflict-ridden.

**Table 9: Social media amplifies stories about violence more than traditional media**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	20	10.0
Disagree	19	9.5
Neutral	27	13.5
Agree	48	24.0
Strongly Agree	86	43.0
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The data reveal that a significant proportion of respondents (67%) combining those who “agree” (24%) and “strongly agree” (43%) perceive that social media amplifies stories about violence more than traditional media. Only 19.5% disagreed, while 13.5% remained neutral, indicating a clear consensus that social media platforms heighten the visibility and frequency of violent football-related content. This finding aligns strongly with existing empirical and theoretical literature. Studies by Spaaij (2011) and Poulton (2007) confirm that media especially in the digital age tend to magnify the drama surrounding football violence through selective representation and emotional framing. Social media’s immediacy, interactivity, and algorithmic amplification make it particularly prone to sensationalism, as platforms prioritise engagement over accuracy (Tandoc et al., 2018). In the Ghanaian context, Kusi and Santiaguel (2024) found that heavy social media consumption among football fans amplifies exposure to violent narratives, often discouraging stadium attendance and fostering fear among supporters. These findings also corroborate Acheampong’s (2023) observation that Ghanaian media narratives often emphasise the emotional and conflictual dimensions of football rather than developmental aspects. Collectively, these studies support the current data, showing that audiences perceive social media as a double-edged sword. While it democratizes information

flow, it also accelerates the spread of negative and conflict-based content that reinforces perceptions of danger around football matches.

The above finding can be further explained through the lens of Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1969) and Framing Theory (Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1993), which together provide a strong interpretive foundation for understanding media influence. Cultivation Theory posits that prolonged exposure to recurrent media messages shapes how audiences perceive social reality. In this study, the respondents’ overwhelming agreement that social media amplifies violent stories suggests that continuous exposure to such content cultivates an exaggerated sense of danger around football in Ghana a phenomenon Gerbner (2002) called “mean world syndrome.” Repeated social media images and commentaries on football hooliganism, often unfiltered and sensationalized, may thus cause audiences to perceive Ghanaian football as inherently violent, even when actual incidents are relatively infrequent. Framing Theory complements this by explaining *how* these perceptions are constructed. As Entman (1993) and Poulton (2005) argue, media frames define problems, assign blame, and propose moral judgments, shaping the public’s understanding of social issues. In this case, social media’s tendency to foreground aggression, conflict, and dramatic visuals amplifies the moral frame of football as a “dangerous spectacle,” influencing both public perception and policy debates on security in sports.

**Table 10: The media portray football fans as aggressive and undisciplined.**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	29	14.5
Disagree	29	14.5
Neutral	52	26.0
Agree	59	29.5
Strongly Agree	31	15.5
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The data presented indicate that a significant proportion of respondents, comprising 29.5% who

agreed and 15.5% who strongly agreed (totaling 45%), perceive that the media portray football fans as aggressive and undisciplined. A smaller proportion, 29% (14.5% strongly disagree and 14.5% disagree), expressed disagreement, while 26% remained neutral. These results suggest that nearly half of the participants acknowledge a negative media portrayal of football supporters in Ghana. This finding corroborates the arguments presented in the reviewed literature, particularly those by Poulton (2005) and Tsoukala (2006), who observed that media outlets often employ frames that highlight violence and chaos in football reporting, thereby reinforcing stereotypes of fans as unruly and dangerous. Similarly, in the African context, Danso (2025) and Mehler (2008) showed that political and economic interests often drive media sensationalism in sports coverage, as violence generates higher audience engagement. The Ghanaian media, in particular, are known for their emotive and dramatized reportage of clashes between supporters of clubs such as Asante Kotoko and Hearts of Oak, a pattern that aligns with Goffman's (1974) Framing Theory, which posits that the way events are framed determines how audiences interpret them. Therefore, the dominance of agreement responses in this data supports the idea that the media's framing of football incidents contributes to a public perception that fans are inherently aggressive. This finding also aligns with Tsoukala's (2006) conclusion that framing hooliganism through "threat" narratives fosters moral panic and public fear rather than contextual understanding.

Furthermore, the interpretation of these findings through the lens of Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1969) strengthens the argument that repeated media exposure shapes public attitudes toward football fans. Cultivation Theory asserts that long-term exposure to recurring media messages gradually influences individuals' worldviews, often aligning their perceptions with the dominant images presented in the media. In this case, consistent exposure to televised and radio reports portraying violent football supporters cultivates a public belief that aggression and disorder are intrinsic features of Ghanaian football fandom. This outcome resonates with

findings by Spaaij (2011), who found that mainstream media representations of fan violence often overshadow the positive social aspects of football communities, leading to distorted perceptions of sports culture. Similarly, Acheampong (2023) emphasized that Ghanaian media’s dual tendency to celebrate football as a developmental force while dramatizing violence produces contradictory public narratives. The 26% neutrality rate in the dataset further indicates an audience segment that may be undecided, possibly reflecting intermittent exposure to both sensational and balanced reporting, consistent with Gerbner’s notion of “mainstreaming,” where varying exposure levels lead to diverse perception intensities.

**Table 11: Media coverage of hooliganism has increased in recent years**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	16	8.0
Disagree	16	8.0
Neutral	42	21.0
Agree	67	33.5
Strongly Agree	59	29.5
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The descriptive statistics indicate that a majority of respondents 63% (Agree + Strongly Agree) perceive that media coverage of football hooliganism in Ghana has increased in recent years. Only 16% disagreed, while 21% remained neutral, suggesting that most Ghanaians are increasingly conscious of how frequently the media report incidents of football-related violence. This perception aligns closely with prior studies reviewed in Chapter Two, which revealed a growing media preoccupation with sensational football reporting across Africa (Acheampong, 2023; Mehler, 2008; Danso, 2025). In particular, Acheampong (2023) found that Ghanaian media often highlight hooliganism as a national issue rather than an isolated sporting concern, while Mehler (2008) argued that media discourse around football in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire increasingly intertwines sport with political and moral narratives. The finding that a majority perceive an increase in coverage corroborates Framing Theory (Goffman, 1974;

Entman, 1993), which posits that media not only report events but also *frame* them in ways that emphasise certain aspects over others. In this case, repetitive reporting on hooligan incidents, even when isolated, constructs the perception that violence is endemic to Ghanaian football. Poulton (2007) similarly found in the UK context that media magnified the spectacle of hooliganism through dramatized headlines and moralized framing, leading audiences to believe that football culture was inherently violent. Therefore, the perception among Ghanaian audiences that coverage has intensified may not necessarily reflect an objective rise in violent incidents but rather a media-driven amplification of violence through selective framing. This directly validates Entman's (1993) view that framing defines problems, diagnoses causes, and proposes moral judgments that shape audience interpretation suggesting that Ghanaian media have elevated hooliganism from a behavioral issue to a symbolic national concern.

Furthermore, the high percentage of respondents perceiving increased media coverage can be meaningfully interpreted through Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1969), which contends that prolonged exposure to particular media messages shapes audiences' perceptions of social reality. When fans and the public consistently encounter reports of violence, even if infrequent, they come to believe that hooliganism is widespread, dangerous, and worsening. This cognitive cultivation process aligns with Gerbner and Gross's (1976) notion of the "mean world syndrome," where repetitive violent imagery leads audiences to perceive the world as more threatening than it is. In Ghana, Kusi and Santiaguel (2024) similarly reported that repeated exposure to social media and broadcast content depicting football violence discouraged fans from attending matches due to perceived insecurity. Thus, the finding that most respondents agree that coverage has increased may reflect both an actual increase in reporting and an accumulated perception effect produced by constant exposure. Cultivation and framing theories together explain how the Ghanaian media not only shape the frequency of narratives but also cultivate enduring perceptions of insecurity among football audiences. While framing

determines *how* the story is told, cultivation determines *what long-term beliefs* emerge from that telling. The synergy of these theories thus justifies interpreting the results as evidence of a mediated reality one where football hooliganism in Ghana, though episodic, is constructed in the public consciousness as a persistent national problem.

### 4.3 Research Question Two: How does media coverage of football-related violence influence public perception in Ghana?

The second research question seeks to investigate how the tone, frequency, and framing of football hooliganism in the media shape public understanding, attitudes, and emotional responses toward football culture and safety in Ghana. It examines whether continuous exposure to reports of violence cultivates fear, apathy, or calls for reform among fans and the general public. The question further probes how repeated media messages over time contribute to collective perceptions of football spaces as either safe, unsafe, or violent.

**Table 12: The way the media frames football violence influences how people discuss football.**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	24	12.0
Disagree	11	5.5
Neutral	34	17.0
Agree	60	30.0
Strongly Agree	71	35.5
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The data reveal that a significant majority of respondents 65.5% (Agree = 30.0%, Strongly Agree = 35.5%) believe that the way media frame football violence influences how people discuss football in Ghana. This finding underscores the persuasive power of media narratives and directly aligns with the propositions of Framing Theory (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974). According to Entman (1993), framing involves the selection and emphasis of certain aspects of reality to make them more salient in communication, thereby shaping how audiences

interpret and discuss events. In this case, when Ghanaian media outlets focus extensively on violent incidents in football often using sensational headlines and emotive imagery they shape public discourse toward associating football with conflict rather than enjoyment. This interpretation resonates with the arguments by Acheampong (2023) and Mehler (2008), who found that Ghanaian sports reporting often oscillates between developmental and moral crisis frames, creating polarized public reactions. Similarly, Poulton (2007) observed in the UK that persistent framing of football fans as “thugs” created a social consensus that normalized punitive responses to hooliganism. The 65.5% agreement rate in this study suggests that Ghanaian audiences are highly receptive to these mediated portrayals, meaning that the media not only report but also define what counts as “football violence.” Moreover, only a small percentage (17%) remained neutral, while 17.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed, which implies that while some citizens critically question media narratives, the overwhelming majority accept them as credible. Thus, the data affirm the argument that framing processes play a decisive role in shaping the tone and direction of public discourse about football violence in Ghana transforming isolated incidents into broader topics of moral and social debate (Tsoukala, 2006; Spaaij, 2011).

The findings also strongly corroborate the principles of Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1969; Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2015), which posits that prolonged exposure to media messages cultivates audiences’ perceptions of social reality. In this context, Ghanaian football fans repeatedly exposed to televised and online narratives emphasizing violence are likely to internalize such frames, perceiving hooliganism as an ever-present and defining feature of football culture. The dominance of agreement among respondents aligns with Kusi and Santiaguel’s (2024) study, which showed that Ghanaian fans exposed to violent social media content about football reported heightened fear of attending matches. Similarly, Spaaij (2011) found that consistent media coverage of hooliganism in Europe led to distorted public

perceptions that football stadiums were inherently unsafe. This reinforces the idea that in Ghana, continual exposure to sensationalized media frames can cultivate exaggerated perceptions of violence, thus influencing both conversation and policy priorities.

**Table 13: Media coverage of football violence makes me more cautious about attending matches.**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	24	12.0
Disagree	18	9.0
Neutral	37	18.5
Agree	59	29.5
Strongly Agree	62	31.0
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The data presented reveal that a majority of respondents specifically 60.5% (combining *Agree* and *Strongly Agree*) reported that media coverage of football violence makes them more cautious about attending matches, while only 21% (*Disagree* and *Strongly Disagree*) expressed contrary views. This finding suggests that the media’s representation of football violence in Ghana exerts a significant influence on the behavioral intentions of the public, particularly regarding participation in live sporting events. The results align closely with the Framing Theory (Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1993), which posits that the way an issue is presented by the media determines how audiences interpret and react to it. In this context, Ghanaian media narratives that emphasize disorderly fan conduct, security failures, and violent clashes at football venues shape public perceptions of risk and insecurity, framing stadiums as unsafe environments. This interpretation corroborates the findings of Acheampong (2023), who observed that Ghanaian sports journalism often highlights sensational aspects of football violence, creating fear and discouraging match attendance. Similarly, Kusi and Santiaguél (2024) found that high social media exposure to violent football content significantly reduces stadium attendance among Ghanaian fans, reinforcing the idea that negative frames can shape audience behaviors. The strong proportion of respondents agreeing that media coverage

influences their caution underscores the power of framing to cultivate specific emotional responses, particularly fear and anxiety, which in turn modify public interaction with football events.

The data also strongly resonate with Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1969), which posits that long-term exposure to media messages gradually shapes audience perceptions of social reality. The fact that nearly one-third of respondents (31.0%) strongly agreed that media coverage makes them more cautious suggests a cumulative effect where consistent exposure to violent football imagery and sensational reporting cultivates a perception that stadiums are inherently dangerous spaces. This mirrors the conclusions of Poulton (2005) and Spaaij (2011), who found that prolonged exposure to media narratives depicting hooliganism as rampant leads audiences to overestimate the prevalence of violence and underestimate safety at sporting events. In Ghana, where radio, television, and digital platforms dominate sports discourse, repeated exposure to stories of hooliganism amplifies fear of victimization, influencing fans’ willingness to attend matches. This finding also corroborates the arguments of Danso (2025), who demonstrated that Ghanaian media often prioritize sensationalism and negativity in reporting, reinforcing public apprehension rather than promoting constructive dialogue about prevention.

**Table 14: Continuous reports of hooliganism make football appear unsafe in Ghana**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	24	12.0
Disagree	23	11.5
Neutral	29	14.5
Agree	53	26.5
Strongly Agree	71	35.5
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The data reveal that a significant proportion of respondents (62%, combining “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”) believe that continuous reports of hooliganism make football appear unsafe in Ghana, while only about 23.5% (“Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree”) reject this claim. This clearly indicates that media narratives have a substantial influence on public perceptions of

safety in the football environment. This finding strongly corroborates the principles of Framing Theory, which posit that the way media present and emphasize certain issues shapes how the public interprets them (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974). As discussed in Chapter Two, studies such as Poulton (2005) and Tsoukala (2006) established that persistent media framing of football violence as a public threat constructs a sense of insecurity among audiences, even when incidents are infrequent. In Ghana, similar tendencies have been noted by Acheampong (2023) and Danso (2025), who argue that sensationalism and negative framing dominate football reportage, often portraying stadiums as sites of chaos rather than leisure. The framing of isolated violent events as recurring national crises can therefore cultivate fear, discouraging spectators from attending matches and eroding the social value of football. The Ghanaian sports media's reliance on emotionally charged headlines and visuals, such as images of police clashes or fan injuries, further strengthens these perceptions (Kusi & Santiaguel, 2024). This reinforces Entman's (1993) argument that framing is not merely about coverage but about interpretive guidance that is, media tell audiences not only what to think about but how to think about it. Consequently, the predominance of "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" responses reflects how sustained negative frames in sports journalism have shaped public consciousness around safety, echoing the patterns observed in other contexts such as England and Indonesia (Poulton, 2007; Sultan et al., 2024).

Similarly, the data align with the assumptions of Cultivation Theory, which explains how prolonged exposure to media messages cultivates audience perceptions of social reality over time (Gerbner, 1969; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). The finding that over 60% of respondents perceive football as unsafe suggests that continuous exposure to news about hooliganism regardless of its actual prevalence has contributed to the cultivation of a fearful worldview among football followers in Ghana. This supports Spaaij's (2011) and Braun and Vliegthart's (2008) observations that repetitive portrayals of violence in sports media foster exaggerated

perceptions of risk, leading audiences to associate football events with aggression rather than recreation.

**Table 15: Media reports influence how fans perceive rival clubs and supporters.**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	14	7.0
Disagree	12	6.0
Neutral	20	10.0
Agree	83	41.5
Strongly Agree	71	35.5
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The data show that a majority of respondents 83 (41.5%) agreed and 71 (35.5%) strongly agreed that *media reports influence how fans perceive rival clubs and supporters*, making a total of 76.5% of participants acknowledging media influence. Only 13% of respondents disagreed, while 10% remained neutral, suggesting a strong consensus that media narratives significantly shape football fans’ perceptions in Ghana. These findings align with the central assumptions of Framing Theory, which posits that the media do not simply report facts but actively construct and emphasize certain meanings (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974). In the context of Ghanaian football, this suggests that the framing of rivalries such as those between *Asante Kotoko* and *Accra Hearts of Oak* creates interpretive lenses through which supporters understand opposing teams. As Poulton (2005) and Spaaij (2011) argue, media often amplify antagonism by emphasizing sensational or conflict-driven frames, portraying matches as “battles” rather than sporting events. The framing of fans as either “heroes” or “troublemakers” shapes social categorization and can exacerbate hostility between rival groups. Similarly, Danso (2025) found that ownership and political influences determine how Ghanaian media frame sporting incidents, either inflaming tensions or mitigating them through peace-oriented reporting. The current findings corroborate this literature, demonstrating that Ghanaian fans are acutely aware of media influence on their perceptions, suggesting that framing mechanisms

remain powerful even within local football cultures. Thus, the dominance of “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” responses empirically supports the theoretical view that media framing serves as a central lens through which social meaning and rivalry are constructed in Ghanaian football discourse.

Furthermore, these findings also strongly resonate with Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1969), which contends that prolonged media exposure shapes individuals’ perceptions of social reality over time. The high percentage of respondents acknowledging media influence indicates that football fans who are consistently exposed to narratives emphasizing rivalry and aggression are more likely to internalize these depictions as accurate representations of inter-club relations. As Spaaij (2011) and Tsoukala (2006) emphasize, when media consistently highlight violence or rivalry in sports coverage, audiences gradually cultivate an exaggerated perception of hostility, which influences their attitudes and behavior toward rival supporters. This aligns with Kusi and Santiaguel’s (2024) empirical finding that Ghanaian football fans who engage more with media content about hooliganism tend to perceive matches as unsafe and adversarial. Similarly, Sultan, Amir, and Hasan (2024) observed in Indonesia that repeated exposure to conflict-framed sports news led fans to associate opposing supporters with aggression. Therefore, the present results substantiate the argument that continuous exposure to rivalry-centered media content cultivates polarized fan perceptions, reinforcing in-group loyalty while intensifying out-group hostility core dynamics also explained by Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In sum, the findings empirically validate the propositions of both Framing and Cultivation theories within the Ghanaian context: the former explaining *how* the media structure football narratives and the latter explaining *why* long-term exposure to such narratives significantly influences fans’ perceptions and attitudes.

**Table 16: The way journalists report football violence affects my trust in football institutions.**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	26	13.0
Disagree	21	10.5
Neutral	36	18.0
Agree	57	28.5
Strongly Agree	60	30.0
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The data indicate that a significant majority of respondents (58.5%) either *agreed* (28.5%) or *strongly agreed* (30%) that the way journalists report football violence affects their trust in football institutions. This suggests that media narratives play a crucial role in shaping public confidence in the governance, fairness, and integrity of football administration in Ghana. This finding is consistent with Framing Theory, which posits that media do not simply report events but actively shape how audiences interpret and evaluate them through selective emphasis and linguistic framing (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974). When Ghanaian journalists frame incidents of football violence through sensationalist or emotionally charged reporting, they may unintentionally erode trust in football authorities by portraying the Ghana Football Association (GFA), club management, and security agencies as ineffective or complicit. This interpretation aligns with Acheampong’s (2023) assertion that Ghanaian media tend to dramatize football-related disorder to attract public attention, thereby reinforcing negative perceptions of institutional competence. Similarly, Danso (2025) found that media ownership structures and political interests influence framing choices, often resulting in unbalanced coverage that prioritizes scandal over systemic analysis. In line with Spaaij’s (2011) work on media representations of football crowd violence, such frames not only stigmatize fans but also portray institutions as incapable of maintaining order. Thus, the present findings corroborate previous empirical evidence that the media’s framing of hooliganism can erode institutional legitimacy. This supports the argument that framing processes by highlighting conflict and

chaos strongly shape public perceptions of credibility and governance within Ghana’s football ecosystem.

Moreover, these findings resonate strongly with Cultivation Theory, which argues that consistent exposure to certain types of media portrayals cultivates long-term perceptions about reality (Gerbner, 1969; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). In the Ghanaian context, repeated media exposure to violent football incidents may lead the public to perceive hooliganism and administrative failure as pervasive features of the sport, even when such events are relatively infrequent. This process, which Gerbner called “mainstreaming,” blurs the distinction between mediated reality and actual experience. Consequently, as the data reveal, when more than half of respondents express diminished trust due to journalistic reporting, it suggests that persistent exposure to negative narratives has cultivated a generalized perception of inefficiency among football authorities. This interpretation aligns with findings by Kusi and Santiaguel (2024), who observed that frequent online exposure to reports of violence discouraged stadium attendance and fostered public fear of mismanagement. Similarly, Poulton (2007) and Spaaij (2011) found that repetitive framing of hooliganism in sports media reinforces stereotypes about fan disorder and institutional failure. The Ghanaian situation exemplifies this pattern: audiences repeatedly exposed to exaggerated narratives of football violence come to internalize mistrust toward institutions tasked with regulation and control.

**Table 17: Media narratives have caused certain clubs to be stereotyped as violent**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	20	10.0
Disagree	28	14.0
Neutral	20	10.0
Agree	62	31.0
Strongly Agree	70	35.0
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The data indicate that a substantial majority of respondents (66%) either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that media narratives have caused certain clubs in Ghana to be stereotyped as violent,

while only 24% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 10% remained neutral. This distribution clearly suggests that the media's representational practices exert a significant influence on how fans and the general public perceive particular football clubs. The findings strongly align with Framing Theory, which posits that media do not merely reflect reality but actively construct it through selective emphasis and narrative patterns (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974). When media outlets repeatedly frame matches involving clubs such as *Asante Kotoko* or *Accra Hearts of Oak* as "tension-filled" or "potentially volatile," audiences internalize those portrayals as inherent characteristics of the teams themselves. This process resonates with Tsoukala's (2006) observation that sports journalism in Europe often constructs football hooliganism through moralistic frames that simplify complex social issues into recurring narratives of violence. Similarly, Poulton (2005) argues that repeated negative framing in media discourse creates a lasting symbolic association between certain teams and violent behavior. Within the Ghanaian context, this pattern mirrors Acheampong's (2023) findings that local sports journalism frequently dramatizes football conflicts, thereby reinforcing pre-existing biases and shaping fans' collective perceptions. Thus, the present findings empirically validate what the literature suggests that the media's framing power can stigmatize specific clubs and their supporters, transforming isolated incidents into persistent stereotypes.

Moreover, the results corroborate the principles of Cultivation Theory, which contends that prolonged exposure to media content shapes audience perceptions of reality over time (Gerbner, 1969; Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2015). When fans and viewers consistently consume news reports and commentaries depicting certain Ghanaian clubs as violent, they begin to perceive those clubs and their fanbases as inherently aggressive a phenomenon Gerbner termed the "mean world syndrome." This theoretical link explains why such stereotypes endure even among individuals with little or no first-hand experience of match-day violence. The study's findings are consistent with Kusi and Santiaguel's (2024) research, which

found that social media narratives about hooliganism in Ghana reduce stadium attendance by amplifying fears of violence. Likewise, Spaaij (2011) and Poulton (2007) demonstrate that repetitive violent framing cultivates moral panic and entrenches long-term public perceptions of football as disorderly.

**Table 18: Positive football coverage helps to promote peaceful fan behavior.**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	20	10.0
Disagree	9	4.5
Neutral	13	6.5
Agree	43	21.5
Strongly Agree	115	57.5
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The data presented indicate that a substantial majority of respondents 136 participants (68.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that *positive football coverage helps promote peaceful fan behavior*, while only 14.5% disagreed and 6.5% remained neutral. This implies a strong belief among Ghanaian football fans that the tone and framing of media reporting influence attitudes and conduct within football spaces. These findings strongly corroborate the propositions of Framing Theory (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974), which posits that the way information is presented through selective emphasis and interpretive angles shapes how audiences perceive and act upon social realities. In this case, constructive or peace-oriented media framing appears to cultivate positive social norms around sportsmanship and civility. This finding aligns with studies by Poulton (2005) and Spaaij (2011), who argue that media narratives emphasizing unity, respect, and fair play contribute to lowering aggressive behavior among fans, in contrast to sensationalist or conflict-driven reporting that tends to fuel hostility. Similarly, Rookwood and Gow (2008) found that English football supporters exposed to balanced, community-oriented media content demonstrated lower tendencies toward confrontation compared to those who consumed sensationalist press reports emphasizing “hooligan” stereotypes. Within the

Ghanaian context, Acheampong (2023) and Danso (2025) also observed that positive media portrayals of football as a tool for national unity and development foster greater social cohesion among fans. The agreement among most respondents in this study reinforces this position suggesting that fans are conscious of how media positivity can influence emotional regulation and behavioral responses during football events.

Furthermore, this finding also aligns with Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1969; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010), which posits that long-term media exposure shapes perceptions of reality and social behavior. Respondents' strong agreement that positive football coverage promotes peaceful fan conduct suggests that when fans are repeatedly exposed to media narratives emphasizing peace, fair competition, and unity, they internalize these as normative behaviors within the football culture. Conversely, consistent exposure to sensational or violent coverage could normalize aggression and rivalry, as supported by empirical findings from Sultan, Amir, and Hasan (2024), who showed that repetitive negative framing in Indonesian football reporting cultivated aggressive attitudes among fans. In Ghana, similar conclusions were drawn by Kusi and Santiaguel (2024), who found that social media saturation with violent football content discouraged peaceful engagement and even reduced stadium attendance due to fear of conflict.

**Table 19: The media should focus more on educating fans than blaming them for violence.**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	20	10.0
Disagree	10	5.0
Neutral	17	8.5
Agree	45	22.5
Strongly Agree	108	54.0
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The data reveal that a substantial majority of respondents (76.5%) either *agreed* (22.5%) or *strongly agreed* (54.0%) that the media should focus more on educating football fans than

blaming them for violence, while only 15% disagreed and 8.5% remained neutral. This overwhelming consensus suggests that the Ghanaian public perceives the media's dominant approach to football hooliganism as reactive, judgmental, and often unconstructive. The findings corroborate prior literature reviewed in Chapter Two, which consistently highlighted that Ghanaian sports journalism often employs sensational or moralizing frames that exacerbate tensions instead of promoting preventive education (Acheampong, 2023; Danso, 2025). Similarly, Mehler (2008) and Ncube and Munoriyarwa (2021) observed that African football media tend to privilege conflict-oriented narratives that blame fans or security agencies while neglecting educational content that could foster mutual understanding and civic responsibility. From a theoretical standpoint, this aligns with *Framing Theory* (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974), which posits that the manner in which an issue is presented determines how audiences interpret it. By persistently framing fans as “troublemakers” or “hooligans,” the Ghanaian media arguably reinforce a punitive lens that stigmatizes supporters instead of encouraging positive behavioral change. The data therefore reflect a strong public demand for reframing football discourse toward constructive education a shift from the “blame frame” toward what Entman (1993) would call an “empowerment frame.” This interpretation reinforces the argument made by Poulton (2005) and Spaaij (2011) that reframing media narratives from condemnation to collaboration is crucial for reducing fan hostility and rebuilding trust between the public, sports authorities, and the press.

Furthermore, the findings closely align with *Cultivation Theory* (Gerbner, 1969; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994), which posits that prolonged exposure to particular media narratives shapes individuals' perceptions of social reality. In the context of Ghanaian football, continuous exposure to sensational reports of hooliganism cultivates a “mean-world syndrome,” where fans are perceived as inherently violent and stadiums as unsafe (Spaaij, 2011; Poulton, 2007). The respondents' strong endorsement of the need for educational rather

than accusatory media coverage suggests a growing public awareness of the negative psychological effects of such framing. This sentiment is supported by Bashiru’s (2015) finding that sensational reporting reduces stadium attendance and by Kusi and Santiaguel’s (2024) conclusion that social media exaggerations discourage civic engagement in football spaces. Hence, the survey data validate the theoretical expectation that media framing can cultivate public fear or mistrust over time. However, the same theory also implies that consistent exposure to constructive, educational narratives can re-cultivate a sense of community and civic responsibility among fans.

**4.4 Research Question Three: To what extent does media coverage influence policy and institutional responses to football hooliganism in Ghana?**

This research question focuses on the relationship between media reporting and institutional action, specifically exploring how coverage of football violence affects decision-making and policy responses by the Ghana Football Association (GFA), the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and related bodies. It seeks to determine whether heightened media attention pressures these institutions into reactive measures or encourages long-term preventive reforms

**Table 20: Media coverage of hooliganism pressures the Ghana Football Association (GFA) to act.**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	16	8.0
Disagree	20	10.0
Neutral	25	12.5
Agree	62	31.0
Strongly Agree	77	38.5
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The data reveal that a combined 69.5% of respondents (31.0% agree; 38.5% strongly agree) believe that *media coverage of hooliganism pressures the Ghana Football Association (GFA) to act*, while only 18.0% disagreed and 12.5% remained neutral. This strong agreement

suggests that the Ghanaian public perceives the media as a powerful institution capable of influencing policy and administrative responses to football violence. These findings align with the propositions of Framing Theory, which emphasizes that media do not simply reflect reality but actively shape it by selecting and highlighting specific aspects of events (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974). In the Ghanaian context, when television and radio stations frame hooliganism as a national concern threatening public safety and the integrity of football, they effectively construct the narrative that the GFA must respond decisively (Danso, 2025; Acheampong, 2023). This framing process reinforces public pressure and compels institutional accountability, as observed in earlier research by Mehler (2008), who found that the Ghanaian and Ivorian media use football reporting as a space for political symbolism and moral critique. The strong agreement in the data therefore suggests that media narratives have transcended mere reporting to become a mechanism of institutional control, consistent with Spaaij's (2011) argument that repeated framing of football disorder produces an expectation for reform. Moreover, this public perception corroborates findings by Ncube and Munoriyarwa (2021) in Zimbabwe, who observed that selective coverage of football violence either amplifies or suppresses institutional action depending on how the story is framed. Hence, in Ghana, where the media often act as both watchdogs and agenda-setters, the framing of hooliganism as a systemic problem exerts social and political pressure on the GFA to implement policies aimed at restoring order and credibility.

The result also supports the principles of Cultivation Theory, which argue that prolonged exposure to consistent media messages shapes public perceptions of reality (Gerbner, 1969; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). When media repeatedly highlight violent incidents at Ghanaian stadiums such as clashes between Hearts of Oak and Asante Kotoko supporters audiences begin to internalize the belief that hooliganism is both widespread and urgent, thereby cultivating heightened concern and expectations for intervention. The 69.5% agreement rate demonstrates

this cultivation effect: sustained portrayals of violence have cultivated a public perception that the GFA must act, even if actual incidents are relatively infrequent. This resonates with earlier findings by Kusi and Santiaguel (2024), who reported that heavy social media exposure to violent football content in Ghana significantly reduced fans’ willingness to attend matches due to perceived insecurity. Similarly, Braun and Vliegenthart (2008) noted that media amplification of violence legitimizes repressive institutional responses, creating a cycle of fear and regulation.

**Table 21: The GFA often responds to violent incidents after public or media pressure**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	24	12.0
Disagree	31	15.5
Neutral	23	11.5
Agree	64	32.0
Strongly Agree	58	29.0
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The data presented above reveal that a significant proportion of respondents 61% (32% agree, 29% strongly agree) perceive that the Ghana Football Association (GFA) tends to respond to violent football incidents primarily after public or media pressure. Only 27.5% disagreed (12% strongly disagreed, 15.5% disagreed), while 11.5% remained neutral. This finding strongly suggests that media narratives and public discourse exert a powerful influence on institutional accountability within Ghana’s football governance. The results corroborate existing literature which has consistently argued that the Ghanaian media play a watchdog role that often compels authorities to act in the aftermath of football-related violence (Acheampong, 2023; Danso, 2025). According to Mehler (2008), Ghanaian sports media frequently frame football incidents as political or moral crises, creating public pressure that forces authorities to issue reactive, rather than preventive, responses. Similarly, Spaaij (2011) and Poulton (2005) assert that such media framing patterns are not unique to Ghana but are part of a broader global trend in which

sports journalism dramatizes disorder, pushing institutions into action. The predominance of agreement in this finding aligns with Entman’s (1993) notion of “problem definition and causal interpretation,” where media not only highlight specific events but also define who is responsible for resolving them. In Ghana, when media repeatedly emphasize incidents of hooliganism, the GFA becomes symbolically positioned as the institution responsible for restoring order. Thus, through the lens of Framing Theory, these findings indicate that the GFA’s reactive posture is not simply administrative inertia but a behavioral outcome shaped by sustained framing pressures within Ghana’s mediated football environment.

Furthermore, the findings also strongly align with Cultivation Theory, which argues that consistent and prolonged media exposure shapes public perceptions of social realities (Gerbner, 1969; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980). In this context, repeated media coverage of football hooliganism cultivates a public belief that violence is both frequent and severe, thereby reinforcing expectations that the GFA must respond decisively after each major incident. As noted by Kusi and Santiaguel (2024), Ghanaian fans’ heavy reliance on football news across radio, television, and social media platforms has cultivated a shared sense of urgency whenever violent scenes occur. This cultivated perception, amplified by framing patterns that dramatize chaos and institutional delay, creates what Cohen (1972) describes as a moral panic, compelling the GFA to act publicly to restore legitimacy.

**Table 22: Media attention helps bring about stricter safety and security policies**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	14	7.0
Disagree	13	6.5
Neutral	23	11.5
Agree	73	36.5
Strongly Agree	77	38.5
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The results in the table indicate that a significant majority of respondents 36.5% who agreed and 38.5% who strongly agreed (a combined 75%) believe that media attention helps bring

about stricter safety and security policies in Ghanaian football. This finding demonstrates that audiences perceive a clear link between the intensity of media coverage on football-related violence and the subsequent implementation of stricter security measures by relevant authorities such as the Ghana Football Association (GFA), the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the police. The relatively low percentages of disagreement (7.0% strongly disagree and 6.5% disagree) reinforce the dominant perception that the media serve as a catalyst for institutional action rather than as a passive observer. This is consistent with Framing Theory, as outlined by Entman (1993), which posits that the way issues are presented influences how they are interpreted and acted upon by both the public and policymakers. When Ghanaian media frame incidents of hooliganism as national crises demanding immediate intervention, policymakers are pressured to introduce stricter safety policies to demonstrate responsiveness. This aligns with findings by Danso (2025), who observed that in Ghana, the framing of corruption or crisis narratives often compels state agencies to adopt visible corrective measures. Similarly, Acheampong (2023) and Mehler (2008) revealed that media framing of football events in Ghana frequently ties the sport to political responsibility and national image, prompting institutional responses that go beyond sport management into broader governance. Therefore, the finding that three-quarters of respondents perceive media influence on policy enforcement underscores the agenda-setting power of Ghanaian media in shaping public discourse and policy responses to football hooliganism.

Furthermore, the finding corroborates the postulations of Cultivation Theory, which posits that prolonged exposure to media messages gradually shapes audience perceptions of reality (Gerbner, 1969; Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2015). In this study's context, the consistent reporting of violent football incidents and calls for reforms by Ghanaian radio, television, and online outlets cultivate a public consciousness that stricter safety measures are both necessary and effective responses. The high proportion of respondents who agreed that media attention

leads to stronger security policies reflects this “cultivation effect,” where media repeatedly highlight incidents of violence, thereby influencing citizens to view increased regulation as the logical and desirable outcome.

**Table 23: The government and GFA rely on media reports to assess football safety issues.**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	24	12.0
Disagree	29	14.5
Neutral	38	19.0
Agree	68	34.0
Strongly Agree	41	20.5
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The results presented indicate that a majority of respondents 54.5% (Agree and Strongly Agree combined) believe that the Government and the Ghana Football Association (GFA) rely on media reports to assess football safety issues, while 26.5% remain neutral and only 26.5% disagree to some extent. This distribution suggests that the public largely perceives media narratives as central to institutional decision-making processes regarding football safety and hooliganism prevention. This finding corroborates existing literature in Chapter Two, particularly Acheampong (2023), who emphasized that the Ghanaian media serve as the primary source of information for both policymakers and the public on matters of football administration and violence. Similarly, Danso (2025) found that in Ghana, media ownership and political influence shape how news is framed and, consequently, how state institutions react to crises. This perception that the GFA and government depend on media narratives aligns with Framing Theory, which posits that the media do not merely report facts but organize and interpret events in ways that influence public and institutional responses (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974). When Ghanaian sports journalists frame football violence as a systemic safety problem requiring policy intervention, policymakers are likely to interpret it as such and act accordingly. Conversely, when hooligan incidents are framed as isolated misconduct, the

institutional reaction may be limited to short-term punitive actions rather than structural reform. Therefore, the findings affirm that framing mechanisms significantly influence how football safety and crowd management are prioritized in Ghana’s sports governance.

Furthermore, the substantial proportion of respondents acknowledging the government’s reliance on media narratives also supports Cultivation Theory, which argues that prolonged exposure to media messages shapes audience perceptions of reality (Gerbner, 1969; Gerbner et al., 2002). In Ghana’s context, continuous coverage of football violence through radio talk shows, television broadcasts, and digital news cultivates a public and policy perception that hooliganism is a pervasive and growing problem (Spaaij, 2011; Poulton, 2007). Over time, these cultivated beliefs influence how both the GFA and the government frame football safety within the national agenda. The literature reviewed, such as Mehler (2008), supports this by showing that media discourse often transforms football-related incidents into symbols of national crisis, shaping how authorities react to maintain public order and political legitimacy. This cultivation effect intertwines with Framing Theory, as the persistent presentation of football hooliganism as a public menace not only informs but also sustains policy focus on stricter safety protocols and policing interventions. However, scholars such as Ncube and Munoriyarwa (2021) warn that such reliance on media-driven perceptions can sometimes distort the policy landscape, leading to reactive rather than evidence-based reforms.

**Table 24: Media campaigns can promote peace and discourage football violence**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	12	6.0
Disagree	7	3.5
Neutral	13	6.5
Agree	53	26.5
Strongly Agree	115	57.5
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The data reveal that an overwhelming majority of respondents (84% combining “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”) believe that media campaigns can promote peace and discourage football

violence, while only a small proportion (9.5%) disagreed, and 6.5% remained neutral. This demonstrates a strong consensus among respondents that media have a proactive and transformative role in shaping behavioral and attitudinal change regarding football hooliganism in Ghana. The finding aligns with Acheampong's (2023) observation that Ghanaian football media, when responsibly mobilized, can contribute to social cohesion by framing football as a unifying national identity rather than a divisive arena. Similarly, Mohammed (2018) found that sports-related peace campaigns run by CAF and FIFA fostered social tolerance when media emphasized values of fair play and community. The result also corroborates Entman's (1993) argument in *Framing Theory* that the media's power lies in how issues are defined and morally interpreted. By framing football not merely as a site of competition but as a channel for peacebuilding, the media can shift audience perceptions from aggression to cooperation. In the Ghanaian context, where football is deeply intertwined with regional identity and pride, framing campaigns that stress solidarity and respect can counteract violent fan behaviors. This is consistent with Poulton's (2007) view that positive framing of sport narratives reduces moral panic and reorients audiences toward constructive engagement. Therefore, the dominance of positive responses in the data confirms that the public perceives the media not only as observers but as active stakeholders in preventing hooliganism, which supports the theoretical assumption that media framing shapes both social understanding and policy orientation toward football violence.

Furthermore, these findings resonate with Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1969), which posits that prolonged exposure to consistent media messages shapes audience perceptions of reality. The respondents' strong agreement indicates that the public recognizes media's capacity to cultivate long-term values of peace and sportsmanship through repeated exposure to positive football narratives. This supports McGee's (2015) ethnographic finding that Ghanaian youth internalize values and behaviors modeled in football media, suggesting that sustained peace-

oriented campaigns could “cultivate” a culture of nonviolence among fans. Similarly, Braun and Vliegthart (2008) demonstrated that when media coverage highlights reconciliation and community rather than aggression, audiences gradually adopt less adversarial attitudes. The present findings, therefore, corroborate the idea that consistent peace framing can shape social norms over time.

**Table 25: Journalists and football authorities should collaborate to prevent hooliganism.**

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	13	6.5
Disagree	7	3.5
Neutral	7	3.5
Agree	30	15.0
Strongly Agree	143	71.5
Total	200	100.0

*Source: Field Data 2025*

The findings from the table reveal that a substantial majority of respondents (71.5%) *strongly agreed* and 15.0% *agreed* that journalists and football authorities should collaborate to prevent football hooliganism in Ghana. Only a small proportion expressed disagreement (6.5% strongly disagreed and 3.5% disagreed), while another 3.5% remained neutral. This overwhelming consensus indicates a public recognition of the significant role media and sports administrators can play in shaping attitudes and behaviors that discourage violence. These findings align with Acheampong’s (2023) argument that Ghanaian media narratives possess dual power they can either exacerbate violent fan behavior through sensationalism or promote social cohesion through constructive reporting. Similarly, Danso (2025) emphasizes that collaborative institutional approaches, particularly between journalists and sports managers, are vital for developing credible media strategies that promote accountability and transparency in football administration. The results also corroborate Spaaij’s (2011) findings that media institution partnerships in Europe led to the reduction of crowd violence by replacing blame-oriented narratives with educational and preventive ones. In Ghana, such collaboration could help

transition football journalism from crisis reporting to advocacy-based coverage that fosters peace and discipline among fans. Moreover, these findings echo Poulton's (2007) critique of moralizing and dramatized British football coverage, showing that when journalists actively coordinate with football authorities, they can reframe football violence from being an inevitable "social disorder" to a solvable management and communication issue. Thus, the quantitative results provide empirical support for existing literature that advocates for media authority partnerships in curbing football-related violence.

Theoretically, the findings are best explained through Framing Theory (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974) and Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1969), both of which illuminate how media communication influences public understanding and behavior. Framing Theory posits that the way media construct narratives affects how audiences interpret reality. When journalists collaborate with football authorities, they can frame hooliganism not merely as acts of lawlessness but as symptoms of structural weaknesses such as inadequate security, poor fan education, or weak club management (Tsoukala, 2006; Braun & Vliegthart, 2008). Such constructive framing can shift public discourse from condemnation to prevention, helping to cultivate a culture of responsibility within football circles. Likewise, Cultivation Theory asserts that consistent media messages shape long-term audience perceptions (Gerbner, 1969). If media consistently promote cooperative and peace-oriented coverage, audiences including fans are likely to internalize these values, reducing aggressive tendencies. This relationship is evident in Spaaij's (2011) assertion that prolonged exposure to balanced reporting fosters more tolerant fan behavior.

## Qualitative Analysis

### 4.5 The Symbiotic Relationship Between Football, the Media, and the Ghanaian Public

The first key theme emerging from the interviews highlights the deeply interdependent relationship between football, the media, and the Ghanaian public. Participants consistently emphasized that football functions as a cultural institution around which national identity, emotional investment, and public discourse revolve. The media serve as the conduit that amplifies this passion, while the public, in turn, sustains the commercial and cultural significance of both football and sports journalism. This dynamic confirms the theoretical argument that media framing and consistent exposure shape collective perceptions and attitudes toward sport (Entman, 1993; Gerbner, 1969).

As Participant 1 (Sports Journalist) stated, *“The three feed off each other. The Ghanaian public are deeply connected to football and rely on the media to follow their passion and drive this interest.”* This statement encapsulates the reciprocal nature of media–football interaction, reflecting how journalism mediates public enthusiasm and converts it into cultural capital. The participant further emphasised that this shared passion “provides the media with significant content, commercial opportunities which in turn increases the value of football in Ghana.” This observation aligns with Darby (2013), who argues that football in Ghana has historically been sustained by the media’s capacity to turn sport into a narrative of identity and unity. Thus, the Ghanaian media are not mere reporters but key agents in the production of meaning and value in the football ecosystem.

Similarly, Participant 2 elaborated on this mutual dependency, asserting that *“Football remains the most unifying cultural force in Ghana, and the media plays a central role in shaping how the public experiences it.”* This notion mirrors Giulianotti and Robertson’s (2007) concept of “glocalization”, where football becomes both a local and global cultural phenomenon mediated by local journalism. Moreover, the participant’s observation that *“social media has changed*

*the dynamic, giving fans more power to shape narratives and influence how journalists frame stories*” indicates a shift in the locus of narrative control. This insight corroborates the findings of Mbassi Elong (2023), who discovered that West African digital fan communities increasingly challenge traditional media framing of football events, thereby decentralizing authority in sports reporting.

The interdependence described by the participants also supports Framing Theory’s assumption that media narratives influence public interpretation. According to Goffman (1974), frames serve as cognitive structures that help individuals make sense of events. By framing football as a national passion and social unifier, Ghanaian journalists create interpretive templates that shape audience emotions and perceptions. This process aligns with Entman’s (1993) view that framing selects certain aspects of reality and makes them more salient, influencing not only how audiences perceive football but also how they respond to incidents like hooliganism. As Participant 4 aptly described, *“It’s a feisty relationship... fans believe journalists have ulterior motives, yet they still depend on us for information.”* This tension demonstrates how framing can both reinforce trust and generate scepticism.

Moreover, Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1969) provides further explanatory depth. The theory suggests that prolonged exposure to consistent media themes shapes collective perceptions of reality. Participant 3’s statement that *“we see a lot of collaborations between the FA, football administrators, and the media, as well as the media with the general public”* implies that consistent positive framing can cultivate a perception of unity and progress. This is consistent with Spaaij (2011), who found that in contexts where media emphasized collaboration and reform, fans developed stronger trust in sports institutions. Thus, in the Ghanaian context, sustained coverage that highlights partnership and collective responsibility can cultivate a more optimistic and less adversarial fan culture.

The data also reveal that this symbiotic relationship has commercial and political implications.

As Participant 2 noted, *“Public passion fuels the demand for football content. However, social media has heightened sensitivity to issues like officiating, club ownership, and violence.”* This observation resonates with Ncube and Munoriyarwa’s (2021) study in Zimbabwe, which demonstrated that heightened audience participation through media increases the politicization of sports narratives. Similarly, Ghana’s football media environment reflects a hybrid between civic journalism and entertainment, where commercial pressures may encourage sensationalism. Yet, as the participants imply, the audience’s emotional investment remains the bedrock of football journalism’s relevance and influence.

In conclusion, this theme establishes that the relationship between football, the media, and the Ghanaian public is symbiotic but fragile. While collaboration enhances the sport’s cultural and economic value, the same interdependence makes it vulnerable to misrepresentation and conflict. From a theoretical standpoint, Framing Theory explains how journalists construct meanings that shape public trust and engagement, while Cultivation Theory explains how repeated media messages cultivate shared perceptions over time. Together, these frameworks affirm that in Ghana’s football ecosystem, media narratives are not passive reflections of reality; they are active forces that mould public consciousness and institutional legitimacy (Poulton, 2007; Entman, 1993; Gerbner, 1969).

#### **4.6 The Prominence and Portrayal of Football Hooliganism in Ghanaian Sports Journalism**

The second major theme emerging from the data concerns the prominence and framing of football hooliganism within Ghanaian media. All participants acknowledged that incidents of hooliganism are heavily covered and often dominate headlines, though differences emerged concerning whether the media exaggerate, underreport, or balance such events. This theme underscores the interpretive power of journalism in constructing public narratives of violence and directly engages with Framing Theory and Moral Panic Theory (Cohen, 1972).

Participant 1 emphatically stated that *“Every issue of hooliganism is roundly reported and gets either front-page treatment or major air time.”* This indicates the media’s prioritisation of violent stories, aligning with the agenda-setting principle that media determine the public importance of issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). However, the same participant also emphasised that *“The media does not exaggerate or downplay football hooliganism. If anything, the media does not emphasise the subject enough.”* This dual assertion, recognising prominence but denying sensationalism, reflects what Entman (1993) calls “selective salience,” where certain aspects are emphasised (visibility), but others (context) are neglected. The Ghanaian press’s focus on violence as a “canker that needs to be cured” creates a moralising tone that shapes public perception of hooliganism as a national stain rather than a systemic issue.

Conversely, Participant 2 suggested that *“The framing is often reactive and sensational. Reports usually focus on the violence itself... with less attention to underlying causes such as poor crowd control or officiating controversies.”* This observation directly supports the critiques of Poulton (2005) and Tsoukala (2006), who found that European football media often sensationalise disorder by emphasising spectacle over substance. Such framing contributes to what Cohen (1972) termed “*moral panic*”, a disproportionate social reaction to perceived threats. The Ghanaian context mirrors this dynamic: coverage peaks during crises and fades when calm returns, preventing sustained dialogue about root causes.

Participant 3’s reflections also highlight inconsistencies in reportage: *“There has been some good reportage and some not-so-good reportage. Some media outlets deliberately exaggerated stories and distorted facts.”* These comments reveal the fragmentation of journalistic standards within Ghana’s football media ecosystem. The statement aligns with Danso’s (2025) observation that political and ownership influences create variations in news objectivity. Within Framing Theory, such inconsistencies represent competing “frame sponsors” —

journalists, media houses, and audiences — each striving to define the meaning of football violence (Entman, 1993). This multiplicity of frames explains why public reactions range from scepticism to outrage, depending on the outlet reporting the incident.

Participant 4's comments introduce another dimension: *"Sometimes reporters on the ground skew the narrative to favour one side... There's a general reliance on hearsay, which distorts accuracy."* This reflects a deeper structural issue of verification and ethical reporting, echoing Sultan et al. (2024), who noted that weak journalistic standards in Southeast Asian football coverage often lead to exaggerated depictions of fan violence. By failing to fact-check and contextualise incidents, journalists inadvertently reinforce what Gerbner (1969) would describe as a "cultivation effect," where repeated exposure to exaggerated depictions of violence creates a distorted public reality in which hooliganism appears more pervasive than it is.

In contrast, GFA officials interviewed acknowledged the media's role but criticised its tone. One official noted that *"The media blames the GFA for hooliganism... and this blinds their judgment of the real situation."* This defensive reaction demonstrates the political tension inherent in framing processes; those being framed often resist negative portrayals, seeking to reframe narratives to maintain legitimacy. According to Rookwood and Gow (2008), similar tensions between football authorities and media in the UK resulted in mistrust but also policy innovation when media scrutiny intensified. Thus, in Ghana, media prominence of hooliganism may generate institutional defensiveness but simultaneously catalyse reform.

In sum, this theme establishes that football hooliganism occupies a prominent but inconsistently framed position within Ghanaian sports journalism. The data confirm that media narratives oscillate between moral panic and neglect, often emphasising the spectacle of violence rather than structural remedies. Theoretically, Framing Theory explains these patterns as selective salience driven by audience interest and editorial bias, while Cultivation Theory accounts for the long-term effects of repeated violent imagery on public fear and mistrust.

Together, they illuminate the paradox identified by participants: media attention raises awareness but can also distort perceptions, shaping a national discourse that oscillates between reform and resignation (Poulton, 2007; Entman, 1993; Gerbner, 1969).

#### **4.7 Media Framing, Sensationalism, and the Construction of Football Violence**

This theme explores how Ghanaian media frame and sensationalise incidents of football hooliganism and how such framing shapes audience interpretation, fear, and emotional reaction. Participants frequently discussed exaggeration, selective reporting, and dramatisation, key indicators of media framing processes. The analysis reveals that while some journalists deny sensationalism, others acknowledge pressures from audience interest, commercial motives, or competition for visibility. These practices mirror global findings that show how sports media construct moral narratives that magnify conflict (Poulton, 2007; Tsoukala, 2006) and validate the use of Framing Theory as an analytical lens.

Participant 2's remark that *"The framing is often reactive and sensational. Reports usually focus on the violence itself, the chaos, injuries, or property damage, with less attention to the underlying causes"* underscores a central feature of Ghanaian sports journalism: episodic rather than thematic framing. Entman (1993) explains that framing selects and emphasises aspects of perceived reality to make them more salient, shaping how audiences understand causality and responsibility. Similarly, Tsoukala (2006) found in her British media study that hooliganism coverage was constructed through moral and emotional lenses that oversimplified complex causes. Participant 2's critique of "personalizing blame" toward clubs and fans rather than systemic failures reflects a similar pattern in Ghana, where media dramatize violent episodes to attract audience attention while overlooking poor crowd management and administrative lapses. This process validates Framing Theory's principle that narratives are shaped by selection and exclusion.

Conversely, some journalists defended their reporting. Participant 1 asserted, *"The media does*

*not exaggerate or downplay football hooliganism. If anything, the media does not emphasize the subject enough.*” This statement reveals a competing frame within the same media landscape, where practitioners believe their moral responsibility lies in truth-telling rather than restraint. Yet, as Spaaij (2011) observes, even neutral intentions can lead to amplification effects, where repeated coverage of violent imagery reinforces the perception of widespread danger. According to Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1969), repeated exposure to negative or violent narratives cultivates an exaggerated sense of insecurity. Thus, even when Ghanaian journalists claim accuracy, frequent portrayals of chaos still influence how the public interprets football culture, cultivating fear and disengagement.

Other participants acknowledged both exaggeration and distortion as consequences of weak professional standards. Participant 3 reflected that *“some media outlets deliberately exaggerated stories and distorted facts”* and added, *“local-speaking media outlets tend to exaggerate stories just for viewership.”* This suggests that sensationalism is not merely editorial but linguistic and socio-economic, driven by vernacular radio’s need to capture emotional resonance among grassroots audiences. Braun and Vliegthart (2008) found that similar economic and linguistic pressures in European football journalism encouraged *“hyperbolic storytelling,”* which both inflamed and sustained fan antagonism. This phenomenon aligns with Framing Theory, which posits that emotional salience, achieved through tone, language, and repetition, enhances audience recall but distorts nuance (Entman, 1993).

In contrast, GFA officials expressed frustration with what they viewed as one-sided framing. A senior communication officer stated that *“Ghanaian media often focuses on sensational aspects of hooliganism, emphasising violence over context. While this raises awareness, it risks overshadowing efforts to address underlying issues.”* This statement reveals a fundamental disjunction between journalists’ and administrators’ perceptions of purpose: while journalists

seek immediacy and public accountability, administrators desire balanced narratives that protect institutional legitimacy. Rookwood and Gow (2008) similarly found that in England, tension between the Football Association and journalists led to mutual blame, with each side claiming moral authority. In Ghana, this dynamic reinforces Framing Theory's notion of "contested frames", where stakeholders compete to define what the violence represents and who is responsible.

Participant 4's reflections add depth to this understanding of framing as an ethical dilemma. He cautioned, "*Sometimes reporters on the ground skew the narrative to favour one side... there's a general reliance on hearsay, which distorts accuracy.*" This aligns with Sultan et al. (2024), who found that Indonesian football journalism frequently relied on unverified social media content, producing misinformation and emotional overreactions. The Ghanaian case similarly shows that in the absence of verification, frames can mutate into what Cohen (1972) called "moral panics," where exaggerated representations evoke disproportionate fear. The recurrent "unsafe stadium" narrative thus becomes self-perpetuating, an example of Cultivation Theory in action, where continuous exposure to unsafe imagery reinforces public anxiety and declining attendance (Gerbner, 1969).

Overall, this theme establishes that Ghanaian sports journalism frequently employs reactive, episodic, and sometimes sensational frames in reporting football violence. The phenomenon is underpinned by commercial imperatives, audience expectations, and uneven journalistic ethics. Framing Theory helps explain how selective salience turns isolated violent events into emblematic "national shame" narratives, while Cultivation Theory accounts for how continuous repetition of such imagery cultivates long-term fear among fans. The convergence of both theories suggests that even when journalists claim neutrality, their narrative practices shape and reproduce collective perceptions of football as unsafe, influencing both audience

behaviour and policy responses (Entman, 1993; Gerbner, 1969; Poulton, 2007; Tsoukala, 2006).

#### **4.8 Ownership, Editorial Influence, and Institutional Control over Football Narratives**

The fourth theme concerns the structural and institutional influences that shape media narratives, including editorial policy, ownership control, and political interests. Participants frequently pointed to pressures from advertisers, football authorities, and media proprietors as factors influencing what gets published or emphasised. This reflects a global pattern where economic and political interests mediate sports journalism's autonomy (Danso, 2025; Ncube & Munoriyarwa, 2021). The findings illustrate how Ghanaian media operate within a constrained environment where narratives of hooliganism are sometimes shaped by commercial or institutional loyalties.

Participant 2 articulated this tension clearly: *“Editorial policy often demands balanced reporting and verification, but audience interest in emotionally charged stories can push coverage toward the dramatic. Ownership and commercial interests also play a role. Some media houses may avoid strong criticism of clubs or the FA due to sponsorship ties.”* This reflects the concept of “editorial capture,” where financial dependency compromises journalistic independence (McChesney, 2008). The respondent's admission that “context and responsibility are key” demonstrates professional awareness of this dilemma, yet the acknowledgment of ownership influence validates findings by Danso (2025), who documented how Ghanaian media ownership often limits critical reporting on governance issues to protect business relationships.

Similarly, Participant 3 emphasized independence as a personal ethic: *“No amount of external pressure or influence shapes how I report violent football incidents, because once I have my facts, I report them as they are.”* This stance echoes the principle of journalistic autonomy described by Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014), who argue that truth-seeking requires insulation

from commercial and political interference. Yet, the same participant admitted that some outlets “deliberately exaggerated stories”, revealing an institutional rather than individual problem. This juxtaposition suggests that while individual journalists may strive for accuracy, systemic commercial pressures, especially in competitive local radio, often override professional ideals.

From the GFA’s perspective, the issue of ownership influence manifests as biased blame. One GFA official noted that *“The media blames the GFA for hooliganism and fan violence... this blinds their judgment of the real situation.”* This aligns with Entman’s (1993) observation that frames reflect power struggles over responsibility. In this case, institutional defensiveness by the GFA intersects with the media’s role as a watchdog, creating a reciprocal mistrust that limits collaborative problem-solving. According to Rookwood and Gow (2008), such institutional blame frames in football reporting often harden rather than resolve conflicts, especially when both parties perceive themselves as unfairly represented.

Another GFA official highlighted selective partnership patterns: *“The media blames us, but they are also our partners. They attend our workshops, and yet some distort the message.”* This contradiction reflects the “dual accountability” problem in sports journalism, the need to remain loyal both to audiences and to access providers (Rowe, 2005). Scholars like Boyle and Haynes (2009) have argued that this tension is intrinsic to sports media, where close institutional relationships ensure access but risk bias. In Ghana, this dual accountability is evident in the coexistence of “friendly” and “oppositional” media houses, as one participant described, resulting in polarized football discourse.

The theoretical relevance of Framing Theory becomes evident here. Entman (1993) argues that power in media is exercised through the ability to define reality for others. When ownership and political influence shape football reporting, they influence which frames dominate public discourse, whether as crisis, corruption, or reform. Likewise, Cultivation Theory (Gerbner,

1969) suggests that long-term exposure to politically biased narratives cultivates enduring cynicism among audiences. Participant 4's observation that "*Bad publicity drives away the needed investment in the game*" demonstrates how institutional frames carry economic consequences. Negative portrayals, when repeated, not only damage public confidence but also shape long-term investor perceptions of Ghanaian football's stability.

In conclusion, this theme reveals that ownership and editorial influence profoundly affect the framing of football hooliganism in Ghana. Media houses balance between profit motives, audience interest, and institutional access, leading to uneven narratives that alternately sensationalize or suppress violent incidents. This aligns with global research indicating that sports journalism is both a business and a public trust (Boyle & Haynes, 2009). The findings reaffirm Framing Theory by showing that control over message construction translates to control over public meaning, and Cultivation Theory by illustrating how sustained politically influenced narratives can normalize distrust and defensiveness among stakeholders. Hence, addressing hooliganism in Ghana requires not only ethical reform in journalism but also structural independence that allows the media to act as genuine partners in promoting safe and responsible football culture.

#### **4.9 Public Perceptions, Moral Panic, and Audience Trust**

This theme examines how the Ghanaian public perceives media reports on football hooliganism and how such coverage influences trust, fear, and engagement with the sport. Participants described audience reactions ranging from scepticism and emotional outrage to declining attendance at the stadium. The accounts reflect a cyclical relationship where media framing drives moral panic, while audience distrust reinforces media sensationalism. These findings align with Moral Panic Theory (Cohen, 1972) and Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1969), both of which explain how media overemphasis on violent imagery cultivates fear and distorts reality perceptions over time.

Participant 1 revealed that *“Ghanaian audiences respond to media reports about football violence with scepticism. There’s always a perception that the subject is not serious enough.”*

This highlights a paradox in Ghana’s media-audience relationship: while violent events are widely reported, repeated exposure has normalized them, reducing their perceived severity. This resonates with Spaaij’s (2011) findings that in contexts of repeated football violence, audiences develop a “desensitized moral tolerance,” where aggression becomes an expected part of fandom. Cultivation Theory provides a theoretical lens for this phenomenon — continuous exposure to media depictions of hooliganism cultivates a distorted perception where violence appears inevitable. Consequently, trust in both media and football authorities erodes as audiences perceive recurring crises without sustained solutions.

In contrast, Participant 2 observed that *“The response is usually emotional and polarized. Fans of rival clubs may trade blame, while neutral audiences express disappointment in the state of the game.”* This emotional fragmentation mirrors what Tsoukala (2006) described as “polarised framing,” where media coverage of football violence divides public opinion along club lines. The participant further noted that debates often “reinforce rivalries” rather than encourage unity, a finding corroborated by Poulton (2007), who showed that sensational media narratives in the UK created tribalized fandom identities. Thus, the Ghanaian case illustrates how framing processes generate not only awareness but also adversarial interpretations, turning public discourse into a contest of blame rather than a collective call for reform.

Participant 3 provided a complementary perspective, linking public reaction to behavioural change: *“I’ve realised that venues tend to see low patronage and attendance after any issue of hooliganism is reported, because fans don’t feel safe enough to attend games.”* This statement is consistent with findings by Kusi and Santiaguel (2024), who demonstrated that sensationalised reports of stadium violence in Ghanaian media significantly decreased live attendance, particularly among women and families. Within the framework of Cultivation

Theory, such recurring depictions of unsafe environments contribute to what Gerbner (1969) called the “mean world syndrome”, the tendency of heavy media consumers to perceive their environment as more dangerous than it is. As Participant 3 noted, this perception of insecurity extends beyond fear to economic consequences, affecting matchday revenues and weakening football’s cultural vitality.

Participant 4 added that *“The more the public hears about violence, the more fans stay away from games. Everyone wants to preserve their lives.”* This aligns with Braun and Vliegthart’s (2008) argument that repetitive violent coverage amplifies fear, leading to “symbolic withdrawal”, a disengagement from football spaces perceived as unsafe. The participant’s reflection that “public resentment grows each time hooliganism occurs” also supports Cohen’s (1972) concept of moral panic, where disproportionate attention to isolated incidents generates public anxiety and overgeneralized conclusions. In Ghana, this cycle of fear, disengagement, and outrage demonstrates how the media’s repetitive framing can cultivate a public imagination that perceives football not as leisure but as a risk-laden activity.

GFA officials reinforced these observations, acknowledging that media coverage “erodes public trust and discourages match attendance.” One official noted that *“Continuous reporting on violence makes fans apprehensive, impacting revenue and atmosphere at stadiums.”* This institutional acknowledgment validates the media’s long-term influence on fan psychology and consumer behavior. Entman’s (1993) framing model, defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments, and suggesting remedies, applies here: when media define hooliganism as a persistent, uncontrollable problem, they simultaneously construct football as unsafe. Over time, this framing shapes collective consciousness in ways that transcend individual incidents, confirming Cultivation Theory’s assertion that media exposure alters societal perceptions of normality.

In conclusion, this theme demonstrates that Ghanaian public perceptions of football safety are

profoundly influenced by media framing and repetition. The interviews reveal a dual effect: on one hand, coverage raises awareness and pressures authorities; on the other, it cultivates fear, disengagement, and mistrust. These findings are consistent with international scholarship (Poulton, 2007; Tsoukala, 2006; Spaaij, 2011), showing that sustained exposure to sensational narratives about sports violence breeds moral panic and undermines public confidence. Theoretically, Framing Theory explains the selective emphasis that constructs hooliganism as a perpetual crisis, while Cultivation Theory clarifies how continuous exposure cultivates pessimistic audience worldviews. Thus, media narratives not only inform but also shape how Ghanaians experience and emotionally relate to football culture.

#### **4.10 Policy Influence and Institutional Responsiveness to Media Narratives**

This theme examines how media coverage of hooliganism influences policy formulation, institutional responses, and public communication within the Ghana Football Association (GFA). Participants from the GFA confirmed that sustained media attention often prompts urgent disciplinary measures, security reforms, or policy amendments. This theme, therefore, links the agenda-setting function of the media with institutional policymaking, demonstrating how media framing can drive both accountability and reactionary policymaking. The discussion integrates Framing Theory to interpret the media's role in shaping institutional priorities and Cultivation Theory to explain how long-term narrative pressures influence organisational learning and adaptation.

Participant 1 affirmed that *“Media coverage informs our approach, highlighting areas needing attention and driving policy reviews. It pushes us to communicate clearly and transparently.”*

This demonstrates the agenda-setting influence of media, consistent with McCombs and Shaw's (1972) assertion that media define not what to think, but what to think about. By framing hooliganism as a pressing national concern, Ghanaian journalists shape institutional focus toward safety and crisis response. This also reflects Rookwood and Gow's (2008)

findings that in England, intense media scrutiny of crowd violence accelerated reforms in match security protocols and disciplinary frameworks.

Participant 2 further confirmed this causal link, stating that *“Through media commentaries and discussions, the GFA amends its rules and regulations to conform with expected public standards.”* This adaptive response reflects what Entman (1993) describes as “policy feedback loops”, where framing not only shapes public perception but also compels institutional adaptation. The participant also cited that *“Enhanced safety protocols were introduced after the Nsoatreman incident, which led to Pooley’s death.”* This example demonstrates the “mobilising effect” of crisis-driven media coverage, where public outrage, amplified by media framing, forces immediate policy intervention. However, as Mehler (2008) and Danso (2025) caution, such reactive policymaking risks being temporary and symbolic rather than transformative, especially when long-term preventive strategies are not institutionalised.

Participant 3, a GFA competitions manager, elaborated that *“Media coverage often accelerates our policy review processes. Public pressure, especially when amplified by the media, can push the FA to conduct faster security audits and implement safety adjustments.”* This aligns with Quansah’s (2024) empirical evidence that Ghanaian football reforms often follow peaks of media attention. However, the same participant warned that “tight deadlines and misreported details complicate crisis communication.” This reflects Entman’s (2007) argument that frames can both inform and distort, particularly when speed overrides accuracy. The duality underscores the importance of responsible reporting, an ethical principle central to both Framing Theory and professional journalism (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014).

Similarly, Participant 4 emphasised that *“Games between Kotoko and Hearts of Oak were not to be played at night again following the May 9 disaster.”* This demonstrates how high-profile tragedies, when framed as national failures, yield concrete policy outcomes. According to Cohen (1972), moral panic often produces reactive legislative and institutional measures aimed

at restoring social order. The Ghanaian experience parallels this pattern: media outrage over violent episodes generates swift responses, stadium bans, new regulations, that signal moral and administrative authority but may not address systemic causes. The theoretical interplay between Moral Panic and Framing theories thus explains how media-driven outrage becomes the catalyst for symbolic policymaking.

However, participants also noted limitations in the GFA's responsiveness. One official admitted that *"The GFA's response is often reactive rather than proactive,"* highlighting a pattern of post-crisis management rather than preventive strategy. This resonates with Darby's (2013) observation that Ghanaian football institutions often act under public and political pressure rather than strategic foresight. Cultivation Theory helps explain this dynamic: when media narratives repeatedly portray hooliganism as a chronic crisis, institutional actors become conditioned to respond to spectacle rather than substance. Over time, organizational learning becomes tied to episodic events rather than long-term cultural reform.

This theme demonstrates that Ghanaian media coverage significantly shapes football policy, institutional accountability, and crisis communication. Framing Theory explains how media emphasis on violence prioritises institutional responses, while Cultivation Theory elucidates how sustained exposure to such narratives conditions both public and institutional behavior. The interplay between media pressure and reactive policymaking creates a paradox: while journalism promotes transparency, it also risks institutionalising short-term, performative responses to systemic problems. Therefore, effective prevention of hooliganism in Ghana requires shifting from reactive communication to collaborative framing that aligns public education, media responsibility, and policy sustainability.

#### **4.11 Collaboration Between Journalists and Football Authorities**

A strong cross-cutting theme that emerged from both journalists and GFA officials was the need for structured collaboration between media and football authorities in addressing football

hooliganism. Participants repeatedly emphasised that better communication, mutual respect, and joint education initiatives could help reduce violence and foster responsible reporting. The data demonstrate that despite historical tension and mistrust, both sides recognise that partnership, rather than antagonism, is key to preventing future incidents. The theme also aligns with Framing Theory, as collaborative agenda-setting can influence how stories are presented, and Cultivation Theory, as sustained joint messaging can shape public attitudes toward peace and discipline in football.

Participant 1 (sports journalist) remarked, “*Journalists and football authorities should collaborate to prevent hooliganism... by being more open with each other and through more deliberate education on the anti-hooliganism policies.*” This quote underscores an emerging consensus that institutional transparency and dialogue can transform adversarial relations into productive partnerships. It mirrors Danso’s (2025) findings that inter-institutional collaboration between media and public bodies in Ghana improves accountability and public understanding. Within Framing Theory, such partnerships help create common interpretive frames, aligning how both the media and GFA present violence, not as spectacle, but as a social issue requiring collective responsibility.

Similarly, Participant 2 emphasised the need for structured engagement: “*There needs to be regular media workshops by the GFA on security, responsible reporting, and crisis communication. Journalists should also be involved in pre-season briefings.*” This recommendation is supported by Rookwood and Gow (2008), who found that post-hooliganism reforms in English football were most effective when the media were included in institutional safety campaigns. The participant’s proposal demonstrates a growing recognition that the media are not merely observers but stakeholders in policy execution. From a theoretical standpoint, Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1969) suggests that repeated exposure to consistent educational narratives from both media and authorities can gradually shift fan culture from

aggression to cooperation.

GFA officials echoed similar sentiments. One noted that *“The GFA and media should work together to promote responsible reporting, fan education, and highlight positive fan initiatives, fostering a culture of safety and respect.”* This statement reveals institutional openness to collaboration, marking a shift from defensiveness toward partnership. It aligns with Quansah’s (2024) argument that Ghana’s football institutions have begun integrating media advocacy into their safety communication strategies. Furthermore, such collaboration reflects the agenda-setting function of framing (Entman, 1993), whereby the coordinated narratives of multiple actors reinforce certain issues, like fan safety, as collective priorities in national discourse.

Participant 3 (GFA competitions manager) provided evidence of practical collaboration, stating, *“Joint training sessions, agreed communication protocols, and direct fact-checking channels between the GFA and media houses would significantly reduce sensationalism and improve accuracy.”* This aligns with Poulton’s (2007) findings that regular media–authority engagement in football reduces rumor circulation and speculative reporting. It also validates Framing Theory’s proposition that accurate information exchange helps align institutional and journalistic frames, minimizing distortion. In the Ghanaian context, where misinformation spreads rapidly through social media, structured collaboration could stabilize narratives and reduce panic following violent incidents.

From the journalists’ side, collaboration was framed as a moral responsibility rather than mere institutional convenience. Participant 4 argued that *“Organizing workshops, education, training, and re-training of sports journalists are the most effective ways of using the media to avoid hooliganism.”* This aligns with the peace journalism approach advocated by Lynch and McGoldrick (2013), which emphasises education, accuracy, and sensitivity in reporting conflict-related issues. Such collaboration allows journalists to frame stories in ways that de-escalate tensions and promote reconciliation, goals that align closely with Cultivation Theory’s

long-term influence on audience values. Repeated exposure to calm, solution-oriented coverage can gradually cultivate tolerance among football fans, replacing reactionary aggression with understanding.

In sum, this theme illustrates that both journalists and GFA officials recognize collaboration as central to sustainable violence prevention. From a theoretical lens, Framing Theory supports this by showing how joint agenda-setting can reorient public focus from blame to reform, while Cultivation Theory demonstrates how prolonged, consistent cooperation between media and institutions can reshape public consciousness toward unity and safety. The emerging pattern of mutual responsibility marks a significant step in Ghana's sports communication evolution, from reactive crisis coverage to proactive narrative management.

#### **4.12 Recommendations for Peace Journalism and Ethical Framing in Ghanaian Football**

The final theme synthesises participants' recommendations on ethical reporting, peace journalism, and narrative reform. Participants highlighted the need for factual, balanced, and non-sensational coverage of hooliganism, emphasising that responsible journalism is a preventive tool. These insights align with the principles of peace journalism, media ethics, and Framing Theory, which collectively advocate for constructive storytelling that fosters dialogue and reform rather than fear or hostility. The findings also reflect Cultivation Theory, as repeated exposure to ethical and peace-oriented media frames can gradually influence audience attitudes and fan behaviour over time.

Participant 1 urged journalists to *“report fairly, always put out the right information and de-scale issues by not promoting conflict-inducing narratives.”* This statement embodies the principles of peace journalism articulated by Lynch and McGoldrick (2013), which emphasise truth-telling, empathy, and solution-focused storytelling. In the Ghanaian context, this approach can counteract what Tsoukala (2006) called “dramatised disorder”, the tendency of sports journalism to portray violence as inevitable and sensational. The recommendation to

“de-scale issues” directly challenges the moral panic model, suggesting that reframing narratives toward calm and prevention can restore public trust and mitigate the cycle of fear cultivated by sensationalism.

Participant 2 added specific ethical guidelines: *“Verify all facts before publishing, avoid language that inflames tensions, provide context, highlight preventive measures, and collaborate with authorities.”* These practices align with the ethical journalism codes outlined by Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014) and the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA, 2022). Importantly, they resonate with Framing Theory, which emphasizes that context and linguistic precision determine how audiences interpret meaning (Entman, 1993). By choosing frames that highlight prevention and unity rather than conflict, journalists can reshape collective discourse on hooliganism, transforming football coverage from reactionary reporting to proactive education.

Similarly, Participant 3 recommended that journalists “avoid sensationalism and focus on facts, contextualise the issue and highlight peaceful voices.” This mirrors Braun and Vliegthart’s (2008) argument that reframing violent sports incidents through “constructive journalism” reduces polarisation and public panic. The participant’s emphasis on “peaceful voices” reflects Lynch and McGoldrick’s (2013) advocacy for amplifying reconciliation-oriented narratives, a key tenet of peace journalism. The theoretical overlap with Cultivation Theory is evident here: consistent exposure to positive, inclusive messaging gradually cultivates societal values of tolerance, thereby undermining aggression in fan culture.

GFA officials also stressed ethical reform in media practices. One communications director recommended “regular dialogue, joint workshops, and collaborative campaigns to promote fan safety and engagement.” This represents an institutional endorsement of peace journalism principles, recognizing media as co-creators of public meaning. The official’s focus on campaigns aligns with Darby’s (2013) observation that mass media in Ghana play a central

role in cultural nation-building. Integrating these campaigns within existing football structures can operationalize Cultivation Theory by ensuring that positive fan engagement messages are consistently reinforced across multiple seasons and media channels.

Participant 4 reinforced the ethical dimension of reporting: *“Sports journalists must avoid bias, avoid winding up agitated fans, gather adequate information before making utterances, and have full understanding of the topic and issues.”* This perspective resonates with Kovach and Rosenstiel’s (2014) principles of transparency and verification, underscoring that credibility and restraint are essential to public trust. Moreover, it aligns with Entman’s (1993) framework that ethical framing determines the moral and cognitive lenses through which audiences interpret events. By avoiding inflammatory language and focusing on contextual truth, journalists can shift the football narrative from hostility to dialogue, cultivating empathy and civic responsibility among fans.

The final theme underscores that ethical and peace-oriented journalism is not merely a professional ideal but a strategic intervention in preventing football violence. The participants’ recommendations converge with global literature on media ethics, peace journalism, and sports communication (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2013; Poulton, 2007). Theoretically, Framing Theory explains how careful construction of media narratives influences interpretation and behaviour, while Cultivation Theory accounts for the cumulative cultural effects of consistent peace messaging. Together, they justify a paradigm shift in Ghanaian sports journalism, from episodic and sensational framing toward a sustained, ethically grounded approach that fosters reconciliation, education, and safety in football.

#### **4.13 Discussion of Findings**

The study’s overall findings confirm that the media occupy a central position in Ghana’s football ecosystem, shaping how both fans and institutions perceive and respond to issues of hooliganism. The quantitative results revealed that 84% of respondents believe that the media

have a significant influence on public understanding of football violence, while the thematic analysis established that journalists themselves view their work as integral to how football is experienced and understood. Participant 1 emphasized this interdependence, noting that “the three, football, media, and the public, feed off each other.” This confirms the argument by Rowe (2005) that sports media function as a “cultural broker,” translating sporting events into shared social meaning. The relationship is not linear but cyclical: fan interest fuels media content, which in turn reinforces passion and loyalty. This dynamic fits Framing Theory’s notion of *media construction of reality*, where coverage not only reflects events but also organises them into culturally resonant narratives (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974). Thus, the Ghanaian football media serve as both mediators and meaning-makers, constructing perceptions that extend far beyond the football pitch.

One of the strongest findings was that football hooliganism receives high prominence in Ghanaian media, often occupying front-page headlines or prime airtime when incidents occur. Thematic analysis revealed that journalists recognise hooliganism as “a blot on the country’s football reputation and a canker that needs to be cured,” as stated by Participant 1. Similarly, 69% of survey respondents confirmed that violent incidents are frequently reported in the media. However, participants such as Journalist 2 described the framing as “reactive and sensational,” focusing on “the chaos, injuries, or property damage” rather than structural causes like poor officiating or crowd management. This duality echoes Poulton’s (2005, 2007) and Spaaij’s (2011) findings in the British and Dutch contexts, where football violence was framed as moral decay rather than institutional failure. Within Ghana, such reporting practices reinforce Framing Theory’s problem–cause–remedy sequence (Entman, 1993): the media define hooliganism as a moral crisis, attribute it to fan irrationality, and advocate punitive measures. This pattern, while raising awareness, risks perpetuating a moral panic (Cohen, 1972) that obscures the deeper governance and infrastructural issues underlying fan violence.

Furthermore, the findings show that the Ghanaian media's framing of hooliganism is often influenced by audience interest and commercial imperatives. Participant 2 admitted that "audience interest in emotionally charged stories can push coverage toward the dramatic," while Participant 3 observed that "local-language media tend to exaggerate stories just for viewership." This reflects the commercialisation of football journalism described by Boyle and Haynes (2014), where competition for audience attention incentivises sensationalism. The survey results reinforce this: 45.5% of respondents believed that football violence is exaggerated in the media. According to Framing Theory, this represents *emphasis framing*, where dramatisation functions as a narrative device to sustain audience engagement. However, Cultivation Theory warns that repeated exposure to such sensational content can distort public perception, leading audiences to internalize exaggerated notions of risk and insecurity (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Thus, the media's economic motivations inadvertently cultivate public anxiety about football safety, even when the actual frequency of violent incidents is relatively low.

A major finding across both datasets is that media coverage directly shapes public perceptions of football safety and fan culture. The survey revealed that 60.5% of respondents agreed that frequent reporting on hooliganism makes them more cautious about attending matches, while qualitative data showed similar patterns. Participant 4 stated, "The more the public hears about violence, the more fans stay away from games." These insights align with Cultivation Theory's *mean world syndrome*, where repeated exposure to violence-related media cultivates perceptions that the world, or in this case, football stadiums, is more dangerous than it is (Gerbner, 1969; Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). This pattern has also been documented by Forde and Wilson (2022) in their study on African sports media, where repetitive negative portrayals led to declining fan engagement. In Ghana, such cultivation effects are particularly potent given the emotional centrality of football to national identity. Thus, while the media's intent may be to inform and protect the public, the consequence is often diminished confidence and reduced

attendance at live matches.

The findings also underscore the media's influence on public trust in football institutions such as the Ghana Football Association (GFA) and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Quantitative results showed that 58% of respondents believe media coverage affects their trust in football authorities. Interviews supported this trend: GFA officials lamented that “negative coverage harms Ghana football's image, deterring fans and sponsors,” while others argued that the media “blame the GFA for hooliganism and allow the real culprits to get away.” These perspectives reflect the *attribution function* of media framing, where blame is assigned to actors presented as responsible for societal failures (Entman, 1993). As seen in similar studies by Rookwood and Gow (2008) in the UK, negative frames targeting football authorities erode institutional legitimacy and prompt defensive communication. In Ghana, this dynamic creates a fragile trust ecosystem: public outrage amplifies through the media, compelling the GFA to act swiftly, sometimes reactively, to restore confidence. Therefore, the findings demonstrate that media not only shape fan perceptions but also structure the accountability relationships between the public and football governance bodies.

Closely related to this is the finding that media coverage influences policy and disciplinary responses within Ghana's football governance. From the survey, 69.5% of respondents agreed that media pressure prompts GFA intervention, while interviews revealed several examples. GFA officials cited the *Nsoatreman–Kotoko* incident, where “the intensity of reporting was a major contributing factor to the urgency from the Ghana Football Association and the remedial actions they instituted.” This supports McCombs and Shaw's (1972) Agenda-Setting Theory, which posits that issues given high visibility by the media become priorities for policymakers. The Ghanaian case also mirrors Ncube and Munoriyarwa's (2021) study in Zimbabwe, where media reporting on fan violence influenced disciplinary policy reform. Framing Theory helps explain this dynamic: when media define hooliganism as a national crisis, institutions are

pressured to act symbolically to restore public confidence. However, the thematic evidence also showed that such actions are often short-term and reactionary, underscoring the need for institutionalized communication strategies rather than ad hoc responses.

Despite these challenges, both the survey and interviews revealed that the Ghanaian media possess immense potential as agents of peace and reform. Quantitative results showed that 84% of respondents believe that the media can play a preventive role, while 71.5% strongly support collaboration between journalists and football authorities. Participant 3 recalled a successful media campaign titled “Respect the Referee,” which influenced GFA policy and inspired anti-hooliganism messages at match venues. This aligns with Galtung’s (2002) Peace Journalism framework, which emphasizes solution-oriented and empathy-driven reporting. By focusing on reconciliation and education rather than blame and spectacle, peace journalism principles can counteract the moral panic that currently dominates Ghanaian football narratives. The theoretical implication is that Framing Theory can be mobilized not just to critique media behavior but also to design positive, reform-oriented communication models

The study further found that both journalists and GFA officials recognize ethical reporting as essential to maintaining public confidence. Participant 1 emphasized that “accurate reporting is the only means to make our stadiums safe,” while Participant 4 added that journalists “check language and reports based on facts and comprehensive information.” These statements reflect professional self-awareness about the media’s moral duty to balance truth-telling with social responsibility. Such ethical reflexivity is central to Entman’s (2007) argument that framing is both a technical and moral act, deciding what to include, emphasize, or exclude inherently reflects value choices. The findings also reinforce Ward’s (2016) call for contextual accuracy in journalism, particularly when covering conflict-laden topics. Through consistent factual framing, journalists can cultivate (in the Gerbnerian sense) a public that is both informed and discerning, thereby strengthening the credibility of sports reporting as a democratic institution.

Another critical insight from both strands of analysis is the importance of proactive collaboration between media institutions and football authorities. Participants across all interviews agreed that open communication, joint training sessions, and regular policy briefings would improve the accuracy and tone of football coverage. GFA officials proposed that “media should dedicate airtime to educating fans and naming individuals who are found culpable,” while journalists recommended “deliberate education on anti-hooliganism policies.” This consensus indicates growing recognition of the interdependence between journalists and administrators. The collaboration model echoes findings by Pamment (2016), who observed that coordinated public communication fosters trust during crises. When framed within Cultivation Theory, sustained exposure to cooperative media–institution messaging can gradually cultivate public belief in reform and safety, reducing fan hostility over time. Thus, collaboration is not just operational but also perceptual, transforming how the public interprets both the media and the institutions they cover.

In synthesis, the discussion demonstrates that the Ghanaian media occupy a paradoxical position in the fight against football hooliganism: they are both part of the problem and part of the solution. The findings illustrate that while current framing practices often sensationalize violence, they also possess the latent capacity to educate, influence policy, and cultivate a culture of peace. Both Framing Theory and Cultivation Theory are validated in this context, the former explaining how narratives shape meaning and the latter showing how repeated exposure to such narratives influences perception and behavior. The study thus advances the understanding that sustainable solutions to football hooliganism in Ghana require not only institutional reform but also narrative reform. By reframing football as a shared national project grounded in discipline, fairness, and solidarity, the Ghanaian media can evolve from being chroniclers of crisis to architects of peace and reform in the nation’s sporting life.

#### **4.14 Chapter Summary**

This chapter analysed and presented the study's empirical findings by integrating insights from both the survey data and the thematic analysis of interviews. Quantitative results revealed that a significant majority of respondents believed the media strongly influence public understanding and institutional responses to football hooliganism, while qualitative findings provided depth by illustrating how journalists and football administrators perceive and frame the issue. Eight major themes emerged from the thematic analysis, including media sensationalism, audience influence, ethical responsibility, collaboration, and policy responsiveness. Together, the findings demonstrate that the Ghanaian media play a dual role—simultaneously amplifying fear through sensational framing while holding the potential to promote peace and accountability through responsible reporting. Statistical trends such as the 71.5% agreement that journalists and football authorities should collaborate, and the 60.5% acknowledgment that media coverage affects perceptions of safety, were supported by narratives from participants who emphasised the need for partnership and balanced storytelling. When interpreted through the lenses of Framing and Cultivation Theories, the results reveal that media narratives not only shape audience perceptions of football violence but also influence policy actions within football governance. In summary, this chapter provided a comprehensive account of how media constructions, audience perceptions, and institutional behaviours interact within the Ghanaian football context, serving as a bridge between data analysis and the ensuing discussion of findings in Chapter five.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of key findings, conclusions, and recommendations derived from the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data collected in this study. The purpose of the chapter is to synthesise the main results into a coherent discussion that addresses the study's central objective, to examine the role of the media in preventing football hooliganism in Ghana, focusing on how media narratives shape public perceptions and influence policy actions. The findings summarised in this chapter integrate the insights drawn from survey responses and thematic interviews with sports journalists and Ghana Football Association (GFA) officials. The discussion also situates the empirical results within the theoretical framework of Framing Theory and Cultivation Theory, illustrating how the media's portrayal of football-related violence informs public understanding and institutional behavior. This chapter, therefore, distills the implications of the study by highlighting how the Ghanaian media's framing practices both amplify and mitigate hooliganism, and how collaborative communication between journalists and football authorities can foster peace-oriented sports culture. The section proceeds to draw logical conclusions and propose evidence-based recommendations for journalists, policymakers, and football administrators. It concludes with reflections on the study's limitations and directions for future research to advance knowledge on media influence and football governance in Ghana.

## 5.1 Summary of Key Findings

The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study converge to reveal that the Ghanaian media play a central yet complex role in the construction, interpretation, and potential prevention of football hooliganism. The survey data showed that a vast majority of respondents (84%) believed that the media possess significant influence in shaping public understanding of football-related violence, while 71.5% strongly agreed that journalists and football authorities should collaborate to prevent hooliganism. These findings were reinforced by thematic insights from sports journalists who described the media–football–public relationship as deeply symbiotic, with Participant 1 noting that “the three feed off each other,” reflecting a mutual dependence in shaping narratives and public sentiment. Thematic analysis further revealed that football, media, and the public form a cultural triad in Ghana where fan passion, journalistic framing, and institutional response are interwoven. This aligns with Framing Theory’s assertion that media select and structure information in ways that influence how audiences perceive social phenomena (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974). It also supports Cultivation Theory’s proposition that repeated exposure to specific portrayals gradually shapes long-term public beliefs (Gerbner, 1969). Overall, this finding underscores that the Ghanaian media are both conveyors and co-creators of football culture, capable of either amplifying tension or promoting cohesion through their narrative strategies.

Secondly, both sets of findings confirmed that media framing of football hooliganism is predominantly sensational and episodic rather than analytical or preventive. The survey indicated that 69% of respondents believed that violent football incidents are regularly highlighted in the media, with 45.5% asserting that such coverage is exaggerated. This quantitative observation was corroborated by interview data, where Participant 2 described Ghanaian football coverage as “reactive and sensational,” focusing more on “chaos, injuries, or property damage” than on underlying causes such as poor crowd control or officiating

controversies. Similarly, GFA officials lamented that “media often emphasise violence over context,” thereby neglecting reform efforts. This convergence suggests that Ghanaian media’s dominant frames emphasise spectacle and emotion rather than context and resolution. Such tendencies are consistent with Poulton’s (2005, 2007) and Spaaij’s (2011) findings that football journalism globally tends to dramatise fan violence, reinforcing stereotypes of hooliganism. The study thus affirms that in Ghana, media portrayals, though well-intentioned in raising awareness, often generate disproportionate fear, reinforcing the “moral panic” pattern described by Cohen (1972).

A third key finding revealed that media coverage significantly influences public perceptions and behaviours toward football safety. From the survey, 60.5% of respondents agreed that frequent reporting on hooliganism makes them more cautious about attending matches, while 62% said such reporting makes football appear unsafe. Qualitative interviews reinforced these findings: journalists and GFA officials alike confirmed that violent coverage leads to low stadium attendance and heightened public anxiety. Participant 4 observed, “The more the public hear about violence, the more fans stay away from games. Everyone wants to preserve their lives.” This suggests that long-term exposure to alarming news stories cultivates fear among fans, leading to reduced matchday participation. This aligns with Cultivation Theory’s “mean world syndrome” (Gerbner & Gross, 1976), where continuous exposure to negative imagery creates exaggerated perceptions of danger. Similarly, the thematic analysis showed that while some journalists insisted on ethical restraint, others admitted that commercial pressures and audience demand for “emotionally charged stories” occasionally push coverage toward dramatization. Together, these findings confirm that Ghanaian football fans’ perceptions of safety are largely mediated constructions rather than reflections of direct experiences, affirming the powerful cultivation effects of repeated violent imagery in sports media.

The fourth major finding revealed that media coverage exerts a powerful influence on institutional and policy responses to football violence in Ghana. Survey results indicated that 69.5% of respondents agreed that media coverage pressures the Ghana Football Association (GFA) to act on hooliganism, and 75% believed it leads to the adoption of stricter safety and disciplinary policies. This was mirrored in interviews with GFA officials who acknowledged that “media coverage informs our approach, highlighting areas needing attention and driving policy reviews.” Participant 3 of the GFA recounted that following the widely reported *Nsoatreman–Asante Kotoko* incident, the GFA implemented enhanced safety protocols and improved steward training. These findings illustrate the agenda-setting function of the media (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), where consistent coverage of violence elevates it as a policy priority. However, both journalists and officials admitted that institutional responses tend to be reactive rather than proactive, with media pressure often triggering short-term reforms instead of sustained preventive strategies. This underscores Entman’s (2007) argument that framing not only shapes public opinion but also drives elite decision-making by defining what constitutes an urgent problem. Therefore, while Ghanaian media act as a catalyst for accountability, their influence remains sporadic and event-driven.

The final finding from both the survey and interviews highlighted the potential for collaboration between journalists and football authorities to promote preventive communication and peace education. Quantitatively, 71.5% of respondents strongly supported such collaboration, while qualitatively, journalists and GFA officials proposed structured engagement through “joint workshops, education campaigns, and proactive crisis communication.” Participant 3 noted, “When I was with Happy FM, we ran a campaign called ‘Respect the Referee,’ which influenced the GFA’s anti-hooliganism initiatives.” This collaborative model illustrates the transformative potential of constructive framing, where journalists act as agents of peace rather than amplifiers of crisis. These findings align with

Galtung's (2002) peace journalism framework, which advocates for narrative reframing that emphasizes solutions, empathy, and responsibility. Both Framing and Cultivation theories converge here: sustained exposure to peace-oriented media messages can gradually cultivate pro-social fan behaviors and shape a culture of restraint. In summary, both quantitative and qualitative results indicate that while the media's current framing practices sometimes fuel fear and distrust, deliberate collaboration with football authorities could transform sports journalism into a preventive and educational tool for eradicating hooliganism in Ghana.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

The study concludes that the Ghanaian media serve as both a mirror and a molder of football culture, wielding immense influence over public perceptions, institutional legitimacy, and policy reform. Drawing from both thematic and survey data, it is evident that the media's current framing of hooliganism tends to prioritize spectacle and crisis over analysis and prevention. This narrative construction, consistent with Framing Theory, amplifies public fear and cultivates enduring perceptions of insecurity among football fans. Yet, these same communicative structures hold the potential to promote social responsibility and peacebuilding if reframed to emphasize collective safety, education, and shared civic pride.

Secondly, the study concludes that media-driven perceptions of football hooliganism in Ghana are largely cultivated representations rather than empirical realities. Continuous exposure to alarming headlines and violent imagery has created a mediated sense of danger, contributing to declining match attendance and weakening fan trust. This supports Cultivation Theory's central claim that media exposure shapes social perceptions over time. However, the study also finds that accurate, ethical, and peace-oriented journalism can reverse these effects by cultivating a culture of tolerance and accountability. Therefore, the role of media in football hooliganism is not inherently harmful or beneficial, it depends on framing choices and institutional collaboration.

Finally, the study concludes that media–institution partnerships are crucial for sustainable policy responses to football violence. Thematic evidence shows that GFA officials acknowledge media influence on disciplinary and safety reforms. Yet, both actors must move beyond reactive crisis communication toward a strategic model of proactive education and preventive messaging. Integrating peace journalism principles into media training, while institutionalizing regular dialogue between the GFA and journalists, would enhance accountability and foster a safer football environment.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

First and foremost, journalists should adopt contextual and balanced approaches when reporting football violence. Sensational headlines and fear-driven language should be replaced with factual, empathetic storytelling that highlights preventive efforts and structural solutions. Media houses should institutionalize editorial policies that encourage responsible framing aligned with Framing Theory principles, ensuring that coverage educates rather than inflames public sentiment.

Secondly, the GFA and the Ministry of Youth and Sports should establish regular workshops, briefings, and joint campaigns with journalists on responsible reporting. Such collaboration would enhance transparency, build mutual trust, and align narratives with factual institutional updates. This partnership should include media liaisons to coordinate communication during crises and ensure message consistency.

Moreover, journalists should integrate peace journalism practices that emphasize reconciliation, empathy, and constructive discourse. This involves highlighting fan discipline, cooperation, and community engagement rather than focusing solely on conflict. Media campaigns similar to “Respect the Referee” should be revived nationwide, as they have demonstrated positive impact in reshaping fan behavior and institutional reform.

Furthermore, the GFA, media organizations, and civil society should organize community-

based education programs that teach fans how to critically interpret media messages about football violence. Such literacy initiatives would empower fans to differentiate between sensationalized and factual news, reducing susceptibility to fear and misinformation, as predicted by Cultivation Theory.

Finally, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, in partnership with the National Media Commission and the GFA, should formulate a comprehensive policy outlining media protocols for reporting football violence. This should include ethical guidelines, crisis communication standards, and media training modules that promote long-term collaboration for peaceful football development.

#### **5.4 Limitations of the Study**

The study's reliance on self-reported data from surveys and interviews may have introduced subjective biases, as participants might have underreported or exaggerated their experiences. Moreover, the research was cross-sectional, capturing perceptions at a single time point, limiting its ability to measure evolving media effects.

Additionally, while the qualitative sample included experienced journalists and GFA officials, it did not fully capture the perspectives of grassroots fans and local-language radio presenters, groups that play influential roles in shaping fan culture. Future studies could expand participation to these voices for a more inclusive understanding.

#### **5.5 Suggestions for Future Research**

Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to assess how continuous exposure to football narratives influences audience behavior and institutional response over multiple seasons. This would allow a clearer understanding of the cultivation effects of sustained media framing on public attitudes.

Researchers should also explore the role of digital and social media ecosystems, where unverified football content often spreads rapidly, amplifying moral panic. Platforms such as X (Twitter), TikTok, and WhatsApp are becoming key agenda-setters in shaping fan discourse.

Finally, comparative studies across African footballing nations, for instance, Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya, could provide insights into regional patterns of media framing and fan violence, contributing to a pan-African framework for sports media ethics and peace communication

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## **APPENDICES**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

Dear respondent, this questionnaire is part of an academic research study that seeks to explore how media narratives influence public perceptions and policy responses to football hooliganism in Ghana.

Your responses will be kept confidential and for academic purposes only. There are no right or wrong answers, please respond honestly.

#### **SECTION A: Demographic Information**

Gender

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

Age range

18-25 years

26-35 years

36-45 years

46-55 years

56 and above

Educational Level

Basic Education

Secondary/SHS

Tertiary

Postgraduate

Occupation

How often do you attend football matches

Regularly

Occasionally

Rarely

Never

How often do you follow football-related news in the media (TV, radio, social media, newspapers)?

Daily

Weekly

Occasionally

Rarely

Never

### **SECTION B: Media Narratives on Football Hooliganism**

Using a scale of 1–5, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree,

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements

Ghanaian media frequently report incidents of football hooliganism.

1

2

3

4

5

The media often exaggerate the extent of violence at football matches.

1

2

3

4

5

Media reports focus more on negative aspects than positive football stories.

1

2

3

4

5

Social media amplifies stories about violence more than traditional media.

1

2

3

4

5

The media portray football fans as aggressive and undisciplined.

1

2

3

4

5

Media coverage of hooliganism has increased in recent years.

1

2

3

4

5

The way the media frames football violence influences how people discuss football.

1

2

3

4

5

### **SECTION C: Public Perception and Media Influence**

Using a scale of 1–5, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree,

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements

Media coverage of football violence makes me more cautious about attending matches.

1

2

3

4

5

Continuous reports of hooliganism make football appear unsafe in Ghana.

1

2

3

4

5

Media reports influence how fans perceive rival clubs and supporters.

1

2

3

4

5

The way journalists report football violence affects my trust in football institutions.

1

2

3

4

5

Media narratives have caused certain clubs to be stereotyped as violent

1

2

3

4

5

Positive football coverage helps to promote peaceful fan behavior.

1

2

3

4

5

The media should focus more on educating fans than blaming them for violence.

1

2

3

4

5

**SECTION D: Media Influence on Policy and Institutional Response**

Using a scale of 1–5, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree,

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements

Media coverage of hooliganism pressures the Ghana Football Association (GFA) to act.

1

2

3

4

5

The GFA often responds to violent incidents after public or media pressure.

1

2

3

4

5

Media attention helps bring about stricter safety and security policies

1

2

3

4

5

Government and GFA rely on media reports to assess football safety issues.

1

2

3

4

5

Media campaigns can promote peace and discourage football violence

1

2

3

4

5

Journalists and football authorities should collaborate to prevent hooliganism.

1

2

3

4

5

**Purpose:**

To explore how sports journalists construct and frame media narratives on football hooliganism, how such narratives shape public perceptions, and the extent to which they influence institutional and policy responses.

**Section A: Background Information**

1. Can you briefly describe your experience as a sports journalist and the kind of football-related stories you typically report?
2. How would you describe the relationship between football, the media, and the Ghanaian public in recent years?
3. In your view, how prominent is the issue of football hooliganism within Ghanaian sports journalism?

**Section B: Media Narratives on Football Hooliganism**

4. How would you describe the way football hooliganism is commonly reported or framed in Ghanaian media?
5. What factors (editorial policy, audience interest, ownership influence, etc.) shape how you report violent football incidents?
6. In your opinion, do you think the media sometimes exaggerate or downplay football violence, and why?

**Section C: Public Perception and Media Influence**

7. From your observation, how do Ghanaian audiences respond to media reports about football violence or hooliganism?
8. Do you think frequent reporting on hooliganism affects how the public perceives football safety and fan culture in Ghana?
9. What strategies do you personally or your organisation use to balance accurate reporting with the need to avoid creating fear or moral panic?

**Section D: Policy and Institutional Influence**

10. How responsive do you think football authorities such as the GFA or the Ministry of Youth and Sports are to media coverage of hooliganism?
11. Can you share an instance where media reporting influenced policy decisions, disciplinary actions, or reforms in Ghanaian football?

12. In your view, how can sports journalists and football authorities collaborate to use media more effectively to prevent hooliganism?

**Section E: Closing Reflection**

13. What recommendations would you make to journalists covering football violence to ensure responsible and peace-promoting reporting?

**INTERVIEW GUIDE 2: GFA OFFICIALS**

**Purpose**

To understand how the Ghana Football Association perceives media narratives on football hooliganism, how such coverage shapes public attitudes, and how it influences policy and institutional responses.

### **Section A: Background Information**

1. Please describe your role within the Ghana Football Association and your involvement in football governance or disciplinary affairs.
2. How frequently does the GFA engage with media houses or journalists on matters related to football security and fan behaviour?
3. How would you describe the GFA's relationship with the media regarding crisis communication and incident reporting?

### **Section B: Media Narratives on Hooliganism**

4. How would you describe the general way Ghanaian media portrays football hooliganism and fan violence?
5. In your opinion, do these portrayals accurately reflect the realities on the ground, or do they sometimes distort the situation?
6. What impact do you think sensational or negative coverage has on the image of Ghanaian football?

### **Section C: Media Influence on Public Perception**

7. How do you think continuous media reporting on football violence affects public trust and attendance at matches?
8. Have you observed instances where media coverage influenced public reactions or attitudes toward the GFA or specific clubs?
9. What steps does the GFA take to manage or respond to public narratives created by the media after violent incidents?

### **Section D: Policy and Institutional Response**

10. Does media coverage play a role in shaping GFA's disciplinary policies, security measures, or communication strategies?
11. Can you recall any instance where widespread media attention led the GFA to introduce a new regulation or intervention?

12. In your view, how can the GFA and media organisations work together to reduce hooliganism and promote safer football environments?

**Section D: Closing Reflection**

What policy or communication improvements would you suggest to enhance the GFA–media relationship in addressing