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**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
(SoGSaR)**

**ONLINE MEDIA COVERAGE OF GHANA'S U-20 TEAM AT THE 2021 AFRICAN
YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIPS**

BY

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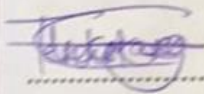
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JOURNALISM, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS (MA) DEGREE IN JOURNALISM**

DECEMBER, 2021

DECLARATION
CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this work is the result of my own research and has not been presented by anyone for any academic award in this or any other university. All references used in the work have been fully acknowledged. I bear sole responsibility for any shortcomings. It was supervised in accordance with procedures laid down by the University.


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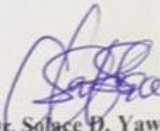
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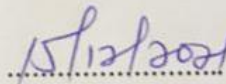
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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that I have supervised the student in undertaking this dissertation in accordance with procedures laid down by the university and I confirm that the student has my permission to present this work for assessment.


Dr. Solace D. Yawa Asafo
(Supervisor)


Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to the Almighty God, for his protection and guidance throughout this study.

To my family for all their support through-out my academic journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am forever grateful to God Almighty for his protection throughout this study. I am thankful to Dr. Solace D. Yawa, Asafo my thesis supervisor, for her continued support and guidance. I thank all my classmates at the graduate school for having been a pillar of support throughout the academic year. I say AYEEKO TO YOU ALL!

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ABSTRACT

The study's major aim was to examine Ghanaian online media coverage of Ghana's U-20 team's participation at the African Youth Championship in Mauritania in 2021. The objectives of this study was to assess the nature of online media reporting, analyze the major issues addressed by the media, and investigate the dominant frames used by online media when covering the U-20 team in the tournament.

The study followed the quantitative content analysis research design to while sampling a total of 100 news stories published on popular football online website ghanasoccernet.com.

The findings of this study show that the U-20 squad was well-covered during the competition, with the majority of the stories focusing on the playing body (players and technical coaching staff), albeit other political problems received considerable attention. Furthermore, the study reveals that web reporting focused on a variety of issues, the most prominent of which was a comprehensive focus on the playing body, with the bulk of stories published on the platform focusing on how the team trained, the tournament's final game, and important players from the Ghanaian squad.

1.0 Background to the Study

The media play a critical role in societies across the globe. While their informational, entertainment and educational roles may seem simplistic, these core duties are deep seated within every social system (Holtz-Bacha & Norris, 2001; Preeti, 2014). While this is true of the functions of the media in every society, the media plays an even advanced role where they are critical agents of society and not just information givers and educators. The media is responsible for representing issues within society through its normative information-education role (Fursich, 2010). Thus through their normative roles, the media shows society how to view certain issues, the issues to pay attention to and how to think about them. Effectively, the media's role as a tool of representation is expressed in how they construct ideas about some issues for social members (Damota, 2019; McGrath, 2012).

Owing to this, the media, especially in recent times at the prevalence of free speech, has become a critical tool. The media reports on social institutions, issues and persons that reach diverse aspects of the society. These reportage within the media concerning social issues and persons are what become social perceptions that individuals hold (McCluskey, Kalaitzandonakes, & Swinnen, 2015). Literature concerning media reports on social issues that bother on economics, politics and socio-cultural issues are varied and vast. Thus, owing to the power that the media wields in society scholars have paid attention to how the media reports on critical socio-economic and political institutions. The media does not however report on or cover only such issues that are political or economic orientation and benefit. The media plays a similar crucial role in reporting on entertainment (Edgerly & Vraga, 2019; Shedlosky-Shoemaker, Costabile, Bishop, & Arkin, 2011) and sporting issues (Cemil & Ozbek, 2010; Wanta, 2013).

McChesney (1989) assert that sports and the mass media enjoy a very symbiotic relationship especially in countries where media systems are well developed, pluralistic and run on free

market spaces. The symbiotic relationship between the media and sports holds that both media and sports have some inter-linking relevance on each other. Sports refer to any playful self-development, self-actualization and competitive use of physical and mental skills (Beck & Bosshart, 2003). The relationship between the media and sports have existed for very long times although the relationship have become more visible and easily observed in the current media space. From periods dating as far back as the early 19th century when press printing begun, media teams showed interests in reporting on sporting events and personalities as means of publishing soft news that helped sell newspapers (Lever & Wheeler, 1993). As Beck and Bosshart (2003) account the first sports publication in a newspaper was made in England over 150 years after the first newspapers emerged in the world. Since then reports on sporting events, issues, and personalities have become dominant features in not only newspapers but broadcast and social media too.

One critical sport that the media has tended to pay a lot of attention to over the years, especially in Ghana, is football or soccer. It is almost impossible to read a newspaper publication or a broadcast news segment without finding at least one report on football (Tatiana & Carvalho, 2018). Tatiana and Carvalho (2018) just as McChesney (1989) notes, perceive that, the relationship between the media and football has grown to be symbiotic just as any other sport. Media coverage of football has now developed into a two-way mutually beneficial role – having some significance to both football and the media. Football has developed into a household sport over the past two decades due to the keen attention the sport has enjoyed from the media. In return the media benefits immensely from advertising revenue as a result of their focus on football which has now become a source of leisure and entertainment for many media audiences (Shank, 2002).

Tatiana and Carvalho (2018) express that the media tends to focus a lot on some specific aspects of football while covering the sport in order to generate enough interest from audiences. They

acknowledge that in its very earliest forms football reporting focused simply on on-field activities, score lines as well as statistical aspects of the game. However, the current phase of football reporting seems to have shifted from this primarily on-field perspective to include a focus on athletes and football events away from match days. Tattiana and Carvalho (2018) conceptualizes that football reporting is within three phases that span both on-field and off-field activities. These are the pre-game phase in which the media create a generalized speculative expectation around the event to prepare the environment for the game; the game phase – which focuses on the football event itself; and the post-game phase where the media focuses on other issues connected to the event after it has ended.

Bourdieu (1997) advances that media organizations are now carving niche businesses for themselves in football reporting, covering only football related issues both on the field and outside the pitches. As part of doing this, the media places a lot of emphasis on covering large footballing events such the FIFA World Cup, national leagues and cup games, continental leagues among other football events. While reporting on such large football events, the media focus on reporting on the social contexts of such events, athlete-performances, statistical implications, athlete lifestyles and a host of other issues that places football reporting into a whole genre of journalism practice on its own (Barbeiro & Rangel, 2006; Boyle, 2006).

Football reporting and sports reporting in general does not only end with reports of journalists about team performances and athlete performances and lifestyles. Football journalists just like political journalists are responsible for characterizing feelings and attitudes that are connected with the sport (Somra & Kakar, 2020). To be able to do this effectively, football journalists present stories while framing issues. Thus, as Tatiana and Carvalho (2018) acknowledges, some media organizations while reporting on some football athletes, clubs and events tend to focus on routine specialized activities that are done, framing them in some superstitious or ritual-doing frames. Somra and Kakar (2020) for instance adds that media framing of football

presents the sport as the second most loved sport in India and a male dominant one with very little involvement from females both as athletes and as spectators.

There lie a plethora of frames concerning how football events and athletes are framed in the sports. It is essential for academic media studies to pay critical attention to how media organizations frame football events and athletes within the media. The core purpose of this study therefore was to investigate how the Ghanaian online media community covered the 2021 TOTAL Under-20 African Youth Championships. A study of such nature present succinct findings and deep insights into how contemporary media practice, that is dominantly online, reports and frames issues while covering international footballing events.

1.1 The TOTAL 2021 U-20 African Youth Championship

The Total Under-20 is biennial youth championship hosted by Africa's football governing body, Confederation of African Football (CAF). The tournament is hosted for footballers who are aged 20 years and below. The 23rd edition of the tournament was hosted in Mauritania between 14th February to 6th March 2021 and it involved 12 national U-20 teams from Africa. The tournament was hosted in two cities across Mauritania - Nouachott and Nouadhibou. It is also worth noting that for the first time played behind closed doors due to COVID-19 restrictions (cafonline.com).

This edition of the tournament marked a shift in format from an eight member team tournament to 12 with some qualification variations. The participating national teams included Mauritania, Cameroon, Uganda, Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Tunisia, Namibia, Central African Republic, Ghana, Tanzania, The Gambia and Morocco. Ghana emerged winners of the tournament, chalking their fourth trophy after beating first timers Uganda in the final in Nouadhibou.

The tournament attracted a lot of local and international media attention. This was particularly so because it was one of the continent's major tournaments after COVID-19 restrictions were

eased on sporting activities in Africa. In Ghana local media both broadcast and online media focused primarily on the Ghanaian national team and gave regular updates on the team as well as other associated issues. Due to the fact the heightened role of online media during the COVID-19 pandemic, online media organizations such as ghanasoccernet.com (the prime focus of this study) published frequently on team news, statistics and athlete performances in order to keep their growing audiences well informed (cafonline.com).

1.2 Problem Statement

The media as a critical social tool focuses extensively on reporting on sporting events across the world. Literature regarding how the media reports on sporting activities, events and personalities do not seem lacking as some researchers have looked critically at the media-sport nexus. However as Somra and Kakar (2020) assert there is the need for more research into this phenomenon. Some authors have looked generally at how media organizations particularly newspapers report on sports in a rather generic sense. Thus studies such as Cemil and Ozbek, (2010); Rowe (2007) Beck and Bosshart (2003); Boyle (2006); as well as Rowe (1992) look essentially at how the media covers sporting activities paying critical attention to how much media space is given to sports issues in national dailies, the key issues that are discussed, what quality sports reporting means and the implications for national development. Some studies have also looked at a different dimension to this phenomenon, focusing more on the role of media in sports (see for instance Kumar, 2018). These scholars however acknowledge that literature on sports journalism and media coverage of sporting activities remain a relatively unattended to phenomenon in literature.

A rather large chunk of the attention within literature has been paid to the gender dynamics of media coverage of sports in the world. Within this section of the media-sports enclave, literature are vast and very well researched. Authors such as Goslin (2008); Ajibua, Oladitan, Oyerinda and Bewaji (2013); Petty and Pope (2018); Govender (2010); Lim, (2018); Kian and

Hardin, 2009) posit that sport reporting or media coverage of sports in the world is gendered and that females are framed differently within the media from their male counterparts. These studies argue essentially that there are some disparities between the way male sports personalities are represented in the media and how females are owing to both quantity and quality of coverage in media.

Some studies have also looked specifically at how the media select some key sports personalities represent and frame them for public discourse. Satti (2017) for instance looks critically at how the media reported and framed the death of boxing legend Muhammad Ali. Some researches also tend to focus on media coverage and representation of large sporting events such as the olympics (Vujovic, Motrovic, & Obradovic, 2018), the FIFA World Cup (Tudor, 2006; Vonnard, 2018; Moloi-Siga, 2012) among other major sports events.

Studies on online media reporting on sporting events, especially football also tend to follow gendered reporting ideologies. Sainz-de-Baranda, Ada-Lameiras and Blanco-Ruiz (2020) for instance focused on the gender dynamics involved in sports reporting on twitter. The study investigated gendered preferences for different sports. The research studied four twitter handles of sports media organizations in Spain. The study identified that both men and women enjoyed watching football and basketball. However, more males were interested in football related news than women. Furthermore, the findings of the study indicate that there is an increasing trend of focusing on women's sports news in these media platforms recently than before. The study, much like other online related studies on sports simply looks at gender dynamics of media reportage and not engaging a holistic approach to investigating how the media cover youth sports events as this study intends to do.

Studies that have not focused on gender dynamics as Sainz-de-Baranda, Ada-Lameiras and Blanco-Ruiz (2020) have also focused on investigating issues such as online media reportage

of player injuries (Isyakyu, Rabi, Mhid, Mohamad, & Ahmad, 2020); football transfer news (Torrijos & Mello, 2021; Ante, 2019) online streaming and broadcast rights (Hutchins, Rowe, & Li, 2019) among other issues. These studies despite their relevance in studying online media's role in football coverage, do not focus on media coverage of international or continental national football teams, which this study focused on.

From the foregoing, there seem to be very little Ghanaian based research on media coverage of football in Ghana as well as football events across the world. Most studies tow the line of gender dynamics (Lampsey, 2019), applying marketing strategies to football clubs' operations (Tackie, 2018; Acheampong, 2018) among other issues. Ghanaian literature on football events at the continental level is therefore lacking. There is hence the need to pay some attention to how the media covers and frames continental football events while looking critically at the Ghanaian perspectives to this. The primary objective of this study therefore to investigated Ghanaian online media coverage of international football events using the just ended Total Under-20 Youth Championship as case study.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to investigate how Ghanaian online media covered and framed the Ghana's U-20 national team at the Total Under-20 African Youth Championship.

The study therefore seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

- i. To investigate the nature of online media's coverage of the U-20 team during the tournament
- ii. To explore the dominant issues the media focused on while reporting on the U-20 tournament
- iii. To examine the dominant frames the media used in reporting the U-20 tournament

1.4 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions

1. What is the Nature of ghanasoccernet.com's coverage of the U-20 Team during the African Youth Championships?
2. What are the dominant issues the media focused on while reporting on the U-20 team during the tournament?
3. What are the dominant frames the media used while reporting on the U-20 team during the tournament?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study was limited to data collection from online media in Ghana only. Specifically the study concerns data from ghanasoccernet.com, a top ranking football dedicated website in Ghana that solely publishes on Ghana related football news. The study thus collected data from the website within a time frame spanning when publications of the tournament begun to when the tournament ended. Also, the scope of the study will be limited to publications concerning the just ended Under 20 African Youth tournament only and not any other tournament. However, due to the seeming characteristics and format that the tournament shares with other CAF organized tournaments on the continent findings made from this study could be extrapolated onto other tournaments of the similar ilk.

1.6 Significance of the Study

As has been established, little Ghanaian literature concerning African continental football activities exist. The main objective of this study was to address this gap and provide some empirical literature concerning this phenomenon. The significance of this study will therefore lie in varying perspectives.

For one, the study will add to literature concerning the much discussed sports-media nexus. However, this study will provide a different perspective to what already exists in literature,

focusing more on local media reportage of African continental football events. Also the study is critical to the general administration of football in Ghana as it provides insights as to how to manage media reportage during football events of this magnitude.

The study is essential to sports journalists who are interested in the core dynamics that come to play regarding how their reportage impacts and affects sporting events. For policy makers in the Ghanaian football industry, the media and the African football industry, insights from researches such as this is crucial in developing media centred policies that will guide how media reports on African football and how football in Africa also affects media practice.

1.7 Order of the Study

The study will be structured into five (5) chapters. Chapter one will be an introduction to the study. It will comprise background to the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, and scope of the study. Chapter two will take a critical look at literature such as books, journals, articles, studies and other publications related and relevant to media reportage and framing of football events. Chapter two will also look at conceptual definition of terms, operational definition of concepts, and end with a conclusion.

Chapter three expands the appropriate methodology of the study, methods, research design, population, sampling technique and sample frame and size, sources of data collection and data collection instruments, techniques of data analysis of the study. Chapter Four will seek to provide critical analysis and discussions of key findings that accrued from the gathered data, while Chapter Five summarizes the key findings, draws conclusions and makes some recommendations for further research based on the findings made.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter of the study focuses on reviewing literature relevant to this. The chapter discusses literature relevant to media coverage of football events. This chapter also discusses the framing theory and the Agenda Setting theory as theoretical foundation for this study.

2.1 Empirical Review

This section takes a critical look at other studies that has been conducted in relation to coverage of Sports in general, football, both largely on the international front because data on the subject matter on the local setting was hard to come by. Nonetheless, the limited literatures found are reviewed and related accordingly under the following themes; Media coverage of Sporting Events, Media Coverage of Gendered Sports Events and Media Coverage of Football Events Ideologically.

2.1.1 Media Coverage of Sporting Events

Satti (2017) in another study analysed coverage of Muhammad Ali's death in three newspapers: Khaleej Times, The Guardian and The New York Times. Guided by framing analysis, from one-week long coverage period between his death and his burial provided insight into how Ali was portrayed both inside and outside the ring. Satti (2017) suggested four frames to the media coverage to include: Ali the celebrity, the entertainer, the humanitarian, and the man of the people. Results indicated that Ali was mostly portrayed as a celebrity and as a man of the people. Also, the findings indicated that Ali's boxing prowess inside his ring and his outspoken nature outside of it ensured that he remained an instantly recognizable figure all over the world. Results also indicated that Ali was an inspiration to many since he stood up for his beliefs and against social injustices. Hence, the study showed that coverage of Muhammad Ali's death, as well as parts of Ali's life were examined to provide insight about who he was as a champion.

Bie & Billings (2013) used a quantitative content analysis to investigate Chinese and United State of America newspaper articles about Chinese swimmer Ye. The study focused on newspapers coverage of the controversial performance of female Chinese swimmer Ye Shiwen during 2012 London Summer Olympics. The study posit that while Ye won two gold medals and the ease in which she did so led to doping suspicions in Western media. The findings showed that analysis of 222 articles from the US and China revealed sharp differences between the two countries' amount of coverage about Ye, highlighted valence and usage pattern of information sources as well. USA coverage of Ye Shiwen was not as extensive as in China, and gender and nationality based dialogues were present in newspaper reports. US coverage showed more scepticism on the doping issue; meanwhile, Chinese coverage exhibited a strong desire to protect its national image and national identity through defending Ye as unquestionably innocent. From a theoretical perspective, a framed "us versus them" dichotomy suggests that both countries' coverage's were still strongly influenced by the hostile ideologies beyond mere Olympic performances.

Licen, Loncar, Delorme, Horky and Jakubowska (2017) examines international newspaper coverage of the 2013 European Basketball Championship for men. From Generalist broadsheet newspapers in 13 countries on five continents, the researchers examined over the course of 1 year (from August 2012 until September 2013) content of coverage dedicated to this major event and to understand the amount of resources dedicated to them. Results show that the host country, Slovenia, dedicated the most extensive coverage to the EuroBasket, followed by Croatia, a neighbouring country. Media interest in other countries was very limited and focused almost exclusively on competitive aspects of the tournament (as opposed to organizational, tourist, or cultural angles). This suggest probably that a look at the under 20 championship would likely see more coverage from the host country than other nations. In addition, of the

newspapers examined, only five covered the event in the months leading up to it and only four reported the final outcome of the tournament. Generalist broadsheets used thus displayed limited interest in the competition, contradicting organizers' assertions and popular belief of widespread promotional and economic benefits deriving from the event. The result also found that newspapers from countries that fielded teams at the event overwhelmingly focused on their performances. As setters of the public agenda, mainstream broadsheets exhibit very limited interest in the myriad.

Somra and Kakkar (2020) used quantitative content analysis of selected mainstream dailies of Jaipur to track down the trends in coverage of sports in Indian main stream print media and bring out the comparative analysis between them as well as find out the space devoted to a particular sport and the importance given to National and International sports. The findings of the study of the two sample newspapers clearly strengthens the viewpoint that cricket is the most popular sport in India and also the most covered sport by the print media. Both the newspapers gave maximum coverage to cricket and IPL. The English newspaper, The Times of India (TOI) gave ample coverage to other sports too as it had two or more sports pages daily. But the Hindi newspaper, Dainik Bhaskar (DB) did not cover the other sports significantly, it carried only one sports page daily. Proper coverage of all the sports is important for the promotion of sports culture in the country. Since Hindi language newspapers have greater reach and circulation as compared to English, the Hindi newspapers should also focus more on sports coverage and increase the number of sports pages as well as give enough coverage to sports events of National and International level other than related to Cricket. Besides, a look at the sports pages of mainstream newspapers reveal that the concept of sports journalism has evolved over time by incorporating innovative features in news presentation to make sports news continuously interesting. In response to the increase in market competition owing to advent of visual media like television and new media, newspapers increased the usage of pictures and

graphics to enhance the visual appeal. To make the news piece interesting and in attempt to drag the reader, sports pages widened the spectrum of news content related to sports. Controversies are investigated, off and on field news are gathered and reported to bring in spice in the sports stories.

2.1.2 Media Coverage of Gendered Sports Events

A wide body of research has demonstrated that women's sport continue to be greatly underrepresented in the media but Petty and Pope (2019) in their article that examined English print media coverage of the England's Women's National football team during the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup; after using both quantitative and qualitative content analysis of articles and photographs of the England national team on the five English national newspapers (*The Times*, the *Independent*, the *Guardian* (broadsheets) and the *Sun* and the *Daily Mirror* (tabloids); and their Sunday papers) from 24 May to 14 August 2015 showed that the study demonstrated that during the tournament, women's football received a significant amount of print media coverage and that this coverage was largely positive. Hence the researchers argument that we have entered a new age of media coverage of women's sport in the UK, with a shift towards greater gender equality.

In addition, Mwambwa (2014) investigated how decision making by reporters and editors and their interaction with sports institutions result in limited coverage and at times exclusion of women in the newspaper sports pages. By engaging with a multi-pronged methodological and theoretical framework, Mwambwa (2014) utilised processes and tools including feminist, media, development and human rights to address three dimensions of the following problem- the dynamics of limited coverage of women by newspapers, the normative framework of the right to sport and lastly interventions in addressing this situation. The findings showed that since media are in principle independent of the state in their operation, the dynamics of this

independence and raised concern on the fundamental media principles of newsworthiness and public interest were paramount for successive coverage.

In relation, McGuigan's (2011) study focuses specifically on Athletics and Football, and aims to compare the types of treatment and representation of its elite sportsmen and women. The research concerns itself with attitudes and behaviours associated with gender and thus endeavour to expose the attitudes of sportsmen and women, whilst also stressing the relationship and importance of the media and the administrative bodies of sport. The researcher employed a more qualitative approach than quantitative, in order to provide a richer data set, in terms of opinions and perceptions of gender and sport and the findings show that the primary themes identified by the media analysis were that there is an undeniable saturation of male sports in the British media, in particular men's football. The media was identified as supporting and aiding the incessant reproduction of gendered norms, based on difference. Also, the media analysis highlighted that, on the whole, sportswomen and sportsmen involved in athletics were given equal coverage and furthermore women were portrayed in a positive and celebratory manner. The media was positioned favouring the coverage of individual sports which were deemed socially acceptable, opposed to team sports which were regarded as a threat to traditional feminine ideals. Finally, the results also demonstrated that football was perceived to be a masculine sport, whereas athletics was perceived to be gender neutral. Respondents regarded the British media as largely under representing women's sport, specifically women's football. Women's football was seen as being overshadowed by men's football and by its continued links with hegemonic masculinity and notions of the alpha male.

Menevşe and Ablay (2019) study aims to examine the attitudes of sports media employees and sports managers toward women's sports. The research universe includes the sports media

employees in Istanbul and academicians in the field of sports while the research sample includes Skorer TV, Fanatik newspaper employees and academicians of Esenyurt University and Istanbul University. Using a quantitative method, the researchers selected 161 people randomly [n = 80 media employees; (F = 50, M = 30), n = 81 academicians; (F = 48, M = 33)] while SPSS package program 22 was used in the data statistics and the data were evaluated with frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, single factor variance analysis (One-way ANOVA) at 0.05 level. The findings show that female and male sports media employees disagreed with the following two statements with the highest average: “News reports about female athletes are credible and convincing” (F; \bar{x} =3.9987, M; \bar{x} =4.379); “The number of female sports media employees is sufficient in the sports media” (M; \bar{x} = 3.746, F; \bar{x} = 3.9045). It was also found that male sports media employees disagreed with the following two statements with an average higher than that of female sports media employees: “Articles of sports columnists about female athletes are convincing” (M; \bar{x} = 4.379, F; \bar{x} = 2.5005); “In our country, there is a Women’s sports media which provides professional press services” (M; \bar{x} = 3.113, F; \bar{x} = 2.2798). The statement with the highest average (M; \bar{x} = 3.68) of disagreement from the male was “Government makes sufficient use of media instruments to encourage women to start sports” while the statement with the highest average (F; \bar{x} = 3.9944) of disagreement from the female sports media employees was “Sports media considers demands from readers when determining editorial policy for women’s sports”. The female participants who participated in our study disagreed with the statements in our survey on “the attitudes of sports media on women’s sports” and the statement that “the sources of women’s sports and athletes are sufficient” with an average higher than that of male sports media.

Sainz-de-Baranda, Adá-Lameiras, and Blanco-Ruiz, (2020) in their paper analyzed from a gender perspective, media coverage by sports news media in their Twitter accounts on the backdrop that of the new communication channels, such as Twitter; if the media maintain

gender stereotypes when reporting sports news. Using a content analysis methodology for each tweet published on the days and in the media selected, the researchers examined the type of sport engaged in by the men as well as women who receive media coverage through four most followed media in Spain: (*@ElPais_Deportes*, *@ABC_Deportes*, *@Marca* and *@MundoDeportivo*) over a period of five months, from March to June 2016. The findings showed that out of the sampled 6544 tweets, 96.19% were about sportsmen compared to 3.81% that portrayed women. Also, the sport with the most media coverage was football (72.11%), for men as well as for women, followed by basketball (6.63%). The result also indicated that, it is clear that despite the growing international triumphs of Spanish women athletes in recent years, the latter continue to be underrepresented in the media. Female athletes receive more media coverage according to the sport which they engage in (“gender-appropriate” sports), with the exception of football, and not in accordance with their accomplishments. The study in summation showed that Twitter remains at the service of traditional media replicating the same gender biases and even augmenting them.

Jakubowska and Ličen’s (2019) study examines how newspapers in post-communist Poland nurture a gendered national identity through their disparate coverage of men’s and women’s European basketball championships. The researchers employed Agenda-setting, framing and social identity theories to analyse 502 articles published between 2009–2013. The results show that men’s tournaments received 3.5 times more coverage than women’s events; the gap further widened when Poland hosted the championships. Articles about men’s championships were also longer (314 words on average versus 161). The result also found that the discourse surrounding women’s competitions was factual whereas the men’s national team’s performances were framed as challenges, matters of national pride, and involved combat and military terminology. Peculiarly, the most frequently mentioned member of the women’s team was its male coach. Findings further indicated a significant departure from the communist era

promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment as a source of pride. National identity is nurtured through newspaper coverage of the men's national team but not of the women's national team.

2.1.3 Media Coverage of Football Events

There has been considerable number of studies conducted with regards to how the media covered football events on the international front. For instance; Mehlers' (2006) paper on "Political Discourse in Football Coverage –The Cases of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana" argues that discourses within football coverage referring to political issues reflect dominant, and, possibly, contesting, "truths", which themselves are linked to power relations and political struggles within a given society. The comparison of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, two neighbouring countries in very different conditions (particularly with regard to their historical trajectories and the degree of societal consensus), and more particularly, the comparison of dominant discourses on the topics of patriotism, peace and good governance related to the World Cup qualification of both national teams supports the hypothesis of a strong context-relatedness of a politically loaded "football language". For instance, whereas in Ghana patriotism is, when football comes in, quickly merged with pan-africanism, the Ivorian team renewed the heated political debate about "Ivorianess" by putting forward a notion of inclusive patriotism.

Still in Africa, Moloi-Siga's (2012) study investigated how, as host for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, South Africa was reported on by two international online media newspapers, *The New York Times* (United States of America (USA)) and the *Guardian* (United Kingdom (UK)). The aim for the researcher is to address an understudied aspect of South Africa's hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup by reflecting systematically on the tone and content of international media portrayals of the event, both before and during the tournament. The study has two focuses. Firstly, it considers the motives for South Africa's bid to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Secondly, it appraises the content and nature of reporting in the two overseas newspapers.

The study uses a mix of secondary and primary sources, which include academic journals, books, websites, newspaper articles and government and the FIFA websites. The findings of this study suggest that the bid to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup was based on the country's positive experience from hosting previous sports mega-events. Additionally, South Africa wanted to showcase its commercial maturity, its development of physical infrastructure, and the presence of human skills. The motives underpinning the bid aimed at dispelling and challenging international misconceptions of the African continent. The novelty of an African country bidding to stage and host a sport mega-event such as the FIFA World Cup resulted in the country gaining extensive international media coverage from *The New York Times* and the *Guardian*. The qualitative and quantitative content analysis from these two newspapers yielded some commonality and recurrence of words such as: "stadium", "tickets", "vuvuzela", "crime", and "security". The differences between the two newspapers were minimal, supporting the liberal-pluralist theoretical claim that the media acts as an agenda setter, and in line with the Marxist theory of the ideological role of the media. Media coverage of sports mega-events is important and influential in determining the way in which the host country is branded, and future studies are necessary to address the understudied aspects of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. These include, over a longer period assessment of the event's economic, political, social and other legacies.

Relatively, Adesina, Obalanlege & Togunwa (2017) investigated the influence of foreign football and its digital coverage among youths in Abeokuta by examining the values portrayed by internet/satellite technology, the extent to which these values affect Nigerian youths, and the extent to which Nigerian youths' exposure to foreign football through the internet/satellite technology affects their commitment to Nigerian football. The study employed qualitative method of Focus Group Discussion (FGD), using discussion guide to source data from youth in Abeokuta South and Abeokuta North Local Government Areas. Among others, the study

discovered that major values promoted by internet technology such as technical companionship, global citizenship and technological determinism enhances western values and interests, and have undermined to a very large extent the citizenship values of Nigerian youths. Nigerian youths have practically abandoned their citizenship values such as love and loyalty to the country, patriotism and commitment to national ideas, and have embraced the values promoted by the internet with their passion for foreign football. The main findings recognises Nigerian youths interest in European football was motivated by good organization, adequate and quality facilities and good football on the field of play; hence Nigerian youths abandoned Nigerian football due to poor management, inadequate and poor facilities and insecurity at match venues, among other factors. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that Nigerian football should be overhauled. There is need for proper funding to fix facilities like quality stadia, provision of security at match venues and ensure proper administration of the games. Youth football should be revived in Nigeria and grassroots football should be re-introduced at primary and secondary school levels to discover raw talents. Adequate arrangement should be made for marketing and sponsorship programmes, including live coverage of football events on the Nigeria television network.

Ali Ziaeea, Adib-Moghaddamb, Ellingc, van Sterkenburgd, and van Hilvoordea, (2021) study made use of a Google alert with the title of ‘Iran Men’s National Football Team’, and a general content analysis of Iranian national and sport media. The analytic focus was on media coverage of the Iranian national football team at the 2018 FIFA World Cup and the 2019 AFC Asian Cup. All relevant newspaper articles before, during, and after Iran’s matches were reviewed, coded, and analysed using four main themes in the coverage expressing Iranian identity in the context of the aforesaid football events: ‘united passion’, ‘determined and conscientious’, ‘oppressed but great’, and ‘emotion-ridden’. It was concluded that political and historical references used by Iranian media contribute to the invention and reproduction of Iranian

national identity through the aforementioned sporting tournaments. This also means that Iranian media try to stand for Iran's credibility even beyond the national team as this credibility is assumed to be restricted on international stages due to the political tensions. Nevertheless, these major football tournaments are experienced by Iranian football fans as a pleasant timeout of the political and economic tensions and as an opportunity to represent themselves irrespective of political constraints. Generally speaking, the media provide a site to improve national bonding, pride, and representing national identity through mega sporting events to meet the stakeholders (politicians, sport governing bodies, and fans) goals.

On a broader scope, Souanef and Marchetti (2017) article analyses the transformations of the media coverage of professional football in Europe since the 1980s through the French coverage of European competitions. Basing itself essentially on interviews, the study shows that it is less a process of "Europeanisation" than an increasing trans-nationalisation and economisation of the entertainment sport. The subspace of sports journalism is structured along a continuum of positions linked in part to the volume of economic capital of the media, which partly determines the holding or not of "television rights", i.e. access to the "show" to its co-producers. Indeed, the media space has become so strategic in the co-production of social representations that most of professional agents and structures are increasingly seeking to put at distance journalists. This intensification of commercial logic in the professional football space has an impact on journalistic practices and contents between those who are in the "game" and those who are partly excluded from the "game".

In the United States of America, Tidrow (2020) researched comprehensively on the evolution of media coverage in professionally and collegiate eSports in the United States of America to understand how both professional and collegiate sports coverage emerged from, and responds to, the social practice of eSports, and turns that coverage into a viable form of commercial media. The author utilized ethnography methodology using participant observation and

interviewing which were used to collect data and found commonalities between the answers of the participants as well as the data given by other research on the media coverage of eSporting events. The result showed that the bulk of media coverage is from online and digital platforms at the professional level as well as the college level, while media rights fees for specific events have not yet been established at a normal rate. The future for YouTube, ESPN, and other streaming services is extremely bright.

2.1.4 Online Media Coverage of Football

Torrijos and Mello (2021) the extent of misinformation in four key European digital sports media sources' coverage of the 2020 winter football transfer window: *Marca* (Spain), *A Bola* (Portugal), *La Gazzetta* (Italy), and *The Guardian Sport* (Britain). The study employed the use of content analysis of hundreds of news articles and tweets posted on these sites' football homepages and Twitter accounts. The misinformation matrix devised by the fact-checking organization First Draft News was used to identify five distinct categories of mistakes in sports news to see how much of it was speculative, misleading, or untrue. A mechanism was also devised to determine how many rumours were eventually shown to be genuine, which sources were more trustworthy, and which outlets were more accurate.

The findings show that the four digital media outlets released more non-factual articles regarding upcoming football transactions than they did about completed trades. In the coverage of the best teams in each league, where the media outlets put the emphasis, speculative reporting predominated, whilst reporting on lesser clubs was based more on factual news.

A study by Ziaee, Adib-Moghaddam, Elling, Sterkenburg and Hilvorrd (2021) sought to investigate the role of the media in constructing Iranian national identities through football coverage. The study investigated three main Iranian national newspapers' coverage of the Iranian team during the 2018 world cup and the 2019 Asian Cup. The study identified four main themes that expressed identities that the media sought to create and exert during the two

tournaments. The study found themes such ‘united passion’, ‘determined and conscientious’, ‘oppressed but great’, and ‘emotion-ridden’ as the Iranian footballers’ identities.

Gendered reporting ideologies are also prevalent in studies of online media coverage of sports events, particularly football. For example, Sainz-de-Baranda, Ada-Lameiras, and Blanco-Ruiz (2020) studied the gender dynamics in sports reporting on Twitter. The study looked into gender differences in sports interests. The study looked at four Twitter accounts associated with sports media companies in Spain. Both men and women like watching football and basketball, according to the survey. Males, on the other hand, were more interested in football-related news than females. Furthermore, the findings of the study show that there is a current tendency in these media outlets to focus more on women's sports news than before. The research, like previous online sports-related studies, focuses on gender dynamics in media reporting rather than taking a comprehensive look at how the media covers youth sports events, as this study accomplished.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Agenda Setting Theory

There are plethora of theories on media and conflict including the agenda setting theory in the last five decades. According to Seteolu (2017: 80) the agenda setting theory was made popular by Bernard Cohen in 1963 when he said the press (media) “may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is successful in telling it readers what to think about”. The original work is, however, credited to Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972 in their article titled: *The Agenda Setting Function of the Media*. To McCombs and Shaw, the agenda setting is the process whereby the news media lead the public in assigning relative importance to various public issues through the tools of framing and priming. The media accomplish this agenda setting function not by directly telling the public that one issue is more important than the other, which has proven to be ineffective, instead, the media signal the

importance of certain issues by giving these issues preferential treatment, such as more frequent coverage and more prominent positions. Castells (2007:4) re-enforced this perspective when he agreed that “what does not exist in the media does not exist in the public mind even if it could have a fragmented presence in individual minds”.

Agenda setting theory, describes how media, through the process of mediating information, creates the audience’s motivations and needs. The audiences look up to media for guidance on where they should focus their attention about events, information or aspects of society. Consequently, media do not tell audiences what to think but rather what to think about (McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 1997). This theory is powerful as it explains the reason behind the prioritization of the same issue by many as well as its predictive function on what the reaction among the heterogeneous audience will be when they are exposed to the same message.

There is a continuing debate between scholars, and the debate circles around the core questions of media influence, namely, how directly and to what degree the media set the public agenda. Some of the recent studies propose that personal variables can mitigate the effects of media agenda setting on individual or audience (Matsaganis & Payne, 2005; Gross & Aday, 2003; McCombs & Shaw, 1997). These majorly contributed from the background education and understanding of the media audiences on the issue or agenda which is presented by the mass media (Carter, 1996). Their opinions are more difficult to be influenced by the information that they received from the mass media (Matsaganis & Payne, 2005; Littlejohn & Foss, 2009; Coleman, 1993). Moreover, such influence from the mass media in forming opinion is impossible to those people who lived far away from the information provided or to those who are difficult to get the accessibility of the information from the mass media (Lippmann, 1922). Largely, as a result of technological changes, the abilities of the so-called mainstream media to influence an agenda for the general public is challenged and threatened by the ever increasing

array of information sources made available by developments in new communication technologies (Chaffee & Metzger, 2001; McCombs, 1993).

The agenda setting theory, therefore, presents a foundation for investigating how the media set the agenda based on crucial socio-economic issues. The theory also gives a basis for investigating how the agenda set by the media affects the people's behaviours or perception on issues (Wohn & Bowe, 2016). Kayode & Adeniran (2012) have indicated that editor's act as gatekeepers of mass mediated messages and they promote a media agenda by prioritizing certain issues. They can offer sustained and prominent coverage to an issue while others are marginalized or ignored (Kayode & Adeniran, 2012). According to McQuail (2000), agenda setting is a process of media influence (intended or unintended) by which the relative importance of news events, issues or personages in the public mind is affected by the order of presentation (or relative salience) in news reports. It is assumed that the more the media attention, the greater the importance attributed by the news audience. The media influence is not on the direction of opinion, but only on what people think about.

There is evidence that the media have a strong influence on the people's perception of which issues are important and which problems they want their government to do something about (Charron & Annoni, 2021). The influence of mass media increases when the need for orientation among the viewers is much (Matthes, 2005). The agenda setting theory explains the effect of media power in shaping the perception of people concerning a particular issue. The agenda setting effect is stronger for concrete issues that are easy to visualize than for abstract issues (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002; Yagede & Dozier, 1990; Yangar, Peters, & Kinder, 1982).

2.2.1.1 Relevance of this theory to this study

Since the media have a strong influence on the people's perception of issues, so would the media be able to use the tools of agenda setting in terms of how it covers celebrities who endorse politicians in the country. The media through the priming effect would signal the magnitude of election issues by giving these issues preferential treatment, such as more frequent coverage and more prominent positions that it will attract the public attention for action.

In short, the media can put the agenda setting machinery in motion, but if the audience is not interested in it, it will not sustain the discussion to make the media successful at telling people what to think about. Through agenda setting the media is able to get the public talking about issues.

So, if the media is to extensively cover news and issues surrounding the under 20 championship, most people would get to know about the various participating teams and pros and cons of the teams as well as the conditions of the teams in the country. Agenda-setting is related to the framing concept, which characterizes the effects of media (McQuail, 2000)

2.2.2 Framing Theory

Anthropologist Gregory Bateson is credited with first positing the theory in 1972. Framing is often traced back to roots in both psychology and sociology (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). The psychological origins of framing lie in experimental work by Kahneman & Tversky (1979, 1984), for which Kahneman received the 2002 Nobel Prize in economics (Kahneman, 2003). According to Kafle (2014) framing is a very important concept to understand and interpret news. Meanwhile Iyenger (2005) indicated that at the most general level, framing refers to the way in which opinions about an issue can be altered by emphasizing or deemphasizing particular facets of that issue. That is, the concept of framing refers to the effects of presentation on judgment and choice (Iyenger, 1996). Entman (1991) defined framing as the way media

shapes the news to elicit specific responses from viewers and readers. He found that with framing, media emphasizes what is politically important and the dominant frame in a set of news stories will most likely affect political outcomes (Entman, 1991). Framing helps to not just to understand news but also to help identify the intention and the process of news making. Framing is based on the assumption that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by the audiences (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). One of the first scholars to illustrate framing as a complete theory of mass media was Robert Entman (1993), who defined media framing as a process by which the media “select some aspect of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in a way that can promote a certain definition, interpretation, moral evaluation or treatment recommendation” (p. 52).

According to Entman (1993), media frames have the power to influence public opinion in the way they transfer information from a media source to social and individual awareness. These frames serve as the structures through which individuals understand and organize information (Reber & Berger, 2005; Scheufele, 2004). Media framing encompasses the selection and salience that is given to various pieces of information, allowing certain attributes to be highlighted and others to be omitted in a communication context (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Entman, 1993; Knight, 1999). Increasing the salience given to certain attributes influences the audiences’ personal opinions regarding a given issue by making it more likely they will process and store it to memory (Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 2004). Entman, (1993) indicated that frames can also be used to divert attention to or even ignore pieces of information which have been, which is just as powerful as highlighting specific areas or characteristics of a story. The danger in understanding or omitting information is that it limits the knowledge the public is exposed to. However, “frame” and “framing” are two different terms that needs to be clearly distinguished before analyzing any news. Cartee (2005) states that the ‘frame’ and ‘framing’

are not necessarily synonymous, she further claims that “framing is the process by which a communication source, such as a news organization defines and constructs a political issue or public controversy”, (Cartee, 2005, p. 24). “Frame” on the other hand is the central organization of ideas that give the complete sense to an issue through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration. (Cartee, 2005).

Entman (1991) claims that news frames help to establish meaning when interpreting news. Framing theory explains that the media create this frame by introducing news items with predefined and narrow contextualization. Frames can be designed to enhance understanding or are used as cognitive shortcuts to link stories to the bigger picture. While there is a clear conceptual intersection between concept of framing (Weaver, 2007), the idea of framing is similar to the ‘second level’ of agenda setting which “examines the relative salience of attributes of issues, as McCombs (2005) and Ghanem (1997) as described in detail. Framing theory postulate three functions of media frames to include: selection (who or what to show), emphasis (how much to show), and exclusion (what not to show) (Billings, 2004). The theory also stresses that media have the power to shape a story in a positive or negative manner, with the negative portrayals having a stronger influence on the audience than positive portrayals (Billings, 2004; Eastman & Billings, 2001). The theory identifies that information can be presented in several ways, how it is organized and disseminated through the media and how the public understands and uses the information they have been given (Terkidsen & Schnell, 1997). Media frames can be found in four areas of communication process (Entman, 1993). First, frames can be found with information communicators who are influenced by their own frames and schemes when deciding what information to publish and highlight.

Secondly, frames can be found in presence or absence of certain attribute within the actual text. The simple placement or repletion of certain frames in a text is enough to increase the likelihood that an individual will store it to memory. The third location in the communication

process where frames can be found is with the receiver. Frames can affect the thoughts and insights generated by the public by determining what information they are exposed to and confirming or disconfirming previously stored beliefs. Finally, today's culture is overwhelmed with frames usually shared and accepted by the social majority (Entman, 1993).

According to Kusi (2017) these frames have been spread throughout society because of the consistent exposure and omission of information in the media. Nicely (2007) says one reason media frames have become so common within social culture is because they can be found in all levels of communication process. Media producers and editors do not necessarily utilize media frames to purposely pervert or manipulate the public, but instead to concisely and effectively report a story using a limited amount of space (Nelson, Clawson & Oxley, 1997). It is a well-established fact that members of the media use familiar frames to help the public make sense of the information they are being given (Bronstein, 2005). Framing can influence the audiences' perception of the worldview through "construction of news." "Framing does not predetermine the information an individual will seek but it may shape aspects of the world that the individual experiences either directly or through the news media and is thus central to the process of construction" (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992, p. 61). Framing is very powerful to make individuals see the world in a particular way that news providers want them to believe and see; although they may not realize it as it might only affect the readers or audiences on a sub-unconscious level.

2.2.2.1 Relevance of Theory to the study

Concluding on the theoretical framework, it is to note that, the agenda setting and framing theory used in this study clearly explains online media contribute to the formation of public opinion on sporting issues in particular, football in the nation, continent and globally as well. The agenda setting theory explains how the public of these media outlets make sense of whatever news item or media content in different dimensions that they consume. McCombs

and Shaw (1972) empirically tested public opinion formation between the media content priorities in terms of what is seemed salient and what the users perceived as important issues and found out that, they are closely linked. Accordingly, allocation space to specific issues by the online media affects the positioning of the news items, be it articles, adverts, letters to the editor as well as news stories on the under 20 football tournament are looked at (Hedberg, 2015; Aryitey 2016). Therefore pictures and captions that accompany the stories are deliberately selected to set the agenda by the media outlets for public discussions. This, however, builds a strong relationship between the public and media since the public agenda becomes a fundamental reflection of the media's agenda.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an outline of the research methods and procedures that the researcher employed in collecting and analysing data for this study. The chapter therefore elaborates the research design, sampling techniques and size, as well as the data analysis techniques that were used in this study.

3.1 Research Approach and Design

The study followed the quantitative approach. The quantitative approach to research is one of the three major approaches to research, which are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method (Creswell, 1998). Quantitative approach to research deals with quantifying and analysing variables in order to get results. It includes the use and analysis of numerical data using specific statistical techniques to answer research questions. It also involves the explanation and comprehension of social issue and phenomena through gathering numeric data (Apuke, 2017; Bacon-Shone, 2015).

The use of statistical data and representation of findings saves time and resources. Additionally, quantitative approach to research allows for generalization of studies. Studies that are done with the quantitative approach can be extrapolated onto other populations. Again, the approach allows for high levels of objectivity, as the researcher and values are detached from the collective processes of the research (Eyisi, 2016; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014).

The study adopts the quantitative content analysis design to understand online media coverage of the 2021 Under-20 African Youth Championships. Content analysis is a “method that gives the researcher the opportunity to analyse secondary communication material and draw (statistically tested) meaning from manifest as well as latent content” (Lock & Seele, 2015:10).

Given (2008) asserts that content analysis concerns the intellectual process of categorizing textual data into clusters of similar entities or conceptual categories to identify patterns and relationships between variables and themes. In media studies, one of the most widely used research methods and often the most appropriate in analysing media content is the content analysis approach. The design helps in properly analysing media and news articles such as headlines, leads, paragraphs while investigating how media texts are framed to portray issues in a particular manner (Krippendorff, 2004).

Quantitative content analysis is an objective research technique that describes content of communication in a systematic manner. In quantitative content analysis, the researcher is interested in sampling text, selecting relevant text, unitize these texts and contextualize the text (Krippendorff, 2013). The essence of quantitative content analysis and the purpose for which the researcher employed it as study design for this study was stated in its objective nature, relevance in analysing media texts and products, validity and reliability (Krippendorff, 2013; Lock & Seele, 2015). Thus, the relevance of content analysis to a research is multifaceted and deep seething. The study therefore employed the use of quantitative content analysis in order to analyse media texts and contents in an objective manner.

3.2 Sampling Technique and Sampling Size

Sampling is the method of selecting a suitable sample, or a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population (Tuckman, 1999). According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), researchers adopt sampling in order to direct their choice of observation and respondents to particular characteristics to consider.

The effectiveness of a sampling strategy would be how it enables researchers to methodically collect the necessary information without wasting time and resources, and it means making sure that the sampled texts are the ones that are needed in order to answer the research questions (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002)

The study made use of the purposive sampling technique in order to sample online news publications for analysis. The purposive sampling technique involves the use of subjects who possess specific qualities or information the researcher needs (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

The purposive sampling technique was appropriately selected mainly because the study intends to only gather data from studies that regard the Under-20 African Youth Championships 2021 on Ghanasoccernet.com. The researcher sampled from Ghanasoccernet.com mainly because it is Ghana's top ranking dedicated football online news platform. The researcher sampled 100 news publications from Ghanasoccernet.com concerning the U-20 African Youth Championship.

The sampling size considered news articles that were published on Ghanasoccernet.com between February 1 and March, 6. The researcher was interested in selecting stories that were published from February 1 because the championship began in that month and media coverage on the tournament had begun seeing a peak at the time. The researcher did not include stories published later than 6th March because the tournament ended on 6th March 2021.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

3.3.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis has been defined by Krippendorff (2004) as a research technique that is used for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the context of their use. According to Windhauser (1991), content analysis is a systematic process used to compress many words of a text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding. Stemler (2001) asserts that content analysis enables researchers to shift through large volumes of data with relative ease in a systematic fashion while Berelson (1971) as cited in Johnson (2009) describes content analysis as a research method which focuses on the real content and features within a media text and he goes on further to say that content analysis actually helps in the determination of the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters or words, within a text and this helps to quantify their presence, in an objective manner. Wimmer and Dominick (2003)

citing Kerlinger (2000) are of the view that content analysis is “a method of analysing and studying communication in an objective, quantitative and systematic manner for the purposes of measuring variables” (p. 141).

Bryman (2001) posits that content analysis is an approach to the analysis of documents and texts (which may be printed or visual) that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable content. Content analysis has been employed extensively in analysing printed texts and communication media to be precise. So in the quest to analyse how newspapers framed the coverage of Ghanaian female athletics, there was the need to content-analyse selected news articles. To Krippendorf (2004), content analysis is mostly used in media studies to analyse units of news articles such as headlines and paragraphs in the context of framing theory. Hence, to examine how frames are used there was the need to content analyse the selected news articles by focusing on the paragraph as the unit of analysis in order to sort out larger amount of phrases and words into fewer categories to be able to convey meaning.

3.4 Units of Analysis

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2003), unit of analysis is the smallest element of content analysis and it is the basic unit of the text to be classified during content analysis.

Unit of analysis refers to the basic or smallest unit which would be analysed during content analysis. According to Weber (1990), one of the important decisions any researcher must make is to define the coding unit.

According to Tankard (2001), the means of identifying and measuring news frames are: headlines, leads, subheads, photographs, photo captions, source selection, quotes, statistics and charts, concluding statements, quote selection, pull quotes, logos and paragraphs. It therefore

means assigning a code to a text of any size, as long as that text represents a single theme or issue of relevance to research questions.

This study used full stories as the principal unit of analysis in investigating how Ghanasoccernet.com covered the 2021 U-20 African Youth Championships.

3.5 Data Analysis Technique

The data gathered from the website was thematized quantitatively and input and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The software analysed the data gathered in descriptive form with critical focus on the objectives of the study. The results of the analyses were presented in simple frequency tables, and graphical charts. The results were then interpreted to make meaning in line with answering the research questions of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

The study was interested in investigating online media reportage of the 2021 African Youth Championships. The study was keen on finding out the dominant issues as well as the dominant frames online media adopted while reporting on the U-20 team's exploits at the competition. The study sampled 100 news stories from the Ghanasoccernet.com from February 1 to March 30th 2021.

This chapter of the study presents an analysis of how the mentioned online media organization reported on the national U-20 football team while paying attention to the dominant issues and frames employed by the organization in their reportage. Analysis of the data is presented in tables. The chapter presents these analysis in line with the research questions of the study.

4.1 RQ1: What is the Nature of ghanasoccernet.com's coverage of the U-20 Team during the African Youth Championships?

The research tried to investigate the nature of stories that were published concerned the Black Satellites at the tournament. The researcher was interested in investigating the types of stories published as well as the months they were published in.

4.1.1 Type of Publication

Table 1: Frequency Table Showing the Types of stories published on the Black Satellites

Types of Story	Frequency	Percentage
Hard News	53	53
Editorial	20	20
Opinion Piece	18	18

Gallery Publication	9	9
Total	100	100

Source: Field Data, 2021

The table above indicates that the frequency of the types of stories that were published on Ghanasoccernet.com concerning the national U-20 male football team. The study found that more than half (53%) of the publications made the platform were hard news stories. Additionally, editorial pieces that were published on the platform were 20% while 18% of the publications were opinion pieces. Publications that included only videos and images (labelled as gallery publication in table 1) of the U-20 team of Ghana.

4.1.2 Months of Publication

Table 2: Frequency table showing number of publications by month

Month of Publication	Frequency	Percentage
February	45	45
March	55	55
Total	100	100

Source: Field Data, 2021

The table above indicates the number of publications on Ghanasoccernet.com regarding the U-20 team during the 2021 African Youth Championships by month. The study was interested in assessing stories over a two month period (February, 1 to March 30th). The study found that majority of the stories sampled for this study were published in March while 45% of them were published in February.

The finding implies that there was a lot of attention given to the U-20 team during the tournament in March while, relatively, lesser attention was paid to them in the previous month.

This could be because majority of the high rated parts of the tournament such as the semi-finals, third place and final games were played in the month of March while February witnessed matches from the group stages were ideally, audiences pay lesser attention. Additionally, the month of March witnessed a hike in the reportage of the U-20 team because the coronation of the team as champions, their return to Ghana and their general performance at the tournament became center stage topics during the tournament.

4.1.3 Sources of Stories

Table 3: Frequency table showing the sources of stories published by the media organization

Source of Story	Frequency	Percentage
Players	39	39
Coach and Technical Staff	33	33
GFA President and Staff	9	9
President	6	6
Writers' Initiative	13	13
Total	100	100

Source: Field Data, 2021

The data in table 3 above indicates the sources of stories that were published by ghanasoccernet.com on the U-20 teams' exploits in the tournament. The findings of the study indicate that 39% of the stories were sourced from players of the team while 33% of them were from the coach of the team and his technical staff members.

The findings further point that stories sourced from the Ghana Football Association President and other staff members accrued 9% of the sampled stories. Meanwhile the president of Ghana was sourced in 6% of publications while 13% of the stories were as a result of the writers' own initiatives. The implication of the data is that ghanasoccernet.com tended to focus more on the footballing staff (i.e. the players, coach and technical staff) more than any other group or person during their coverage of the tournament.

The finding implies that the media sought to push an agenda of promoting stories concerning some specific issues like the coaching staff and the footballers as there was a lot of attention paid to them. This corroborates with the tenets of the Agenda Setting theory, which argues that media organization publish more stories on some particular stories to make them seem more salient in the minds of readers (Seteolu, 2017). Thus by frequently reporting on one particular issue, the media places emphasis on that issue and makes it seem more important other matters (Castells, 2007). Similarly, by reporting frequently on the footballers and the coaching staff, the media sought to make issues concerning them more important in the minds of readers.

4.2 RQ2: What are the dominant Issues the Media Focused on while Reporting on the U-20 team during the U-20 African Youth Championship

The study interested in assessing the dominant issues that online media focused on while reporting on the U-20 team during the tournament. The findings indicate that the media focused on varying issues while reporting on the team.

Table 4: Frequency table showing the dominant issues ghanasoccernet.com focused on while reporting on the U-20 team

Dominant Issues	Frequency	Percentage
Team Preparations	27	27
Government Assistance	11	11

The Final	21	21
Key Players' Performance	19	19
Congratulatory Messages	22	22
Total	100	100

Source: Field Data, 2021

The study was interested in identifying the key issues that ghanasoccernet.com focused on while reporting on the Black Satellites during the tournament. The findings of the study point that the media organization focused on five (5) key dominant issues.

The data points that 27% of the stories sampled for the study focused on the preparations of the team towards their matches while 21% were also focused on the final match of the tournament of which Ghana participated and won. Furthermore, the findings point that 22% of the publications focused on stories that concerned congratulating the U-20 team for winning the trophy while 19% focused on the performance of key players in the team. Finally, 11% of the stories were focused on the calls for assistance and the eventual assistance offered by the government and other sports agencies towards the teams' success in the competition.

This implies that a lot of attention was paid to issues that concerned the team's preparations towards their games as well as the final. Relative to the Agenda Setting theory, the findings suggest an agenda to popularize players of the national U-20 team. The Agenda Setting theory suggests that media organizations may tend to frequently pay attention to some issues or persons in order to make them appear salient. Thus, by continuously publishing stories from a particular perspective, source or on an issue, the issue assumes salience in public discourse. The findings of this study therefore syncs with the core tenets of the Agenda Setting theory (McQuail, 2000).

Further, a considerable level of attention was paid to performance of key players such as Abdul Issahaku, Afriyie Barnieh, Percious Boah and Danlad Ibrahim. In sum, it can be argued based on the data presented in table four above that ghanasoccernet.com paid a lot of attention to issues that concerned the team directly while paying relatively less attention to other issues that did not directly concern the team at the tournament. Hence, by highlighting a lot on the preparations of the team towards matches, the final game (which included the Ghanaian team) and the performance of key players, the media organization seemed more interested in issues regarding the team directly and not other peripheral issues. This finding agrees with Levy (2016) who argues that during international football competitions, a large portion of international media content focuses directly on some key and famous footballers. Levy (2016) found in his study of media coverage of the 2014 world cup that content on footballers were a major issue that the media focused on other than other issues surrounding the world cup event.

4.3 RQ3: What are the Dominant Frames the Media Focused on While Reporting on the U-20 Team at the African Youth Championships?

Table 5: Frequency table showing frames adopted by ghanasoccernet.com while covering the national U-20 team at the 2021 African Youth Championship

Frame	Frequency	Percentage
Nationalism and Patriotism frame	41	41
Ghana's African Dominance	23	23
Government Support for Youth Sports Frame	26	26
National Contempt frame	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: Field Data, 2021

Table five (5) above presents an analysis of the various frames identified in the reportage of ghanasoccernet.com's coverage of the U-20 team during the 2021 African Youth Championship. The study found four core frames that were prevalent in the media organization's reportage of the U-20 team. The data indicates that 41% of the stories carried Nationalism and Patriotism frames, while 23% of the frames expressed in the stories concerned Ghana's Dominance in African youth football. The findings further indicate that 26% of the stories were framed in Government support for youth football frames while just 10% of the stories expressed frames that suggested the nation's contempt for the performance of the team at the competition. The data implies therefore that majority of the frames tended to position the team as fighting for the nation and thus making them patriotic persons. Meanwhile a lesser portion of the stories portrayed Ghanaians' contentment towards the team's performance at the competition. Framing is founded on the premise that how an issue is described in news reporting has an impact on how people understand it (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Thus, by placing stories in some particular perspective, the media sought to portray issues in a particular manner and further elicit some responses from readers. The dominant frames identified in the study are described below.

4.3.1 Nationalism and Patriotism Frame

The study found that majority of the stories portrayed the U-20 team as patriotic and nationalist persons who were fighting for the interest of the nation. The findings indicate that the media sought to portray the team as willing to do everything to win the trophy in order to fulfill a national course. This portrayed them as patriotic persons with the interest of the nation at heart regardless of their youthful ages. Hence, some headlines, words and phrases that reporters employed while covering the team sought to portray the team as focused on a national agenda with strong will of patriotism.

Additionally, the findings also point that some pictorial and video-graphic contents that were published on ghanasoccernet.com also framed the team as nationalistic and patriotic. Thus, pictures that involved the players and members of the technical team holding the Ghana flag, kissing the national crest or adorned in sports-wear accessories with the national emblem were published in the platform's galleries to further exact the frame of nationalism and patriotism. This finding presents some similarity in Zeiaa et al's (2021) study. The researchers in their study of Iranian online media coverage of Iranian football participation at the 2018 World Cup and Asian Cup found that Iranian footballers were portrayed in diverse frames to exact their identities as nationalistic and patriotic.

4.3.2 Frame of Ghana's Dominance in African Football

The study also found that the media focused on portraying the U-20 team as a dominant team in African youth football. The findings indicated that 23% of the stories framed the team as being a dominant force so far as African football at the youth level is concerned. Thus, the stories focused on establishing the achievements as well as the worth of talents of the team relative to other teams from other African nations. The stories published on the platform hence had critical focus on the fact that Ghana was one of the nations that have won the trophy four times and the only African nation to have won the U-20 World Cup after winning the African Youth Championships. This frame therefore sought to establish the team as a dominant African team in youth football, drawing on the team's achievements at the youth level.

Such phrases that described the legendary status of the national U-20 team in African football as continental and global titles as well as other similar phrases and descriptions framed the U-20 team as a dominant youth football power house in Africa.

4.3.3 'Government Support for Youth Sports' Frame

Furthermore, the study found that publications on ghanasoccernet.com also sought to frame the government as well as sports related government agencies such as the Ghana Football

Association, Ghana Sports Authority among others as showing support for the team during the competition. The study found that the government and other related agencies were framed as showing enough interest in youth sports and most importantly showing support to the U-20 team.

Hence, the publications focused on reporting on visitations by lead government officials to the team during their camping and preparations towards the competition as well as during the competition; congratulatory messages from government officials and agencies following matches that were won as well as prize monies promised the team after winning the competition. Publications such as these sought to frame the team as receiving enough support from the government and sports related agencies in Ghana. According to Cates (2011) one of the crucial things that often inures for the success of national teams at global tournaments is receiving enough support from the government. While studying the Nigerian national football team at the 2014 world cup, Cates (2011) found that one of the reasons for poor performance from the Nigerian team was the lack of adequate support from the Nigerian government, He therefore advises that enough support is given to other national teams that embark on tournaments of such nature. In agreement to this, the current study found that the U-20 team had received adequate governmental support.

4.3.4 ‘National Contempt’ Frame

The findings point out that another frame that was adopted was the ‘National Contempt’ frame. The study found that the media portrayed Ghanaians as being contempt with the overall performance of the U-20 team during the tournament.

The media published stories of Ghanaians showing contempt after the team had won the competition further establish this frame. Additionally, by publishing stories on Ghanaian’s welcome ceremony after the team had returned from Mauritania where they won the

competition, the media framed Ghanaians as being overwhelmed with the team's achievements.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the key findings that have been made in the study. The chapter looks critically at providing a summary of the core arguments and findings of this study. Furthermore, the study presents a conclusion and subsequent recommendations based on the findings of this research.

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

The rise of the internet and internet enabled devices revolutionized the practice of journalism greatly. The impact digital devices and the internet spectrum have had on media practice over the last few decades have been such that journalism cannot do without online platforms or media. Online media has therefore become a crucial aspect of journalism practice in our world today. This study has argued that the media's role of covering events in society have long become increasingly rampant and more effective following the rise of online media platforms.

Particularly with respect to sports reporting, online media platforms, which allows for niche specialization unlike print and broadcast forms of media which have paid crucial attention to sports reporting across the world. However, in media studies of how the media covers sporting events, not a lot of studies have been conducted. The core objective of this study was therefore to investigate how online media covers sporting events, particularly in Ghana. Using the U-20 African Youth Championships in Mauritania, the study sought to investigate how ghanasoccernet.com covered Ghana's national U-20 team during the competition. The sought was built on three core objectives – to investigate the nature of the online media's reportage, to investigate the core issues the media focused on, and to examine the dominant frames online media used while reporting on the U-20 team during the tournament.

The study found that in terms of the nature of coverage, online media published mostly hard news stories while also focusing relatively well on editorial pieces. It is worth noting that gallery publications, which is increasingly becoming a crucial part of online reporting played a key role in the nature of the media's coverage. Thus publications that concerned only pictures and videos were also quite prevalent in the media's reportage.

Also, the study found that majority of the publications on the platform focused more on the playing body and technical staff members of the team as sources of news more than any other source while covering the U-20 tournament in Mauritania. Thus, most of the publications were sourced from the players, coaches and technical staff members of the team. Other groups such as members of the Ghana Football Association and the president were also engaged as sources of news during the coverage.

Furthermore, the study investigated the dominant issues online media focused on in their reportage of the U-20 team during the competition and found that, the media focused more on the preparation of the team towards the competition more than any other issue. Hence, majority of the stories published on the online platform regarded the preparations of the team towards winning the trophy. Issues concerning the final was also relatively well focused on as the platform tended to publish 21% of such stories on the platform. Other key issues that the media focused on regarded focus on key players, congratulatory messages from fans and Ghanaians and the assistance of the government and sports related government agencies.

Finally, the researcher was interested in examining how the media framed the U-20 team during their coverage of the African Youth Championships in Mauritania in 2021. The study found that four major frames were employed during the coverage of the U-20 team. These included the frame of nationalism and patriotism which portrayed the U-20 team as patriotic citizens fighting for Ghana and for a national course. The study found this frame to be the most

employed frame in stories published on the platform. Furthermore, the online media also frame the U-20 team as a dominant African football force. Thus, the frame of Ghana being a dominant football force was also used in the coverage of the U-20 team and their exploits in Mauritania in 2021. The use of such phrases and descriptions such as *'the first African team to win the world cup'*, and *'four time African champions'* further exacts the existence of this frame in the stories published on the platform.

Additionally, the frame U-20 team was framed as receiving adequate government support in light of their preparations for the competition. Some stories that were published on the platform portrayed the U-20 team as receiving adequate support from the central government, the president, the Ghana Football Association as well as other relevant sports agencies in Ghana. Meanwhile, the frame of national contentment was also well established in the online media's coverage. The study thus found that, the media sought to frame the U-20 team as receiving contentment and gratitude expressed in the jubilations, welcome ceremonies, and celebrations of Ghanaians after they had won the trophy and for their overall performance at the competition.

5.2 Conclusion

Following the growth of online media platforms, this research argues that the media's role in covering events in society has grown more widespread and effective.

In particular, when it comes to sports reporting, online media platforms, which, unlike print and broadcast media, allow for particular specialization, have attached great importance to sports reporting all over the world.

The study's main goal was to find out how online media in Ghana covered sports events. The research used the U-20 African Youth Championships in Mauritania to see how ghanasoccernet.com covered Ghana's national U-20 team during the tournament. The analysis

was based on three main goals: to learn more about the nature of online media reporting, to learn more about the main concerns covered by the media, and to learn more about the dominating frames used by online media while covering the U-20 team throughout the tournament.

Conclusively, the findings of this study point to the fact that the U-20 team was well covered during the tournament with the focus of most of the stories being paid to the playing body (the players and the technical coaching staff), although some attention was paid to other political issues. Additionally, the study concludes that ghanasoccernet.com's reportage focused on a number of different issues key amongst which concerned a focus on again the playing body with majority of the stories covering how the team prepared, the final game of the tournament and key players from the Ghanaian team. Finally, the media framed the team in a generally positive light through its focus on frames that portrayed the team as nationalistic and patriotic as well as a dominant force in African football.

5.3 Recommendations

The researcher suggests the following recommendations based on the findings of this study.

- The researcher recommends that framing of the other national teams as well as other teams from other disciplines focus greatly on nationalism and patriotism in order to rekindle the love of Ghanaians. The findings found that one of the major frames ghanasoccernet.com employed in their reportage was the nationalist and patriotism frame. The researcher therefore suggests on the back of this that other national teams receive the same forms of reportage.
- Furthermore, the researcher suggests that media coverage of national sports teams should look at positive portrayals of such teams instead of negative forms of reportage

- Media organizations should endeavor to focus greatly on key talented players and their performances during international tournaments such as has been studied in this research. This will grant talented Ghanaian players the needed exposure in the international world and also set them up for greater heights in their careers.
- Extensive media coverage of youth and juvenile football must be encouraged amongst online media platforms in Ghana for the purposes of informing, educating and entertaining the public. Additionally, such reportage is essential in acting as reference points for future use.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

- Future studies should employ a comparative approach to investigate how print media, broadcast media and online media report on Ghana's participation in international football events. The present study only focused on online media coverage of the U-20 team at the 2021 African Youth Championship. This limits the scope of the study to only online media coverage. It will therefore be essential to conduct such comparative studies to broaden and diversify the scope of media coverage of Ghana's participation in international football events.
- Other researches can look at conducting similar studies in other sporting disciplines such as athletics, basketball and boxing among others.
- The researcher recommends that other studies that seek to follow the narrative of this present studies can increase their sampling size and diversify their methodology. This study sampled 100 stories from ghanasoccernet.com while using the quantitative content analysis approach. It is imperative that, in order to establish the facts of these findings and to make in-depth probing, the qualitative content analysis be used to study the phenomenon.

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