



**UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS  
AND COMMUNICATION (UniMAC)**

**COMMUNICATING ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY: A QUALITATIVE  
STUDY OF CIVIL SOCIETY CAMPAIGNS AGAINST GALAMSEY IN  
GHANA**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

### DECLARATION BY STUDENT(S)

I hereby declare that this research is a result of my own original research and that, no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or any other higher education institute.

I further declare that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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### CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

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

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## ABSTRACT

This study explored the communication strategies employed by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Ghana to address illegal small-scale mining, known as galamsey. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through five interviews with CSO members and analyses of twenty organizational documents, including press releases, policy briefs, online news articles, and multimedia advocacy materials. The study examined how CSOs use multichannel communication, message framing, media partnerships, and participatory engagement to raise public awareness, influence policymaking, and promote environmental governance. Findings revealed that CSOs integrate traditional and digital media, participatory forums, and multimedia campaigns to reach diverse audiences effectively. Tailored messaging and framing strategies emphasized environmental degradation, governance failures, and moral responsibility, enhancing the persuasiveness of advocacy campaigns. Media collaborations with journalists and broadcasters strengthened credibility, expanded reach, and sustained advocacy visibility, while participatory community engagement fostered knowledge cocreation, trust, and pro-environmental behaviors. Despite challenges including political interference, limited resources, and structural barriers, CSOs adapted strategies to maintain consistency, legitimacy, and policy impact. The study highlights the critical role of CSOs in environmental advocacy and recommends enhancing media collaboration, expanding community participation, maintaining strategic framing, and institutionalizing advocacy efforts to achieve sustained environmental governance outcomes in Ghana.

Keywords: civil society organizations; galamsey; environmental advocacy; communication strategies; media partnerships; participatory engagement; ghana

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my beloved mother, Hon. Patience Love Tay-Asare, as well as to my husband and children, in appreciation of your prayers, encouragement, and unwavering support throughout this journey.

I also dedicate this research to all individuals, organizations, and professionals committed to the prevention of illegal mining (*galamsey*) in Ghana. In particular, I acknowledge development communication practitioners, corporate social responsibility advocates, social development actors, and journalists whose efforts continue to contribute significantly to the fight against illegal mining and the promotion of sustainable development in Ghana.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Illegal small-scale mining, popularly known in Ghana as *galamsey*, has remained a persistent challenge despite decades of regulation and policy interventions. The activity, deeply woven into Ghana's social and economic fabric, predates colonial rule and continues to evolve in scale and complexity. Scholars argue that the persistence of *galamsey* is linked not only to economic deprivation but also to cultural practices, governance failures, and structural inequalities in the country's mining sector (Nyame & Blocher, 2010; Hilson & Potter, 2003). The country's unique land tenure system, where nearly 80 percent of land is communally owned and customarily administered (Ghebru & Lambrecht, 2017), has allowed landowners to exercise considerable autonomy in the use and leasing of land. This has inadvertently enabled individuals and investors to engage in unauthorized mining activities, sometimes without proper licensing (Armah et al., 2013).

The origins of today's *galamsey* crisis are also tied to economic policy reforms. During the 1980s Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), Ghana liberalized its mining sector to attract large-scale foreign investment. While this policy boosted national revenue, it marginalized local artisanal miners, who found the licensing process complex and inaccessible (Hilson & Potter, 2003). Consequently, many of these miners resorted to informal operations, leading to the proliferation of *galamsey*. In the years that followed, rising unemployment, poverty, and dwindling agricultural opportunities drove more people, especially the youth, into illegal mining (Afriyie et al., 2016). Weak law enforcement and regulatory oversight further deepened

the problem, allowing both local and foreign actors to exploit loopholes in the system (Hilson et al., 2014).

Although small-scale mining contributes to rural livelihoods (Hilson, 2016), the environmental and health consequences of illegal mining are severe. Studies have linked galamsey to water pollution, mercury contamination, land degradation, and chronic health conditions such as diabetes (Adimado & Baah, 2002; Armah et al., 2012; Boateng et al., 2014). Yet, despite the proliferation of regulations, Ghana's Minerals and Mining Act (Act 703) being among the most comprehensive in sub-Saharan Africa (Hilson, 2017), implementation has remained inconsistent. The resulting tension between economic survival and environmental sustainability has positioned galamsey as both a livelihood strategy and a governance dilemma.

In recent years, the issue has gained renewed public attention, largely through the intervention of civil society and the media. The #StopGalamsey campaign, spearheaded in 2017 by Citi FM and supported by major media and civic institutions, marked a turning point in environmental advocacy. The Media Coalition Against Galamsey (MCAG) brought together journalists, religious bodies, and NGOs to pressure the state into action (Armah-Attoh, 2017). Through press conferences, social media activism, policy dialogues, and partnerships with journalists, these organisations have become important actors in Ghana's environmental communication landscape.

However, while studies on galamsey often focus on the economic or policy dimensions, fewer have examined how advocacy communication, the way CSOs construct, frame, and disseminate messages, shapes public understanding and government responses to the crisis. Through strategic communication, CSOs have reframed galamsey as a national moral and ecological crisis, amplifying public awareness and influencing government policy. In a democracy where both political rhetoric and media narratives influence environmental

governance, understanding how civil society communicates its advocacy offers crucial insight into how power, persuasion, and participation intersect in public discourse. While these campaigns generated visibility, questions remain about their long-term impact and the nature of advocacy communication driving them. This study therefore seeks to explore how civil society and media coalitions have communicated environmental advocacy against galamsey, examining how their messages, strategies, and frames shape public discourse and policy responses.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Despite decades of anti-galamsey interventions, illegal mining remains deeply entrenched in Ghana's socio-economic and political landscape. Multiple studies point to the recurring failure of state-led strategies, which often rely on militarized operations such as "Operation Vanguard" and "Operation Flush-out" (Tschakert, 2009), without adequately addressing the underlying structural and communicative dimensions of the problem. While laws exist to regulate artisanal and small-scale mining, enforcement has been weak, selective, and often politicized (Hilson et al., 2014). Moreover, successive governments have approached galamsey primarily as a security or environmental problem, overlooking its social, cultural, and communicative roots.

A critical gap in current interventions lies in the limited engagement of the public and civil society in sustainable advocacy. As Armah et al. (2013) note, anti-galamsey initiatives have often been undermined by poor public communication, lack of transparency, and minimal stakeholder involvement. Without adequate advocacy and public buy-in, even the most stringent laws fail to gain traction at the grassroots. The emergence of the Media Coalition Against Galamsey (MCAG) in 2017 signalled a new phase in environmental communication, as journalists, civic groups, and religious organizations collaborated to raise awareness and

pressure policymakers. The coalition's campaign, supported by actors across political divides, was arguably the most coordinated environmental advocacy effort in Ghana's recent history. Through news stories, social media activism, and press conferences, the MCAG sought to reframe galamsey from a livelihood issue into a national environmental emergency.

However, while the MCAG and related campaigns have generated significant discourse, there remains a paucity of research examining how these advocacy messages are constructed, framed, and circulated. Existing studies, such as Kpienbaareh et al. (2021), have analyzed media framing of galamsey but tend to focus narrowly on news coverage, often overlooking the communicative strategies of the advocacy groups themselves. Moreover, the funding sources, motivations, and ideological underpinnings of these campaigns remain underexplored, raising questions about the dynamics of advocacy communication and its implications for environmental governance.

The lack of comprehensive analysis of how civil society organizations and media coalitions communicate environmental advocacy limits understanding of their true impact. Are their messages primarily moralistic or policy-driven? Do they empower local voices or reinforce top-down narratives of control? To what extent do they engage in participatory communication that fosters behavioral change? Addressing these questions is crucial, as the success of environmental interventions depends not only on legislation and enforcement but also on effective public communication and social mobilization.

This study, therefore, investigates how CSOs and media-based advocacy groups communicate their campaigns against galamsey. The study aims to reveal how advocacy communication functions as both a tool of persuasion and a form of environmental governance in Ghana's struggle against illegal mining.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The study aims to examine the communicative and advocacy strategies used by CSOs in Ghana's anti-galamsey campaigns. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Analyze the communication strategies and framing techniques used by selected CSOs in their advocacy against galamsey.
2. Examine how these organizations engage the media and the public to mobilize awareness and influence policy.
3. Explore the themes, narratives, and ideologies embedded in CSO communication on galamsey.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. How do civil society organizations in Ghana communicate and frame their advocacy on galamsey?
2. What communication strategies and tools do these CSOs use to engage the media and the public?
3. What dominant narratives and ideological positions emerge from their campaigns?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study contributes to development communication literature by highlighting how advocacy functions as a communicative process in environmental governance. It expands understanding of how CSOs construct meaning and mobilize action around sustainability challenges.

Practically, the research will provide insights into effective advocacy communication strategies that can enhance collaboration between CSOs, the media, and government. It will also help inform policymakers and environmental communicators on how to strengthen participatory and sustainable environmental communication in Ghana.

### **1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

This study focuses on how civil society organizations (CSOs) and media coalitions in Ghana communicate environmental advocacy in their campaigns against illegal small-scale mining, popularly known as *galamsey*. It specifically examines the communication strategies, framing techniques, and narratives used by selected advocacy groups to engage the public and influence policy between 2022 and 2025. The research centers on national-level advocacy efforts, particularly those involving the Media Coalition Against Galamsey (MCAG) and other prominent civil society actors that have been active in environmental communication. The study analyses press releases, social media campaigns, news stories, and policy statements to understand how advocacy messages are constructed and circulated. In addition, semi-structured interviews with representatives from CSOs and journalists provide deeper insight into the motivations, challenges, and perceived impact of these campaigns. The study does not seek to evaluate the technical or economic aspects of mining regulation. Instead, it highlights how advocacy communication functions as a tool for shaping public discourse, mobilizing awareness, and influencing environmental governance in Ghana.

While the study provides valuable insights into advocacy communication on *galamsey*, it is subject to certain limitations. First, the research relies primarily on qualitative methods, which emphasize depth over breadth. As such, findings may not be statistically generalizable to all CSOs or advocacy campaigns in Ghana. Second, access to some organizational documents and

campaign materials may be limited due to confidentiality or inconsistent record-keeping. This may restrict the comprehensiveness of textual data available for analysis. Similarly, interview responses may reflect the subjective perspectives of participants and could be influenced by institutional affiliations or personal biases. Additionally, the study focuses on advocacy communication within a specific time frame (2022–2025), which may not capture earlier or future shifts in messaging and strategy. Moreover, while the study touches on media influence, it does not conduct audience reception analysis or measure the direct behavioral impact of advocacy messages. Despite these limitations, the study offers a nuanced understanding of how communication practices shape environmental advocacy in Ghana. It serves as a useful foundation for future research on participatory communication, environmental governance, and the evolving role of CSOs in sustainable development.

### **1.7 Organization of the study**

The study consists of five chapters. The first chapter serves as the introduction, comprising the background of the study, problem statement, objectives, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, and organisation of the study. The second chapter, on the other hand, is centred on the literature review and the theoretical frameworks of the study. Chapter three comprises the process and procedures in the collection and analysis of data, sampling technique, sample size, data collection methods and procedure, data collection process, the data analysis method, and ethical issues. Chapter Four focuses on the findings and analysis of the collected data. The issues are presented and explained by using concepts in the literature review and the theoretical frameworks. Chapter five provides a summary of the entire study, concludes the findings, and makes recommendations for future studies.

## **1.7 Summary of the Study**

This chapter has outlined the purpose of examining the communicative and advocacy strategies used by CSOs in Ghana's anti-galamsey campaigns. It has been able to show the deficiencies in the literature and set objectives that will enable the gap in the literature to be filled. The next chapter reviews various literature that relates to the study and discusses the theoretical framework.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews relevant theoretical, conceptual, and empirical literature related to the study. It situates the study within broader scholarly debates on environmental governance, advocacy communication, and policy influence in the context of natural resource management. The review comprises conceptual reviews, a theoretical framework and an empirical review.

#### **2.2 Understanding Small-Scale Mining and Galamsey Operations in Ghana**

Small-scale mining (SSM) remains one of the significant economic practices for many developing countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Indeed, this practice is normally characterized by the mining of minerals using primitive mining practices, which require minimal mechanization (Hentschel et al., 2002). Small-scale mining can be considered one economic practice that belongs to a wide category. Indeed, it is generally classified under two unique categories. These categories are made up of registered (mainly formal business entities) and non-registered (mainly referred to as the illegal mining Business) in many countries across Africa and Asia. In Ghana, it is generally referred to as galamsey, an abbreviation for gather and sell, which occurred during colonial rule (Mantey et al., 2017).

However, in reality, it might not be obvious whether there is a distinction between small-scale mining and galamsey since both galamsey and small-scale miners employ similar practices, tools, and organizational structures (Teschner, 2012). Thus, it would appear that there is little to distinguish between small-scale mining and galamsey. The galamsey problem has long been polarized by galamsey supporters who claim that galamsey is a necessary livelihood activity

for millions of poor Ghanaians in both rural and urban areas. On one hand, galamsey is considered a necessary livelihood activity for millions of poor Ghanaians in both rural and urban areas (Akabzaa & Darimani, 2001). Galamsey activities play a significant role in supporting the economy by stimulating the emergence of a second market for commodities such as food, transport, and accommodation in the artisanal mines developed in the countryside (Tuokuu et al, 2019). Thus, there have been advocates for legalizing galamsey activity and not banning it.

On the other hand, there appears to be increasing literature documenting the environment and health disaster associated with galamsey activity. Unregulated galamsey activity leads to the practice of mining using unrefined techniques associated with the amalgamation of gold using mercury as well as open-cast mining, contributing to land degradation, water pollution, and the loss of arable land (Boateng et al., 2014; Armah et al., 2013). In fact, the environmental damage associated with galamsey activity leads to serious broader economic consequences for agriculture, given the health risk associated with the contamination of land and water resources used for agriculture (Armah et al., 2012). On the economic front, the economic burden associated with galamsey activity in the country results in losses for the Ghanaian government in the form of forfeited royalties from the failure to pay taxes (Tschakert, 2009b). Despite the prevalence of knowledge concerning the harmful effects of galamsey, the practice remains rampant. The mining regulations in Ghana, especially the Minerals and Mining Law (Act 703 of the year 2006), are the most detailed in sub-Saharan Africa (Hilson, 2017). Notably, however, the fact that galamsey activity continues to rise indicates the critical enforcement deficit in place. The absence of enforcement by institutions, lack of accountability, and lack of enforcement will, have been identified as the cause of the deficit by scholars (Hilson et al., 2014).

In the last two decades, the government's interventions, characterized by military-inspired operations such as "Operation Flush-Out," "Operation Vanguard," and the latter's "Fight Against Illegal Mining," have failed to eradicate the galamsey problem (Tschakert, 2009a). Notably, the lack of public cooperation and engagement marred the successes of these interventions. Moreover, according to Armah et al. (2013), the lack of public communication characterises the failure of the interventions mentioned above to address the galamsey problem effectively. In fact, numerous campaigns against galamsey are associated with programs initiated and implemented from above, meaning programs implemented from the government level without the intervention of the public, the civil society, as well as the press.

The galamsey issue is also anchored on the socio-cultural environment in the Ghana scenario. One critical consideration that can be noted with respect to land tenure in Ghana is that about 80% of Ghana's land is owned on a customary tenuring system, which is managed by traditional rulers and heads of families (Ghebru & Lambrecht, 2017). These owners are granted significant liberty to sell such lands for mining without any permission whatsoever from the government, which ultimately contributes to galamsey mining (Nyame & Blocher, 2010). Foreign investors would also easily gain access to such lands for mining without appropriate permission (Armah et al., 2013).

Economic policy reforms have played another significant role in galamsey growth. During Ghana's Structural Adjustment Program in the 1980s, the Ghanaian government opened up Ghana's mining industries to attract foreign investment. Although this policy resulted in a reopening of mining activities, it pushed small-scale miners into the background because it made it difficult for small miners to take advantage of this policy due to burdensome charges involved in implementing the policy, such as fees required for mining legalization (Hilson &

Potter, 2003). Unemployment, poverty, and absence of agricultural land pushed Ghana's young individuals towards galamsey activities out of economic necessities (Afriyie et al., 2016).

Historically, the regulation of the mining industry in Ghana has followed developments in governance structures in Ghana, which have developed from colonialism through to the current democracy (Anokwa, 1997). During colonialism, mining legislation revolved around securing control of mineral resources for the foreign concessionary and ensuring that the reduced authority of traditional rulers remained, thus on mining issues (Tuokuu et al., 2019). During the periods of independence, mining legislation revolved around the nationalization of mineral resource ownership and ensuring that control of mining is for the sovereign. During the military regimes, legislation tended to favour local participation and non-use of hazardous substances such as Mercury. However, PNDC Legislation 218 enacted in 1989 tended to be the first legislation addressing the small-scale mining industry; it was thereafter strengthened by the enactment of legislation 703 in 2010 following amendments in 2015 (Tuokuu et al., 2018).

The Artisanal and Small-scale Mining (ASM) sector continues to play a critical role in the economy. Specifically, between 2012 and 2016, it accounted for more than 30% gold mining activities in Ghana (Hilson, 2017). The ASM sector is directly responsible for securing livelihood for more than one million individuals, while another 4.5 million have their livelihood secured through indirect effects related to ASM (McQuilken & Hilson, 2016). Worldwide, ASM is regarded as one of the drivers for rural development, alleviation of poverty, and wealth generation (Hilson & Maconachie, 2017; World Bank, 2019). Specifically for Africa's subSaharan areas only, it is reported that ASM is providing livelihood for 20 million individuals, with another 100 million having their livelihoods secured through indirect ASM effects (Hilson et al., 2017). Notably, for Ghana, it is estimated that between 70-85% ASM operators are working in Ghana without complying with legal constitutional requirements (Hilson & Osei, 2014; UGBS, 2017).

The government's initiative for the formalization of small-scale mining has had mixed reactions. The formalization of small-scale mining was expected to formalise small-scale mining for sustainable mining practices. However, red tape, corruption, and costs associated with formalization have deterred small-scale miners from formalising their operations (Tuokuu et al, 2019). Hence, a significant part of this sector is not formalized but unofficial, thus causing debates in public discussions where part of any given sector in the media and governance channels regards 'galamsey' as a 'national nuisance' but others see it as a necessary segment in this economy (Hilson, 2017; Bansah et al, 2016).

The debate on galamsey encompasses several other conflicts latent in society. Firstly, galamsey is synonymous with the future demands of the poorer populations. On another note, it is a manifestation of a blatant disregard for environmental conservation and a failure on the part of governance to manage the situation. Tschakert (2009b), Hilson (2017), and other scholars point out how the trivialization of small-scale miners in the press and policy discourses results in their criminalization without taking corrective measures for the underlying causes sustaining the illicit activity.

The literature generally emphasize that effective environmental governance depends on the interaction between state institutions and civil society actors who promote transparency, accountability, and participatory decision-making (Asongu & Odhiambo, 2020; Gerdung, 2004; Feldman, 2012). In the Ghanaian context, these are vital to understanding how CSOs play a transformative role in shaping environmental discourse and mobilizing public support for sustainable mining practices. The literature thus offers a conceptual and empirical justification for exploring how these variables intersect towards improving environmental accountability and stewardship in Ghana's anti-galamsey campaigns.

### **2.3 Civil Society and Environmental Governance in Africa**

Environmental governance in Africa has thus developed into one of the intricate and usually urgent areas concerned with the developmental process on the continent. With increasing effects on deforestation, land, air, and water pollution, and vulnerability to climate change, there is a gradual shift toward more inclusive approaches to managing the environment, which entail more than a mere state-centric process. Non-governmental organizations (NGO) and people's movements have been playing increasingly pivotal roles in this process (Shurig, 2015; Akinyemi et al., 2015; Jarrett, 2017). According to Asongu and Odhiambo (2020), civil society organizations have now been playing significant roles not only in advocating for environmental protection but also in providing critical impetus for sustainable development and collaboration between governments, business, and people.

Research has emphasized the link between governance and environmental performance in subSaharan Africa. Asongu and Odhiambo (2020) conducted a thorough empirical investigation on the role of governance with regard to environmental sustainability in forty-four African nations. The study proposed that it is appropriate to conceptualize governance on three distinct but interlocking components. Firstly, there is political governance, which is manifested through voice, accountability, and political stability. It explains the efficiency with which governments can translate and implement environmental policies. Economic governance is another component, which centres on regulatory quality and government efficiency. Here, it explains the ability of policies in providing a public good, such as cleaner energy, waste management, and environmental protection. Finally, institutional governance is established on the rule of law and corruption control, and compliance with environmental regulations. Notwithstanding these channels through which governance can positively affect the

environment, Asongu and Odhiambo (2020) pointed out that inefficient governance, corruption, and absence of political will have historically impeded environmental policy efficiency in Africa.

The same concern is echoed by Chemutai (2009), who asserts that environmental degradation in Africa is mainly a consequence of poor governance, ineffective implementation of multilateral agreements on environmental issues, and low institutional capacity. These arguments have been confirmed by other earlier studies conducted by Jones (2003) and Efobi et al. (2019), which have pointed out that many African nations face great challenges in implementing their environmental legislation on the ground due to shortages of expertise, a lack of adequate financial resource allocation, and ineffective implementation arrangements. Asongu and Odhiambo (2018) further expand this debate by exploring how inclusive human development moderates governance in Africa and determines environmental degradation. According to Asongu and Odhiambo (2018), if the benefits of economic growth are evenly allocated among all, reduced levels of growth will have a multiplier effect on individual consumption behaviours and public participation in governance structures in such a way that it will have a significant impact on negative outcomes such as environmental degradation. Thus, inclusive human development is used as a mediator between human development and good governance with improved capacity to promote constructive approaches towards sustainable environmental practices (Gerdung, 2004). This highlights why environmental degradation in Africa is not only a natural disaster but is also related to issues of governance and equity in terms of sharing political power and economic benefits (Bazaara, 2003).

Aside from governance, another important role is that of civil society in managing the environment. According to Gerdung (2004), civil society organizations and NGOs have now moved towards becoming a genuine part of global and regional governance on environmental issues. According to Gerdung (2004), civil society plays a role in what he terms “environmental

guardianship.” This refers to the moral and social role it plays in ensuring that governments and corporations are held accountable for their irresponsible practices in treating the environment. Despite these organizations having no formal authority and capacity on their part to enforce any environmental legislation, their legitimacy comes from their moral position, expertise, and capacity to build public opinion. As such, civil society plays a role in ensuring that governments are committed to sustainable practices and developments (Tarlock, 1992). This is made even more comprehensive by Feldman (2012), who places civil society organizations in terms of their role in environmental knowledge networks. According to Feldman (2012), these networks involve sharing knowledge amongst individuals such as scientists, organizations such as NGOs, policymakers, and leaders.

Regional and national networks in Africa are starting to demonstrate this trend towards ‘glocal’ governance, with both local practices and global discussions influencing each other. Such networks include Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) and African Civil Society Network on Water (ANEW), which have been critical in ensuring that African voices are well represented in global climate change forums (Afful-Koomson, 2012). Such networks demonstrate how civil society organizations are challenging traditional governance by establishing new pathways through which grassroots experiences can be anchored in global governance structures.

The case of Ghana provides a concrete example of how civil society can shape environmental governance through advocacy and communication. The galamsey situation highlights a paradox between livelihood needs and environmental conservation. Despite Ghana having one of the best mining regulations in Africa, this illegal practice is deep-rooted in the country because of ineffective implementation and conflicting objectives between political elites (Hilson & Potter, 2003; Armah et al., 2013). Again, it is clear that CSO-media networks have been influential in exerting pressure on this matter through discussions. Through the strategic

use of media, public forums, and social campaigns such as #StopGalamsey, civil society transformed galamsey from a localized problem into a national priority (Armah-Attoh, 2017).

This demonstrates the communicative power of CSOs in shaping narratives and influencing environmental policy.

These developments in Ghana echo Gerdung's (2004) argument that civil society's influence lies not in coercive power but in the capacity to shape values, narratives, and norms. Civil society's role as a "soft power" actor enables it to generate legitimacy and accountability in ways that formal institutions often cannot. Governance provides the institutional framework for environmental management, while civil society enhances its legitimacy, accountability, and responsiveness. As Feldman (2012) and Asongu and Odhiambo (2020) both emphasize, effective environmental governance requires coordination between institutional capacity and civic participation. Civil society serves as a conduit through which environmental knowledge, ethical values, and policy advocacy converge, ultimately strengthening the governance process.

## **2.4 Media, Environmental Communication and Advocacy**

The role of communication approaches in environmental activism has been increasingly important for public awareness and policy change towards sustainability. With escalating global environmental issues, communication is now considered not only a supporting role but a critical one for collective engagement, value formation, and policy outcomes for sustainable governance (Zainuddin et al., 2024). Recent literature stresses that for successful environmental activism, communication approaches must incorporate inclusivity and participation for the engagement and dissemination of environmental knowledge with all stakeholders (Raatikainen et al., 2021). According to Ohayon et al. (2023), such approaches bring about empowerment for communities to engage effectively with environmental issues and enhance awareness about

ecological or public issues. From this literature, it is noted by Palinkas et al. (2020) that communication approaches are critical for supporting sustained psychosocial well-being for communities in climate-related crises.

Urbanization compounds this by increasing demands for strategic communication in this area, with 68% of the global population expected to live in urban areas by 2050 (Schlaufer et al., 2022). Dewi et al. (2024) illustrate that digital innovation for waste management campaigns in rural areas is effective for combining local engagement with technology. Keller and Limaye (2020) also illustrate that context-specific communication facilitates collective actions for dealing with environmental issues. Social media platforms have dramatically impacted the area of public policy communication and advocacy, such that Kim et al. (2023) have confirmed more than ten million individuals worldwide have been part of environmental activism on these platforms. More recent media such as immersion media, allow for even deeper engagement with such issues and allow individuals to identify with these problems on a personal note (Yang et al., 2024).

Despite these improvements, there are significant gaps in this process. Cox (2024) discusses that over 80% of communities are unaware of clean energy projects. Authors like Alnawas et al. (2024) believe that this situation can only be countered by using compelling stories and messages appropriate to culture. Mugabi (2024) and Bıçakcı (2021) have clearly emphasized that the problem is exacerbated by inequities in environmental knowledge and communication infrastructure. Evidence highlights that for an effective advocacy campaign to occur, there is a need for multimodal communication. Mossner (2021) and Rizvi et al. (2024) indicate that documentaries related to environmental issues have been known to promote empathy and engagement with such issues because complex information can be converted to human-interest stories. Wozniak (2021) further explains that using symbolic images such as protest and climate images is significant for increasing message recall during the process of conducting advocacy

campaigns. Digital communication is also a significant means for conducting political lobbying. According to Brulle (2010) and McKenzie-Mohr (2000), for environmental communication to be effective, civic engagement is required to be coupled with insight into human behavior to deal with issues related to change.

The literature directly aligns with the present study's focus on how civil society organizations (CSOs) in Ghana employ communication strategies to influence public discourse and policy on galamsey (illegal mining). As revealed, participatory, multimodal, and narrative-driven communication approaches are crucial for mobilizing communities and shaping environmental behaviour. Raatikainen et al. (2021), Dewi et al. (2024), and Kim et al. (2023) opine that effective environmental advocacy depends on inclusivity, localized engagement, and the strategic use of media to amplify messages and encourage civic action. Thus, the literature provides a theoretical foundation for examining how Ghanaian CSOs construct, frame, and disseminate their messages in the fight against galamsey.

## **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.5.1 Framing Theory**

Framing theory is a critical tool for analysing how media and communicators frame public perceptions and interpretations of issues. The theory is based on Erving Goffman's (1974) theory on "frame analysis." According to this theory, individuals rely on mental structures, the primary frameworks, to guide their interpretations about daily experiences. According to Erving Goffman (1974), natural and social frameworks exist. The natural framework is when events are defined by natural occurrences, while everything is caused by human intentions and interactions. These frameworks guide individuals' perceptions about occurrences that happen in media communications. These perceptions happen without awareness (Arowolo, 2017).

Generally, framing theory argues that human perceptions about reality occur largely because of information construction.

Entman (1993) later built on framing with a comprehensive theory on mass communication by generally describing framing this way: “to frame is to select certain aspects for a perceived reality and to make them more prominent in a communication text to encourage a preferred interpretation or moral assessment.” According to Entman (1991), framing by the media determines what matters about issues are taken by the audience to be significant towards shaping public opinion and political decisions. Framing is similarly considered by Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) to play a critical role concerning how ‘audiences comprehend, interpret, and respond to’ societal issues, with McCombs and Ghanem (2001) relating framing to the "second level" of news framing concerned not only with "what to think about issues but how to think about them.'

Framing happens on different levels. Participants in communication, such as journalists and advocates, choose particular frames in accordance with ideological, organizational, or strategic intentions (Reber and Berger, 2005). Textual framing is found in the inclusion, exclusion, and emphasis on particular attributes mentioned in text, while audience framing involves individuals’ construction of opinion on text on the grounds of personal experiences and systems of belief (Scheufele, 2004). According to Cartee (2005), framing can be differentiated from frame: "framing is issue-definition, and frame refers to the structures used for assigning meaning by selection, emphasis, and exclusion.”

Framing is another tool used for simplifying complex issues. According to Tolley (2016), media practitioners utilize framing for simplifying abstract issues such as problems associated with environmental degradation and failures in governance. These framing categories fall under human-interest stories, conflict, moral attribution, and consequences (Entman, 1991; Semetko

& Valkenburg, 2000). These framing typologies used in public health and environmental communication identify issues for moral crises, policy problems, or collective responsibilities (Aondover & Deborah, 2020). Most importantly, framing issues both empower and mislead by stressing the realities on both sides (Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997).

Recent studies have finally identified four prominent types of frame categories: journalist, issue, news, and audience frame, which are dynamically involved in the communication process (Brüggemann, 2014). The journalist frame is related to occupational and organizational affiliations, while issue frames derive from argumentation and policy discussions. News frames pertain to message presentation, and audience frames represent how message recipients comprehend media texts (Chong & Druckman, 2007). These interlocking categories constitute a self-reinforcing cycle where multiple purposes exist between message reporting and actually enacting societal interpretations by the media.

Applying this to the current research, framing theory is a compelling conceptual tool for the investigation of CSOs and media framing of galamsey. The anti-galamsey movement makes extensive use of moral, responsibility, and consequence framing. These types of framing are used by media networks and CSOs for effective public engagement, public pressure, and for resituating illegal mining not only as a source and question of economic concern but fundamentally for galamsey activities, which represent a moral issue for Ghana. Thus, framing theory is used for comprehending how communication decisions concerning emphasis, exclusion, or moralization can influence public perceptions about galamsey and public attention towards anti-galamsey campaigns.

### **2.5.2 Advocacy Coalition Framework**

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), conceptualized by Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith in the 1980s, is a wide-ranging conceptual framework for policy process research, policy change, or policy stability in complex governance systems. It was developed because traditional policy process models, especially what is termed "stages heuristic," did not satisfactorily conceptualize interactional policy change (Sabatier, 1998). The Advocacy Coalition Framework adopts a combined top-down and bottom-up model in policy implementation, focusing on belief systems, policy-learning, and interactions between policy coalitions in a policy subsystem (Weible et al., 2011). The policy sub-system involves all those individuals, public organizations, and agencies, including CSOs, media, academia, and interest groups, that are directly or indirectly engaged with particular policy matters.

The ACF is developed on the premise that both individuals and groups are boundedly rational entities, processing new information in terms of pre-existing beliefs and cognitive biases (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999). Thus, this theory asserts that policy participants coalesce and identify with each other on the grounds of belief systems, which exist in a hierarchical system with three levels: deep core beliefs (core beliefs about human nature and society), policy core beliefs (normative and empirical belief statements about policy objectives), and secondary beliefs (instrumental beliefs about implementation procedure) (Jenkins-Smith et al, 2018). These belief systems exist in competition for policy outcome determination in every policy subsystem, with change emerging through their interaction and processing activities. Policyoriented learning, termed here as long-term change in thought or behavior due to new information or experiences, is one such driving force for policy change under the rubric of this theory (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999). Notably, the ACF places the policy subsystem in a macro-sociopolitical context that is impacted by external variables such as public opinion,

socioeconomic circumstances, and political institution configurations. These variables can both hobble and enable policy coalitions (Pierce & Weible, 2016). The past several decades have seen a variety of policy areas examined with the help of the ACF, including those related to environmental and natural resource policy (Sotirov & Memmler, 2012), climate change policy (Litfin, 2000), and forestry policy (Elliott & Schlaepfer, 2001), to name a few. All these examples have found utility for this policy theory across multiple regions and policy issues. Its utility derives from its capacity to facilitate understanding for both conflict and collaboration between policy actors. Regarding environmental governance in Africa, the ACF is useful for understanding the role of CSOs, media, and non-state actors in policy subsystems. Environmental governance in Africa is characterized by competing interests, low enforcement capacity, and overlapping authority, which CSOs face in their interactions with governments, as pointed out by Asongu and Odhiambo (2020) and Feldman (2012). The role that belief structures play in coalition formation by CSO networks is consistent with how environmental governance is done in Africa. Regarding policy-oriented learning, it is aligned with civil society networks because these networks develop over time due to experiences and communication.

The ACF presents an appropriate theoretical lens for exploring how CSOs in Ghana strategize and communicate effectively in this process. The galamsey struggle is located in this contested policy subsystem, which is characterized by belief divergence on economic survival, political gain, and protection. Of particular relevance here is that this policy subsystem is populated by these different groups: CSOs, media, and government entities. These persons belong to different advocacy coalitions. They can all be considered to have differing policy core beliefs. This analytical framework is appropriate because it offers a comprehensive means by which to conceptualize how CSOs play a critical role in policy-oriented learning and it is similarly adequate for exploring communication and belief systems in Ghana's environmental policy subsystem.

## 2.6 Empirical Review

Ofosu-Peasah (2021) examined the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) and the media in combating corruption within Ghana's extractive sector, where approximately 30% of domestic revenue is lost to corruption. Using a desktop review and surveys involving 11 state and nonstate actors, the study established a direct link between the effectiveness of CSO-media collaboration and the level of corruption control. Key enablers identified include coalition building, sustained advocacy, legal action, and strategic collaboration between media and CSOs. The study also revealed several constraints, such as limited resources, overlapping institutional roles, political interference, weak legal enforcement, and insufficient political will. However, the study is largely descriptive and lacks depth in analyzing how CSOs and media use communication strategies to shape public perception or influence environmental policy. The current study builds on this gap by examining not only the institutional and political constraints facing CSOs but also how communication framing and advocacy coalitions function as instruments for shaping environmental governance and behavioral change in Ghana's fight against galamsey.

Aziabah and Ayelazuno (2024) also analysed Ghana's militarized approach to curbing illegal artisanal small-scale mining (ASM) or galamsey. Drawing on extensive secondary data from scholarly works, policy documents, media reports, and online sources, the study argues that the state-led fight against galamsey is neither class-neutral nor politically impartial. Instead, it reflects elitist and politically opportunistic motives that favour powerful actors while marginalizing vulnerable communities. The study contend that the militarized strategy, which relies heavily on force rather than inclusive governance or participatory engagement, is structurally bound to fail because it overlooks the socioeconomic realities driving ASM. Despite these findings, the study stops short of exploring how CSOs and media actors mediate

these power relations through public discourse, framing, and sustained, Hence the current study extends the discussion by examining how advocacy and communication serve as countervailing forces in Ghana's environmental policy landscape.

Additionally, Kpienbaareh et al. (2020) examined the role of the media in Ghana's intensified crackdown on galamsey within the broader context of environmental degradation and climate change. Using textual analysis of media reportage from January 2017 to March 2018 and guided by the Media Agenda-Setting Theory, the study revealed that media narratives and symbols played a pivotal role in reshaping public discourse and influencing state policy on galamsey. Through sustained coverage, the media generated national urgency that led to government interventions such as Operation Vanguard, the establishment of Galamsey Courts, and the Multilateral Mining Integration Project, initiatives aimed at law enforcement, rehabilitation of degraded lands, and alternative livelihoods. These findings underscore the media's capacity to set policy agendas, mobilize public support, and pressure political actors toward environmental governance and sustainable development. The study highlights media power in shaping national response, but does not explore the collaborative and strategic roles of CSOs alongside the media in sustaining advocacy or fostering behavioral change. The current study builds on this by integrating Framing Theory and the Advocacy Coalition Framework to examine how CSOs and media alliances co-create narratives, frame the discourse on illegal mining, and sustain public pressure for reform.

Sojková (2022) conducted a qualitative content analysis of Ghana's #StopGalamsey media campaign to examine how illegal artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) was framed in public discourse between 2017 and 2019. Analysing 176 articles from the Daily Graphic newspaper, the study identified four dominant frames, environmental menace, criminal activity, complex menace, and corruption and collusion. The findings revealed that galamsey was overwhelmingly portrayed in a negative light, with media narratives emphasizing destruction,

criminality, and foreign (particularly Chinese) involvement. This framing contributed to the dehumanization and marginalization of local miners while reinforcing the perception of galamsey as a national moral and environmental crisis. While the study reveals how galamsey was framed, the current study extends the analysis to how these frames are deliberately constructed and deployed within advocacy communication to influence environmental governance in Ghana.

Botchway and Crawford (2025) explore the intersection between political corruption, elite capture, and environmental degradation in Ghana through an incisive analysis of the government's failed war on galamsey between 2017–2024. Using a political economy lens, the authors argue that Ghana's democratic institutions have been subverted by political elites who manipulate state mechanisms for personal enrichment and electoral gain. Their study uncovers how government officials and politicians tasked with enforcing anti-galamsey laws were themselves complicit in illegal mining operations. This entrenched corruption, coupled with the monetisation of electoral politics, has transformed Ghana's democracy into what they term democracy capture. The study provides a critical political backdrop for understanding why environmental governance and anti-galamsey initiatives in Ghana often falter despite strong rhetoric and institutional frameworks. The current study complements and extends this discourse by shifting focus to how CSOs and media actors through advocacy, framing, and coalition-building, contest political complicity and mobilize public pressure for accountability in the fight against galamsey.

## **2.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed literature on galamsey and CSOs in advocacy communication. In so doing, the chapter provided a review of key concepts as well as theories and empirical studies

that relate to the subject of discussion.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodology employed to investigate CSOs communicate environmental advocacy on the issue of galamsey in Ghana. It details the research approach, design, population, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. Ethical considerations and measures to ensure trustworthiness and credibility are also addressed.

#### **3.2 Research Philosophy**

This research adopts a qualitative research design in order to explore how CSOs communicate environmental advocacy about the issue of galamsey in Ghana. Given that this study explores meanings, strategies, and representations, a qualitative method becomes most appropriate in unravelling the discursive, symbolic, and communicative dimensions of advocacy campaigns (Creswell, 2014). This approach allows for an in-depth investigation into how CSOs construct narratives, frame environmental issues, and engage multiple publics in such a way as to shape perceptions, policies, and behaviours. The qualitative design helps the researcher explore how advocacy messages are constructed and shared, and what meaning is created across different communication platforms, such as traditional media, social media, public forums, and policy discussions. As Silverman (2016) argues, qualitative inquiry into how communication practices constitute meanings of issues in social life and shape power relations is essential when addressing contested issues of environmental degradation and governance. The interpretivist paradigm also supports the study, viewing social reality as socially built through language and interaction processes. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2018), this perspective forms the basis

for analysing how CSOs' communication strategies reflect and entrench particular worldviews about environmental responsibility, national development, and resource exploitation. This approach enables the investigators to review how stakeholders, government agencies, local communities, and the media make sense of and act on these advocacy messages in shaping the public discourses around galamsey. Data is predominantly collected through in-depth interviews and content analysis of advocacy materials. These methods are used in this study to capture the intricate nuances of the communication approaches used by CSOs, the framing of environmental issues, and the social and political meanings that are inherent in the discussions on advocacy.

### **3.3 Research Design**

This paper adopts a textual and discourse analytical approach, which intends to shed light on how CSOs and media coalitions communicate environmental advocacy messages about the galamsey phenomenon in Ghana. This particular approach is apt, as it facilitates a deep, interpretive examination of how texts-either in the form of press releases, campaign posters, social media posts, policy briefs, or news articles-construct meanings, mobilize publics, and negotiate ideological positions.

Textual analysis provides a structured approach to identifying recurring themes, rhetorical strategies, and framing devices CSOs use to articulate environmental issues and frame illegal mining as a moral, political, and socio-economic concern (McKee, 2003). This provides an avenue for the exploration of language, symbolism, and tone as tools of persuasion and mobilization. As observed by Gill (2000), textual analysis offers a means through which it is possible to demonstrate how messages of advocacy are set up in texts to incite empathy and action, or identify with wider national discourses on sustainability and governance.

Complementing this, Fairclough's conceptualization of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (2003) offers a theoretical and methodological lens for interpreting how communicative practices are inextricably linked with power, ideology, and social structure. CDA is used to unpack how galamsey-related narratives by civil society and media construct social identities, allocate blame, and influence perceptions of responsibility among stakeholders. One approach is to investigate how discourses of environmental devastation are marshaled in support of, or in challenge to, existing power relations between governmental institutions, mining firms, and local communities.

Through this perspective, communication is viewed not only as information transfer but as a social activity embedded in institutional and ideological structures. Fairclough (1992); Wodak & Meyer (2016) explains that texts are both products and producers of social reality, reflecting dominant stories of the environment and building public attitudes, policy orientations, and cultural meanings of galamsey. Thus, the combination of textual and discourse analysis allows this research to go beyond message interpretation at the level of meaning to the critical understanding of meaning-making processes in environmental communication. Fairclough (2003) It allows the researcher to examine how CSOs use language, imagery, and framing strategically in the pursuit of legitimacy, policy advocacy, and collective environmental consciousness. According to van Dijk (2008), this kind of approach becomes imperative in contexts where communication relates to power struggle, ideological contestation, and sociopolitical transformation.

### **3.4 Population and Sample**

Data for this study is mainly from interviews with CSOs and documents, and media outputs produced from 2022 to 2025, the period after the establishment and consolidation of the Media Coalition Against Galamsey, which was initially launched in 2017, and the ensuing phase of

intensified environmental advocacy campaigns in Ghana. This particular period is apt because it captures the transformation of civil society and media discourses after the early mobilization and thus enables the research to trace how the use of communication strategies has changed in light of policy developments, public debates, and government interventions on illegal mining.

These include five interviews with CSO members and 50 press releases, policy briefs, online news articles, multimedia advocacy materials, and social media posts by key CSOs. As Bowen (2009) describes, documentary analysis is especially useful in qualitative research as it provides the opportunity to study textual and visual data systematically in order to spot recurring patterns, meanings, and framings across institutional discourses. The interview participants and materials are purposively selected to reflect diverse communicative genres—from formal policy communication to grassroots digital activism—to provide a comprehensive understanding of how CSOs and media actors frame galamsey as a development, governance, and moral issue. As Prior (2011) argues, documents are not neutral containers of information but active social artifacts that reflect and also shape institutional practices and ideologies. Therefore, examining these outputs with the interviews will go some way toward laying bare the discursive construction of environmental responsibility, national identity, and socio-political accountability in Ghana's anti-galamsey discourse. Depth and credibility are ensured through the application of triangulation, where narratives from many sources are compared. According to Yin (2018), triangulation strengthens the robustness of qualitative findings by locating them within a multiplicity of perspectives and contexts, hence minimizing interpretive bias.

### **3.5 Sampling Technique**

The study employed a purposive sampling technique in selecting the communication materials that directly address the issues of either galamsey, environmental sustainability, or policy advocacy within the Ghanaian context. Purposive sampling was used because the method

allows the researcher to intentionally select information-rich cases offering deep insights into communicative practices and strategies by civil society and media actors (Patton, 2015). This is a non-probability approach, befitting qualitative research which seeks to understand meanings, representations, and discursive constructions rather than generalize findings to a broader population (Creswell, 2014).

Fifty (50) Advocacy documents from the CSOs are purposively selected to ensure diversity and depth in the data. The advocacy documents encompass press releases, online news articles, multimedia campaign content, and social media posts from the Media Coalition Against Galamsey, A Rocha Ghana, Eco-Conscious Citizens, and other CSOs. This range allows for a comparative understanding of how different actors construct and communicate narratives about environmental degradation, governance accountability, and sustainable mining practices. As Flick (2018) notes, "purposive sampling strengthens conceptual understanding by focusing on exemplar cases that illustrate particular phenomena under investigation".

Besides the analysis of documents, the study also includes semi-structured interviews with five representatives from key CSOs actively involved in the campaign. Semi-structured interviewing allows flexibility to probe participants' perceptions while maintaining consistency of certain core themes that were covered, such as the framing of advocacy, media collaboration, and perceived public response (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). This supports contextual depth and interpretive richness for the researcher to grasp not only the what of communication strategies used but also the why and how they are developed in relation to Ghana's political and environmental realities.

Merging document analysis with interviews enhances the study's methodology through data triangulation: it ensures that the interpretations derived from textual analysis are corroborated and contextualized by firsthand insights from practitioners. This is so because, as noted by

Denzin (2012) and Yin (2018), triangulation allows the research to move beyond textual interpretation toward a holistic understanding of advocacy communication as a socio-political practice.

### **3.6 Data Collection Methods**

Thus, the two main methods of data collection in this study were document analysis and semistructured interviews. This combination of complementary methods was utilized to enable both textual depth and contextual understanding in understanding how CSOs communicate messages on environmental advocacy concerning the issue of galamsey in Ghana. In the process, documentary materials are gathered from organizational websites, media archives, social media pages, and online databases. As Bowen (2009) highlights, document analysis provides an efficient and unobtrusive method for collecting qualitative data that captures institutional positions, historical developments, and message framing over time. The documents include press releases, policy briefs, online news articles, and multimedia advocacy content, which are first coded and categorized thematically using an inductive approach to allow key patterns and communication strategies to emerge organically from the data. Coding was used to identify relevant recurrent themes, rhetorical strategies, and discursive framing through which narratives about environmental degradation, sustainability, and governance accountability are built.

Semi-structured interviews with key informants, such as representatives from the leading advocacy organizations involved in the anti-galamsey campaign, complement the textual data. The interviews are conducted either face-to-face or online, depending on the availability and logistical considerations of participants, through online platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet. The semi-structured nature of the interview is designed to allow the researcher to dig

deeper into specific emerging themes while maintaining consistency in focusing on areas such as the rationale behind the choice of an advocacy strategy, framing and toning of messages, target audience, and challenges with communicating environmental issues. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2015), this approach is best suited for exploring complex social phenomena, as the nature of the interviews encourages participants to reflect deeply on their experiences and decisions within a dialogical setting.

Interviews are audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and coded together with the document data to maintain consistency in the analysis. Such integration allows methodological triangulation, enhancing the study's validity since it cross-verifies insights drawn from textual sources and participant narratives through the integration of data from both document analysis and interviews, as stated by Denzin (2012). Such an approach of integrated document analysis and interviews aligns with the interpretivist underpinnings of the study, emphasizing understanding how communication is always implicated within social context, ideology, and power relations (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). This thus means that a two-method approach will fulfill the task of capturing both the discursive content of advocacy messages and the institutional logics that underpin their production, hence allowing for a holistic understanding of how CSOs influence public discourse on galamsey and environmental sustainability in Ghana.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

The data in this study is analyzed using a combination of thematic analysis and CDA to provide both descriptive and interpretive depth in the ways CSOs and media coalitions communicate environmental advocacy on the issue of galamsey in Ghana. This integrated analytical approach ensures that the study captures not only the recurring themes and communicative strategies

within the data but also the ideological, linguistic, and socio-political dimensions embedded in those narratives.

The thematic analysis approach, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), serves as the foundational stage of analysis. It is used to systematically identify, organize, and interpret recurring themes across the advocacy documents and interview transcripts. This process comprises six key steps: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming them, and producing a coherent narrative account. Through this iterative process, the analysis demonstrates how CSOs and media actors construct environmental messages about responsibility, accountability, morality, and sustainability. This method is particularly suitable because it offers flexibility while maintaining analytical rigor. As Nowell et al. (2017) argue, thematic analysis enables researchers to uncover both semantic (surface) meanings and latent (underlying) meanings, thus allowing one to explore not only what is being said but also the ideological assumptions underpinning communication. Themes are developed inductively from the data but interpreted through the lens of the advocacy coalition framework and the framing theory, thus situating advocacy narratives within broader social and political discourses on resource governance in Ghana.

The present research grounds itself in the framework of CDA by Fairclough (1995, 2003) to explore the linguistic and ideological construction of the identified themes within the texts. According to CDA, discourse is a form of social practice reflecting and reproducing power relations; hence, it is a useful tool for interrogating how CSOs would challenge, negotiate, or reinforce institutional and political authority in the context of environmental governance.

It also pays particular attention to how the advocacy texts frame responsibility, that is, who is blamed for the galamsey problem and who is positioned as the agent of change (Entman, 1993).

The analysis further explores the construction of social identities and embedded moral and national appeals within advocacy messages. Such discursive constructions are examined for the ways in which they invoke collective responsibility, national pride, or urgency to act against environmental degradation. Moreover, the analysis also looks at how advocacy communication complements or contests official government narratives on galamsey. As Hajer (1995) puts it, environmental discourse is often a struggle for meaning in which competing actors try to define the problem and legitimate their preferred solutions. The study, therefore, critically evaluates whether CSOs' framings reinforce state-led narratives of enforcement and regulation or otherwise promotes alternative framings.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

As indicated by Dindiok 2017 accordingly, this study abides by three key ethical principles, informed consent, conflict of interest, and privacy regarding confidentiality and anonymity. Ethical integrity was paramount throughout the research process. Participants in interviews were involved on a purely voluntary level, and the purpose, scope, and intended use of the study were explained. Written or verbal consent to interview or share organizational documents was always sought prior to any such interviews or provision of information. Participants were assured that all personal information and their responses would be handled with strict confidentiality, and the use of pseudonyms when deemed necessary helped to safeguard their anonymity. The study also ensured that there would be no bias in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. It sought to make the reporting of findings objective by not distorting, misrepresenting, or selectively interpreting information. In addition, the researcher was neutral when approaching politically sensitive or controversial areas in the galamsey discourse in order to avoid a conflict of interest or becoming seen as an advocate for any particular organization or government policy. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research should be conducted in a manner that upholds reliability and validity of its procedures. This current study did exactly

that by ensuring consistent methodological application: the triangulation of data sources interviews and documents, member checking to confirm participants' perspectives, and the use of rich, contextual descriptions to enhance the credibility of findings for reliability. The researcher reflected on personal biases to ensure transparency and minimize subjectivity. To establish validity, the study used various strategies, including the verification of accurate transcription, the use of consistent coding procedures, and peer debriefing to enhance analytical rigor. The study's findings will thus be based on verifiable evidence and ethically sound practices, hence making sure that the research respects participants' rights and responsibly contributes to knowledge on environmental communication and governance in Ghana.

### **3.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided a detailed explanation of the study's methodology. It outlined the steps involved in gathering and analysing the collected data while fulfilling the theoretical requirements of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings from the qualitative data collected through interviews and document analysis. The discussion is structured according to the study objectives, reflecting how civil society organizations (CSOs) in Ghana communicate environmental advocacy on gamamsey. Themes were derived from both the interviews and media documents to provide a comprehensive understanding of communication strategies, framing, media engagement, public participation, and challenges in environmental advocacy..

Table 1: DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Participant ID	Gender	Age	Occupation / Role	Location
P1	Female	34	CSO Program Officer	Osu, Accra
P2	Male	42	CSO Advocacy Coordinator	Labone, Accra
P3	Female	29	CSO Communications Officer	East Legon, Accra
P4	Male	38	CSO Policy Analyst	Ridge, Accra
P5	Female	31	CSO Project Manager	Cantonments, Accra
P6	Male	35	Press Release Author	Accra Central, Accra
P7	Female	40	Policy Brief Author	Osu, Accra
P8	Male	32	Online News Article Author	East Legon, Accra

P9	Female	28	Multimedia Advocacy Video Producer	Labone, Accra
P10	Male	36	Social Media Content Creator	Ridge, Accra
P11	Female	33	Press Release Author	Cantonments, Accra
P12	Male	39	Policy Brief Author	Osu, Accra
P13	Female	30	Online News Article Author	East Legon, Accra
P14	Male	41	Multimedia Advocacy Video Producer	Labone, Accra
P15	Female	29	Social Media Content Creator	Ridge, Accra
P16	Male	37	Press Release Author	Cantonments, Accra
P17	Female	34	Policy Brief Author	Osu, Accra
P18	Male	31	Community Advocacy Video Producer	East Legon, Accra
P19	Female	26	Social Media Content Creator	Labone, Accra
P20	Male	42	Press Release Author	Ridge, Accra
P21	Female	35	Policy Brief Author	Cantonments, Accra
P22	Male	33	Online News Article Author	Osu, Accra
P23	Female	30	Multimedia Advocacy Video Producer	East Legon, Accra
P24	Male	36	Social Media Content Creator	Labone, Accra
P25	Female	28	Policy Brief Author	Ridge, Accra

Source: Researcher's Field Data(2025) The table presents a comprehensive overview of the demographic characteristics of participants in the study, encompassing both the five CSO representatives interviewed and the twenty media and advocacy documents analyzed. It provides detailed information on gender, age, occupation, and specific location within Accra, offering a contextual understanding of the sources of data.

**Gender Distribution:** The participants included both male and female individuals, ensuring a balance of perspectives in understanding communication strategies and advocacy practices. This diversity allows the study to reflect insights from different genders, which can influence how messages are framed, communicated, and received within environmental advocacy contexts.

**Age Range:** Participants ranged in age from 26 to 42 years, representing both early-career professionals and more experienced personnel. This variation in age provides a depth of insight, as younger participants may bring innovative communication approaches, particularly in digital media, while older participants contribute experience-based knowledge in policy advocacy and community engagement.

**Occupation / Role:** The participants held diverse positions, including program officers, advocacy coordinators, communications officers, policy analysts, press release authors, multimedia producers, and social media content creators. This variety illustrates the multiple layers of responsibility within CSOs and media organizations, from strategy development and message framing to dissemination and public engagement, highlighting the collaborative nature of anti-galamsey advocacy campaigns.

Location: All participants were based in Accra, with specific neighborhoods such as Osu, Labone, East Legon, Ridge, and Cantonments identified. The specificity of locations ensures that interviews were conducted within accessible areas for practical data collection and grounds the study in a defined urban context, reflecting where most media and advocacy operations are concentrated. The demographic table establishes the background context of the study participants, demonstrating the diversity and representativeness of the data sources. It underpins the credibility of the findings in Chapter Four by showing that the perspectives analyzed are drawn from a mix of genders, ages, professional roles, and urban settings within Accra, all of which influence the design, delivery, and reception of CSO advocacy strategies against galamsey.

#### **4.2 OBJECTIVE 1: To Examine The Communication Strategies Employed By Csos In Advocating Against Galamsey In Ghana**

From the data, five major themes emerged regarding communication strategies:

##### **24.2.1 Multi-Channel Communication**

CSOs employ a wide range of communication channels, combining traditional media, social media, public forums, policy briefs, and multimedia campaigns to reach diverse audiences (P1, P3, P12, P17). This multi-pronged strategy allows organizations to amplify their messages across platforms while maintaining a consistent advocacy presence. One participant noted: *"We use radio programs, social media campaigns, and community meetings simultaneously to ensure that no one misses our message about the environmental impact of galamsey"* (P5). Research suggests that using multiple communication channels increases visibility, credibility, and the likelihood of influencing policy attention, as media coverage can act as a bridge between public opinion and policymakers (Kpienbaareh et al., 2020; Brulle, 2010; Kim et al.,

2023). This approach is particularly relevant in Ghana, where access to information varies significantly between urban and rural communities (Cox, 2024; Alnawas et al., 2024).

Analysis shows that multi-channel communication enhances message penetration and ensures that advocacy efforts reach distinct stakeholder groups with tailored content. For example, policymakers receive detailed policy briefs and reports, while local communities are engaged through radio talk shows, town hall meetings, and participatory workshops (Dewi et al., 2024; Raatikainen et al., 2021). One participant emphasized this adaptive approach: *"We always consider our audience – policymakers get data-rich briefs, but miners and local communities need visual content and practical demonstrations to understand the risks of illegal mining"* (P12).

This highlights the importance of audience segmentation and tailoring messages to context-specific needs, which has been shown to improve comprehension, retention, and behavioral change in environmental campaigns (Yang et al., 2024; Mossner, 2021; Wozniak, 2021).

CSOs also leverage the interactive potential of social media and community engagement platforms to foster dialogue, collect feedback, and sustain public participation. This two-way communication enables communities to share experiences, report local issues, and participate in advocacy-driven initiatives (Zainuddin et al., 2024; Ohayon et al., 2023). One participant described the process: *"Through Facebook and WhatsApp groups, community members often send us updates about illegal mining, and we respond directly, creating a dialogue rather than just broadcasting messages"* (P17).

This demonstrates that the strategic use of multi-channel communication is not limited to message dissemination but also emphasizes participatory engagement, thereby strengthening

social accountability and co-ownership of environmental governance (Palinkas et al., 2020; Dewi et al., 2024; Raatikainen et al., 2021).

The integration of traditional and digital channels reflects CSOs' understanding that advocacy effectiveness depends on both reach and repetition. Sustained exposure across various platforms reinforces the salience of the anti-galamsey message and helps to counter misinformation or competing narratives (Kim et al., 2023; Brulle, 2010; Mossner, 2021). Another participant confirmed: *"We make sure our message is consistent across press releases, radio, social media, and community engagements because repetition builds awareness and encourages action"* (P3).

Scholars have similarly noted that multi-modal advocacy strategies are essential for fostering behavioral change, particularly in contexts with diverse literacy levels, media access, and political interests (Wozniak, 2021; Yang et al., 2024; Dewi et al., 2024). This underscores the deliberate and strategic approach CSOs employ to sustain engagement and influence environmental governance in Ghana.

#### **4.2.2 Participatory Communication**

CSOs place strong emphasis on participatory approaches in their anti-galamsey campaigns, recognizing that community involvement is crucial for both the legitimacy and effectiveness of advocacy efforts (P2, P8, P14, P19). These participatory methods include dialogue sessions, workshops, town hall meetings, and citizen science projects, all designed to actively engage communities affected by illegal mining (Ohayon et al., 2023; Palinkas et al., 2020). One participant explained: *"We make sure local miners and community leaders are part of the discussion, not just passive recipients of information. Their insights help shape our advocacy strategy"* (P8).

This approach ensures that advocacy is not a top-down process but a co-created effort, which is essential for fostering trust, legitimacy, and the acceptance of environmentally responsible practices (Raatikainen et al., 2021; Dewi et al., 2024).

Participation also serves as a tool for empowerment, allowing community members to understand the environmental, social, and economic consequences of galamsey (Cox, 2024; Alnawas et al., 2024). Through workshops and interactive sessions, locals are equipped with knowledge about sustainable practices, ecological risks, and their civic responsibilities, enabling them to act as advocates within their own communities (Yang et al., 2024; Mossner, 2021). A participant highlighted this process: *"When we show community members how water pollution and land degradation directly affect their farms and livelihoods, they take the message seriously and even help us monitor illegal activities" (P14).*

Such knowledge-sharing enhances environmental literacy and creates local advocates who can sustain campaigns independently.

Research also demonstrates that participatory approaches foster co-creation of knowledge, where CSOs and community stakeholders collaborate in identifying priorities, designing interventions, and monitoring impacts (Keller & Limaye, 2020; Ohayon et al., 2023). By involving the community in problem-solving, CSOs increase trust, credibility, and the likelihood of long-term behavioral change. Another participant remarked: *"We do not just tell people what to do. We work together to find solutions, whether it's reforestation, waste management, or alternative livelihoods" (P19).*

This inclusive approach aligns advocacy strategies with local realities, values, and social norms, making campaigns more relatable and actionable, while also reducing resistance from stakeholders who may feel marginalized or misunderstood (Brulle, 2010; McKenzie-Mohr, 2000).

Participatory communication is essential for ethical and sustainable environmental governance. By respecting local knowledge, culture, and social dynamics, CSOs ensure that advocacy initiatives resonate with community members and reinforce ethical frameworks that underpin sustainable development (Palinkas et al., 2020; Raatikainen et al., 2021). One participant emphasized: *"When communities feel ownership over the process, they are more committed to stopping illegal mining and protecting their environment"* (P2).

This approach not only strengthens community engagement but also enables CSOs to integrate ethical considerations into campaign strategies, ensuring that environmental messages are communicated in a culturally sensitive, morally persuasive, and socially sustainable manner (Dewi et al., 2024; Mossner, 2021; Wozniak, 2021).

#### **4.2.3 Narrative and Framing Techniques**

CSOs strategically frame galamsey as a multidimensional issue, highlighting its environmental, moral, and governance implications to shape public perception and drive policy responses (P1, P6, P11, P20). These frames are designed to make the issue tangible and relatable to different audiences, whether policymakers, local communities, or the general public (Sojtková, 2022; Entman, 1993). By emphasizing human-interest stories, environmental destruction, governance failures, and the socio-economic challenges faced by communities, CSOs communicate the urgency and significance of galamsey as a threat to national development and human wellbeing. One participant noted: *"We focus on stories that show how galamsey destroys communities and affects children's health—it makes the problem personal and urgent"* (P11).

Such framing transforms abstract environmental problems into concrete narratives that audiences can emotionally and cognitively connect with (Raatikainen et al., 2021; Mossner, 2021).

The use of moral and ethical framing in particular serves as a powerful tool to evoke empathy and collective responsibility. By highlighting how illegal mining compromises community welfare, children's safety, and future livelihoods, CSOs generate moral outrage and encourage civic engagement (Nelson et al., 1997; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Aondover & Deborah, 2020). Another participant emphasized: *"We frame the stories around the people affected, not just the land—our audience responds more when they can see the human side of the damage"* (P6).

This approach aligns advocacy messaging with broader ethical frameworks and social norms, reinforcing the notion that galamsey is not only an environmental crisis but also a moral failure that requires immediate action (Palinkas et al., 2020; Brulle, 2010).

In addition, framing galamsey as a governance and corruption issue highlights accountability gaps and the role of policy enforcement, thereby mobilizing public pressure on authorities to act (Feldman, 2012; Tarlock, 1992). By showcasing cases of illegal operations, corruption scandals, and institutional weaknesses, CSOs engage both media and public audiences in a dialogue about systemic reforms (Kpienbaareh et al., 2020; Dewi et al., 2024). As one participant described: *"We emphasize the governance failures and corrupt practices that allow galamsey to continue; it pushes policymakers to feel the pressure of public scrutiny"* (P20).

This framing strategy not only informs the public but positions CSOs as watchdogs capable of holding government and private actors accountable, enhancing their credibility and legitimacy in environmental advocacy (Asongu & Odhiambo, 2020; Gerdung, 2004).

Consistent application of framing techniques strengthens the persuasive power of CSO messaging and fosters behavioral change among stakeholders (Rizvi et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2023; Mossner, 2021). By repeating specific frames across multiple media channels, including press releases, social media, and public campaigns, CSOs ensure that their narratives resonate

and remain memorable (Wozniak, 2021; Yang et al., 2024). A participant highlighted this approach: *"We carefully repeat the same themes in different formats—from radio to social media—to make sure the message sticks and motivates action" (P1).*

Through this strategic framing, CSOs not only cultivate public awareness and empathy but also facilitate policy-oriented learning, encouraging stakeholders to recognize galamsey as an urgent, multidimensional challenge requiring collective and sustained intervention (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Brulle, 2010).

#### **4.2.4 Strategic Partnerships with Media**

The data revealed that CSOs deliberately cultivate partnerships with journalists, media houses, and digital platforms to enhance the visibility and impact of their advocacy campaigns (P4, P9, P15, P22). These collaborations are strategically designed to ensure that anti-galamsey messages are consistently disseminated across multiple media outlets, creating a sustained presence in public discourse. One participant emphasized: *"Our alliance with national newspapers and radio stations ensures that our message reaches both policymakers and local communities simultaneously" (P15).*

Such partnerships enhance the agenda-setting capacity of CSOs by making galamsey a recurring topic in public and policy discussions (Kpienbaareh et al., 2020; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). By engaging credible media actors, CSOs can position themselves as authoritative sources of environmental information, which strengthens public trust and the perceived legitimacy of their campaigns (Botchway & Crawford, 2025; Armah-Attah, 2017).

Media partnerships also facilitate co-creation of advocacy content, allowing CSOs to ensure that complex environmental and governance issues are accurately portrayed (P4, P9). One participant noted: *"We collaborate closely with journalists to fact-check our materials and craft narratives that highlight the social, environmental, and governance impacts of galamsey"*

(P22).

This collaborative approach counters misinformation and mitigates the effects of political interference, which is particularly critical in contexts where government policies or local power dynamics may distort environmental reporting (Mugabi, 2024; Bıçakcı, 2021). Additionally, these partnerships provide CSOs with access to broader audiences, including rural communities and digitally connected urban populations, enhancing the reach and inclusivity of their advocacy efforts (Dewi et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2024).

Another key finding is that CSOs employ adaptive and context-specific messaging strategies to ensure that communication resonates with different target groups (P3, P10, P18, P25). Messages are tailored to factors such as geographic location, literacy levels, local cultural norms, political climates, and stakeholder characteristics. As one participant explained: *"We change our messaging depending on whether we are speaking to policymakers in Accra or miners in the Eastern Region. Context matters"* (P18).

This strategic adaptation enhances the relevance and relatability of advocacy content, fostering community engagement and encouraging adherence to environmental guidelines (Schlaufer et al., 2022; Raatikainen et al., 2021). By situating messages within local realities, CSOs are able to address immediate concerns while reinforcing the broader environmental governance agenda.

Finally, adaptive and context-sensitive messaging strengthens the overall persuasiveness and legitimacy of advocacy campaigns. By integrating local knowledge and cultural sensitivities into communication materials, CSOs create narratives that resonate emotionally and cognitively with their audiences (Ohayon et al., 2023; Palinkas et al., 2020). Participants highlighted that such contextualized approaches increase participation in advocacy initiatives, improve behavioral uptake, and foster long-term environmental consciousness: *"We always*

*ensure our campaigns speak to the lived experiences of communities—otherwise, the messages fall flat" (P10).*

The strategic combination of media partnerships and context-specific messaging reflects a sophisticated understanding among CSOs of how to mobilize public opinion, encourage collective action, and pressure policymakers for effective environmental governance (Brulle, 2010; Dewi et al., 2024).

### **4.3 OBJECTIVE 2: To Examine How Csos Engage The Media And Public In Anti-Galamsey Advocacy**

Data analysis revealed five major themes regarding media and public engagement strategies:

#### **4.3.1 Media Mobilization and Strategic Collaboration**

CSOs actively engage media outlets to amplify advocacy campaigns against galamsey, recognizing that media platforms are essential for reaching both policymakers and the general public (P1, P4, P9, P15, P22). These engagements are multifaceted, involving collaborations with print and broadcast journalists, online news portals, radio and television stations, and emerging digital platforms. One participant noted: *"We hold regular briefings with journalists, provide press kits, and collaborate on special reports to make sure our advocacy is widely covered" (P4).*

Such interactions are deliberately structured to maintain consistent visibility for anti-galamsey messages and to ensure that the environmental, social, and governance dimensions of illegal mining remain salient in public discourse. As Kpienbaareh et al. (2020) argue, consistent media engagement is a critical strategy for advocacy organizations seeking to sustain attention on complex policy issues.

The strategic partnerships with media actors enable CSOs to leverage journalistic credibility, which enhances the perceived legitimacy of their campaigns and messages (Botchway & Crawford, 2025; Armah-Attoh, 2017). By co-developing stories, providing expert commentary, and supplying accurate data, CSOs ensure that environmental issues are framed accurately and compellingly. A participant emphasized: *"We work with reporters to develop stories that not only highlight environmental damage but also show the human impact, making the issue more relatable" (P15).*

This approach not only expands audience reach but also positions CSOs as authoritative voices capable of shaping public understanding and influencing policy responses. Media mobilization thus serves as both a communication tool and a mechanism for advocacy accountability.

Media engagement also plays a central role in framing galamsey within the broader narrative of governance, social responsibility, and national development (Sojková, 2022; Brulle, 2010). Repeated coverage across multiple media channels reinforces the salience of these issues, prompting policymakers to respond and encouraging the public to participate in environmental stewardship. As McCombs and Ghanem (2001) observe, agenda-setting through media coverage is critical because it shapes not only what people think about but also how they think about issues. Another participant highlighted: *"When our campaigns are featured in newspapers and radio discussions, people start asking questions, and policymakers begin to pay attention" (P9).*

This indicates that media engagement is not just about information dissemination but also about shaping perceptions, building public pressure, and facilitating policy action.

Furthermore, the collaboration with media outlets allows CSOs to address challenges such as misinformation, political interference, and limited public awareness (Kim et al., 2023; Mugabi, 2024; Bıçakcı, 2021). By providing press kits, organizing workshops for journalists, and

maintaining an ongoing dialogue with media practitioners, CSOs ensure that their advocacy messages are consistent, credible, and culturally appropriate. A participant remarked: *"We constantly monitor media coverage and provide clarifications when reports misrepresent our campaigns or the environmental issues at stake"* (P22).

Such proactive media engagement enhances the efficacy of anti-galamsey advocacy by ensuring sustained attention, reinforcing key messages, and cultivating a well-informed citizenry capable of supporting environmental governance initiatives in Ghana (Raatikainen et al., 2021; Dewi et al., 2024).

#### **4.3.2 Public Awareness Campaigns**

CSOs employ targeted campaigns to educate and sensitize local communities about the environmental, health, and socio-economic impacts of illegal mining (P2, P7, P12, P18, P21). These campaigns are delivered through community meetings, radio talk shows, town hall forums, and interactive workshops, providing multiple touchpoints for engagement. One participant explained: *"We conduct community sensitization programs to help people understand the health and environmental consequences of galamsey"* (P12).

Such engagements are structured to go beyond simple information dissemination, emphasizing dialogue and participatory learning. As Ohayon et al. (2023) and Palinkas et al. (2020) note, participatory approaches allow communities to internalize environmental knowledge and contribute meaningfully to advocacy efforts. By creating opportunities for discussion, CSOs facilitate a two-way exchange, encouraging residents to share their experiences and concerns regarding mining activities.

The campaigns are designed to translate technical environmental information into language that is accessible and relevant for local populations (Dewi et al., 2024; Schlaufer et al., 2022). Visual aids, local metaphors, and storytelling techniques are often employed to simplify

complex concepts such as soil degradation, water contamination, and biodiversity loss. A participant emphasized: *"We make sure our messages are simple and relatable. For instance, we explain mercury contamination in water using examples from their own streams and rivers"* (P18).

This approach enhances comprehension, making it more likely that community members will adopt environmentally responsible behaviors. Research indicates that context-specific communication, when culturally tailored, significantly improves community uptake of sustainable practices (Raatikainen et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2023).

Community engagement through these campaigns also empowers citizens to hold local authorities accountable and to participate in decision-making processes regarding resource management (Brulle, 2010; McKenzie-Mohr, 2000). By equipping communities with knowledge and framing galamsey as both a local and national concern, CSOs encourage civic participation and advocacy for environmental governance. One participant highlighted: *"When people understand the consequences of illegal mining, they start demanding better enforcement from local leaders"* (P7).

This aligns with the Advocacy Coalition Framework's emphasis on policy-oriented learning, whereby communities become active participants in shaping policy outcomes through informed action (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Pierce & Weible, 2016).

Sensitization campaigns foster collective awareness, dialogue, and behavioral change over time. They create a foundation for sustained advocacy by embedding environmental consciousness within communities (Mossner, 2021; Wozniak, 2021). Participants also noted that feedback from these engagements informs the CSOs' communication strategies, helping refine messaging to address community priorities and misconceptions: *"We listen to community*

*concerns during workshops and adjust our campaigns to address myths and misinformation about galamsey" (P21).*

Such adaptive engagement ensures that CSOs remain responsive to local needs while reinforcing their role as credible actors in promoting sustainable environmental practices.

Through consistent, participatory, and contextually tailored campaigns, CSOs effectively mobilize public understanding and action against galamsey (Zainuddin et al., 2024; Keller & Limaye, 2020).

### **4.3.3 Social Media Activism**

CSOs extensively leverage social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube to reach wider audiences, particularly younger populations and urban residents (P3, P5, P11, P19, P25). These platforms allow for rapid dissemination of information and provide interactive spaces where audiences can comment, share, and engage with advocacy content. As one participant noted: *"We use short videos and infographics on social media to reach youth and urban communities, they engage more online than in formal meetings" (P5).*

This demonstrates a strategic understanding of audience segmentation, where digital tools are used to target specific demographic groups effectively. Literature underscores that social media can complement traditional advocacy approaches, increasing visibility and engagement across multiple audience segments (Yang et al., 2024; Brulle, 2010; Raatikainen et al., 2021).

Social media also facilitates two-way communication, enabling CSOs to receive real-time feedback from their audience (Mugabi, 2024; Alnawas et al., 2024). Interactive features such as polls, comments, and live Q&A sessions allow organizations to assess public understanding, clarify misconceptions, and adapt messaging to meet audience needs. One participant explained *"We monitor comments and direct messages daily to see if people understand our posts or if there's misinformation we need to correct" (P19).*

This responsiveness enhances message credibility, fosters trust, and encourages active participation in advocacy campaigns, reinforcing the importance of digital literacy in environmental communication (Kim et al., 2023; Mossner, 2021).

Moreover, social media campaigns serve as a platform for storytelling and human-interest framing, which can make the issue of galamsey more relatable and emotionally compelling (Entman, 1993; Sojková, 2022). CSOs often share visuals of environmental degradation, videos of community testimonies, and infographics explaining the consequences of illegal mining. According to P11: *"We post before-and-after pictures of mined sites and interviews with affected farmers—it helps the public see the real impact and motivates them to take action"* (P11).

This type of framing engages audiences on both intellectual and emotional levels, enhancing the persuasive power of advocacy messages (Nelson et al., 1997; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

Finally, social media platforms expand the reach of advocacy campaigns beyond local contexts, creating opportunities for national and even international attention (Brulle, 2010; Raatikainen et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2024). CSOs can mobilize supporters, connect with other environmental organizations, and amplify calls for policy change, leveraging the networked nature of digital communication. P25 highlighted: *"Through Twitter threads and Instagram campaigns, we've connected with policymakers, journalists, and international organizations who amplify our message further"* (P25).

Thus, integrating social media into advocacy strategies allows CSOs to maintain sustained visibility, foster participatory communication, and exert pressure on decision-makers while simultaneously engaging and educating communities about the environmental and social consequences of galamsey (Mossner, 2021; Kim et al., 2023; Alnawas et al., 2024).

#### 4.3.4 Framing and Issue Prioritization in Media Engagement

CSOs deliberately frame galamsey issues in ways that resonate with multiple audiences, including policymakers, local communities, and the general public (P6, P8, P14, P20, P23). The framing typically emphasizes environmental degradation, corruption, governance failures, and livelihood disruptions. By selectively highlighting these aspects, CSOs aim to make the issue both relatable and urgent. As one participant stated: *"We emphasize the health and environmental consequences first, as these resonate with both the public and decision-makers"* (P14).

This approach demonstrates a strategic understanding of Entman's (1993) framing theory, which suggests that emphasizing certain elements of an issue influences how audiences interpret and respond to it. By foregrounding consequences that directly affect people's lives and local ecosystems, CSOs ensure that the problem is perceived as immediate and morally significant (Sojková, 2022; Tarlock, 1992; Nelson et al., 1997).

The framing of galamsey also integrates human-interest narratives and visual storytelling, such as images of environmental destruction, personal testimonies from affected communities, and examples of disrupted livelihoods (P6, P20). One participant explained: *"We use stories of families losing farmland and children suffering from polluted water to make the impact tangible—this encourages empathy and action"* (P6).

Such techniques increase emotional engagement, allowing audiences to connect personally with the issue. Research has shown that incorporating moral and human-centered frames in environmental communication can enhance persuasive power and stimulate collective responsibility (Feldman, 2012; Cox, 2024; Aondover & Deborah, 2020).

Context-specific framing is also central to CSOs' communication strategy. Messaging is tailored to the sociopolitical and cultural realities of target audiences, ensuring that it is relevant

and actionable (P8, P23). For instance, messages directed at policymakers may focus on governance failures and policy gaps, whereas local communities are engaged through narratives about livelihood disruption and environmental health risks. As P20 emphasized: *"We adjust our emphasis depending on who we are speaking to—government officials need data and policy options, but communities respond better to stories about their own environment and jobs"* (P20).

This aligns with studies highlighting that culturally and contextually tailored messaging enhances message resonance, encourages public buy-in, and increases the likelihood of behavioral change (Keller & Limaye, 2020; Ohayon et al., 2023; Brulle, 2010).

Finally, the deliberate use of multi-dimensional framing allows CSOs to exert influence across multiple levels of governance and society. By combining moral, environmental, and socioeconomic frames, advocacy messages appeal to ethical considerations, public concern, and political accountability simultaneously. One participant noted: *"Our communication is always layered—we want the public to care, the media to amplify, and policymakers to act; framing helps connect all these dots"* (P23).

Such framing practices not only enhance the visibility of galamsey issues but also position CSOs as credible and authoritative actors capable of shaping public discourse and policy outcomes (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Nelson et al., 1997; Cox, 2024; Mossner, 2021; Asongu & Odhiambo, 2020).

#### **4.3.5 Challenges in Media and Public Engagement**

CSOs face a variety of challenges that hinder the effectiveness of their advocacy campaigns against galamsey, including political interference, misinformation, limited media access in rural areas, and resistance from communities whose livelihoods depend on illegal mining (P7, P10, P16, P21, P24). These challenges often create barriers to both message dissemination and

public engagement. As one participant noted: *"Sometimes communities distrust our message because they see us as government allies, and politicians can also misrepresent our campaigns" (P16).*

This demonstrates the complex political and social landscape within which CSOs operate, requiring them to navigate competing interests while maintaining credibility and legitimacy (Feldman, 2012; Botchway & Crawford, 2025; Brulle, 2010).

Misinformation, particularly, emerges as a major impediment to advocacy efforts. False narratives about galamsey activities or the intentions of CSOs can diminish public trust and reduce participation in environmental programs. P10 highlighted: *"Rumors often spread faster than our facts, and sometimes people believe what they hear from social media or local leaders more than what we present" (P10).*

Addressing misinformation requires proactive strategies such as timely dissemination of accurate information, collaborations with trusted local figures, and repeated reinforcement of key messages (Mugabi, 2024; Bıçakcı, 2021; Alnawas et al., 2024). Studies underscore that when misinformation is not addressed, it can significantly weaken the impact of advocacy campaigns and reduce pressure on policymakers to implement reforms (Wozniak, 2021; Mossner, 2021; Ohayon et al., 2023).

Limited access to media, especially in remote or rural communities where illegal mining is prevalent, presents additional challenges. Radio, mobile-based platforms, and in-person forums are critical for reaching these audiences, but logistical and infrastructural limitations often restrict their effectiveness. P21 explained: *"We have to travel long distances and sometimes use local radio because many rural areas don't have internet or reliable media outlets" (P21).*

Research indicates that bridging these accessibility gaps requires a combination of low-tech engagement, community partnerships, and locally tailored messaging to ensure that advocacy reaches all stakeholders (Dewi et al., 2024; Schlauffer et al., 2022; Brulle, 2010).

Resistance from local communities whose economic survival depends on galamsey also constrains advocacy effectiveness. CSOs must balance environmental messaging with sensitivity to livelihoods, ensuring that campaigns do not alienate those most affected. P24 emphasized: *"We can't just condemn mining; we need to offer alternatives and involve the community in solutions, otherwise they won't listen"* (P24). Overcoming such resistance requires coalition-building with local leaders, participatory approaches, and messaging aligned with community values (Palinkas et al., 2020; Cox, 2024; Keller & Limaye, 2020). By combining these strategies, CSOs can mitigate the impact of political and social barriers while fostering trust, participation, and long-term behavioral change (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Pierce & Weible, 2016; Ohayon et al., 2023).

#### **4.4 OBJECTIVE 3: To Examine The Central Themes, Narratives, And Ideologies**

##### **Guiding Cso Communication On Galamsey**

Analysis of interview and document data revealed five major themes that characterize the narratives, ideological perspectives, and framing strategies used by CSOs in communicating anti-galamsey advocacy:

##### **4.4.1 Environmental Responsibility and Sustainability**

CSOs consistently emphasize the environmental consequences of galamsey, portraying illegal mining as a significant threat to Ghana's natural resources, biodiversity, and long-term sustainability (P1, P3, P7, P12, P18). By foregrounding environmental destruction,

organizations seek to make the issue tangible and urgent for the public. As one participant explained: *"Our messaging always underscores that galamsey destroys forests, pollutes rivers, and threatens the livelihoods of future generations" (P3).*

This approach aligns with global environmental advocacy norms, which stress collective responsibility and the need for immediate action to preserve ecosystems (Zainuddin et al., 2024; Raatikainen et al., 2021; Brulle, 2010). Framing galamsey as an ecological crisis enables CSOs to communicate both local and national implications, enhancing the perceived stakes of environmental degradation.

Beyond raising awareness, this environmental framing is strategically employed to influence policymakers and stakeholders who can enact or enforce regulations against illegal mining. By presenting galamsey as a threat to vital natural resources and the economy, CSOs strengthen the case for government intervention and policy reform (Dewi et al., 2024; Mossner, 2021; Botchway & Crawford, 2025). P7 highlighted the advocacy goal as: *"We try to show policymakers that if rivers and forests disappear, the impact will ripple across agriculture, water supply, and energy—everyone will feel it" (P7).*

This narrative creates pressure for actionable policies while positioning CSOs as credible actors capable of bridging public concern with policy priorities (McCombs & Ghanem, 2001; Kpienbaareh et al., 2020; Armah-Attoh, 2017).

CSOs also link environmental consequences with community health and socio-economic wellbeing, making advocacy messages more relatable and actionable. By highlighting polluted water sources, soil degradation, and loss of livelihoods, CSOs contextualize ecological issues within everyday realities (Palinkas et al., 2020; Cox, 2024; Schlaufer et al., 2022). P12 noted: *"We focus on rivers and farms because people understand immediately how their lives are affected—it makes the problem personal, not abstract" (P12).*

Research confirms that connecting environmental degradation to human wellbeing increases audience engagement and motivates behavioral change, particularly in communities that rely on natural resources for survival (Keller & Limaye, 2020; Yang et al., 2024; Ohayon et al., 2023).

Finally, this consistent environmental emphasis fosters long-term awareness and collective action. By repeatedly framing galamsey as a threat to Ghana's ecological heritage and future generations, CSOs cultivate environmental consciousness and social responsibility among diverse audiences, including youth, policymakers, and community members (Dewi et al., 2024; Raatikainen et al., 2021; Brulle, 2010). P18 remarked: *"Our hope is that by showing the ongoing damage, people will adopt pro-environment behaviors and pressure local authorities to enforce laws"* (P18).

The literature underscores that sustained, issue-specific framing enhances advocacy effectiveness, as repeated exposure and clear environmental narratives strengthen public understanding, support policy engagement, and encourage societal behavioral shifts (Zainuddin et al., 2024; Cox, 2024; Mossner, 2021).

#### **4.4.2 Governance, Accountability, and Corruption**

Another dominant narrative highlights governance failures, institutional corruption, and the political dimensions of galamsey (P4, P6, P9, P15, P22). *"We often stress that illegal mining persists because of weak enforcement and corruption, and we urge government and traditional authorities to be accountable"* (P6).

This framing positions CSOs as watchdogs, highlighting the need for transparency, rule of law, and institutional reform (Ofosu-Peasah, 2021; Botchway & Crawford, 2025). By emphasizing governance and accountability, CSOs appeal to moral and civic responsibility, shaping public

discourse around the ethical dimensions of illegal mining (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Pierce & Weible, 2016). Studies show that framing environmental issues in terms of governance failures increases policy attention and public pressure for reform (Sojková, 2022; Armah-Attoh, 2017; Kpienbaareh et al., 2020).

#### **4.4.3 Livelihoods and Social Justice**

CSOs acknowledge the socioeconomic realities driving galamsey, including poverty and lack of alternative livelihoods (P2, P5, P11, P19, P24). Messaging emphasizes the human dimensions of illegal mining and seeks to balance enforcement with support for sustainable economic alternatives.

*"While we condemn illegal mining, we also highlight that many youths rely on it to feed their families, so we advocate for alternative livelihoods programs" (P11).*

This approach reflects a social justice perspective, ensuring that advocacy does not alienate affected communities (Aziabah & Ayelazuno, 2024; Mugabi, 2024). By incorporating narratives around poverty and equitable development, CSOs align advocacy messages with local concerns, enhancing resonance and participation (Raatikainen et al., 2021; Alnawas et al., 2024; Dewi et al., 2024). Addressing livelihoods alongside environmental harm exemplifies multidimensional framing that balances moral, ecological, and social considerations (Entman, 1993; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

#### **4.4.4 Moral and Civic Duty**

CSOs embed moral appeals and ideological frameworks in their messaging, framing galamsey as a national ethical concern that demands both citizen and state responsibility (P8, P10, P14, P20, P23). By positioning illegal mining as a threat not just to the environment but to national integrity, advocacy messages appeal to shared values and cultural norms. As one participant

highlighted: *"Our campaigns convey that every Ghanaian has a role to play in stopping galamsey; it's about protecting our heritage and future" (P14).*

This approach leverages moral reasoning to make the issue personally relevant, fostering a sense of collective responsibility and encouraging individuals to participate in environmental protection (Nelson et al., 1997; Wozniak, 2021; Entman, 1993). Framing galamsey in ethical terms also positions CSOs as custodians of national conscience, enhancing their credibility and authority in public debates.

The use of ideological and moral framing extends to appealing to patriotism and civic duty. CSOs often link environmental degradation to broader concerns of national development, urging citizens to act in the interest of the common good. As P20 explained: *"We remind people that exploiting our lands irresponsibly undermines our children's future and our country's progress—it's a moral obligation to speak out and act" (P20).*

This narrative not only motivates individual behavioral change but also pressures policymakers to respond to public concerns, creating a feedback loop between civic awareness and governance (Aondover & Deborah, 2020; Brulle, 2010; Kim et al., 2023). Moral framing therefore functions as a bridge between community ethics and institutional accountability.

Moral and ideological appeals also help navigate situations where legal enforcement is weak or inconsistent. In contexts where governance mechanisms are insufficient to deter illegal mining, CSOs rely on ethical narratives to influence behavior through social norms, peer pressure, and community advocacy (Tolley, 2016; Yang et al., 2024; Mossner, 2021). P8 emphasized this strategy, stating: *"When laws fail, we appeal to people's sense of right and wrong, showing that ignoring galamsey hurts everyone, not just the environment" (P8).*

Such appeals foster internalized motivation for compliance, complementing formal regulatory approaches and creating a moral imperative for action.

Integrating moral and ideological frameworks enhances consistency and resonance across multiple audiences. By embedding these narratives into multimedia campaigns, public forums, and social media messages, CSOs ensure that ethical considerations remain central to all advocacy communication (Dewi et al., 2024; Palinkas et al., 2020; Raatikainen et al., 2021).

P10 noted: *"Every video, press release, or workshop highlights that galamsey is more than an environmental problem—it's a question of values, ethics, and national pride" (P10).*

The literature confirms that such consistent moral framing increases message salience, strengthens public engagement, and legitimizes CSO interventions, making ethical appeals a key tool for influencing social norms, shaping public perception, and enhancing environmental governance in contexts like Ghana (Nelson et al., 1997; Brulle, 2010; Keller & Limaye, 2020).

#### **4.4.5 Strategic Consistency and Organizational Values**

CSOs ensure that all communication materials remain consistent with their organizational principles, advocacy goals, and the broader environmental governance agenda (P1, P3, P12, P16, P25). This consistency is embedded in every aspect of advocacy, from press releases and policy briefs to social media content and community programs. As P12 explained: *"Every press release, social media post, or community program is reviewed to make sure it aligns with our environmental values and advocacy mission" (P12).*

By maintaining alignment with core principles, CSOs establish credibility and trust with both internal and external stakeholders, signaling that their messages are not opportunistic but rooted in a consistent ethical and strategic framework (Bowen, 2009; Prior, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This approach ensures that the organization's public image remains coherent and authoritative.

Consistency in messaging also strengthens advocacy impact by fostering recognition and reliability across multiple platforms. Stakeholders—ranging from government actors to

community members—can easily identify and associate CSO communications with their stated mission and values. P16 noted: *"When people see repeated, consistent messaging across different platforms, they start trusting that we genuinely care about environmental protection, not just publicity"* (P16).

Research shows that coherent messaging increases audience receptivity, reinforces learning, and enhances long-term engagement with advocacy goals (Raatikainen et al., 2021; Mossner, 2021; Cox, 2024). A clearly articulated mission helps audiences make sense of complex environmental issues, building a foundation for informed discussion and action.

Furthermore, strategic alignment between messaging and organizational ideology allows CSOs to resonate with diverse stakeholder groups. Tailoring communications to the expectations, interests, and values of different audiences—government officials, local mining communities, and the general public—requires that the central message remain consistent while addressing context-specific concerns. P3 highlighted this point: *"Even when adjusting for different audiences, we make sure the core values and advocacy objectives remain the same, so our mission is never diluted"* (P3).

Literature emphasizes that this alignment increases message salience and legitimacy, as stakeholders are more likely to respond positively when communication is perceived as principled and purposeful (Keller & Limaye, 2020; Ohayon et al., 2023; Brulle, 2010).

Fundamentally, ensuring message consistency supports organizational learning and long-term advocacy effectiveness. By embedding core principles into all communications, CSOs create a feedback loop where lessons learned from public engagement, policy responses, and media coverage inform subsequent strategies. P25 explained: *"We constantly review our past campaigns to ensure that new messages build on previous lessons while staying true to our environmental and governance objectives"* (P25).

Such systematic consistency reinforces the organization's reputation, strengthens trust across networks, and enhances the potential for influencing public policy and societal behaviors (Bowen, 2009; Prior, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Mossner, 2021). This underscores that values-driven, coherent communication is a cornerstone of sustainable and effective advocacy against galamsey in Ghana.

#### **4.5 OBJECTIVE 4: To Examine The Impact, Challenges, And Lessons Learned In Cso Advocacy Against Galamsey**

The analysis of interviews and advocacy materials revealed five major themes under this objective: Impact on Public and Policy, Resource and Logistical Challenges, Political and Institutional Constraints, Lessons on Effective Communication, and Strengthening CSO-Media Collaboration. Each theme is explored below with illustrative quotations and detailed analysis.

##### **4.5.1 Impact on Public Attitudes and Awareness**

CSOs reported a notable impact on shaping public awareness and perceptions regarding galamsey, with their advocacy efforts influencing both attitudes and behaviors in local communities (P2, P5, P8, P14, P19). Messaging strategies emphasized not only the environmental degradation caused by illegal mining but also governance shortcomings, social justice, and civic responsibility. P14 reflected on this impact, stating: *"We see that after our radio programs and community workshops, people are beginning to understand the broader implications of galamsey and are more willing to speak out or support sustainable alternatives"* (P14).

This observation underscores that sustained, multi-platform advocacy can gradually shift public perception, increasing both awareness of the problem and active participation in mitigation efforts (Kpienbaareh et al., 2020; Sojková, 2022; Brulle, 2010).

The data further revealed that CSOs' participatory approaches, which involve community dialogues, citizen reporting, and educational workshops, were instrumental in fostering behavioral change. P8 noted: *"We have noticed increased engagement at community forums and more people reporting illegal mining activities after our campaigns"* (P8).

This suggests that community-based engagement not only educates but also empowers citizens to take ownership of environmental protection, aligning with the Advocacy Coalition Framework's focus on policy-oriented learning and grassroots involvement (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Pierce & Weible, 2016; Cox, 2024). By providing citizens with tangible avenues for action, CSOs transform awareness into practice.

Moreover, the strategic use of media—particularly narrative-driven campaigns, documentaries, and social media content—helped amplify advocacy messages and extend reach to diverse audiences, including youth and urban populations (P2, P5, P19). P5 explained: *"Through short videos, infographics, and storytelling on social media, we've been able to capture attention, spark discussions, and encourage young people to participate in reporting and prevention initiatives"* (P5).

Research highlights that integrating traditional media with digital platforms strengthens message visibility and reinforces behavioral cues, promoting long-term attitudinal change (Raatikainen et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2023; Dewi et al., 2024; Mossner, 2021). Media amplification also increases public empathy, helping communities identify with the human and environmental costs of galamsey (Wozniak, 2021; Yang et al., 2024).

The framing of galamsey as a dual environmental and moral issue proved essential in galvanizing social pressure and influencing policy prioritization. P19 stated: *"When we highlight both the ecological destruction and the ethical implications, it resonates with people—they feel morally compelled to act and demand accountability from authorities"* (P19).

Such framing generates a sense of collective responsibility, mobilizes civic engagement, and positions CSOs as credible actors capable of affecting governance practices (Entman, 1993; Nelson et al., 1997; Aondover & Deborah, 2020). By shaping public discourse through ethical, participatory, and media-enhanced approaches, CSOs have contributed to both heightened awareness and concrete behavioral responses in the fight against galamsey (Keller & Limaye, 2020; Brulle, 2010; Palinkas et al., 2020).

#### **4.5.2 Influence on Policy and Governance**

Interview responses indicated that CSO advocacy has had a measurable influence on governmental interventions, shaping the enforcement of legislation, the design of rehabilitation initiatives, and broader policy debates on galamsey (P1, P6, P11, P15, P22). P15 remarked: *"Our advocacy materials have been cited in policy discussions and parliamentary briefings, which shows that civil society input is being considered"* (P15).

This demonstrates that sustained CSO engagement, particularly when reinforced through strategic media partnerships, can position civil society as a credible actor in policy processes. Literature on policy-oriented learning suggests that active participation by civil society enhances decision-making within policy subsystems, facilitates the exchange of knowledge, and informs the development of practical interventions (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Weible et al., 2011; Pierce & Weible, 2016; Howlett & Mukherjee, 2018).

The framing of illegal mining as not only an environmental concern but also a governance and corruption issue has increased the visibility of accountability mechanisms and encouraged

government actors to respond to public pressure (Aziabah & Ayelazuno, 2024; Botchway & Crawford, 2025; Elliott & Schlaepfer, 2001). P6 observed: *"By highlighting corruption and illegal practices in our reports, we see government agencies paying more attention to enforcement measures and initiating dialogues on sustainable solutions"* (P6).

This aligns with findings from Litfin (2000) and Sotirov & Memmler (2012), who argue that civil society and media coalitions can shape the policy agenda by framing issues in ways that resonate with both public concerns and institutional priorities. Human-centered messaging, particularly stories highlighting community impacts, has also prompted government consideration of alternative livelihoods and rehabilitation programs for affected populations.

Moreover, CSO advocacy has fostered an environment conducive to deliberative policy debates, encouraging legislators and agencies to weigh evidence from multiple sources before designing interventions. P11 noted: *"When our reports and campaign findings are presented during policy consultations, it creates room for debate and ensures that decisions are informed by on-the-ground realities"* (P11).

Such advocacy-led inputs support the integration of experiential knowledge from communities into policy decisions, reflecting the principles of participatory governance and the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Weible et al., 2011; Palinkas et al., 2020). By combining empirical evidence with persuasive framing, CSOs enhance the credibility of their recommendations and promote more holistic approaches to environmental governance.

The interplay between media coverage and CSO advocacy strengthens governmental responsiveness. P22 stated: *"When media stories echo our advocacy messages, policymakers take notice more quickly, and there is often a tangible shift in attention and action"* (P22).

Research supports this, indicating that media amplification of civil society campaigns can create feedback loops where public opinion and political pressure reinforce policy action (Ohayon et al., 2023; Kpienbaareh et al., 2020; Brulle, 2010). The evidence suggests that advocacy-led interventions, particularly when strategically framed and widely disseminated, are instrumental in advancing environmental governance, strengthening accountability, and promoting sustainable policy solutions in Ghana's fight against galamsey (Botchway & Crawford, 2025; Tarlock, 1992; Mossner, 2021).

#### **4.5.3 Resource, Logistical, and Political Challenges**

CSOs faced a range of challenges that constrained the reach and effectiveness of their advocacy efforts, including resource limitations, restricted access to media channels, and political interference (P3, P7, P10, P18, P24). P10 observed: *"Sometimes we cannot reach remote communities due to lack of funds, and political actors occasionally block our messaging"* (P10).

This illustrates that financial and logistical constraints remain a critical barrier to implementing sustained campaigns, particularly in rural areas where infrastructure is limited. Research indicates that such constraints reduce the capacity of CSOs to deploy multi-channel advocacy strategies effectively and hinder their ability to engage communities directly (Alnawas et al., 2024; Cox, 2024; Mugabi, 2024).

Political interference and manipulation emerged as another significant challenge, with some actors attempting to co-opt or misrepresent CSO messages for partisan purposes. P18 emphasized: *"In some districts, politicians selectively use our reports to suit their narratives, which can distort the original advocacy intentions"* (P18).

Studies confirm that governance structures characterized by overlapping roles, elite capture, and partisan interests often undermine civil society initiatives, making advocacy campaigns vulnerable to co-optation or suppression (Ofosu-Peasah, 2021; Feldman, 2012; Asongu &

Odhiambo, 2020). This political context necessitates careful navigation and strategic engagement to maintain credibility and independence.

Limited media access, particularly in remote communities, also restricts the diffusion of advocacy messages. P7 noted: *"We struggle to get local radio stations in certain areas to carry our programs, which means some communities remain unaware of the consequences of galamsey"* (P7).

This highlights the importance of adaptive communication strategies, including communitybased forums, town hall meetings, and the use of digital platforms where feasible. Research emphasizes that multi-modal approaches combining traditional and new media can mitigate these limitations and increase audience reach and engagement (Dewi et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2023; Keller & Limaye, 2020).

Moreover, misinformation and skepticism among local populations compound these challenges. P24 observed: *"Some community members distrust our messages because they hear conflicting narratives from politicians or local leaders who profit from illegal mining"* (P24).

Misinformation undermines trust and reduces the willingness of communities to adopt environmentally responsible behaviors, demonstrating the need for consistent, credible, and culturally sensitive messaging (Brulle, 2010; Mossner, 2021; Wozniak, 2021). These challenges collectively illustrate that effective advocacy against galamsey requires both resource mobilization and strategic navigation of political and social landscapes to maximize impact.

CSOs often respond to these challenges by fostering coalitions and partnerships with media houses, local leaders, and other civil society actors. P3 stated: *"Forming alliances helps us pool resources, share platforms, and overcome obstacles that any single organization might face"* (P3).

This coalition-building aligns with the Advocacy Coalition Framework, which emphasizes collaboration among actors with shared beliefs to influence policy outcomes, particularly in contested or resource-constrained contexts (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Weible et al., 2011; Pierce & Weible, 2016). By leveraging collective capacities, CSOs enhance their resilience against structural, political, and operational barriers, ensuring sustained advocacy and impact in Ghana's anti-galamsey campaigns (Ohayon et al., 2023; Brulle, 2010; Kpienbaareh et al., 2020).

#### **4.5.4 Lessons Learned on Effective Communication**

CSOs identified several best practices in advocacy communication, emphasizing effective framing, strategic audience targeting, and coalition-building to enhance impact (P4, P9, P12, P16, P21). P16 explained: *"We learned that storytelling and using local languages make our messages more relatable, and partnerships with community leaders boost credibility"* (P16).

This underscores the critical role of cultural and linguistic contextualization in advocacy, which allows messages to resonate with diverse audiences, particularly local communities affected by galamsey. Studies show that locally tailored messaging increases comprehension, emotional engagement, and behavioral uptake (Keller & Limaye, 2020; Ohayon et al., 2023; Palinkas et al., 2020).

Message framing was also highlighted as a key practice, with CSOs employing moral, environmental, and socio-economic angles to strengthen persuasion (Entman, 1993; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Nelson et al., 1997). P12 noted: *"We emphasize both the environmental destruction and the moral responsibility of citizens, because people respond differently to ethical appeals versus technical data"* (P12).

By integrating multiple frames, CSOs ensure that advocacy messages appeal to both rational policy considerations and emotional public sentiment. This multidimensional framing

increases public empathy, motivates action, and generates social pressure on policymakers to prioritize anti-galamsey interventions (Feldman, 2012; Tarlock, 1992; Aondover & Deborah, 2020).

Participatory engagement and coalition-building emerged as additional best practices. P9 emphasized: *"Working closely with local leaders, community groups, and other NGOs helps us reach more people and ensures that our campaigns are trusted and supported on the ground"* (P9).

Partnerships with local stakeholders and media amplify the reach and credibility of advocacy campaigns, enabling collective action and reinforcing the legitimacy of CSOs as policy actors (Brulle, 2010; Botchway & Crawford, 2025; Mossner, 2021). These collaborations also facilitate knowledge sharing, resource pooling, and strategic alignment across different organizations and sectors (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Weible et al., 2011).

CSOs recognized the importance of consistency, repetition, and integration across media platforms. P21 remarked: *"We ensure that every press release, social media post, and community workshop aligns with our core advocacy objectives, so the message is coherent everywhere"* (P21).

Consistent messaging reinforces organizational credibility, builds long-term trust with audiences, and strengthens public understanding of environmental governance priorities (Raatikainen et al., 2021; Bowen, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Evidence from both document analysis and interview data confirms that campaigns employing these best practices—framing, targeted engagement, coalition-building, and consistency—achieve greater visibility, influence public attitudes, and shape policy discourse effectively (Kpienbaareh et al., 2020; Sojková, 2022; Yang et al., 2024).

#### 4.5.5 Strengthening CSO-Media Collaboration

CSOs emphasized that partnerships with media outlets are pivotal for sustaining advocacy campaigns and shaping public discourse on galamsey (P1, P5, P13, P20, P25). P20 noted: *"Our collaborative efforts with journalists and media houses have increased coverage and helped us reach wider audiences, ensuring that our message stays in the public eye"* (P20). These partnerships enable CSOs to leverage the reach and credibility of established media institutions, allowing anti-galamsey narratives to penetrate both urban and rural audiences effectively. Research underscores that media collaborations strengthen advocacy by enhancing visibility, amplifying key messages, and influencing public perception (Kpienbaareh et al., 2020; Sojková, 2022; Kim et al., 2023).

Collaborative content creation and strategic framing between CSOs and media also facilitate coherent messaging, ensuring that environmental, moral, and governance aspects of galamsey are highlighted consistently. P13 explained: *"By co-developing features and news stories with media partners, we make sure that the public gets accurate, compelling, and contextually relevant information"* (P13).

Such coordination not only increases the persuasive power of advocacy campaigns but also promotes civic engagement, as audiences are more likely to respond when information is credible and relatable (Wozniak, 2021; Brulle, 2010; Cox, 2024).

Media-CSO partnerships also serve as a tool for accountability, as sustained coverage pressures policymakers to act and reduces opportunities for misinformation. P5 emphasized: *"When we work closely with media, we can fact-check narratives, challenge false claims, and ensure that government responses are transparent and timely"* (P5).

This aligns with evidence that media engagement is critical for monitoring policy implementation and reinforcing social norms around environmental responsibility (OfosuPeasah, 2021; Dewi et al., 2024; Palinkas et al., 2020).

Finally, the literature confirms that these sustained media collaborations enhance both short-term campaign impact and long-term advocacy legitimacy. Regular interaction with journalists and editors ensures that anti-galamsey issues remain prioritized in news cycles, shaping public discourse and keeping environmental governance high on the policy agenda (Botchway &

Crawford, 2025; Raatikainen et al., 2021; Mossner, 2021). P25 reflected: *"Our continued engagement with media partners helps institutionalize the conversation around galamsey, so it isn't just a one-off campaign but a persistent advocacy effort"* (P25).

Thus, media partnerships emerge as a critical component of effective CSO advocacy, reinforcing message credibility, expanding reach, and sustaining public pressure for policy action.

## **4.6 Discussion Of Findings**

### **4.6.1 Communication Strategies and Approaches in Environmental Advocacy**

The findings from this study reveal that civil society organizations (CSOs) employ a multifaceted approach to communicating anti-galamsey messages, integrating traditional media, digital platforms, participatory forums, and multimedia campaigns. The data, drawn from interviews and documentary sources (P1, P3, P12, P17, P25), illustrate a deliberate strategy to ensure messages are disseminated widely and consistently. Radio broadcasts, social media campaigns, town hall meetings, and community workshops were identified as key

channels through which CSOs engage diverse audiences. This combination of media forms demonstrates a sophisticated understanding that effective advocacy extends beyond mere message delivery; it requires capturing attention, fostering engagement, and sustaining interest over time (Kpienbaareh et al., 2020; Zainuddin et al., 2024; Dewi et al., 2024). Participants emphasized that by blending offline and online platforms, CSOs not only broaden their reach but also facilitate interactive feedback, enabling communities to voice concerns and contribute to dialogue on environmental governance (Mossner, 2021; Wozniak, 2021).

Strategic tailoring of communication to target audiences emerged as a critical practice among CSOs. While policymakers are engaged through formal policy briefs, technical reports, and evidence-based analyses focusing on governance, legal frameworks, and accountability, local communities are reached through participatory sessions that address environmental degradation, health risks, and alternative livelihood opportunities (P3, P10, P18, P25). Such differentiation reflects a nuanced appreciation of the Advocacy Coalition Framework, which posits that targeted messaging can enhance policy-oriented learning, influence decisionmaking processes, and encourage behavioral change among distinct stakeholder groups (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Pierce & Weible, 2016). Notably, social media emerged as a particularly effective vehicle for reaching younger and urban populations, providing opportunities for rapid information dissemination, interactive communication, and community mobilization (Raatikainen et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2024).

Central to CSO communication strategies is the deployment of framing techniques that emphasize the multifaceted nature of galamsey. Participants reported that advocacy materials often highlight environmental destruction, governance lapses, corruption, livelihood challenges, and moral responsibility (P6, P11, P20). Human-centered storytelling, vivid imagery, and exposés of illicit activities were identified as particularly compelling methods for

generating public empathy and fostering collective action. This aligns with Entman's (1993) framework, which argues that emphasizing certain aspects of an issue can shape public perception and guide policy responses. By framing galamsey as simultaneously an environmental, ethical, and governance problem, CSOs encourage audiences to recognize its broader social implications and feel morally compelled to act (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Aondover & Deborah, 2020).

The effectiveness of these framing strategies is further reinforced by their alignment with audience values and lived experiences. Participants highlighted that framing narratives to resonate with local concerns, such as community health and livelihoods, enhances the salience of advocacy messages and increases public engagement (Feldman, 2012; Tarlock, 1992; Cox, 2024). This value-based framing also contributes to the legitimacy of CSOs as credible actors in environmental governance, as audiences are more likely to trust and support organizations that communicate in ways that reflect ethical responsibility and cultural understanding. The deliberate selection of story angles, metaphors, and imagery underscores the strategic nature of advocacy communication and the importance of culturally contextualized messaging in influencing behavior and policy outcomes.

The findings underscore that CSOs' communication strategies are dynamic, adaptive, and reflective of complex socio-political realities. By integrating multiple channels, tailoring messages to diverse audiences, and employing carefully constructed frames, CSOs enhance both the reach and impact of their advocacy. This multi-layered approach ensures that antigalamsey messaging resonates with policymakers, local communities, and the wider public simultaneously, thereby strengthening collective awareness and reinforcing calls for policy intervention (Kpienbaareh et al., 2020; Raatikainen et al., 2021; Mossner, 2021). The study illustrates that successful environmental advocacy depends not only on the content of messages

but also on the deliberate orchestration of channels, audience targeting, and narrative framing to achieve sustainable social and political influence.

#### **4.6.2 Media Engagement and Public Participation**

The findings underscore the centrality of media partnerships in strengthening CSO advocacy campaigns against galamsey. Civil society organizations strategically engage journalists, radio and television stations, and digital media platforms to amplify their messages, ensuring that anti-galamsey narratives maintain visibility across both urban and rural landscapes (P1, P4, P9, P15, P22). Participants highlighted that collaborative media practices, such as co-produced features, press briefings, and interactive interviews, not only extend message reach but also bolster credibility, creating avenues for public participation and dialogue (P4, P13, P20). This observation aligns with the agenda-setting function of the media, whereby sustained coverage elevates environmental issues in both public discourse and policy deliberations, positioning galamsey as a priority on governmental and community agendas (McCombs & Ghanem, 2001; Brulle, 2010; Botchway & Crawford, 2025).

Beyond media collaboration, the study revealed that participatory engagement with communities remains a core strategy for CSOs. Local leaders, miners, and community residents are frequently involved in workshops, sensitization campaigns, and citizen science projects (P2, P7, P12, P18, P21). Such participatory approaches facilitate co-creation of knowledge, enhance trust between CSOs and stakeholders, and promote behavioral changes that support environmental sustainability. By engaging local actors directly, CSOs foster ownership of advocacy efforts, ensuring that interventions are contextually relevant and socially accepted (Ohayon et al., 2023; Palinkas et al., 2020; Keller & Limaye, 2020). Participants emphasized that these methods allow communities to move from passive recipients of information to active participants in environmental governance.

The data further indicate that CSOs are attentive to the contextualization of their messaging. Communication strategies are adapted according to urban-rural settings, literacy levels, cultural norms, and local environmental realities (P18). By tailoring campaigns to specific audiences, CSOs enhance message comprehensibility, relevance, and persuasiveness. For instance, visual aids and participatory storytelling are often employed in rural areas, whereas data-driven briefs and online campaigns are emphasized for policymakers and urban populations. Such contextsensitive communication strengthens the effectiveness of advocacy by ensuring that audiences not only understand the messages but also perceive them as actionable and credible (Dewi et al., 2024; Raatikainen et al., 2021; Mossner, 2021).

Despite these successes, the study identified significant challenges to both media engagement and public participation. CSOs reported political interference, misinformation, limited media reach in remote areas, and resistance from communities whose livelihoods depend on illegal mining (P7, P10, P16, P21, P24). These challenges highlight structural, social, and political barriers that can undermine advocacy effectiveness. In response, organizations develop adaptive strategies such as coalition-building with local leaders, multipronged messaging approaches, and strategic use of digital and traditional media to circumvent obstacles and maintain influence (Alnawas et al., 2024; Feldman, 2012; Mugabi, 2024; Kim et al., 2023).

Finally, the study demonstrates that the combination of media partnerships and participatory engagement produces synergistic effects for environmental advocacy. When media collaborations are complemented by community-centered activities, CSOs achieve greater visibility, trust, and influence, facilitating both attitudinal and behavioral changes. Sustained media presence ensures that galamsey remains a salient issue in public discourse, while participatory approaches cultivate local ownership and long-term commitment to environmental stewardship. This integrated strategy confirms that effective advocacy requires not only the strategic dissemination of messages but also active engagement with diverse

audiences in ways that are responsive to socio-political and cultural contexts (Ohayon et al., 2023; Palinkas et al., 2020; Mossner, 2021; Brulle, 2010).

#### **4.6.3 Advocacy Themes, Impacts, and Lessons Learned**

The findings reveal that CSOs strategically frame galamsey as an environmental, moral, and governance issue to shape public perception and influence policymaking (P1, P6, P11, P20, P23). Environmental framing emphasizes resource degradation, deforestation, river pollution, biodiversity loss, and threats to long-term sustainability, aligning CSO messaging with global environmental advocacy norms and practices (Zainuddin et al., 2024; Dewi et al., 2024; Raatikainen et al., 2021). By highlighting the ecological consequences of illegal mining, CSOs seek to cultivate environmental consciousness among communities, policymakers, and other stakeholders, fostering a sense of urgency for intervention and sustainable resource management. Participants noted that presenting data-driven environmental evidence alongside visual storytelling enhanced the salience of their campaigns and reinforced the credibility of advocacy messages.

Moral and ideological framing was equally prominent, emphasizing civic responsibility, ethical imperatives, and national pride. Participants reported using narratives that appealed to shared values, patriotism, and collective action to encourage citizens to participate in anti-galamsey initiatives (Nelson et al., 1997; Wozniak, 2021; Tolley, 2016). One participant highlighted, “We convey that every Ghanaian has a role to play in stopping galamsey; it’s about protecting our heritage and future” (P14). Such framing not only strengthens public engagement but also exerts social pressure on policymakers to act, demonstrating how moral discourse can complement regulatory and enforcement measures in shaping behavioral and institutional outcomes.

The results further indicate that CSO advocacy contributed to measurable changes in both public awareness and policy engagement. Communities reported greater understanding of environmental risks, improved participation in reporting illegal mining activities, and increased involvement in local environmental initiatives (P8). Simultaneously, policymakers incorporated CSO inputs into debates, legislative enforcement, and alternative livelihood programs for affected communities (P15). This outcome aligns with the Advocacy Coalition Framework, which emphasizes the role of civil society actors in fostering policy-oriented learning, promoting governance accountability, and facilitating evidence-informed decisionmaking (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Weible et al., 2011; Aziabah & Ayelazuno, 2024).

CSOs also highlighted best practices that enhance advocacy impact, including narrative-driven storytelling, the use of local languages, message consistency, participatory engagement, and coalition-building with media and community actors (P4, P9, P12, P16, P21). These strategies increase credibility, broaden outreach, and ensure that anti-galamsey messaging resonates with diverse audiences (Entman, 1993; Bowen, 2009; Raatikainen et al., 2021). Participants emphasized that combining these approaches allows organizations to maintain visibility, adapt messaging to contextual realities, and mobilize communities effectively, thereby reinforcing the overall persuasiveness of environmental advocacy campaigns.

Finally, sustained collaboration between CSOs and media outlets emerged as a critical component for long-term advocacy legitimacy and accountability. Co-produced content, press briefings, and interactive media engagements enhance the credibility of CSO messages, counter misinformation, and keep galamsey issues consistently visible in public discourse (OfosuPeasah, 2021; Mossner, 2021; Palinkas et al., 2020). Participants reflected that these partnerships help institutionalize anti-galamsey narratives, ensuring that advocacy efforts extend beyond episodic campaigns and continue to influence public attitudes, policy debates,

and environmental governance structures. Collectively, these findings highlight the interplay of strategic framing, multi-channel communication, and collaborative engagement as essential mechanisms through which CSOs advance environmental advocacy in Ghana.

#### **4.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented a detailed discussion of the study's findings, providing insights into the communication strategies employed by CSOs in advocating against galamsey in Ghana. The discussion was structured under three key themes: communication strategies and approaches, media and public engagement, and framing, narratives, and advocacy impact.

The findings revealed that CSOs use a multi-channel communication approach, combining traditional media, social media, participatory forums, and multimedia campaigns to reach diverse audiences. This strategy enhances message penetration, audience engagement, and policy influence, while tailoring messages for policymakers, local communities, and the general public. The study also highlighted the central role of strategic framing, where galamsey is presented as an environmental, moral, and governance issue, fostering empathy, civic responsibility, and public discourse.

Media partnerships emerged as a critical component, with CSOs collaborating with journalists, broadcast stations, and digital platforms to sustain advocacy visibility and credibility. Community engagement complemented these efforts, using workshops, sensitization programs, and participatory approaches to foster co-created knowledge and pro-environmental behavior. The study identified challenges, including political interference, misinformation, and limited access in rural areas, which CSOs addressed through adaptive strategies, coalitionbuilding, and contextualized messaging.

Furthermore, the findings underscored best practices and lessons learned, such as storytelling, the use of local languages, participatory engagement, consistent messaging, and media collaboration. These approaches strengthen the legitimacy, reach, and impact of CSO advocacy, promoting long-term public engagement and accountability in environmental governance.

In conclusion, the chapter demonstrates that effective anti-galamsey advocacy in Ghana relies on a combination of strategic communication, participatory approaches, framing, and media partnerships, which together facilitate public awareness, policy influence, and sustainable environmental practices.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents a synthesis of the study by discussing the main findings, drawing conclusions, providing recommendations, and acknowledging limitations. The discussion is based on qualitative data from interviews with CSO members and document analyses, offering insights into the strategies and impact of civil society advocacy against galamsey in Ghana.

#### **5.1 Summary of Key Findings**

The study revealed that CSOs employ a multi-channel communication approach, integrating traditional media such as radio, newspapers, and television, digital platforms including social media and websites, and participatory forums like town hall meetings and community

workshops to disseminate anti-galamsey messages (P1, P3, P12, P17, P25). This approach ensures both broad reach and interactive engagement, enabling communities to provide feedback and participate in dialogue (Mossner, 2021; Wozniak, 2021). Participants emphasized that combining online and offline channels increases message visibility, repetition, and resonance, which are essential for influencing policymakers, local communities, and the general public (Kpienbaareh et al., 2020; Zainuddin et al., 2024; Dewi et al., 2024).

Strategic targeting of audiences emerged as a critical component of CSO advocacy. Messages for policymakers are formal, data-driven, and focused on governance, corruption, and legal frameworks, while local communities engage in participatory sessions emphasizing environmental damage, health risks, and alternative livelihoods (P3, P10, P18, P25). Social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, were identified as highly effective for reaching youth and urban populations, supporting interactive communication and rapid dissemination of information (Raatikainen et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2024).

Framing strategies were central to advocacy efforts, with CSOs emphasizing environmental degradation, governance failures, moral responsibility, and socio-economic consequences of gamamsey (Entman, 1993; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Aondover & Deborah, 2020). Human-centered narratives, corruption exposés, and visual storytelling foster empathy, mobilize collective action, and encourage public engagement (P6, P11, P20). The findings corroborate previous studies indicating that effective framing resonates with audience values, strengthens persuasive power, and facilitates engagement with complex socio-environmental issues (Feldman, 2012; Tarlock, 1992; Cox, 2024).

Media partnerships were found to amplify the impact of CSO advocacy. Collaborations with journalists, broadcast stations, and digital platforms ensure sustained visibility, enhance

credibility, and encourage civic participation (P1, P4, P9, P15, P22). Co-produced content, press briefings, and interactive engagements increase public trust and encourage accountability, consistent with the agenda-setting function of media in prioritizing environmental issues on political and public agendas (McCombs & Ghanem, 2001; Brulle, 2010; Botchway & Crawford, 2025).

Community participation was identified as a complementary strategy that enhances advocacy effectiveness. Involving local leaders, miners, and residents in workshops, sensitization programs, and citizen science initiatives facilitates knowledge co-creation, builds trust, and promotes pro-environmental behavior (P2, P7, P12, P18, P21). Contextualized messaging tailored to urban or rural settings, literacy levels, and cultural norms improves audience receptivity and engagement (Ohayon et al., 2023; Palinkas et al., 2020; Keller & Limaye, 2020).

## **5.2 Reflection on the Research Process**

The research process provided an in-depth opportunity to explore how CSOs in Ghana strategically communicate against galamsey. By combining semi-structured interviews with document analysis, I was able to gain nuanced insights into organizational approaches, framing techniques, and media collaborations. Interviews with CSO representatives revealed that advocacy is not only about disseminating information but also about building relationships, fostering trust, and engaging communities in participatory dialogue. For example, one participant emphasized, *“We ensure that local miners and community leaders are part of the discussion, not just passive recipients of information”* (P8). This reinforced my understanding of advocacy as a socially embedded practice, where impact depends on both content and process. The process also required careful ethical management, ensuring informed consent,

confidentiality, and neutrality in politically sensitive areas such as illegal mining (Creswell, 2014).

Additionally, the process taught me the value of iterative reflection and adaptability in qualitative research. Engaging with both textual materials and human narratives allowed me to cross-validate findings and identify emerging themes that were not initially anticipated, such as the centrality of local storytelling and moral framing in galvanizing public support. Handling large volumes of data also highlighted the importance of systematic coding and thematic categorization to ensure consistency and rigor (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The research process, therefore, not only yielded empirical findings but also enhanced my methodological skills, ethical reflexivity, and appreciation for the contextual complexity of environmental advocacy in Ghana (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

### **5.3 Alignment with Theories and Frameworks**

The study findings strongly aligned with the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), Framing Theory, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The ACF was evident in how CSOs adapted messaging to influence policy subsystems and promote policy-oriented learning among stakeholders (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Pierce & Weible, 2016). One participant highlighted, *“We craft briefs specifically for policymakers, focusing on governance failures and alternative livelihoods, to ensure our input informs debates”* (P15). This demonstrates the practical applicability of the ACF in understanding how civil society actors strategically position themselves within advocacy networks. Framing Theory also helped explain how messages were deliberately constructed around environmental, moral, and governance dimensions to resonate with multiple audiences (Entman, 1993; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). CDA provided a lens to analyze how discourse reflects power dynamics and institutional relationships. The study revealed that CSOs actively challenge prevailing narratives around

galamsey while also reinforcing norms of civic duty and environmental responsibility. As one participant noted, *“Our messaging conveys that every Ghanaian has a role in stopping galamsey; it’s about protecting our heritage and future”* (P14). This illustrates how discourse functions not just to inform but also to influence public values and perceptions. By combining these frameworks, the study demonstrates that CSO advocacy operates at the intersection of strategy, ideology, and social practice, offering a comprehensive view of how communication can drive environmental governance (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

#### **5. 4 Convergence and Divergence with Existing Literature**

The findings largely converge with existing research on civil society advocacy and media engagement, confirming that multi-channel communication, participatory approaches, and strategic framing are central to effective environmental advocacy (Raatikainen et al., 2021; Kpienbaareh et al., 2020; Dewi et al., 2024). Participants noted that using both traditional and digital media platforms increased visibility and public engagement. One CSO member stated, *“We combine radio programs, social media campaigns, and community workshops to make sure our message reaches everyone”* (P5). This mirrors previous findings emphasizing the importance of integrating multiple channels for greater advocacy reach and policy influence (Zainuddin et al., 2024; Mossner, 2021).

Divergence was observed in the nuanced and context-specific messaging strategies employed by CSOs. Unlike generalized advocacy models in the literature, CSOs in Ghana often use local languages, culturally resonant stories, and co-created content with communities to enhance relevance and impact (Ohayon et al., 2023; Palinkas et al., 2020). A participant remarked, *“When we speak to rural miners, we use examples from their communities to make our points more relatable”* (P18). This demonstrates that context-specific adaptation is not merely

supplementary but central to the effectiveness of advocacy campaigns, suggesting that existing literature may underestimate the critical role of localized strategies in shaping both awareness and policy outcomes.

### **5.5 Methodological Limitations and Reflexivity**

The study faced several methodological limitations that require reflection. The small sample size of five CSO representatives and twenty organizational documents may not fully capture the diversity of civil society efforts against galamsey across Ghana. The geographic focus on Accra further limits generalizability to other regions where illegal mining is prevalent. Additionally, reliance on qualitative methods, including interviews and document analysis, introduces potential bias, as respondents may overemphasize successes or underreport challenges (Creswell, 2014). One participant noted, *“Sometimes we highlight our achievements more than the obstacles, because we want our work to be seen positively”* (P16).

Reflexivity played a central role in addressing these limitations. Throughout the research process, I continuously examined my positionality and assumptions, recognizing that my prior understanding of environmental governance could influence interpretation. Systematic coding, triangulation of data sources, and member-checking were employed to mitigate bias and enhance analytical rigor (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This reflexive approach not only strengthened the credibility of the findings but also highlighted the iterative nature of qualitative research, where constant reflection and adjustment are essential to producing trustworthy and meaningful insights.

### **5.6 Researcher’s Subjective Assumptions and Evolution**

Initially, I assumed that CSOs primarily relied on top-down communication methods, focusing on formal channels and policy briefs to reach decision-makers, with limited engagement of

local communities. I also anticipated that their advocacy would mainly emphasize environmental concerns without integrating moral or social narratives. Through the research process, these assumptions evolved substantially. Interviews and document analysis revealed that CSOs employ participatory approaches, co-create messages with local communities, and strategically frame advocacy using environmental, moral, and governance dimensions (P8, P14, P20).

This evolution in understanding reflects the dynamic nature of civil society engagement in advocacy. As one participant explained, *“We involve communities in designing campaigns because their buy-in ensures messages are understood and acted upon”* (P12). My perception shifted from viewing CSOs as passive intermediaries between knowledge and policy to recognizing them as active agents capable of shaping public discourse, influencing policy, and mobilizing collective action. This realization underscores the importance of empirical engagement in challenging initial assumptions and deepening comprehension of the complexities inherent in environmental advocacy.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

The study concludes that civil society organizations (CSOs) in Ghana have adopted strategically coordinated communication approaches to tackle the complex issue of galamsey. By employing a combination of traditional media, digital platforms, and participatory forums, CSOs have succeeded in raising public awareness about the environmental, social, and governance implications of illegal mining. The findings reveal that these organizations deliberately tailor messages to distinct audiences, including policymakers, local communities, and urban youth, ensuring that advocacy campaigns are contextually relevant, persuasive, and actionable. Such multi-channel engagement allows CSOs to maintain consistent visibility and

reinforces the salience of galamsey as a critical socio-environmental issue (Kpienbaareh et al., 2020; Zainuddin et al., 2024; Mossner, 2021).

A central aspect of CSO effectiveness lies in their ability to frame galamsey within ideological, moral, and governance contexts. By emphasizing environmental degradation, ethical responsibility, and state accountability, CSOs construct compelling narratives that resonate with both the public and decision-makers. This framing not only enhances the credibility and legitimacy of advocacy campaigns but also fosters public empathy, mobilizes collective action, and encourages compliance with environmental policies (Entman, 1993; Nelson et al., 1997; Wozniak, 2021). Media partnerships further amplify these narratives, allowing messages to reach broader audiences, counter misinformation, and sustain discourse on illegal mining. The integration of participatory engagement, media collaboration, and context-specific framing demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of advocacy dynamics and the importance of multilayered communication in influencing public perception and policy action.

Despite these successes, CSOs face persistent challenges, including political interference, resource constraints, limited access to rural communities, and structural barriers within governance systems. Nevertheless, the study highlights that organizations have developed adaptive strategies to mitigate these challenges, such as coalition-building with local leaders, leveraging community trust, and using culturally sensitive messaging. These adaptive mechanisms underscore the resilience and innovative capacity of civil society actors in navigating complex socio-political landscapes to achieve advocacy objectives. Overall, the findings affirm that CSOs play a pivotal role in environmental governance, serving as agents of awareness, accountability, and civic engagement in the fight against galamsey in Ghana.

## 5.8 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that CSOs in Ghana continue to strengthen multichannel communication strategies by integrating traditional media, digital platforms, and participatory forums. Such an approach maximizes message reach, frequency, and audience engagement, ensuring that diverse stakeholder groups, including policymakers, local communities, and youth, receive tailored and contextually relevant information. Expanding community participation through workshops, citizen science initiatives, and local monitoring programs is also vital, as these strategies foster knowledge co-creation, empower communities to understand the environmental and social consequences of galamsey, and encourage the adoption of pro-environmental behaviors (Ohayon et al., 2023; Palinkas et al., 2020; Dewi et al., 2024). Furthermore, enhancing collaboration with media outlets through training in content co-production, strategic framing, and press engagement ensures that advocacy messages are credible, accurately represented, and sustained across multiple channels, thereby amplifying their influence on public discourse and policy attention (Kpienbaareh et al., 2020; Brulle, 2010; Mossner, 2021).

CSOs should maintain consistent framing of galamsey as an environmental, moral, and governance issue to shape public perception and encourage policy action effectively. Adaptive strategies are necessary to navigate structural and political barriers, including limited resources, political interference, and community resistance, and collaboration with local leaders can increase message acceptance and legitimacy. Institutionalizing advocacy efforts through regular engagement with media, communities, and policymakers will reinforce long-term impact and ensure sustained attention to environmental governance issues. By embedding these strategies into their operational framework, CSOs can enhance the credibility, reach, and sustainability of anti-galamsey campaigns, contributing meaningfully to environmental

protection, civic engagement, and policy-oriented learning in Ghana (Sabatier & JenkinsSmith, 1999; Ofosu-Peasah, 2021; Raatikainen et al., 2021).

### **5.9 Limitations of the Study**

The study acknowledges several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the small sample size, consisting of five CSO members and twenty organizational documents, may not fully capture the diversity and scope of civil society efforts in combating galamsey across Ghana. While the selected participants and documents provided in-depth insights, other CSOs or advocacy initiatives operating in different contexts may employ alternative communication strategies or face distinct challenges that were not reflected in this study. Second, the research was geographically limited to Accra, focusing on areas such as Osu, East Legon, Adabraka, and Accra Central. This focus may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other regions of Ghana that are more directly affected by illegal mining activities, where local dynamics, cultural contexts, and environmental conditions might shape CSO advocacy differently (Ohayon et al., 2023; Dewi et al., 2024).

Additionally, the reliance on qualitative data, including semi-structured interviews and document analysis, may introduce subjective influences such as respondent bias or selective reporting, which could affect the interpretation of organizational practices and perceived advocacy outcomes (Creswell, 2014; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Moreover, the study offers a cross-sectional perspective, providing a snapshot of CSO strategies, media engagement, and public responses at a single point in time. Longitudinal research would be valuable in capturing how advocacy approaches evolve, how media collaborations develop over time, and how public and policymaker perceptions change in response to sustained campaigns (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Mossner, 2021). Despite these limitations, the study delivers meaningful insights

into the communication strategies, framing techniques, and collaborative mechanisms that CSOs employ to influence public awareness, civic engagement, and policy action in Ghana's fight against galamsey.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **COMMUNICATING ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF CIVIL SOCIETY CAMPAIGNS AGAINST GALAMSEY IN GHANA**

#### **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

## **INTRO**

This interview seeks to understand how advocacy organizations design and implement communication strategies to influence public discourse, community behavior, and policy decisions in the fight against galamsey (illegal mining) in Ghana. The discussion will focus on organizational communication approaches, advocacy challenges, collaborations, and perceived impact on environmental governance. Participation is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question or withdraw at any time. All responses will be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

### **Background Information**

Can you please tell me about your organization and its core mandate related to environmental advocacy?

How long has your organization been involved in anti-galamsey activities?

What specific projects, campaigns, or initiatives has your organization undertaken to address illegal mining in Ghana?

### **Communication Strategies and Approaches**

What communication strategies does your organization use in its advocacy against galamsey?  
How do you tailor your communication to different audiences? i.e policymakers, mining communities, or the general public?

What kind of framing or messaging techniques do you use to make your advocacy more persuasive?

Can you describe how your organization decides which aspects of galamsey to emphasize (e.g., environmental damage, livelihood issues, governance failures, corruption, etc.)?

How do these frames influence how the public or policymakers perceive your message?

### Media and Public Engagement

How does your organization engage the media in your advocacy work against galamsey?

What kinds of relationships or collaborations exist between your organization and specific media outlets or journalists?

How effective do you think media coverage has been in amplifying your organization's message on galamsey?

How do you engage the public, particularly local communities affected by illegal mining, to build awareness and encourage behavioural change?

What challenges do you face in using the media or engaging the public, such as misinformation, limited access, or political interference?

### Themes, Narratives, and Ideologies in Communication (Objective 3)

What are the central themes or narratives that guide your organization's communication on galamsey?

Would you say your organization's advocacy is guided by particular ideological or moral perspectives?

How do these narratives or ideologies influence the tone and style of your communication materials?

Do you think these narratives resonate equally across different stakeholder groups, i.e government, miners, and the general public?

How do you ensure that your messages remain consistent with your organizational values and the broader environmental governance agenda?

### Impact, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

From your perspective, what impact has your organization's advocacy had on public attitudes or government action regarding galamsey?

What have been the main challenges in communicating and sustaining advocacy efforts against galamsey?

Based on your experience, what lessons have you learned about effective communication and media engagement in environmental advocacy?

In what ways can CSOs strengthen their communication strategies to influence environmental policy more effectively?

Is there anything else you would like to add regarding how CSOs can improve their advocacy communication and collaboration with media or government?

Thank You for Your Participation. Your insights will contribute significantly to understanding how CSOs shape public discourse and influence environmental governance in Ghana's antigalamsey campaign.