

**THE PATTERN AND FRAMES OF HIV/AIDS PRESS COVERAGE IN GHANA: A  
CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE *DAILY GRAPHIC* AND THE *DAILY GUIDE*  
NEWSPAPERS FROM 2000 TO 2015**

**BY**

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN  
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## DECLARATION

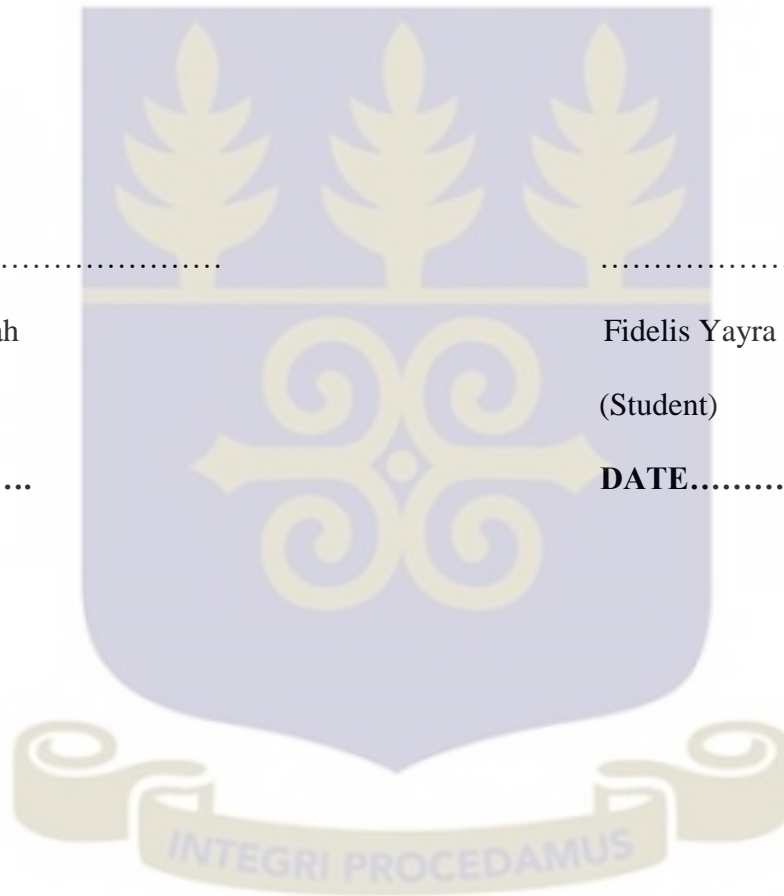
I hereby declare that except for the references to other people's work, which have been duly cited, this thesis is the result of my own research undertaken at the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. The work was under the supervision of Drs. Godwin Etse Sikanku and Gilbert Tietaah.

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## **DEDICATION**

This research is dedicated to the Almighty God, my family, my lecturers and all who continue to work tirelessly to ensure that HIV/AIDS will not wipe out the hopes and aspirations of Ghanaians.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Almighty God for how far he has brought me. It is His grace that has transformed what began as a mere dream to reality. Daddy Lord, I am looking forward to what You will do next.

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## ABSTRACT

This study was a quantitative content analysis of the reportage of HIV/AIDS issues by the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* from 2000 to 2015. Using the theories of framing and issue-attention cycle, this study was to determine the pattern of coverage and frames of HIV/AIDS stories and the sources used in such news stories. Also, how specific-issue frames relating to HIV/AIDS changed with time and the differences apparent in the way the two newspapers covered HIV/AIDS issues were examined.

A total of 414 stories were acquired after a constructed week sampling of January to December of the years 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, and 2015. The findings supported the rise-peak-decline pattern suggested by the issue-attention cycle, since the frequency of media coverage of HIV/AIDS issues in Ghana rose from 2000, peaked in 2003, and steadily declined up to 2015. Also, evidence from the study show that HIV/AIDS stories were mostly packaged as straight news, and generally given minimal prominence in terms of placement. There was also a predominant and monotonous use of official sources in HIV/AIDS stories. Furthermore, press coverage of HIV/AIDS was found to have been dominated by prevention frames to the neglect of other important aspects of the disease. Even so, most of such prevention stories were preoccupied with covering events and the official speeches presented there instead of actually discussing important ways to avoid infection or control the disease. However, the issue-frames tended to change with time. Hence, in the latter years examined under this study, prevention frames declined significantly to give way to other frames (transmission, political impact, and funding) which had hitherto not been as popular.

Finally, the predominant use of episodic frames in HIV/AIDS stories did not correspond with an equally predominant use of individual responsibility. Responsibility for the causality and solution treatment was rather primarily attributed to institutions.

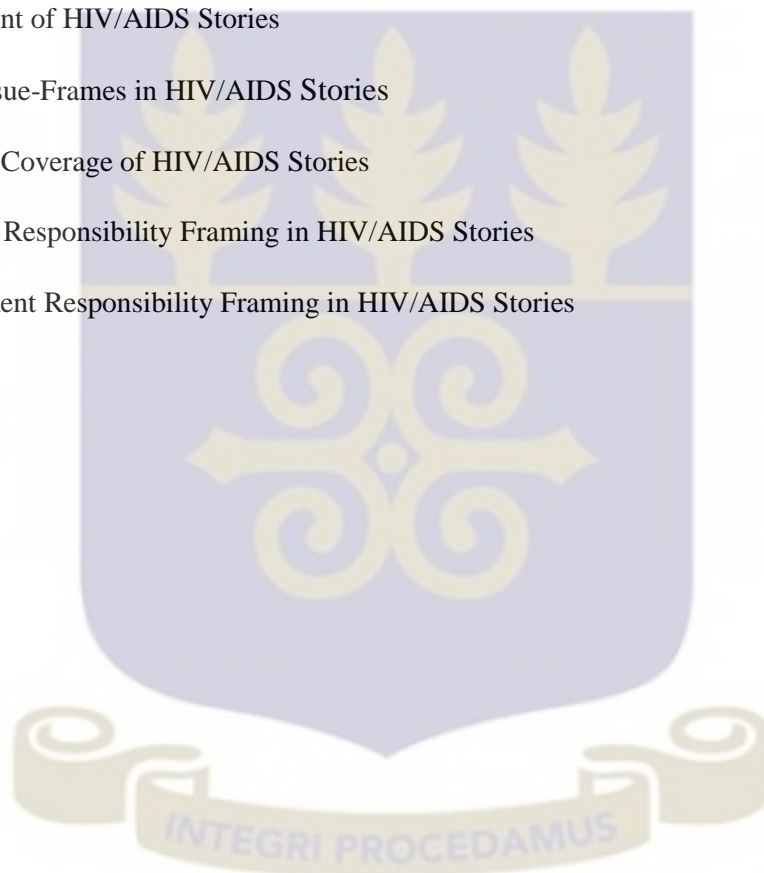
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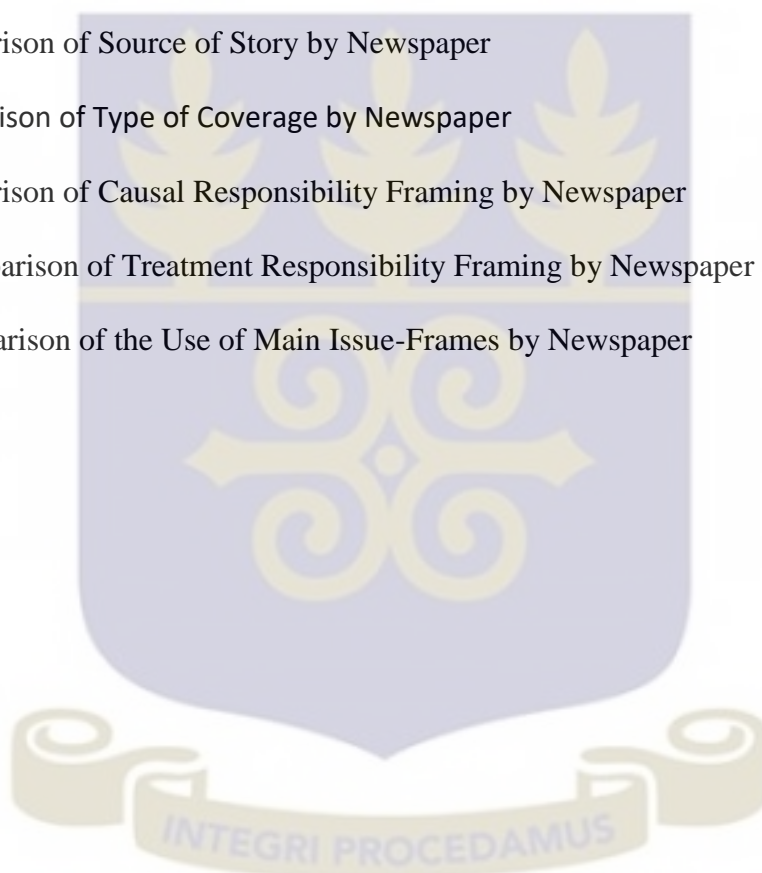
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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of Study

HIV/AIDS hit the headlines in 1981 as a new and mysterious illness. By July 1983 the disease was identified as the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). This virus eventually weakens the body's immune system and results in acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

More than 30 years after HIV/AIDS was identified, the epidemic appears to have begun to recede in intensity in most developed countries and a few developing nations, including Ghana. An implicit implication of this decline however is the adverse possibility of a let up in alertness, awareness campaigns, and education efforts. Such a consequence could, potentially lead to a resurgence of the disease. Already, current statistics still indicate a high HIV/AIDS toll on the Ghanaian population. According to the National HIV Prevalence and AIDS Estimate Report (2014), about 250,232 people are living with HIV as at 2014. The report also estimates that 11,356 new infections were recorded in 2014 while 9,248 persons died from AIDS-related diseases. A 1,889 of such deaths were children between the ages of 0-14. AIDS has also been found to be responsible for 12% of Ghana's orphans.

One important way of comprehending the complex, multi-faceted nature and evolution of the HIV/AIDS issue in Ghana, is by studying how it has been portrayed over the years by the Ghanaian media. Since the beginning of the epidemic, the news media have played an integral role in informing and educating the public about the disease (Backstrom 1998; Brodie, Hamel, Kates, Altman, & Drew, 2004). The media have also been instrumental in

putting HIV/AIDS issues in the policy, cultural and public agenda either nationally or globally.

Bardhan (2002) argues that HIV/AIDS is equally a biomedical reality as it is a social, symbolic, and communicative reality. Similarly, Galant (2008) characterizes the global fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic under two fundamental efforts. The first one is the effort by the scientific community to find a vaccine or at least a less toxic antiretroviral. The second, refers to efforts by social groups to promote behavioural change. The priority in the behaviour change effort is to ensure that the uninfected remain so, while those already infected and living with the disease can do so in dignity and happiness. The role of the media is firmly situated within such discussions and the social impact of HIV/AIDS on individuals and institutions.

Because of these crucial roles, scholars have examined how information about HIV/AIDS is communicated in the media (Cohen 1999; Brodie *et al.* 2004; Davidson & Wallack, 2004; Cullen & Callaghan, 2010; Kiwanuka-Tondo, Albada & Payton, 2012; Stevens & Hull, 2013). In relation to this, there is a general belief that media coverage of HIV/AIDS has been steadily dropping over the years. This belief was confirmed in studies of media coverage of HIV/AIDS between the 1980's and early 2000's in US and Britain (Brodie *et al.*, 2004). Coverage according to these studies followed a common pattern: an initial slow response to signs of the disease which was characterised by the framing of high-risk groups like homosexuals and drug addicts as the principal causes and victims. Following from this, media coverage then increased as realisation of its pervasiveness even among heterosexual populations grew. Finally, HIV/AIDS media coverage became a routine and steadily declined. The drop in media coverage, according to scholars and health professionals alike, is

often not symptomatic of the realities of the disease like increase in new infections, prevalence, actual risks, and the considerable number of people living with HIV/AIDS (Cullen, 2006; Swain, 2005). According to Cullen (2003), this pattern of media coverage observed in the Western press closely resembled Down's (1972) issue-attention cycle which suggests the rise, peak and decline of media interest or coverage on major, long-running health issues. The generalizability of this phenomenon to the African context is unclear as there are limited studies on media coverage of HIV/AIDS which address this. Those studies that however tackle the media coverage of HIV/AIDS in general adopt a rather overly qualitative approach and/or are limited in the number of years they span. Additionally, the attention given to an issue in media reportage and how the issue is framed or represented influences audiences understanding and interpretation of the issue's importance, problem identification, and potential solution (McCombs & Reynolds, 2009; Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009; Iyengar, 1994). Hence, this study sought to rely on the issue-attention cycle and media framing as theoretical frameworks to examine the patterns and nature of press coverage over a 15-year period.

Ratzan (1993) argued that despite differing views on the precise role of the media in reporting HIV, there is broad agreement on the fact that the media are an important and influential source of health and medical information, and that they shape public understandings of and responses to current epidemics: 'The media have enormous potential to help stop the spread of AIDS if they could inform the public continuously and accurately about the true nature and scope of HIV risks around the world' (Ratzan, 1993, p. 256).

## 1.2 The Global Context of HIV/AIDS

It is generally believed that HIV originated from apes in the Democratic Republic of Congo in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Humans caught the disease after coming into contact with the blood of chimpanzees while hunting. In the decades up until the 1980s, the virus was ‘silent’ because it was largely unknown, unreported and limited to remote areas in Central and West Africa.

AIDS as a new disease was first noticed by the medical community on 5<sup>th</sup> June, 1981 when the US Centre for Disease Control (CDC) diagnosed five cases of pneumonia among gay men in Los Angeles. The disease was found to rapidly deteriorate the immune systems of the infected. It was initially thought that this strange new disease was limited to gay men but this proved to be false when by the end of the year, the disease had spread to other segments of the American population. The disease was also reported in several other African countries and Haiti. The HIV virus was first isolated from a patient with AIDS in France in 1983. Increased public and commercial tests led to the detection of over 17,000 AIDS cases from 71 countries.

According to Merson, O’Malley, Serwadda, & Apisuk (2007), during much of the 1980s, most policy officials and the larger public grappled with how sexual and needle-sharing networks had somehow led to the infection of thousands of people globally. They continued to point out that many governments, including some in the severely affected sub-Saharan Africa, rejected the existence of HIV or its associated risk behaviours in their nations.

HIV/AIDS was declared the number four killer in the world and the foremost killer in Africa, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) Report in 1999. By this year, about 33

million people were estimated to be living with HIV and about 14 million people had lost their lives from AIDS (ibid.).

### **1.3 HIV/AIDS in Ghana**

Ghana reported its first case of HIV in March 1986. The disease has been categorised as a ‘generalized epidemic’ in the country since then. A generalized epidemic according to WHO standards is when the prevalence rate of a disease is more than 1 percent of the general population.

Prevalence of HIV/AIDS substantially differs across the country and segments of the general populations. Densely populated areas, mining towns, and border towns and towns along major transportation routes record the highest incidences (Ghana AIDS Commission, 2015).

The Ghana AIDS Commission (GAC) was established with multi-sectoral representation in 2000 and received legal backing by an ACT of Parliament in 2002 to organise the national response to the epidemic. It spearheaded activities like the designing, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of interventional programmes. The GAC in carrying out such activities involves vital ministries of government, the private sector, religious and traditional leaders, and civil society and operates through several centralised and decentralised institutions. According to the GAC, substantial progress has been made in advocacy, resource mobilization, policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation, research and the coordination of HIV/AIDS programmes.

In order to stem the sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS among the Ghanaian populace there have been several behaviour change communication interventions promoting abstinence, partner fidelity, and proper condom use. Civil society organisations (CSOs) have been a major player in this endeavour. Also, through community mobilisation and mass media campaigns, major stakeholders have attempted to raise awareness and create demand for other HIV/AIDS services like counselling and testing.

Stigma and discrimination perpetuated against people living with HIV/AIDS remains a major concern in Ghana. Many CSOs have been involved in this arena as well. Public sensitisation campaigns have been deployed to change attitudes and orientations in this regard. Specifically, key players in the criminal justice system like the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), the Police among others have benefited from capacity development so they could effectively respond to violations of human and legal rights.

#### **1.4 The Role of the Media in HIV/AIDS Mitigation**

It is a widely accepted fact that the media perform several functions in society such as informing, educating, entertaining, facilitating the accountability of public officials, fostering social cohesion, and driving development agenda. The media are supposed to perform all these functions and more. It is therefore untenable to believe that the media will solely concentrate on one social issue like HIV/AIDS, no matter how pervasive and devastating its effects. However, the media remain one of, if not the most powerful tool for addressing HIV/AIDS issues, primarily because of their role as important sources of information, tool for attitudinal and behaviour change, and the shaping of policy actions (Brodie *et al.*, 2004; Souza, 2007; Mogambi, Kiai, & Ndati, 2013).

Various stakeholders, including governments, international donors, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other social groups in helping to manage the HIV/AIDS epidemic, use the media. This is unsurprising as knowledge and information are seen as the first lines of defence for people (UNAIDS, 2004). Mogambi *et al.* (2013) believe that stakeholders' use of the media is motivated by the recognition that the media can help in reaching all manner of people. It can reach those uninfected by the disease and encourage and educate them as to why and how to retain this status. The media can also reach those with HIV/AIDS, urge and educate them on why and how to prevent the further spread of the disease, as well as encourage them to maintain hope through positive lifestyles. Society as whole can also be reached to facilitate the development of sustainable structures that will aid in the effective prevention and management of HIV/AIDS. Again the media can advocate for and ensure accountability in the management of HIV/AIDS intervention programmes and activities.

Notwithstanding the important role the media can and do play in addressing important health issues like HIV/AIDS, the media have been faulted for providing incomplete and/or non-factual coverage, misrepresentation of the prevalence of health threats, and the juxtaposition of competing health messages (Kline, 2003; Souza, 2007). All of these could present difficult challenges to engendering positive belief systems and behaviours that will effectively prevent and manage HIV/AIDS. The media therefore have to strive to provide coverage which is regular, comprehensive, accurate, human centred, and demystifying.

### **1.5 Problem Statement**

Though Ghana has made some positive advancements in its fight against HIV/AIDS, the disease still remains a pressing national issue and problem. According to the National HIV Prevalence and AIDS Estimate Report (2014), there were over 250,000 people living with

HIV in Ghana, 11,356 new infections and 9,248 deaths were also recorded as at 2014. Furthermore, while awareness of HIV is almost universal among the general Ghanaian populace, it has not resulted in comprehensive knowledge and safe sexual behaviour (Ghana AIDS Commission, 2015). The percentage of young women and men aged 15-24 with knowledge about HIV prevention and the common local misconceptions about HIV/AIDS was measured by the 2014 Ghana Demographic Health Survey. Only 19.9% females and 27.2% males were found to have such knowledge (GDHS, 2014).

It is unclear, whether and how the Ghanaian media, particularly national elite newspapers like the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* have over time framed the problem of HIV/AIDS in Ghana, thereby contributing to both the successes and concerns of the HIV/AIDS issue in Ghana. This is because there is sparse scholarly knowledge on how the media have presented HIV/AIDS in Ghana, though studies (Benefo & Takyi, 2003; Benefo, 2004) show the media remain the main sources of health information for many Ghanaians. Also, much of what society understands of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, including who it impacts and its future ramifications, comes from the media (Swain, 2005). Through the media, people in Ghana for instance, become aware of what HIV/AIDS is and how they can be infected or affected.

Findings from some western studies (Brodie *et al.*, 2004, Stevens & Hull, 2013) point to a significant drop in the momentum of media coverage, a finding which is often at variance with the realities of the disease. According to Nassanga (2000), since the media focus on important events or issues in society, it is as if HIV/AIDS was no longer regarded as a big problem. It is difficult to generalise this pattern or phenomenon to the African continent as there remains a paucity of studies which have endeavoured to establish the pattern of coverage of HIV/AIDS in Africa over multiple years.

Indeed, Bardhan (2002) and Swain (2005) have argued that scholarship into the media representation of AIDS has declined and that the academic field is equally suffering from an AIDS fatigue. They go on to call for sustained scholarship within this period marked by the worrying trend of declining coverage. Swain (2005) in particular, called for more research to explore the global dimensions of AIDS coverage; the role of international news flow factors, media texts in different cultures, and how news media in less-developed countries cover the disease. Very few studies have been undertaken in response to this scholarly challenge, as evidenced by the dated nature of literature in this field. Most studies of media coverage of HIV/AIDS were conducted more than 10 years ago and were based on coverage within a single year or less. This has led to a fragmented and often disconnected understanding of the social issue. This study, hopefully will stand out as one of the few in recent times to have responded to Swain's (2005) call.

### **1.6 Research Objectives**

The overall purpose of this research was to find out how the Ghanaian press covered HIV/AIDS issues over a 15 year period by tracking and examining the quantity and content of newspaper reports from 2000 to 2015. To achieve this, the study pursued the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the pattern of HIV/AIDS coverage in the Ghanaian press during the study period.
2. To find out the dominant frames used in HIV/AIDS press coverage.
3. To determine how the dominant frames in HIV/AIDS press coverage have changed over time.
4. To identify the sources and main actors in stories.

5. To ascertain differences in coverage of HIV/AIDS issues between the state-owned, *Daily Graphic* and the private *Daily Guide* newspapers.

### 1.7 Research Questions

To satisfy the above objectives of the study, the following research questions were considered pertinent:

- RQ1: What is the overall pattern of media attention for HIV/AIDS issues in the Ghanaian press?
- RQ2: What are the dominant frames in HIV/AIDS press coverage?
- RQ3: How have the main issue-frames in HIV/AIDS press coverage changed over the study period?
- RQ4: What are the main sources used in the press coverage of HIV/AIDS issues?
- RQ5: How do the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* differ in their coverage of HIV/AIDS issues?

### 1.8 Significance of Study

This study which sought to examine and understand the pattern and frames of HIV/AIDS coverage among the Ghanaian press has an import both for the academic world and for the health communication professional world.

The study was important not only in shedding light on the evolution of HIV/AIDS reporting in Ghana, but also provides comparative data on how HIV/AIDS has and is being framed. It does this by contributing to the body of HIV/AIDS news frames based on the analysis of the

Ghanaian coverage. Again, by examining HIV/AIDS news frames between 2000 and 2015, the study provides grounds to compare how established frames as observed in earlier studies have also changed over time.

According to some scholars (Basil & Brown, 1994; Bardhan, 2002; Swain, 2005), the recent lull in scholarly examination of HIV/AIDS issues in the media remains a major scholarly gap. This study therefore helps to address this gap by making an original contribution to analyses of media coverage of HIV/AIDS from Ghana's perspective, during this period of sparse scholarship.

Finally, this research hopefully helps in gaining an understanding of the of HIV/AIDS issue-frames in Ghana, an invaluable resource to local and international health communicators and HIV/AIDS organisations when they are planning media-driven interventions.

### **1.9 Operational Definition of Key Terms**

The key terms used in this study are HIV/AIDS, pattern of coverage, and frames. These are defined as follows:

**HIV/AIDS:** This is an abbreviation used to represent both the “human immunodeficiency virus” (HIV) and the resultant “acquired immunodeficiency syndrome” (AIDS). At times, the term “epidemic” or “pandemic” was also used to refer to the disease in this study.

**Pattern of coverage:** This was used to denote the frequency of HIV/AIDS stories over the study period. In this study, the term also encompassed story characteristics like story type, origin and placement.

**Frames:** In this study, frames refer to attributes of HIV/AIDS news stories which function to define and highlight HIV/AIDS issues in particular manner, provide causal interpretation, and suggest remedies for the disease. The term denoted both frames that relate specifically to the topic of HIV (HIV/AIDS issue-frames) and generic frames.

### **1.10 Organisation of Study**

This study was organised into seven chapters. Chapter one introduced the study by providing a contextual lay-out. The chapter also presented the research problem, objectives, questions, significance of the study, and an operational definition of key terms. The second chapter discussed the theoretical frameworks used for the study – the framing theory and the issue-attention cycle model.

Chapter three discussed literature related to the study. The research approaches and relevant findings of previous studies on media coverage of HIV/AIDS were reviewed and presented. Chapter four explained the methodology used in this study. The research design, population, unit of analysis, content categories, data collection and analysis procedures were all discussed in this chapter. Chapter five is where the findings of the study as pertaining to the research questions posed were presented. This was mostly done in the form of tables and figures.

Chapter six proceeded to present a discussion of the findings from the study in the light of theory and related literature. Finally, chapter seven, concluded the study by summarizing the findings and discussions presented in previous chapters and drawing out practical implications. The limitations and recommendations for future studies were also presented.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

#### 2.1 Introduction

Several theories have been applied to media coverage of health issues. However, this study which was interested in examining the pattern and frames used in HIV/AIDS coverage chose to rely on media framing and the issue-attention cycle model as theoretical frameworks. These theories grounded the research and helped in discussing the findings of the study. This chapter, therefore contains a discussion of these two theories.

#### 2.2 Framing Theory

Communication as whole helps to construct the social reality within which people exist and function. An important element in this construction of social reality is the process of framing. Goffman (1974) suggested that people viewed the world and made sense of everyday living by relying on a set of expectations. These sets of expectations form a shorthand or schemata through which people make sense of complex issues that happen around them. This process of sense making, which involves both the presentation and comprehension of issues is what is generally termed as framing.

Framing as a focus of inquiry, belongs to the wider ambit of media effects research and has enjoyed growing application among several communication disciplines. It has been used to investigate media content and the relationship between media content and audiences. Unsurprisingly, various definitions of framing and frames (tools which convey the framing process) have been proffered. Seminal among these is Entman's (1993) definition. The process of framing, according to Entman, involves selecting some aspects of a text and making them salient in order to "promote a particular problem definition, causal

interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (1993, p. 52). Other scholars also define frames as, “largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports” (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7); Also, according to Gamson & Modigliani (1989), a frame is a, “central organizing idea...for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue” (p. 3). Stemming from these definitions, two concepts of framing have been derived: media frames and individual frames. Entman (1991) categorised media frames as “attributes of the news itself” and individual frames as “information-processing schemata” (p. 7). Framing manifests as a media frame or a macro construct when it denotes the manner in which media institutions present or report their information. Individual framing or framing at the micro construct level represents how individuals apply mental shortcuts/schemata to interpret and use information presented to them.

### **2.2.1 Media Framing**

Media framing is regarded as the way in which news stories are written and/or presented with certain perspectives, ostensibly to provide a logical structure which will help audiences understand an issue. Media frames develop within particular cultural contexts; Iyengar (1991) states that in the attempt to construct and tell stories that are comprehensible, journalists rely on pre-existing cultural frames or norms. Due to the tendency of individuals to employ media coverage as cognitive shortcut to make sense of intricate issues like HIV/AIDS, it is imperative to understand the way the media frame specific issues. Also, such understanding is necessary to comprehend the subtleties surrounding the formation of public perceptions of these issues (Shih, Wijaya & Brossard, 2008). Finally, the benefits of understanding how the media frame issues like HIV/AIDS reach far even to the corridors of policy makers. Accordingly, Colby and Cook (1991) stated the following:

The media identification and definition of public problems work not only on mass audiences. Policy makers are very attentive to news coverage... The media's construction of AIDS thus influences not merely how we as individuals will react but also how we as a society and as a polity will respond (p. 219).

When individuals follow the news, what they observe and categorise as “news” is scarcely an objective reality of which the media provide a direct and unadulterated transcription. Rather, “news” is constructed by its presentation in the media. McCoy (1993) succinctly described journalists as everyday ethnographers, who possess a spot-news mentality; through selection, rejection, foregrounding, and backgrounding, journalists shape and signify issues. Behaviour or actions, in of themselves do not tell a story in a news report. It is media coverage or framing that suggests what issues are to be recognised as newsworthy, what specific events or topics are to be selected, what explicit context if any is to be presented, and what judgement or evaluation is to be implied in a news report (Jacobs & Johnson, 2007). In media analyses, frames are regarded as something that is adopted by journalists and shared by their audience in a relatively unreflectively manner. As far as they (Journalists and their audiences) are concerned, frames are only mirroring the primary attributes of issues and events (Jacobs & Johnson, 2007).

Media scholars in undertaking studies that examine framing in news story always have to contend with identifying what in a news story actually constitutes a frame. Several scholars have come up with helpful guidelines. Entman (1993, p. 52) suggested that frames in news stories can be observed by “the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments.” Similarly, Shah, Watts, Domke, & Fan, (2002) alluded to “choices about language, quotations, and relevant information” (p. 367). Gamson and Modigliani (1989) identified five “framing devices” that in their opinion, operate to

condense information and present a “media package” of an issue. These framing devices are: metaphors, exemplars, catch-phrases, depictions, and visual images. Tankard (2001, p. 101) offered a comprehensive empirical approach to identifying and measuring frames in news story with his list of 11 framing mechanism, namely: headlines; subheads; photos; photo captions; leads; source selection; quotes selection; pull quotes; logos; statistics and charts; and concluding statements and paragraphs. Frames that over time emerge as dominant have significant effects on public attitude, cultural interpretations, and policy outcomes (Entman, 1991).

### **2.2.2 Framing as a process**

Several scholars call for the conceptualization of framing as an integrated process, one that includes production, content, and media use perspectives (Scheufele, 1999; De Vreese, 2005). An understanding of this integrated process inevitably leads to the holistic appreciation of the framing process. The process of framing involves distinct stages: frame-building, frame-setting and individual and societal level consequences of framing (Scheufele, 2000; de Vreese, 2005). This is premised on the belief that, “communication is not static, but rather a dynamic process that involves frame-building (how frames emerge) and frame-setting (the interplay between media frames and audience predispositions).” (De Vreese, 2005, p. 51).

The term frame-building is similar to “agenda-building” in agenda-setting research. Hence, frame building denotes the factors that impinge on the framing of news content. Simply stated, it encompasses the “how” of frames production. The factors that influence the essential qualities of news frames could be internal or external. Some of the factors intrinsic to journalism that influence the frame-building process include journalist-centred influences (professional norms and attitudes), and organisational routines or constraints (Shoemaker &

Reese, 1996). Other factors that equally influence the production of frames is the continuous interaction between journalists and extrinsic sources of influence; elites and social movements (De Vreese, 2005). The resulting effects of the frame-building process as can be seen from the figure below are the frames manifest in a communicative text.

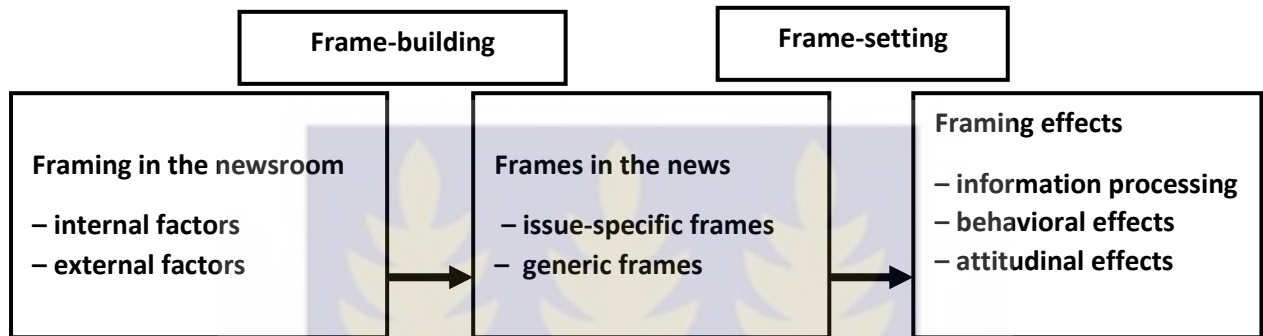


Figure 1: An integrated process model of framing (De Vreese, 2005, p. 52)

Frame-setting is again another terminology borrowed from the agenda-setting field. It involves the interaction between media frames and the prior knowledge and predispositions of individuals. Frames in the news possess the tendency to affect learning, interpretation, and evaluation of issues and events (De Vreese, 2005).

The framing process produces consequences that can be observed on the individual and the societal level. The theory of framing has proven beneficial in describing changes in individuals' cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural outcomes about an issue upon exposure to certain frames. Political socialization, decision-making, and collective action are examples of social processes that frames may influence at the societal level.

When undertaking media framing research, frames can be examined both as independent variables and dependent variables. Media frames may be studied as the dependent variable by examining how several factors like organisational constraints, journalistic routines, elite

discourses, and ideologies influence the media's framing of an issue. As an independent variable, media frames may be studied as a link to audience interpretations and frames. By seeking to compare how the peculiar organisational constraints and journalistic norms apparent in the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* influence the coverage of HIV/AIDS, this study attempts to answer the call of De Vreese (2005) for future research to link features of the production of news with the content (frame-building).

### **2.2.3 Generic and Issue-Specific Frames**

Frames that manifest in news stories can be classified into two major groups; generic and issue-specific frames, as can be observed in Figure 1. According to De Vreese (2002), there are some frames that are applicable to a broad range of topics, transcend thematic limitations, with some even being observable over time and in different cultural contexts. These frames are termed as generic and are distinct from those that are narrowly applicable to specific issues or news events (issue-specific frames).

Several generic frames have been established and employed in subsequent studies: episodic and thematic news frames (Iyengar, 1991); strategic news frames (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997); conflict, human interest, attribution of responsibility, morality and economic consequences news frames (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). According to De Vreese (2005), though analyses based on generic frames facilitate comparability, generalizability and theory building, the generic nature of these frames have not been analysed enough to establish their presence and similarity across national borders. This study therefore sought to examine HIV/AIDS press coverage in Ghana through the lens of two closely related generic frames. These were episodic or thematic frames, and attribution of responsibility frames. Such an

endeavour in Ghana will help in providing scholarly evidence that can be used in comparison with evidence from other countries.

### ***Episodic and Thematic Framing***

In studying US media coverage of social issues such as poverty, crime, and unemployment, Iyengar (1991) discovered that news stories were either presented in an episodic or thematic manner. A news story depicted episodically covered issues as limited to individuals/events and not placed within a broader social and abstract context. Thematically framed news stories, on the other hand, present issues in a continuous and backgrounded manner. Though few news stories are solely episodic or thematic, the dominance of episodic frames in the news was established in Iyengar (1991). Beyond this, he states that the practice ‘simplifies complex issues to the level of anecdotal evidence’ (Iyengar, 1991, pp. 136–137) and resulted in a topical, disorganized, and often isolated, understanding of issues. Iyengar (1991) posited that norms and standards within news organizations and news production lead to the preference for and reinforcement of episodic framing. From the discussions on the framing theory one can also appreciate that how a story is framed in the news has a telling influence on how the public assigns responsibility for an event/issue and how people following from this think about policy options and preferred solutions. This brings us to a discussion of responsibility framing and how it applies to coverage of social issues like HIV/AIDS.

### ***Responsibility Framing***

Manifested in how the media subtly frame news stories is the attribution or assignation of responsibility. According to Semetko & Valkenburg (2000), the attribution of responsibility frame denotes the manner in which news stories present a problematic event or issue by emphasising on blame and responsibility. Usually, the responsibility frame shows the attribution of responsibility for causing or solving of an issue/event to either a government, a group, or an individual. When people are faced with complex issues or tragedies like HIV/AIDS, they desire to minimise the issues' complexity through the attribution of causal and treatment responsibilities (Scheufele, 2000). In other words, people will attempt to figure out the causal responsibility, "origin of the problem", and the treatment responsibility, "who or what has the power to alleviate the problem" (Iyengar, 1991, p.8). This assertion will seem true for an important social issue like HIV/AIDS which has impacted the world and the Ghanaian society in particular to its core with its scope and impact. This study therefore deemed it appropriate to systematically explore the attribution of responsibility both in terms of causality and treatment in news stories related to HIV/AIDS in Ghana.

Scholars have established a relationship between the tendency for news stories to be presented/framed in an episodic or thematic manner and the manner in which attribution of responsibility is also framed. As Iyengar (1991) explained, the use of episodic frames, encourages news users or readers to hold individuals more responsible for social problems than does the use of thematic frames. Also, failure to provide adequate and contextual coverage of social issues can reduce the extent to which the public views the issue as an important problem. This has at times, been described as the unintended consequence of the use of episodic framing. This is because audiences as a whole exposed to episodically framed news stories feel absolved of responsibility for social problems like HIV/AIDS since

responsibility is so readily assigned to the people depicted in the news, regardless of the actual culpability or otherwise of the newsmakers.

In addition, coverage of HIV/AIDS through an individual or episodic lens can privilege prevention efforts to target individual risk behaviour over efforts to influence structural determinants, even though addressing structural drivers of the disease may be more effective in slowing the epidemic (Niederdeppe, Bu, Borah, Kindig & Robert, 2008). Also according to Swain (2005) news stories normally lacked an analysis of the socioeconomic contexts such as poverty, disempowerment, and inequalities which invariably increased the chances of some people getting infected by the disease.

#### **2.2.4 Frames in HIV/AIDS Media Coverage**

Due to the particular nature of the HIV/AIDS issue, this study had to go beyond the generic frames identified above, to determine frames that could allow profound levels of specificity and relevance that only HIV/AIDS specific-issue frames could provide. This is because there were important implications in the way the disease is defined within certain cultural contexts, especially in connection to its causes, consequences, and solutions (De Souza, 2007).

These frames were gleaned from previous scholarly work on HIV/AIDS (Kasoma, 2000; Nassanga, 2000; Odhiambo, 2000; Brodie *et al.*, 2004; Kiwanuka-Tondo *et al.*, 2012). These frames and their definitions are discussed in the methodology chapter of this study. A reliance on these already established issue-specific frames of HIV/AIDS again provided a basis for this study to make evidential comparisons to findings from other contexts.

### 2.3 Issue Attention Cycle

This study, aside from examining the several ways in which HIV/AIDS issues have been framed in the Ghanaian press, is interested in examining the pattern of coverage over the study period. Anthony Downs' issue-attention cycle model is a framework that this study has identified as being beneficial to this endeavour. The “issue-attention cycle” as a model was introduced in Downs (1972) to describe how public attention for certain issues changed over time as result of the “way major communications media interact with the public” (Downs, 1972, p. 2). Findings about the pattern of coverage will hopefully provide an insight into the dynamics of the realities of the disease over time. Findings may or may not also give credence to conflicting findings about the decreasing nature of HIV/AIDS media coverage in several countries.

According to Downs (1972), the issue-attention cycle has five major stages as can be observed in Figure 2. The first is the “pre-problem stage,” which occurs before the issue gains public attention. The next stage involves the mixture of alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm. This is where the public suddenly becomes informed about a certain issue or problem and reacts through intensified alarm and a demand for a solution. Downs (1972) identifies the third stage as “realizing the cost of significant progress”. Here, the public develops an awareness of the costly nature of solving the issue or problem, which may lead to the fourth stage—the gradual decline of intense public interest. The cycle ends with the “post-problem stage,” where the problem or issue is substituted by another of greater relevance at the time. This results in the problem remaining to a large extent unresolved. The problem or issue instead just fades into the background with no real solution and is subject to “spasmodic recurrences of interest” (Downs, 1972, pp. 39–40).

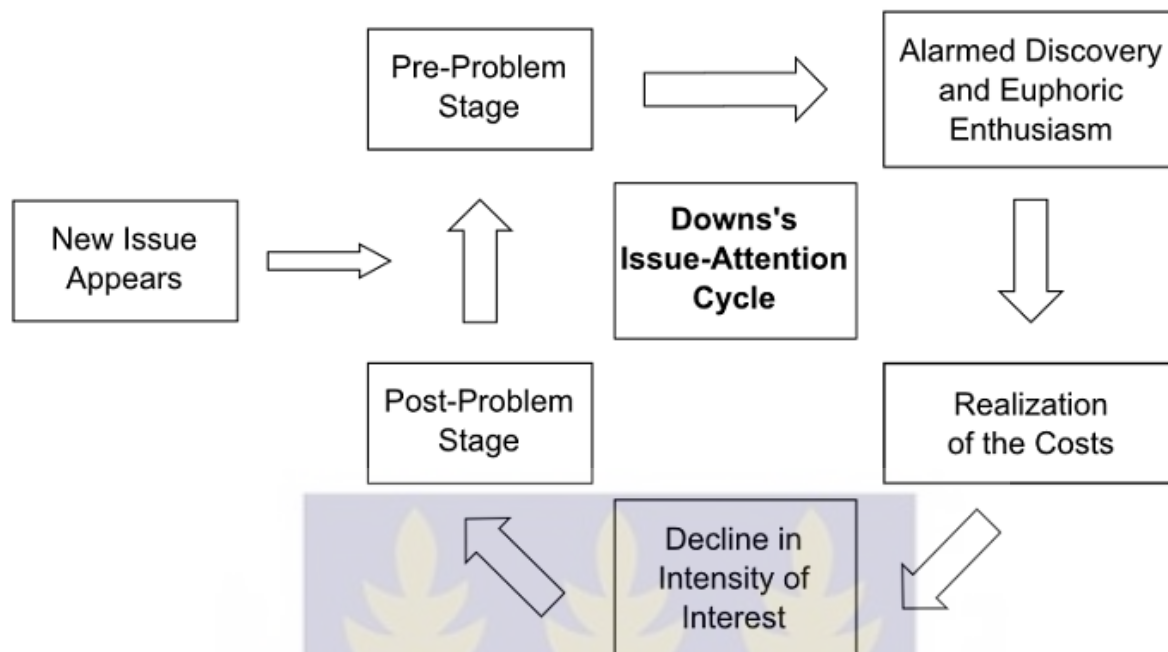


Figure 2: Down's Issue-Attention Cycle

Petersen (2009) states that Downs' issue-attention cycle model is an empirical predictor of patterns of media coverage of social issues. Downs used the issue-attention cycle to explain how events or social problems become introduced in the media, acquire interest from the public, and later fade away because the issue is replaced by a new story which captures viewer interest (Schildkraut & Mushert, 2014). However, Downs concedes that not all major issues go through the issue-attention cycle, a social issue/event must be dramatic and somewhat unique in who is affected (Downs, 1972). Though the model was originally used to examine nuances in public attention of domestic issues (environmental issues in particular), Petersen (2009) observes that there is no reason to assume that the relative dearth of use of the model in other international social issues means that the cycle or model is inapplicable to these areas. In fact, Cullen (2003) identified a resemblance in the way Western media covered HIV/AIDS to Down's issue-attention cycle. Also, Shih *et al.* (2008), employed an integrative framework of framing and issue attention cycle to examine how print media

framed three international public health epidemics (mad cow disease, West Nile virus, and avian flu). Therefore, extending Downs' model beyond its original field, while uncommon, does not lack some precedence.

McComas and Shanahan (1999) grouped the issue attention cycle into three phases—the waxing phase, the maintenance phase, and the waning phase. The waxing phase referred to the phase in which media attention increases. The maintenance phase represented the phase within which media attention remained relatively constant, while the waning phase denoted the fading of media attention. This later and simpler classification of Down's issue-attention cycle is applied in this study. The amount of media attention can be expressed in terms of the frequency and prominence of news stories. Prominence refers to the hierarchy of stories or story importance cues offered by editors (Graber, 1988).

The tendency of the media to draw attention to certain aspects of an issue while minimising attention to others has been shown to change as the issue evolves over time (Nisbet, Brossard, & Kroepsch, 2003; Shih *et al.*, 2008). Throughout the issue-attention cycle, media frames do not remain static, they rather tend to change in relation to how well those issues and events are known. For instance, McComas & Shanahan (1999) in a study of media coverage of issues of global warming revealed differences in narrative themes at different stages of the issue attention cycle. This provides another compelling reason for the need to understand how news frames in HIV/AIDS coverage changed over time. The frames being examined under this study because of their relative broad nature make it possible to study how the frames emphasised in the coverage of HIV/AIDS issues changed over time.

## 2.4 Summary

This study broadly sought to examine the pattern of media attention of HIV/AIDS issues over time, the dominant frames used as exemplified by the specific HIV/AIDS topics covered, the provision or otherwise of a contextual background (episodic/thematic framing), and who in such HIV/AIDS stories are judged as being responsible for the cause and treatment of the HIV/AIDS problem. From the discussions engaged in this chapter, it is clear how this endeavour can be helped by the application of the media framing theory and the issue-attention cycle.



## CHAPTER THREE

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 3.1 Introduction

There are quite a number of studies which have examined the media coverage of HIV/AIDS issues in other parts of the world and in relation to particular population segments. Such studies provided beneficial lessons in various aspects of the research process, particularly the discussion and comparison of key findings. This chapter therefore endeavours to present a discussion of some of these studies.

#### 3.2 Related Studies

##### 3.2.1 Media coverage of HIV/AIDS in Western countries

There have been a few studies which have examined how HIV/AIDS was covered in the media. These studies sought to determine the frequency and dominant frames employed in HIV/AIDS news media coverage. Prominent among them was a study by the Kaiser Family Foundation (Brodie *et al.*, 2004) on news coverage of HIV/AIDS in the United States from 1981-2002. The study examined four national newspapers: *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post* and *USA Today*. Samples from three regional newspapers were also included: *Los Angeles Times*; *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Miami Herald*. News stories from *The Times* in London were sampled as well to provide a basis for comparison between American and European print media. The total sample amounted to 8,783 from which some interesting findings were acquired.

Findings indicated an initial increase in press coverage during the 1980's, a peak in 1987, followed by a steady drop till 2002. After the onset of decline in coverage, minor peaks in coverage were driven by major developments like Magic Johnson's announcement of his

HIV status and the introduction of anti-retroviral drugs for the disease. Though the overall decline in coverage seemed to mirror a reduction in new cases of HIV in the U.S., it actually started about six years prior to the decline in HIV cases. The decline in coverage also continued even in the face of cumulative number of HIV cases in the U.S. rising above 500,000 (Brodie *et al.*, 2004; Kiwanuka-Tondo *et al.*, 2012). Hence, the decline in coverage appeared to not reflect real exigencies of the times, rather, an ‘AIDS fatigue’ by the media (Dearing, 1998; Brodie *et al.*, 2004).

Following from the above, the study also discovered that the most dominant stories tended to focus on prevention and protection (13%). This was followed by stories on HIV research which was generally steady at 11%. Overall, stories on transmission and social issues like stigma and discrimination both stood at about 10%. However, major declines in coverage were discovered for the topics of HIV transmission (from 17% to 3%), social issues (15% to 4%), and HIV testing (7% to 2%). Other topics which enjoyed attention in stories and experienced considerable increase in coverage were: government funding, philanthropic fundraising, political issues, and HIV treatment. Over time, the percentage of stories containing at least some consumer education information also declined from 48% to 30% by 2002. Another significant finding from the study was the marked shift in focus of coverage from the domestic HIV/AIDS situation in the U.S. to a more global perspective, with an emphasis on the African and Asian continents.

According to Swain (2005) the findings from Brodie *et al.* (2004) denote a turn in news coverage that is not only different but perhaps dangerous as well. The emergent pattern in coverage seems to create the false impression that HIV/AIDS is virtually cured, leading to widespread complacency (Bardhan, 2002).

Davidson & Wallack (2004) set out to examine the content of national newspapers in connection to the presentation of non-HIV sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The study sought to understand how the problem of STDs was being presented to the American populace through the lens of print news media. The authors discovered an inadequate amount of substantive reportage on STDs in the print news media. Only 19% of articles in the total sample of 462 made mention of the causes, signs, or symptoms, prevention, consequences, screening, transmission, treatment, trends or rates of STDs, or highlighted these aspects in only one sentence (Davidson & Wallack, 2004, p. 6). Coverage was also found to be unevenly distributed; two out of nine newspapers accounted for half of all substantive discussion. Interestingly, there was an emphasis on the consequences of STDs and on the use of statistics while about two-thirds of stories contained no quotes. These emphases, according to the authors reflected journalists' preferences for the dramatic, and a lack of depth in coverage of the problem of STDs.

While quite a number of studies (Pickle, Quinn & Brown, 2002; Brodie *et al.*, 2004; Stevens & Hull, 2013) concentrated on the media coverage of HIV/AIDS at the national or micro level, Bardhan (2002) adopted a macro-level approach to media coverage of AIDS. He analysed 5 transnational wire services between 1991 and 1997. The researcher selected four mainstream transnational wire leaders—the Associated Press (AP), Reuters, Agence France-Press (AFP), and Telegrafnoye Agenstvo Sovetskovo Soyuz (now known as ITAR—TASS),—and an alternate wire service, Inter Press Service (IPS). The latter was selected for comparison as it focused on giving voice to issues or concerns of the developing world. Bardhan's content analysis specially focused on dominant themes, news makers (sources and actors), and the amount of emphasis or lack thereof apportioned to various world regions.

The choice of transnational wire services by Bardhan (2002) is an important way to study media coverage of HIV/AIDS as they serve as agenda setters in the global news hierarchy. They perform newsgathering and dissemination of content at a global level, which is then routinely picked up by various agenda-setting media and institutions around the globe for onward distribution to the global elite, decision makers and 'normal' readers alike.

The study used news framing and politics of international news flow as theoretical underpinnings. The findings revealed a minor shift away from the biomedical-scientific theme which characterised AIDS news in the 1980s. The socio-economic, public policy, and human-rights themes seemed to have gained ground. However themes surrounding HIV/AIDS prevention and education, and the portrayal of the disease as an intertwined global phenomenon received minimal treatment. The study also found that stories tended to cover official sources (75%) primarily made up of biomedical sources, researchers, and policy makers. This meant that, over the study period, alternative voices or news makers like activists, non-profit organisations and people living with HIV/AIDS were increasingly not being used in wire service news. Coverage was again found to take on mostly Western cultural perspectives, with the total volume of stories declining through the 1990s. Echoing the findings of Brodie *et al.* (2004), Bardhan in relation to this finding states:

The finding that the volume of coverage has declined steadily through the 1990s lends support to the argument that the AIDS story is no longer a newsroom attention getter. The coverage has become routinized and is more reactive than proactive, and passive description dominates over active narration about the future of the pandemic. (Bardhan, 2002, p. 22)

### 3.2.2 Media coverage of HIV/AIDS among minority Groups

Pickle *et al.* (2002) is one of the few studies which examined HIV/AIDS coverage from a minority (African-American) perspective. This was because though the African-American population in the U.S. stood at 12%, they had been disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS. African-Americans represented 37% of all HIV/AIDS cases and 52% of infections. The authors therefore studied the coverage of HIV/AIDS in African newspapers and its implications for health communication and education. A content analysis was carried out among five African-American owned newspapers: *Amsterdam News* (New York), *Oakland Post* (California), *Washington Afro American* (District of Columbia), *Atlanta Inquirer*, and *Chicago Citizen* from 1991 to 1996. Content was analysed to examine how HIV/AIDS was framed in these newspapers.

During this period, Pickle *et al.* (2002) found that coverage of HIV/AIDS was mostly prominent in African-American newspapers from the New York, Oakland, and Washington, D.C areas. Stories mostly cited government officials, community based organisations and medical officers as sources. By way of framing, although most of the 201 articles analysed covered the story largely as a health issue, a considerable proportion displayed a critical stance toward the government and the “AIDS establishment” in regards to their commitment to prevent the loss of lives among minority communities. The AIDS establishment denoted the government agencies, researchers, pharmaceutical companies, and other institutions who had economic stakes in the new HIV/AIDS related industry. Other themes included racism, cultural beliefs and attitudes, and the inescapable role of economics in political and medical circles (p. 15). Articles were also found to usually communicate the idea that before the epidemic could be effectively countered, there had to be substantial efforts about larger socio-political, economic contextual issues that created health inequities. Stories normally also carried alternative theories of cause and treatment. For instance, some stories seriously

discussed the likelihood that AIDS was developed as a plot to exterminate African-Americans, and the use of Kemron, an HIV treatment drug endorsed by the Nation of Islam as the most promising. This was regardless of the existence of much evidence refuting these theories. These frames, in Pickle *et al.*'s (2002) view, reflected the distrust and rational concerns which stemmed from the historical context of American race relations.

Pickle *et al.* (2002) provides insight into how African-American news media covered and framed HIV/AIDS. The study though spanned multiple years was preoccupied with geographical differences and did not find out whether there was an increase or decrease in the trend of coverage over time.

Similar to Pickle *et al.* (2002) in its multi-year content analysis approach of HIV/AIDS media coverage from a racial perspective, is a study by Robin C. Stevens and Shawnika J. Hull titled, "The colour of AIDS: an analysis of newspaper coverage of HIV/AIDS in the United States from 1992–2007." However, unlike Pickle *et al.* (2002), Stevens and Hull (2013) sought to determine the pattern of coverage over the 15-year period by examining the frequency and content of HIV/AIDS coverage of 24 daily US newspapers and one wire service. According to the authors, this approach provided a more nuanced understanding of portrayals of race and risk in HIV/AIDS reporting. Additionally, the 15-year period used in Stevens and Hull (2013) provided a more solid basis for studying a pattern of media coverage. This current study will similarly be carried out over a 15-year period, looking at six specific years between 2000 and 2015.

Content analysis in Stevens and Hull (2013) was conducted in two phases; computerised and human coding. A computerised search term was used to identify HIV/AIDS-related news

stories in the Lexis Nexis database. To examine patterns in frequency and content in the sample, both human and computerised coding methods were employed.

Over the study period, the results indicated a significant decline (76%) in HIV/AIDS coverage, with less fluctuations. There was also a considerable shift in the portrayal of risk in the US, from a domestic to an international focus, with an emphasis on Africa. Particularly, coverage on Africa rose from 5.38% to 48.83% over the study period. The coverage on Africa highlighted the activities of the U.S. government and global bodies like the UN, best and worst case scenarios, and high epidemic statistics. According to Stevens and Hull, although HIV/AIDS was still a severe problem for African Americans domestically, most of the press coverage moved to the African AIDS crisis. The little coverage that did address HIV/AIDS in disproportionately affected populations in the US typically lacked context. The authors maintain that print news coverage of HIV/AIDS over the study period may have reduced the visibility and importance of the impact of HIV/AIDS on Americans.

Inherent in Stevens and Hull's (2013) position is the argument, if not evidence that the print media tend to set the agenda for other media and the public (McCombs & Reynolds 2009). This assertion of the link between what is reported and what is not reported, and the public agenda further underscores the need to examine how in Ghana HIV/AIDS has also been reported by elite newspapers.

### **3.2.3 Media coverage of HIV/AIDS in developing nations**

After studies to identify patterns in HIV/AIDS coverage were observed to be unavailable in developing countries, Cullen (2000) sought to 'remedy' this with a study on Papua New Guinea (PNG). This study complemented limited previous research on HIV/AIDS coverage

in Africa which had taken a decidedly qualitative approach (Pitts & Jackson, 1993; Kasoma, 1995). These earlier studies often made it difficult to understand and establish a pattern in HIV/AIDS press coverage in developing countries.

Cullen therefore undertook a quantitative study of HIV/AIDS news items in PNG's two national newspapers, the *Post-Courier* and the *National* from 1987 – 1999. His study revealed a pattern of coverage that was similar to that of the Western press. PNG's early stage of media coverage also mostly framed the 'usual' targets as the main conduits of the virus. These included foreigners, drug addicts and prostitutes. As discoveries of the widespread nature of HIV/AIDS among the wider heterosexual population became common, there began a significant increase in news coverage on HIV/AIDS. This increase in news coverage, the study found, was however to experience a noticeable decline by late 1999. This decline was just as Brodie *et al.* (2004) found, not concomitant to realities of the disease in PNG. This period rather marked the time that the disease was becoming more visible and widespread. Cullen later describes this situation in the remark below:

It is evident that this pattern of reporting – the rise-peak-and-decline approach – although not a deliberately conscious decision on the part of newspaper editors and a pattern that is common with coverage of other long-term illnesses – has proved inadequate in reflecting the real situation in terms of infection rates and actual risk. Less coverage does not necessarily equate to less risk. (Cullen, 2003, p. 67).

One major research carried out on media coverage of HIV/AIDS on the African continent was the study by the Panos Institute (2004). The study titled; *Lessons from today and tomorrow: An analysis of HIV/AIDS reporting in Southern Africa* was comprehensive in that it analysed newspaper reporting of HIV/AIDS in eight Southern African countries between 1985 and 2003. The study utilised a combination of quantitative and qualitative research

methodology to examine both the quantity and quality of HIV/AIDS coverage. Samples were acquired from the study countries - South Africa, Botswana, Malawi, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe - through a random sampling approach. One of the major findings was that media across the region had significantly increased coverage on HIV/AIDS. For instance, between 1995 and 2003, Botswana saw an increase in stories from a paltry 3 to 402. This finding is in contrast with patterns observed in the ‘western’ and developed countries (Bardhan, 2002; Brodie *et al.*, 2004; Stevens & Hull, 2013), in a developing country like Papua New Guinea (Cullen, 2000), but in agreement with the pattern observed in Cullen’s (2010) study of the same Papua New Guinea some years later. These conflicting findings highlight the unique patterns of HIV/AIDS coverage among regions, countries, and over different time periods. By examining the pattern of HIV/AIDS coverage in Ghana, a West African country, this current study will contribute a fresh perspective to this discourse and hopefully bring more clarity to it. Additionally, almost no trend studies exist that cover the time period of 2000 to 2015, an important basis to make comparisons between earlier studies covering other periods.

Another finding from Panos (2004) was the discovery of an improvement in coverage, in that journalists “have gradually become more sensitive and politically correct” (Panos, 2004, p. 31). According to the study, in the early 1980s when there was poor understanding of the disease, stories on HIV/AIDS were usually sensational in content and insensitive to sufferers. In the 1990s, the language of coverage changed and descriptions like ‘killer disease’ and ‘AIDS victims’ were discarded for the more sensitive ‘AIDS pandemic’ and ‘PLWA’ (People Living with AIDS). Also, unlike the early phases of coverage, the researchers observed a reduction in the use of negative reports, scary statistics and images of emaciated PLWA. However, though reporting on the topic generally increased, “HIV/AIDS stories were not

given prominence and priority when compared to other forms of news” (Panos, 2004, p. 30). Another adverse finding was that, stories on HIV/AIDS were largely event and personality driven with primary focus on statistics, speeches, workshops and conferences, to the detriment of in-depth analysis of the epidemic (Panos, 2004, pp. 24, 27, 55). The study argued that the inadequate press coverage of the disease as a multidimensional story results in uncreative reportage, which has turned off readers who have become tired of hearing the same recycled news. This is more so when newspapers rarely had stories that were generated from their own initiative, or gave attention to voices mostly affected by the pandemic (Panos, 2004, pp. 6, 34). The study also observed an emergent inaccuracy in coverage. Some stories had misleading statistics or reports on AIDS cures, which the study described as both “irresponsible” and offering “false hope” to many who did not comprehend the issues of HIV/AIDS (Panos, 2004, p. 30).

Recommendations from the study included a call for journalists and editors to be formally trained, on how to report on HIV/AIDS and to magnify the voices of the most affected in the society. The study also encouraged the media to continually challenge and hold governments and NGOs accountable in their response to the epidemic.

Kiwanuka-Tondo *et al.*, (2012) also conducted a more recent study on the media coverage of HIV/AIDS in Uganda from 2000 to 2004. This study was significant as a lot of similarities could be drawn between the HIV/AIDS situation in both Ghana and Uganda. Both appeared to have made huge strides in bringing HIV prevalence and infections down, though both countries were still categorised as having a generalised epidemic by the UNAIDS. Both countries still face the daunting socio-economic impacts of the HIV epidemic. The authors sought to examine how the issue of HIV/AIDS had been made prominent on the policy and

cultural agenda of Uganda. According to Kiwanuka-Tondo *et al.*, the understanding of the patterns of coverage will provide invaluable information to journalists, advocates, and health communicators as they tackle the epidemic.

The study applied the framing and media ownership theories in their analysis. *The New Vision* and *The Monitor*, major government-owned and private newspapers, were selected for examination. After systematic sampling, the study arrived at 365 articles which were analysed for trends in coverage and prominent issue frames on HIV/AIDS.

The results indicate that print news coverage of HIV and AIDS followed a non-linear trajectory, declining from 2000–2002 and then increasing from 2003–2004. Curative medicine emerged as the most prominent issue frame. Higher-risk behaviour was the least prominent issue frame overall. The ‘solutions’ issue frame nearly doubled in prominence from 2000–2004, while the HIV-prevention frame decreased from 2000–2002 and then rebounded from 2003–2004. Concerning HIV-related topics, the study found that the private newspaper included more features, printed lengthier articles, incorporated a greater variety of news frames, and published more articles by foreign journalists than the government-owned newspaper. The private newspaper employed the ‘HIV-prevention,’ ‘action,’ and ‘victims’ frames more often than the government-owned newspaper. Journalists at the government-owned newspaper adopted a ‘solutions’ frame more often than their private-press counterparts. Though foreign journalists were more likely than local journalists to employ the HIV-prevention frame, the study revealed that the news organisation for which the journalists worked contributed to issue framing to a greater extent than did either a local or foreign reporting origin. Local (Ugandan) journalists working for the two news organisations differed in their tendencies to apply the HIV-prevention, action, victims, and tragedy frames in news

stories on HIV and AIDS, with journalists at the private newspaper using these frames more often than did journalists at the government-owned newspaper.

Kiwanuka-Tondo *et al.*'s (2012) study set out to fill the gap in research on patterns of media coverage in Africa and provide a model for similar research on the continent. Its findings though helpful in shedding light on possible frames, may not properly explicate patterns of coverage in similar African countries like Ghana. This is because the study was limited in the number of years it covered (from 2000-2004). This current study sought to study more comprehensively, patterns of HIV/AIDS coverage in Ghana over a 15-year period, in three-year intervals by applying a methodology used in Cullen (2010). Again, Kiwanuka-Tondo *et al.* acknowledged their inability to incorporate an examination of generic frames like episodic framing as a limitation of their study. Incidentally, this study again fills this gap by not only examining how episodic and thematic frames were represented in HIV/AIDS news coverage, but also how the framing of the responsibility for the causality and solution of the problem was carried out in the two newspapers.

### **3.3 Summary**

The review of related literature undertaken in this chapter give a helpful insight into how the issue of HIV/AIDS has been presented to audiences through the medium of print news outlets. Several of these studies highlighted conflicting findings of HIV/AIDS coverage among regions, countries, and over different time periods. The review showed a paucity of studies that examine coverage between the periods of 2000 to 2015, especially on the African continent. This study will therefore, among other things, help fill this gap by examining the Ghanaian case as a microcosm of the period and geographical region.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Introduction

This study sought to examine the pattern and frames in HIV/AIDS media coverage in the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* newspapers. This chapter of the report describes and explains the strategies used for data collection, analysis and reporting of findings. Specifically, this chapter includes an outline of the research design, sampling procedure, units of analysis, the content categorisations and data analysis employed in the study. In addressing the research objectives and questions raised in this study, a content analysis method was used.

Though other types of media are important in addressing HIV/AIDS issues, the print media and newspapers, specifically, remain a very helpful way to study how HIV/AIDS issues are covered in the general media landscape. The print media and newspapers in particular set the tone for and influence other media and the public in general when they cover a certain issue in a particular manner (McCombs & Reynolds, 2009). Also, due to the complex and sometimes ambiguous nature of the issue of HIV/AIDS, print news media afford a more in-depth and nuanced coverage than broadcast news (Nelkin, 1991; Stevens & Hull, 2013). Consumers of news normally turn to print news for the details, whereas broadcast news usually offers the broad strokes. Newspapers are also a portable medium that can be carried away and used at a later time, an attribute that facilitates the repeated review of health messages and the reinforcement of positive behaviour. These considerations drove the need to examine how in Ghana HIV/AIDS has been reported by elite newspapers.

#### **4.1.1 Profile of the *Daily Graphic***

According to Kuehnhenrich (2012), the *Daily Graphic* is the market leader in the newspaper industry in Ghana with a daily circulation of about 100,000 copies, and an average of 72 pages. The *Daily Graphic* works as an independent newspaper in the stable of the Graphic Communications Group Limited (GCGL) even though it is a state-owned newspaper. The Newspapers is supervised by a board of directors constituted by the National Media Commission in consultation with the president of Ghana and in accordance with constitutional provisions.

Historically, the *Daily Graphic*, appeared on the newsstand in 1950 and was then owned by the Daily Mirror Group of London, a private United Kingdom company. After independence, the government of Ghana acquired the company by an Act of parliament in 1962. The *Daily Graphic* was later transformed into a statutory corporation in 1971. Since 1999, the Daily Graphic has been the flagship publication of the Graphic Communications Group Ltd (GCGL).

As a market leader, the *Daily Graphic* is deemed as highly influential as it is patronised by a wider section of the Ghanaian populace including elites. Even other media organisations whether radio, television, or online consistently rely on the *Daily Graphic* as a credible source of news and information. The newspaper's content cuts across various sectors including politics, education, health, business and finance, science and technology, environmental, social, international affairs, and development issues. Stories of the *Daily Graphic* are also carried online on its website [www.graphicghana.com](http://www.graphicghana.com). By virtue of its position in the Ghanaian newspaper industry and its comprehensive coverage for several decades, the *Daily Graphic* emerges as an important news outlet to study in order to

understand the media coverage of a long running issue like HIV/AIDS which cuts across various facets of life.

#### **4.1.2 Profile of the *Daily Guide***

The *Daily Guide* is regarded as the leading privately-owned newspaper in Ghana. It is published by Western Publications Limited. In terms of circulation figures, it is only second to the state-owned *Daily Graphic* with 45, 000 copies daily (Yovonoo, 2015). The *Daily Guide* appears on the newsstand six times in the week, that is, from Monday to Saturday.

According to Yovonoo (2015), the *Daily Guide* was set up in 1984 as a four-page weekly sports paper with clandestine commentaries on political issues. Currently, the newspaper is a 22-page daily which covers a wide expanse of topics like politics, health, business, social, entertainment and sports. The paper also has its stories carried on its online platform: <http://www.dailyguideghana.com/>.

This study selected the *Daily Guide* primarily because it is currently the most vibrant privately-owned newspaper providing comprehensive news coverage of the Ghanaian society and beyond. *Daily Guide* therefore serves as a competitive alternative to the dominant state-owned *Daily Graphic*. This was crucial as this study is interested in understanding the influence of different organizational routines and constraints on the type of media coverage that will be afforded an issue like HIV/AIDS.

#### **4.1 Research design**

Previous studies (Kasoma, 2000; Nassanga, 2000; Odhiambo, 2000; Brodie *et al.*, 2004; Kiwanuka-Tondo *et al.*, 2012) which sought to examine how certain news media covered HIV/AIDS issues have tended to adopt the content analysis method. This study which was additionally interested in examining the pattern of coverage across a 15-year period needed to rely on a research methodology that provided for systematic analysis of communication content. Content analysis is again appropriate for this endeavour. Krippendorff (2004) describes content analysis as a research technique or method for making replicable and valid references from a set of data to their context. Also, Palmquist (2005) defined content analysis as a means of objectively examining the presence of certain words, phrases, characters, themes, concepts or any communicative language in a body of text. A content analysis could be carried out either quantitatively or qualitatively. It is quantitative when it provides accuracy and precision in the representation, summary and report of a body of messages (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). Content analysis can also be approached qualitatively when it goes outside the ambit of quantification to analysing meanings, patterns and themes that may be apparent or otherwise in a communicative text. According to Zhang & Wildemuth (2009, p. 1) content analysis approached qualitatively allows “researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner.” This study adopted the quantitative approach to content analysis in order to effectively address the research questions raised.

#### **4.2 Universe and sample**

In this study, the universe comprised all newspaper publications of the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* newspapers from January to December of the years 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, and 2015. This three-year interval over a fifteen year period is similar to the approach

used by Cullen (2010) to study media coverage of HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea in 5-year intervals over a 10-year period. In Cullen (2010), the years 2000, 2005, and 2010 were selectively examined to ascertain the trend of HIV/AIDS press coverage in Papua New Guinea.

The 2000-2015 period examined by this current study was selected because there exists globally, various empirical studies of media coverage of HIV/AIDS in the 1980s and to a lesser extent the 1990s. However, very few studies have been conducted to examine coverage in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This lull or wane in academic research has been cited as a major scholarly gap (Basil & Brown, 1994; Bardhan, 2002; Swain, 2005), one that this study will contribute to addressing. Furthermore, by extending coverage to span the years 2000 to 2015, this study allows for a comparison of frames over a greater number of years. The year 2000 was selected as the starting point of this study because it marked the establishment of the Ghana AIDS Commission to aggressively spearhead the HIV/AIDS response in the country. According to Ghana AIDS Commission (2015), the years 2003, 2006, 2009, and to a lesser degree 2012, marked peaks in the median HIV prevalence rates (3.6%, 3.2%, 2.9%, and 2.1% respectively). The year 2015 representing the latest full year data on coverage was included to make this study as current as possible. By analysing the pattern and the framing of news content across these years, this study can help explain the evolution of press coverage of HIV/AIDS issues in Ghana.

The *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* are major newspapers which appear daily with the exception of Sundays and public holidays. This yields 620 editions of both newspaper for each year being studied. Hence, for the six years under study, the entire size of the universe will be 3,720 editions (i.e. 620\*6). Out of this, 693 editions made up the sample size. Equal

numbers of editions were selected and content analysed since both newspapers were daily newspapers. However, Saturday editions were not included in the sample size because the *Daily Guide* only recently began publishing on Saturdays. All editions that were attained from the sampling procedures were analysed. Further discussions on how this sample size was arrived at is carried out in the ensuing section.

### **4.3 Sampling procedure**

There is the need to focus on certain elements when researchers are studying a phenomenon. This process of deciding on what elements to observe in a study is what Babbie (2010) describes as sampling. Since in this study it was also not feasible to study all newspapers, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select the time span, number and type of newspapers to be used in this study. This purposive technique is one in which “the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher’s judgment about which ones will be the most useful or representative” (Babbie, 2010, p. 139).

A constructed week representing each month of each year under study was used to select the actual editions to be collected and analysed. This meant that one edition was randomly selected to represent each day (Monday to Friday) in a month. Specifically, a list of all the dates in a month was made and grouped into containers of the following strata: Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Out of the four or five Mondays that could be listed, one was randomly sampled to represent Mondays in the month. A similar random sample was done for the Tuesday stratum through to Friday. The whole process was repeated for all the twelve months of the years 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015. Additionally, editions on the annual World AIDS Day celebration (December, 1<sup>st</sup>), as well as the day

before, and after that date were purposely selected as media coverage on the issue rises around this period. Consequently, any time these three additional editions fell on an already drawn date, that date (the randomly selected one) was excluded and another random selection made from the remaining dates. This brought a total of five editions of each newspaper for each month. In a year, a total of 63 editions (60 from stratified sampling and three from purposive sampling) were derived for each newspaper. Over the six years under study, 378 ( $63 \times 6 = 378$ ) editions were selected for each newspaper. This would have resulted in 756 edition dates for both newspapers over the six years under study.

#### **4.4 Data collection Technique and Instrument**

The data was collected from the archives at the Institute of Social Science and Economic Research of the University of Ghana and the offices of the *Daily Guide* newspaper. Importantly, the researcher faced some challenges in locating archived copies of the private newspaper, *Daily Guide*, for the year 2000. The offices of the newspaper did not keep good archives dating back to that year and earlier. All efforts to acquire comprehensive data for the year 2000 proved futile. All other editions selected were located and the content examined for relevant stories. It however meant that while the 378 editions projected for each newspaper were acquired for the *Daily Graphic*, only 315 editions were available for the *Daily Guide*. This situation therefore had an impact on how data was to be analysed. All comparisons made in this study along the lines of newspaper type necessarily had to limit itself to articles acquired from both newspapers from the year 2003 and beyond.

Also, as much as was possible, documents, publications and reports which provided a picture of HIV/AIDS realities in Ghana were acquired and examined. This enabled the study to

effectively juxtapose findings from the content analysis to the realities of the disease in the country and make some informed analysis in the process.

The main data collection instrument used in this study was a coding guide. The coding guide was developed based on categories and frames examined in previous related studies (Kasoma, 2000; Nassanga, 2000; Odhiambo, 2000; Brodie *et al.*, 2004; Kiwanuka-Tondo *et al.*, 2012). Relying on these established categories and frames provided a basis for this study to make comparisons to findings from other contexts. The main categories used in the coding guide include the name of the newspaper, date of publication, story type, origin, placement, and newsmakers. Also, in order to speak to the framing of HIV/AIDS related news stories in Ghana, the coding guide included some HIV/AIDS issue-specific frames from the previous studies highlighted above. Additionally, generic frames like the predominance of episodic or thematic framing, and the attribution of responsibility both in terms of causality and treatment were employed in the study. All these categories and frames are further explained below:

**Name of Newspaper:** This simply refers to the name of the specific newspaper (*Daily Graphic* or *Daily Guide*) within which the article was found.

**Date of publication:** This stated the day, month and year the article was published.

**Type of article:** This category determined how the HIV/AIDS related article was presented or the appropriate genre that the article fits into. The category covered both news articles and non-news pieces. The articles could be straight news, features, editorials, letters, commentaries, and others.

*Straight news:* This is a news report on HIV/AIDS that has been structured and presented in the form of an inverted pyramid. They respond to questions about who, what, when, where, why and how.

*Feature article:* A long, detailed and often analytical report on HIV/AIDS. These stories normally paint pictures in the reader's mind.

*Editorial:* This is an article or opinion piece usually written by the editor of the newspaper stating the stand or position of the newspaper on an HIV/AIDS related issue.

*Letters:* These represent letters written by the readers of the newspaper or professionals expressing their views on HIV/AIDS.

*Commentaries:* These represent articles that are a criticism or discussion of opinions, ideas, and facts.

*Others:* All articles that did not clearly fall under any of the above genres was characterised as "others".

**Origin of Story:** This identified the geographical source of the article. The story was either characterised under *Ghana, Africa* or *Foreign*.

**Story placement:** This referred to the pages in which HIV/AIDS articles were placed. Five categories were employed here: *front page, back page, centre spread, editorial page, and other pages*.

**Main issue-frames:** This covered the central focus, overriding theme or frame of the HIV/AIDS related news article. The main theme of the article was categorised into: prevention, transmission, impact (political/economic/social), PLWHA, HIV counselling and testing, curative medicine, HIV/AIDS statistics, victims and orphans, government funding/financing, philanthropic efforts, and others.

*Prevention:* This category was used when article focused on the controlling mechanisms or measures taken by different bodies to prevent the pandemic.

*Transmission:* Articles which stated or discussed the methods of transmission of HIV/AIDS were put under this category.

*Impact:* This category was applied to articles which dealt with the economic, social, political and cultural implications of HIV/AIDS.

*PLWHA:* This category represented articles that focused on people living with HIV/AIDS, how they were coping with various issues, including stigma and discrimination.

*HIV counselling and testing:* Articles which touched on HIV/AIDS counselling and testing were assigned to this category.

*Curative medicine:* This category was used when articles emphasised medical treatment, such as medicine, therapy, treatment or vaccination.

*HIV/AIDS statistics:* Articles focused on statistics (percentages, ratios, etc.) that describe the prominence of the disease among the populace were assigned to this category.

*Victims and orphans:* This was defined as an emphasis on people affected and children orphaned by the disease were.

*Government funding/financing:* Stories that touched on the efforts by the government to fund the cost of prescription drugs, treatment and other activities aimed at combatting HIV/AIDS.

*Philanthropic Efforts:* Stories which underscored the donation of money, medicine and other useful items to help fight against HIV/AIDS were coded under this category.

*Others:* This category was used if a story had a theme other than the above mentioned ones or if story did not have a clear theme.

**Type of Coverage:** This had to do with how stories were primarily presented with particular reference to Iyengar's (1991) episodic and thematic generic frames. Stories were therefore categorised as *episodic*, *thematic*, or *both* (when stories were not clearly episodic or thematic).

**Causal Responsibility Framing:** This was to examine how stories on HIV/AIDS issues ascribed causal responsibility or blame for the disease and how it has affected society. Stories were categorised as ascribing *individual responsibility*, *institutional responsibility*, *societal responsibility* or *none*.

**Treatment Responsibility Framing:** Here as well, the focus was to ascertain how HIV/AIDS stories emphasised responsibility for solving and remedying the problem. Stories were categorised as either calling for *attitudinal change*, *changing of societal structures*, *policy intervention*, or *none*.

**Main sources of story:** This category was used to determine the various sources that were employed in the HIV/AIDS related articles. It also was used to identify the subjects or persons of interest (actors) of the articles. These were sub-categorised under *health centres/health workers*, *scientists or researchers (both medical and behavioural)*, *policy players (government organizations, politicians, administrators, judiciary, professional, and international)*, *NGOs and other similar social groups*, *meetings and workshops*, *celebrities*, *people living with HIV/AIDS and their friends and families*, *alternative medicine spokespersons*, *none*, and *others*.

#### **4.5 Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher and one other MPhil student at the Department of Communication Studies undertook the coding. Both coders discussed the written definitions of categories. This was to

ensure that both coders thoroughly understood the categorisations and hence obtained reliable data for the study. Upon visiting the libraries and archives where the newspapers were kept, the sampled editions were located. Relevant articles in the sampled editions were then located. This was determined by 50% or more of the article touching on HIV/AIDS and/or the appearance of 'HIV' or 'AIDS' in the headline, a criterion Kiwanuka-Tondo *et al.* (2012) also employed. The coding guide was then used to code the individual articles to determine the appropriate category/categories to be selected for each of the variables being examined. Severin and Tankard's (2001) framing mechanisms were used when determining how HIV/AIDS related articles were framed in terms of the dominant themes or issue frames. Such useful framing mechanisms included specific headlines, subheads, captions, photos, leads, quotes, sources, and concluding statements. The categories on the coding guide were represented by numbers and these were entered into a spreadsheet template. It was this data that was used for analysis.

#### **4.6 Unit of Analysis**

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), a unit of analysis is the smallest unit of content analysis. They state that clearly defined units of analysis make it easy to determine what should be included in a study or not. In this study, the unit of analysis was operationalised as any article (whether news or non-news piece) in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* which focused on HIV/AIDS issues within the specified periods of the study.

#### **4.7 Inter-coder reliability**

To ensure reliability of the data gathered for the study, the researcher undertook an inter-coder reliability test. Though inter-coder reliability could be tested by various methods, this

study employed Cohen's Kappa inter-coder reliability test. The test was carried out on data from a trial coding by the two independent coders of one newspaper edition to be studied. Using the SPSS software, the data submitted by the two coders were tested with the Cohen's Kappa inter-coder reliability function. The test yielded a value of 0.87 (values higher than 0.60 are deemed substantial), a very satisfactory test value indicating high level of agreement between coders. The coders therefore proceeded to code the rest of the content for the study. (Ref. Appendix C for steps used in Kappa's inter-coder reliability test)

#### **4.8 Data Analysis**

A computer software, the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to quantitatively analyse all coded HIV/AIDS related articles. Frequencies, cross tabulations, Chi-square test, a t-test and an ANOVA test were all performed to effectively address the research questions raised in the study. Where appropriate, tables and charts were used to present findings.

#### **4.9 Summary**

Chapter Four discussed the systematic procedures undertaken in collecting reliable data for the study. The content analysis method, sampling and coding procedures, the coding guide and inter-coder reliability tests as applied in this study were some of the issues discussed in this chapter. This discussion facilitates easy replication of the study, an essential criterion that all scientific social science research should meet.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FINDINGS OF STUDY

#### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, findings of the study are presented. This study set out to examine the overall pattern of media attention for HIV/AIDS issues in the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* newspapers between the years 2000 and 2015, in three-year intervals starting from 2000. Also, the study aimed at examining how HIV/AIDS issues were primarily framed in the two newspapers and how specifically, the main issue-frames changed over time. Additionally, the study sought to find out the main news sources used in HIV/AIDS stories and ascertain the differences if any in the way the two newspapers, one state-owned and the other privately-owned, covered HIV/AIDS issues in Ghana. To address all these objectives, data collected were treated using an SPSS software. Descriptive results in the form of frequency tables and graphs were then generated. Cross tabulations and some relevant statistical tests (Chi-square, *t*-test, and one-way variance/ANOVA tests) were also performed to effectively address the research questions raised in this study.

#### 5.2 Overall Pattern of Media Attention

Table 1: Comparison of Coverage by Newspapers

Type of Newspaper	Number of HIV/AIDS Stories	Percent
<i>Daily Graphic</i>	337	81.4
<i>Daily Guide</i>	77	18.6
Total	414	100

Out of the 693 editions sampled for this study, a total of 414 HIV/AIDS related stories were published. As can be seen from Table 1 above, *Daily Graphic* published 337 stories representing 81.4 percent and the *Daily Guide* had 77 stories in all, also representing 18.6 percent of HIV/AIDS stories. There was, therefore, a marked difference in the number of HIV/AIDS stories published by the two newspapers, as Table 1 shows.

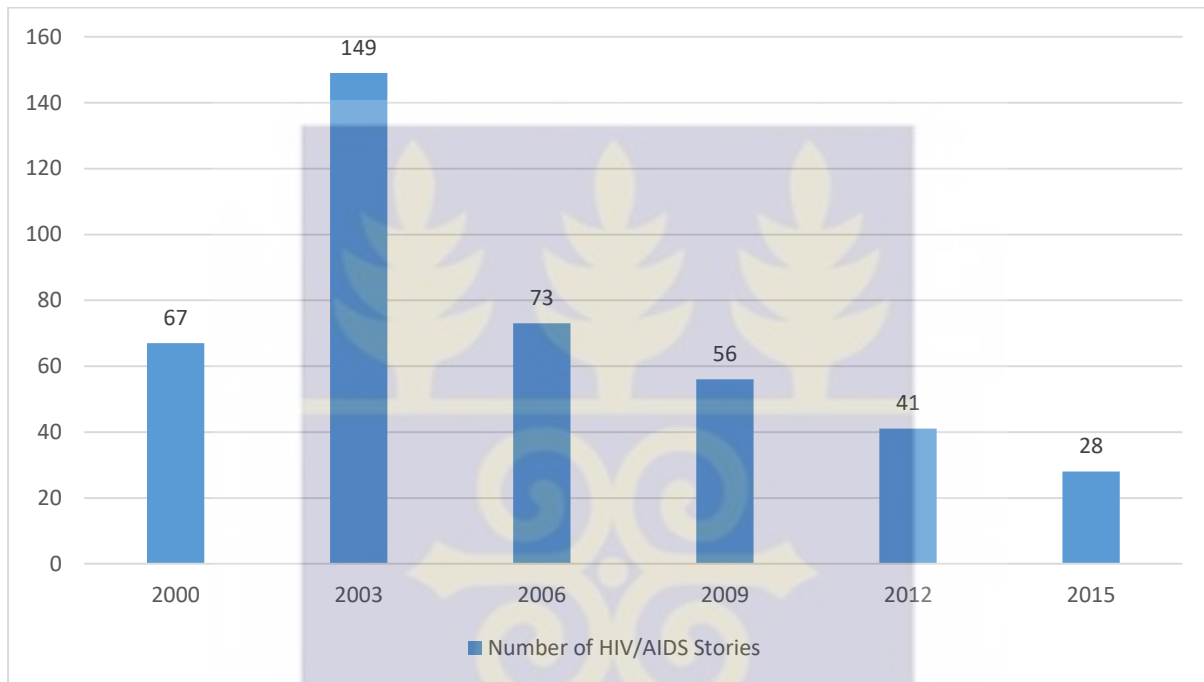


Figure 3: Number of HIV/AIDS Stories over Study Period by Both Newspapers

The results of descriptive analysis on articles published by both newspapers indicate that there was a rise in HIV/AIDS stories from 67 stories in the year 2000 to 149 stories in 2003 as can be seen from Figure 3. In fact, the year 2003 marked the peak of publication. Subsequently, HIV/AIDS stories declined to 73 in 2006, then to 56, 41, and 28 in the years 2009, 2012, and 2015 respectively. This pattern of coverage represents a rise, peak, and decline in media coverage suggested by the Down's (1972) issue attention cycle in the media.

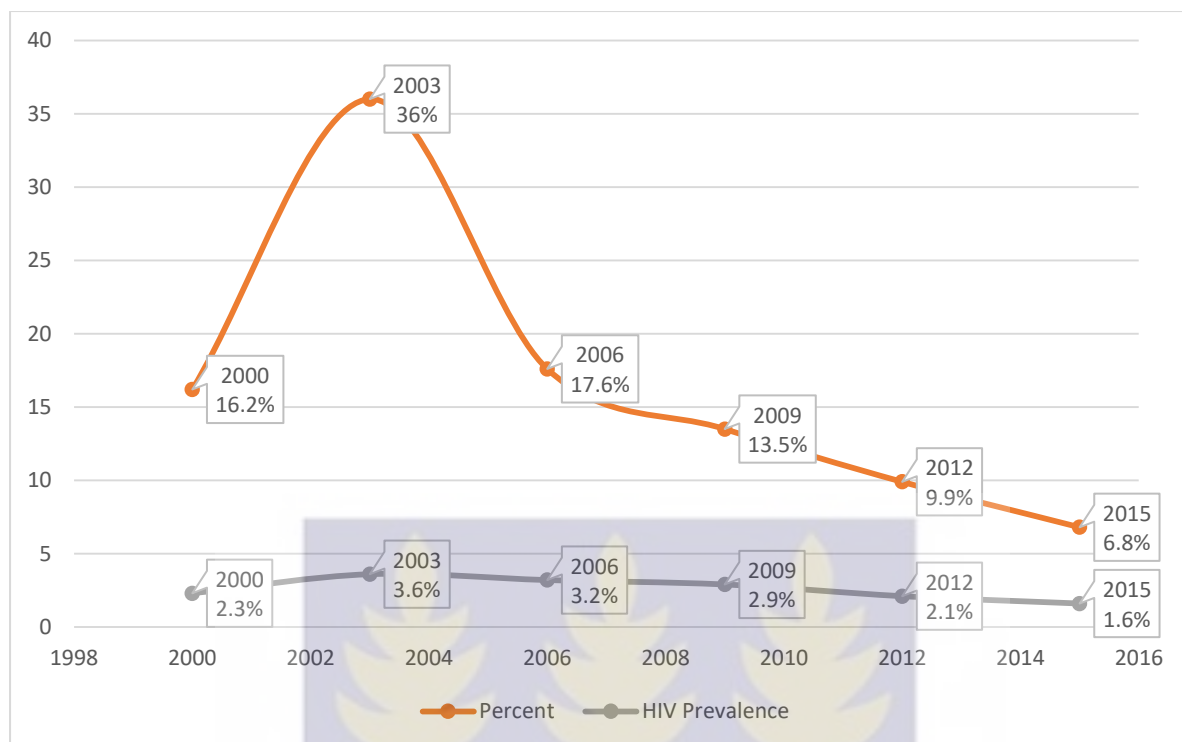


Figure 4: Comparison of Trends in News Coverage and HIV Prevalence

Also pertinent to this study was how media coverage of HIV/AIDS issues was symptomatic of the realities of the disease in Ghana. As can be seen in Figure 4, HIV/AIDS media coverage generally followed the trend of HIV prevalence, that is, both trends rise from the year 2000 to 2003, then decline subsequently till 2015. However, it can also be observed that this pattern is more pronounced in the rate of media coverage than in that of HIV prevalence in Ghana. For instance, from the year 2003 to 2006, the percentage of media coverage dropped by more than half, from 36 percent in 2003 to 17.6 percent in 2006. During that same period, HIV prevalence marginally declined from 3.6 percent in 2003 to 3.2 percent in 2006.

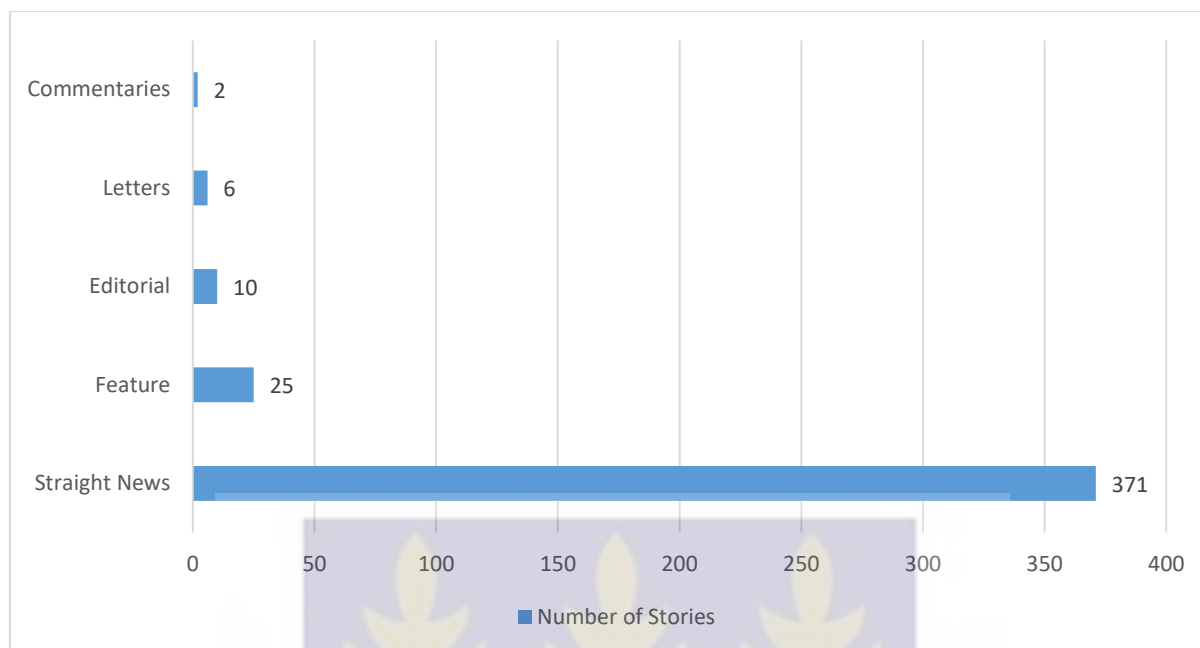
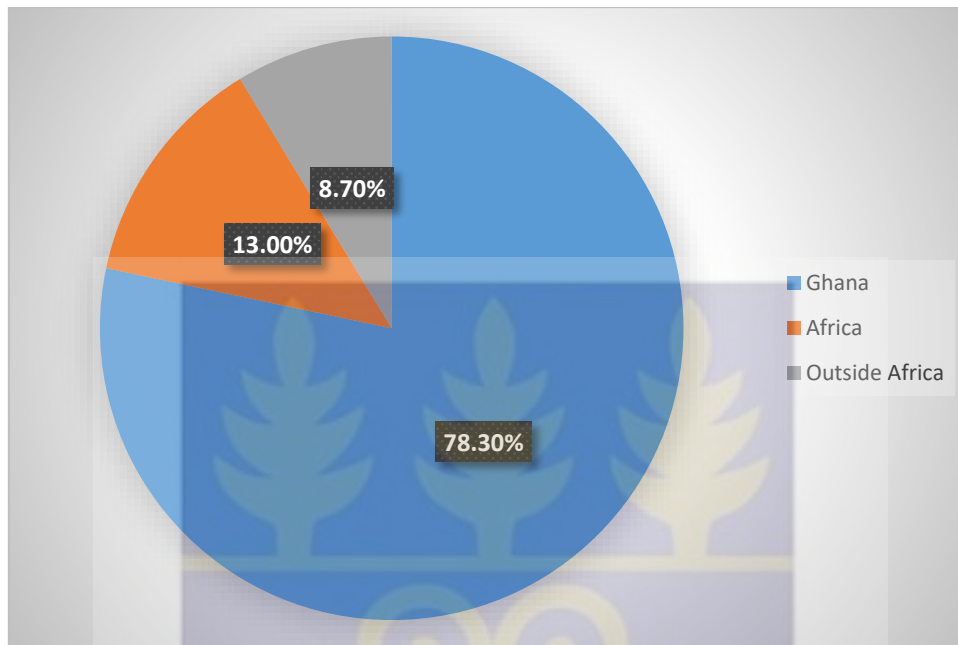


Figure 5: Type of Articles on HIV/AIDS

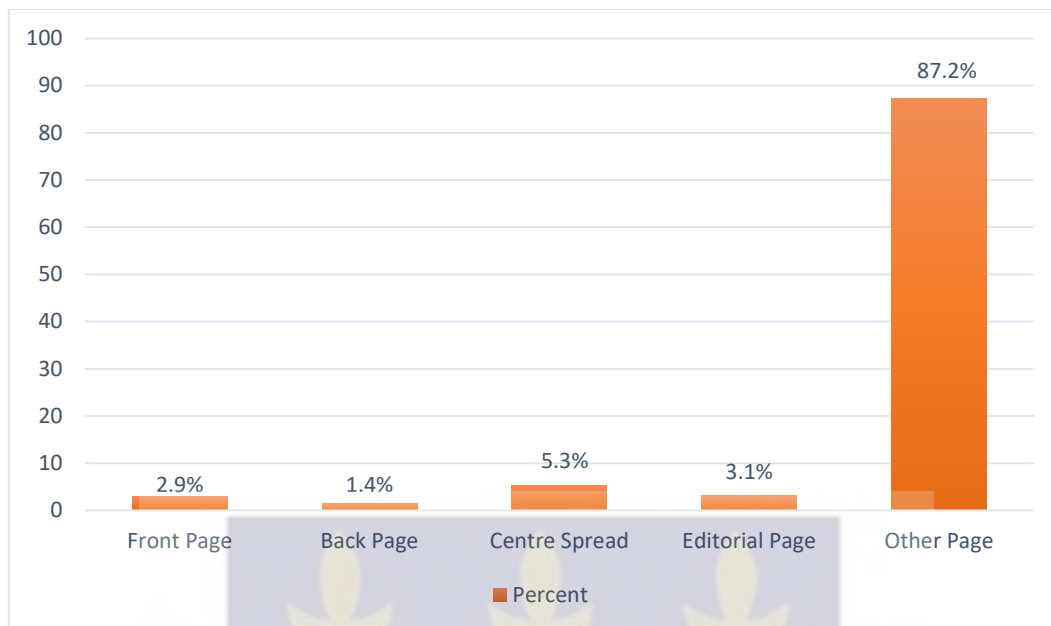
Newspaper articles can be packaged in several ways. In this study, newspaper articles were characterised as straight news stories, features, editorials, letters, commentaries and other stories. Results of the study show that HIV/AIDS stories were overwhelmingly dominated by straight news story types with it representing 371 (89.6%) of all stories. There were only 25 (6%) feature stories, followed by just 10 editorial stories for both newspapers, accounting for 2.4 percent of stories. There were just 6 (1.4%) letters and 2 (0.5%) commentaries published by both newspapers. Straight news stories and features normally represent stories produced by the newspapers' journalists. However, the straight news story format which both newspapers preferred when covering HIV/AIDS issues emphasise hard news or facts and are rarely analytical. Feature articles which require journalists to take the initiative to generate stories that are more in-depth, analytical and creative were not common in both newspapers. Findings suggest that newspapers rarely took the opportunity to express their position/stance on various HIV/AIDS related issues in the form of editorials. Finally, both newspapers had

very few commentaries and letters to the editor, articles which provide a peek into what the public thinks and feels about HIV/AIDS issues.



*Figure 6: Origin of HIV/AIDS Stories*

Since HIV/AIDS is a global issue, press coverage could concentrate on various geographical areas or settings. To additionally inform this study as to the pattern of HIV/AIDS coverage, the origin of HIV/AIDS stories was also examined. Here, stories were categorised as being from Ghana, Africa or outside of Africa. As can be seen in Figure 6, newspaper coverage mostly focused on local Ghanaian HIV/AIDS issues. There were 324 (78.3%) of such stories. HIV/AIDS stories which focused on other parts of the African continent were 54 (13%). There were 36 (8.7%) HIV/AIDS stories that touched on issues happening outside the borders of Africa.



*Figure 7: Placement of HIV/AIDS Stories*

The placement of stories in certain pages of a newspaper indicates the importance or prominence placed on it by editors of the newspaper. The prominence also suggests to readers how important the issue being covered is and should be treated. For instance, stories placed on the front, editorial, centre spread, and back pages are generally considered much more prominent than stories placed on other pages. As Figure 7 shows, 361 (87.2%) of HIV/AIDS related stories were placed on other pages. This number represents almost 9 in every 10 stories on HIV/AIDS. Following from this, 22 stories representing 5.3 percent of stories were placed on the centre spread pages. 13 stories accounting for 3.1 percent of all stories were placed on the editorial pages. Finally, the front page and back page were observed to be the least preferred pages for placing HIV/AIDS stories with just 12 (2.9%) and 6 (1.4%) of stories respectively. The placing of HIV/AIDS stories in mostly non-prominent pages of the newspapers could imply that newspapers assigned less priority to HIV/AIDS issues vis-à-vis other issues competing for the media's attention.

### 5.3 Dominant Frames in HIV/AIDS Press Coverage

This study was interested in examining how HIV/AIDS issues in Ghana were primarily framed in major newspapers. To help achieve this, certain issue-specific frames relating to HIV/AIDS media coverage were examined across the six years between 2000 and 2015. Equally pertinent to understanding how HIV/AIDS stories were framed in Ghanaian newspapers were the concerns about generic frames like the thematic or episodic presentation of an HIV/AIDS story, and the framing of responsibility.

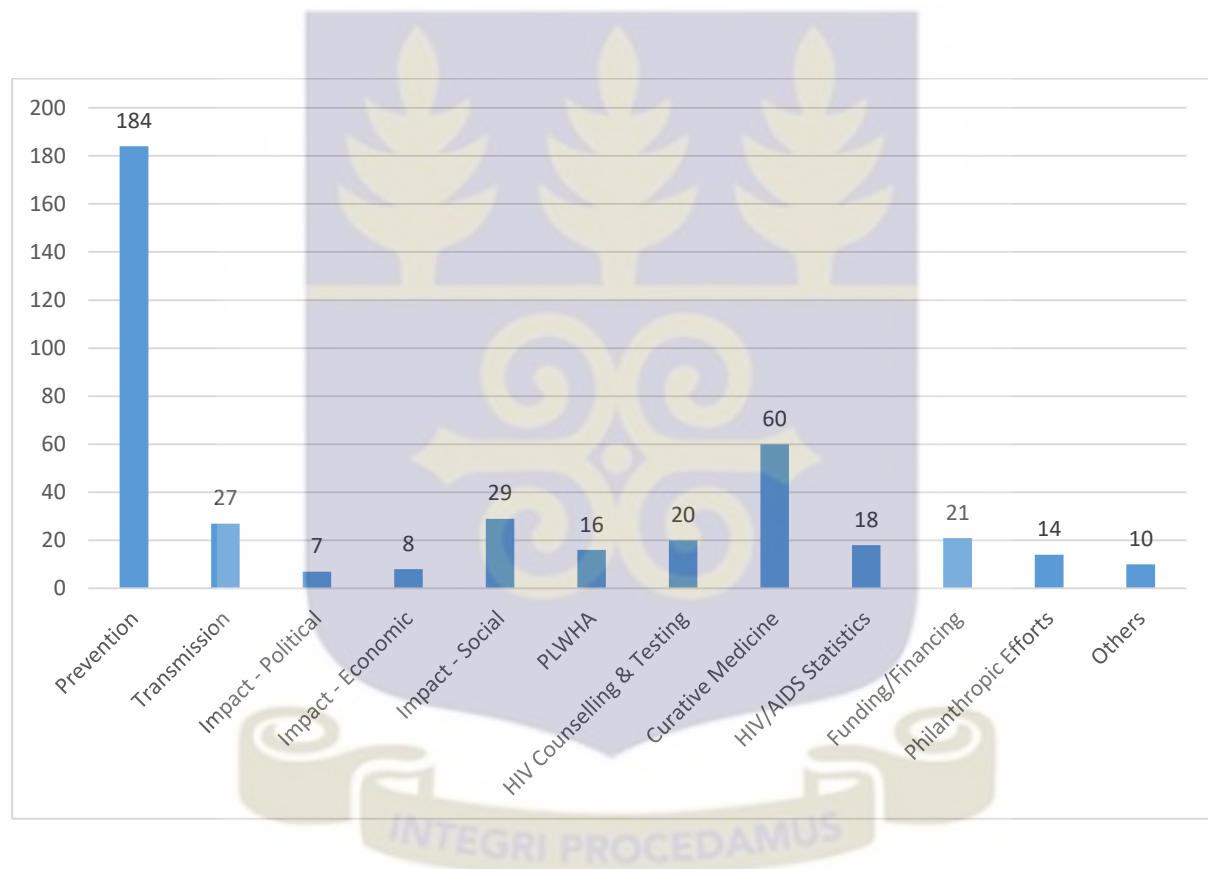


Figure 8: Main Issue-Frames in HIV/AIDS Stories

Out of the total 414 (100%) stories coded over the entire study period, the prevention issue-frame emerged as the most dominant with 184 (44.4%) of stories. Curative medicine 60 (14.5%) followed as the second highest issue-frame in stories. 29 (7%) of stories focused on the social impact of the disease like stigmatization and discrimination. There were 27 (6.5%) of stories that dealt with issues surrounding the transmission of HIV, while the funding or

financing of efforts to stem the epidemic was the primary focus of 21 (5.1%) of the stories. HIV counselling and testing was prominent in 20 (4.8%) of the stories. Stories that primarily touched on statistics and figures relating to HIV/AIDS numbered 18 (4.3%). People living with HIV/AIDS were observed to be the central focus of just 16 (3.9%) of HIV/AIDS stories examined. There were 14 (3.4%) stories that covered philanthropic efforts and activities directed towards HIV/AIDS issues. Only 8 (1.9%) and 7 (1.7%) of all HIV/AIDS stories coded for focused on the economic and political impact respectively. Stories that touched on issues other than the categories described above accounted for 10 (2.4%) of all stories. Such stories primarily focused on research, the United Nations General Assembly, and celebrity musical concerts.

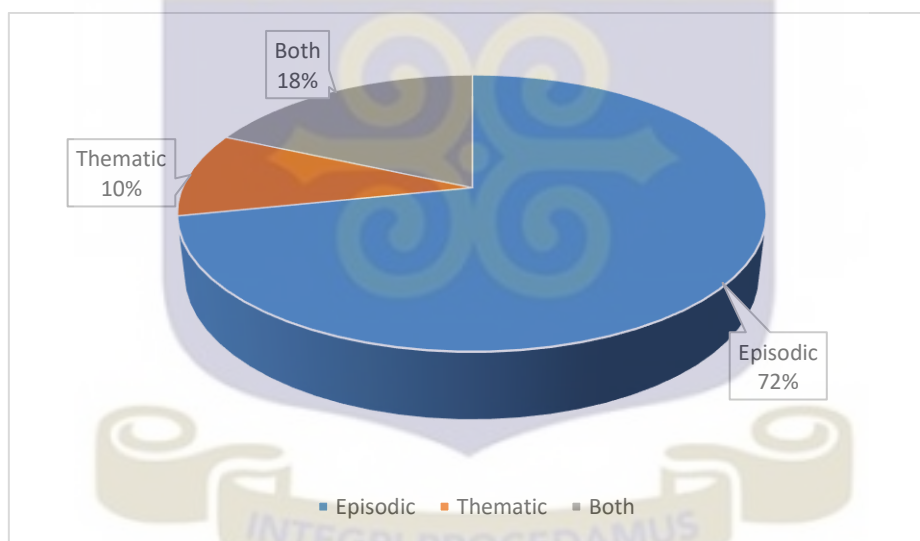


Figure 9: Type of Coverage of HIV/AIDS Stories

As has been discussed in earlier chapters of this study, media framing has been found to manifest in generic frames which are observable across various issues. One major kind of such generic media frames are the episodic and thematic framing of news issues. News stories that are covered and presented episodically tend to emphasise events, issues and

personalities in isolation as compared to thematically presented news stories which foreground, background and link issues in relevant historical and socio-economic contexts. Framing of news stories along such lines has an influence on how audiences interpret issues and assigns responsibility for them. This study particularly set out to examine whether stories on HIV/AIDS in Ghana were primarily framed episodically, thematically or a mixture of both elements. The findings on this variable can be seen in Figure 9, where 297 (71.7%) of HIV/AIDS news stories, representing a clear majority were found to have been framed episodically. Just 41 (9.9%) of the stories were found to have been framed along thematic lines. There were incidentally, 76 (18.4%) stories which were observed to possess equal amounts of episodic and thematic frames.

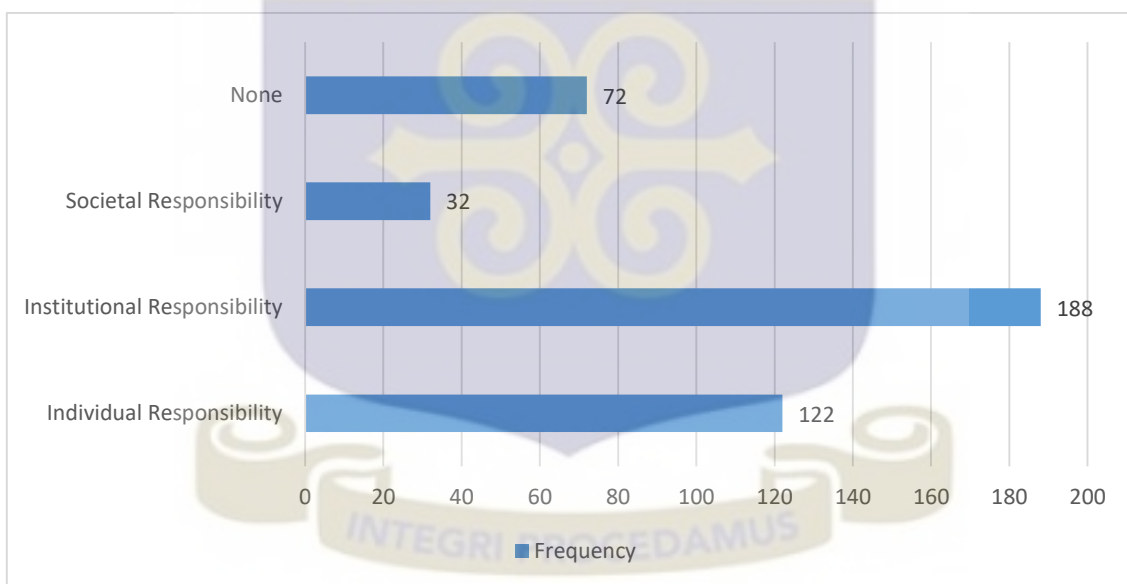
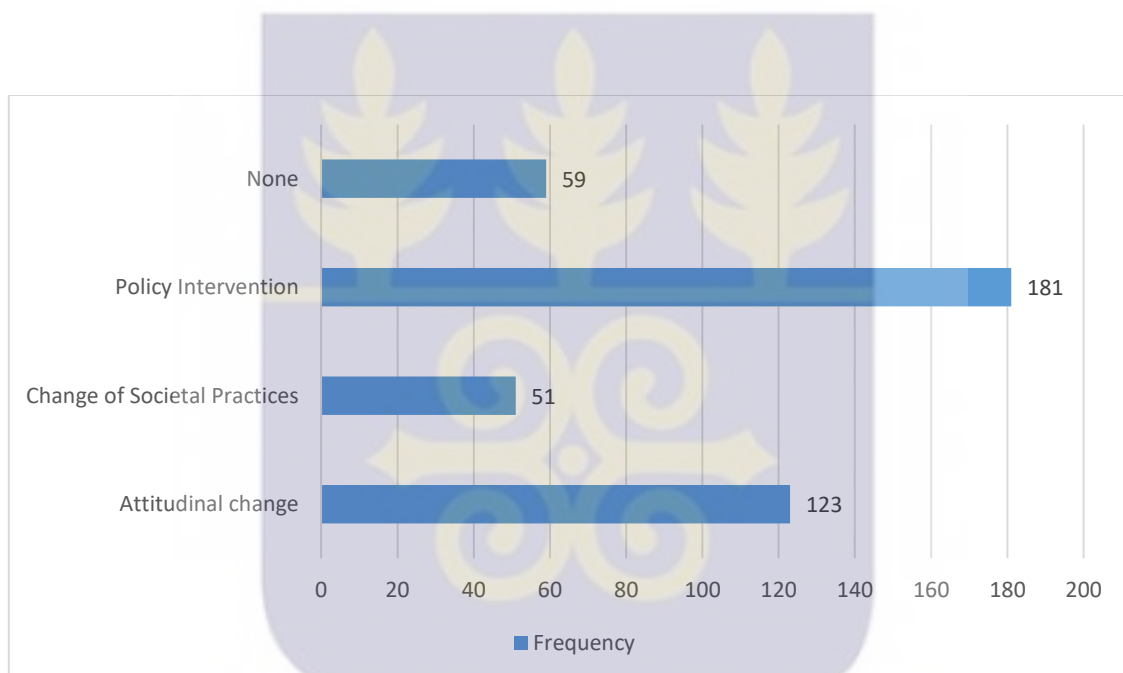


Figure 10: Causal Responsibility Framing in HIV/AIDS Stories

Responsibility framing was another example of generic frames that was examined in this study. It helped to inform the study as to how press coverage of HIV/AIDS in Ghana negotiated the issue of attributing causal responsibility for the problem of the disease and its treatment of solutions. In Figure 10 above, it can be seen that in 188 (45.4%) of the 414

stories examined, causal responsibility for the problems relating to HIV/AIDS was placed at the doorstep of institutions. These included governmental, non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations like the presidency, GAC, judiciary, UN agencies, among others. In 122 (29.5%) of the stories, individuals were framed as being causally responsible. The society as a whole was only reported as being causally responsible for the dynamics of the HIV/AIDS problem in only 32 stories, representing 7.7 percent. 72 (17.4%) of the HIV/AIDS stories examined were found to have ascribed no causal responsibility.



*Figure 11: Treatment Responsibility Framing in HIV/AIDS Stories*

As far as the framing of the responsibility for treating or solving the issue of HIV/AIDS in Ghana went, nearly half of all stories (43.7%) called for some sort of policy intervention or institutional action to combat the disease. The next most touted treatment responsibility frame was the call for individual attitudinal changes, which appeared in 123 (29.7%) of stories examined. Interestingly, there were more stories that did not prescribe any sort of solution and ascribe responsibility for it 59 (14.3%) than stories that called for changes in societal practices and structures 51 (12.3%) as a way of dealing with the disease.

#### **5.4 Changes in Main Issue-Frames over Time**

Over time, or throughout the issue-attention cycle of an issue like HIV/AIDS, the media frames do not remain static but rather tend to change. Media frames change when certain aspects of an issue are emphasised or deemphasised over time. The nature of the data collected in this study made it possible to test the significance of group differences between the six study years (independent variables) and the HIV/AIDS issue-frames (dependent variable) with a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test. Through this, the manner in which the individual main issue-frames changed over time could be statistically determined.

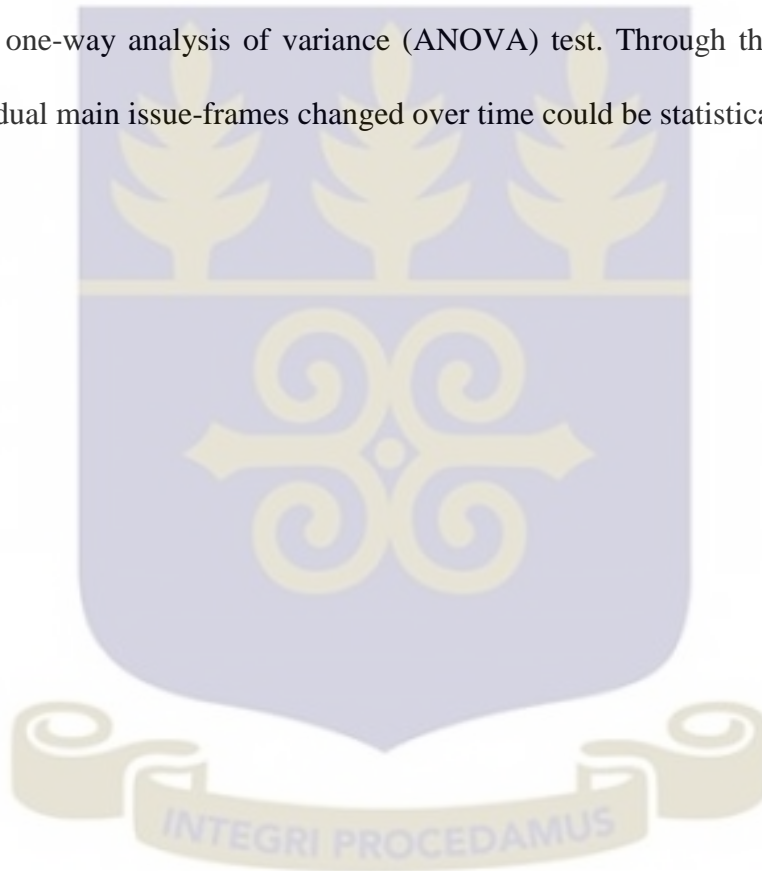


Table 2: Comparison of Main Issue-Frame over Time

Main Issue Frame	2000 n (%)	2003 n (%)	2006 n (%)	2009 n (%)	2012 n (%)	2015 n (%)	Total n (%)
Prevention*	46 (68.7%)	75 (50.3%)	23 (31.5%)	18 (32.1%)	20 (48.8%)	2 (7.1%)	184 (44.4%)
Transmission*	3 (4.5%)	6 (4%)	4 (5.5%)	2 (3.6%)	4 (9.8%)	8 (28.6%)	27 (6.5%)
Impact – Political*	2 (3.0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (14.3%)	7 (1.7%)
Impact - Economic	2 (3%)	2 (1.3%)	4 (5.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (1.9%)
Impact - Social	0 (0%)	18 (12.1%)	3 (4.1%)	8 (14.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	29 (7%)
PLWHA*	2 (3%)	0 (0%)	10 (13.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (14.3%)	16 (3.9%)
HIV Counselling & Testing*	4 (6%)	4 (2.7%)	2 (2.7%)	6 (10.7%)	2 (4.9%)	2 (7.1%)	20 (4.8%)
Curative Medicine*	6 (9%)	15 (10.1%)	14 (19.2%)	16 (28.6%)	9 (22%)	0 (0%)	60 (14.5%)
HIV/AIDS Statistics	0 (0%)	8 (5.4%)	2 (2.7%)	2 (3.6%)	2 (4.9%)	4 (14.3%)	18 (4.3%)
Funding & Financing	2 (3%)	9 (6%)	4 (5.5%)	0 (0%)	2 (4.9%)	4 (14.3%)	21 (5.1%)
Philanthropic Efforts	0 (0%)	4 (2.7%)	4 (5.5%)	4 (7.1%)	2 (4.9%)	0 (0%)	14 (3.4%)
Others	0 (0%)	8 (5.4%)	2 (2.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (2.4%)
Total	67 (100%)	149 (100%)	73 (100%)	56 (100%)	41 (100%)	28 (100%)	414 (100%)

\*Indicates a significant change over time.

As can be seen in Table 2 above, six HIV/AIDS issue frames produced a significant change over time. These were the prevention, transmission, political impact, PLWHA, HIV counselling and testing, and curative medicine issue-frames. A multiple comparison analysis was performed to ascertain the location of the differences for each of the six issue-frames that varied significantly over time.

The prevention frame ( $F = 9.33$ ;  $df = 5, 408$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ) showed significant variation over time. The frame appeared significantly higher in 2000 than it did in 2006, 2009 and 2015. Prevention frames were also less prominent in 2015 as compared to 2003 and 2012.

Also, the result of the ANOVA test showed the transmission frame ( $F = 5.46$ ;  $df = 5, 408$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ) significantly increased over the time period of the study. The transmission frame was significantly higher in HIV/AIDS stories in 2015 than all the other years (2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, and 2012). Indeed, by 2015, stories with the transmission frame as their main issue-frame had more than doubled from those in 2000.

When it came to stories having the political impact frame as the primary focus, a significant variation ( $F = 2.66$ ;  $df = 5, 408$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ) was found between 2003 and 2015. The year 2015 had significantly higher number of such stories than 2003. Here as well, stories had doubled between 2003 and 2015. No other significant differences in the use of the political impact frame was found.

Again, there was a significant variation over time in the number of stories that primarily focused on people living with HIV/AIDS ( $F = 8.06$ ;  $df = 5, 408$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ). Such stories were significantly higher in 2006 than in the other years except 2015. In fact, among all stories coded for, there were none which primarily focused on people living with HIV/AIDS in 2003, 2009, and 2012. The year 2006 still had more PLWHA stories than 2015, it was just not statistically significant.

Another issue-frame that was found to have significantly varied over time was the HIV counselling and testing frame ( $F = 2.44$ ;  $df = 5, 408$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ). This frame was significantly

higher as the primary theme of HIV/AIDS stories in both newspapers in 2009 than it was in 2003. No other significant differences across the years emerged.

Finally, in the year 2009, stories which emphasised the curative medicine frame ( $F = 4.33$ ;  $df = 5, 408$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ) had increased significantly from similar stories published in 2000 and 2003. Again, comparing stories that had the curative medicine frame as their primary focus, the year 2009 was also significantly higher than 2015. Indeed, no stories with this frame were published at all in 2015.

### 5.5 Main News Sources in HIV/AIDS Stories

Linked to an examination of how HIV/AIDS stories were covered and framed in the Ghanaian press is an investigation into the news source selected in such stories. Selection of news sources bring unique perspectives to news stories and play an important role in how the story might influence the readership or audience.

Table 3: Sources Employed in HIV/AIDS Stories

Main Source of Story		Frequency	Percent
Official Sources	Health Centres & Workers	14	3.4
	Scientists & Researchers	28	6.8
	Policy Players	204	49.3
	NGOs & other social groups	117	28.3
Unofficial Sources	Celebrities	12	2.9
	PLWHA & their Family & Friends	21	5.1
	Alternative Medicine Spokespersons	2	0.5
	Individuals	16	3.9
Total		414	100

As can be seen from Table 3 above, press coverage of HIV/AIDS issues among the *Daily Guide* and the *Daily Graphic* was primarily skewed towards the use of official sources. All in all, official sources were used in 363 (87.7%) stories while unofficial sources were observed as being the primary news source in only 51 (12.3%) of HIV/AIDS related stories. A further study of Table 4 reveals the specific news sources which made up both official and unofficial news sources. Policy players like government organizations, politicians, administrators, both national and international were the most used official source at 204 (49.3%) in the HIV/AIDS stories examined. This was followed by NGOs 117 (28.3%); scientists and researchers 28 (6.8%); and finally, health Centres and workers 14 (3.4%). NGOs were categorised as official sources in this study because it was observed that they were co-opted by the Ghana AIDS Commission in the fight against the epidemic in Ghana. They therefore represented and carried out the mandate of the GAC at the grass root level. Again, in the stories where NGOs were found to be the primary news source, they were always represented by the authorities in the NGO. In the very limited use of unofficial sources, people living with HIV/AIDS, their families and friends emerged as the highest at 21, representing just 5.1 percent of all stories coded. This was followed by individuals not attached to any organisation 16 (3.9%); celebrities 12 (2.9%); and alternative medicine spokespersons 2 (0.5%).

## 5.6 Comparing Coverage by Newspapers

The way news is covered and defined in media organisations may be influenced by various factors both internal and external to journalists. Norms, routines and constraints peculiar to news organisations influence the production of media frames (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; De Vreese, 2005). The different ownership nature and the organisational constraints unique to the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* may therefore translate into interesting differences in their communicative texts. Crosstabs were therefore generated and statistical tests (Pearson's

Chi-square test) were performed to ascertain significant differences in the way both newspapers covered HIV/AIDS issues in Ghana.

This study was designed to examine press coverage of HIV/AIDS issues in the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* newspapers in six years (2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, and 2015) across a 15-year period (2000-2015). As stated earlier, archived copies of the *Daily Guide* for the year 2000 were not available to the researcher, as even the bona fide publishers and owners of the newspaper could not locate them. To avoid any potential threats to the validity of findings concerning the difference in coverage of HIV/AIDS issues among the two newspapers, the researcher excluded the year 2000 from all analysis of comparisons.

Table 4: Comparison of Story Type by Newspaper

Name of Newspaper	Type of Story					Total
	Straight News	Feature	Editorial	Letters	Commentaries	
<i>Daily Graphic</i>	239	21	6	2	2	270
	88.50%	7.80%	2.20%	0.70%	0.70%	100.00%
<i>Daily Guide</i>	71	0	4	2	0	77
	92.20%	0.00%	5.20%	2.60%	0.00%	100.00%
Total	310	21	10	4	2	347
	89.30%	6.10%	2.90%	1.20%	0.60%	100.00%

$\chi^2 = 10.279$

df = 4

p = 0.036

Pertaining to the difference in the type of stories used, a significant difference emerged between the two newspapers as shown by the results of the Chi-square statistical test ( $\chi^2 = 10.279$ , df = 4, p = 0.036). Though both newspapers overwhelmingly preferred to use straight news story type in their coverage of HIV/AIDS issues in Ghana, *Daily Graphic* appeared to have more diversity in story type than *Daily Guide*. In fact, *Daily Guide* did not publish any

feature story or commentary on HIV/AIDS issues while *Daily Graphic* had 21 and 2 stories, respectively.

Table 5: Comparison of Story Origin by Newspaper

Name of Newspaper	Origin of Story			Total
	Ghana	Africa	Outside Africa	
<i>Daily Graphic</i>	220	34	16	270
	81.50%	12.60%	5.90%	100.00%
<i>Daily Guide</i>	55	10	12	77
	71.40%	13.00%	15.60%	100.00%
Total	275	44	28	347
	79.30%	12.70%	8.10%	100.00%

$\chi^2 = 7.698$

df = 2

p = 0.021

There was also a significant difference in how both newspapers covered HIV/AIDS issues or stories which originated locally from Ghana, or internationally from Africa or beyond the African continent. *Daily Graphic* at 81.5 percent had about 10 percent more stories on Ghanaian HIV/AIDS issues than the *Daily Guide* which had 71.4 percent. Conversely, *Daily Guide* also published almost 10 percent more stories which originated outside the shores of Africa (15.60%) than did the *Daily Graphic* (5.90%). This means that *Daily Graphic* produced and published more local stories instead of relying on international news houses like British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) or the Associated Press (AP) for stories which unsurprisingly did not originate from Ghana. To reinforce the difference observed in Table 6, at a significant level of 0.05, a significant difference in the quantitative distribution of origin of stories between the two newspapers was observed ( $\chi^2 = 7.698$ , df = 2, p = 0.021).

Table 6: Comparison of Story Placement by Newspaper

Name of Newspaper	Story Placement					Total
	Front Page	Back Page	Centre Spread	Editorial Page	Other Page	
<i>Daily Graphic</i>	6	6	11	6	241	270
	2.20%	2.20%	4.10%	2.20%	89.30%	100.00%
<i>Daily Guide</i>	4	0	2	4	67	77
	5.20%	0.00%	2.60%	5.20%	87.00%	100.00%
Total	10	6	13	10	308	347
	2.90%	1.70%	3.70%	2.90%	88.80%	100.00%

$\chi^2 = 5.768$

df = 4

p = 0.217

A study of the crosstab of the placement of stories by the two newspapers showed that both newspapers published almost 9 out of 10 of their HIV/AIDS stories in pages other than the front, back, centre spread and editorial pages. This similarity run through the other placement categories. The Chi-square results ( $\chi^2 = 5.768$ , df = 4, p = 0.217) also showed no significant difference between the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*.

Table 7: Comparison of Source of Story by Newspaper

Name of Newspaper	Source Type		Total
	Official Source	Unofficial Source	
<i>Daily Graphic</i>	238	32	270
	88.10%	11.90%	100.00%
<i>Daily Guide</i>	63	14	77
	81.80%	18.20%	100.00%
Total	301	46	347
	86.70%	13.30%	100.00%

$\chi^2 = 2.088$

df = 1

p = 0.148

In terms of the preference of either official or unofficial sources of news, both the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* employed more official sources, the former at 88.10 percent while the later at 81.80 percent. Therefore, no differences were observed as a result of the peculiar nature of the individual newspapers. Chi-square analysis ( $\chi^2 = 2.088$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.148$ ) also proved this.

Table 8: Comparison of Type of Coverage by Newspaper

Name of Newspaper	Type of Coverage			Total
	Episodic	Thematic	Both	
<i>Daily Graphic</i>	187	27	56	270
	69.30%	10.00%	20.70%	100.00%
<i>Daily Guide</i>	51	8	18	77
	66.20%	10.40%	23.40%	100.00%
Total	238	35	74	347
	68.60%	10.10%	21.30%	100.00%

 $\chi^2 = 0.284$ 

df = 2

p = 0.868

From the quantitative distribution of generic frames between the two newspapers in Table 8, it can also be surmised that whether a story was framed episodically, thematically or both was not significantly influenced by the type of newspaper. Both the *Daily Graphic* (69.30%) and the *Daily Guide* (66.20%) primarily adopted an episodic frame to their coverage of HIV/AIDS issues, and the absence of a significant difference between the newspapers was similarly observed in the other two categories. Chi-square analysis also produced an insignificant result ( $\chi^2 = 0.284$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.868$ ).

Table 9: Comparison of Causal Responsibility Framing by Newspaper

Name of Newspaper	Main Causal Responsibility				Total
	Individual Responsibility	Institutional Responsibility	Societal Responsibility	None	
<i>Daily Graphic</i>	80	122	16	52	270
	29.60%	45.20%	5.90%	19.30%	100.00%
<i>Daily Guide</i>	24	37	6	10	77
	31.20%	48.10%	7.80%	13.00%	100.00%
Total	104	159	22	62	347
	30.00%	45.80%	6.30%	17.90%	100.00%

 $\chi^2 = 1.803$ 

df = 3

p = 0.614

Causal responsibility framing in HIV/AIDS related stories was found to have been similarly manifested in news stories regardless of newspaper type. Results of the Chi-square test was ( $\chi^2 = 1.803$ , df = 3, p = 0.614). This meant that both newspapers were in agreement in the framing of institutional entities as being primarily responsible for the problems and dynamics of the disease.



Table 10: Comparison of Treatment Responsibility Framing by Newspaper

Name of Newspaper	Main Treatment Responsibility				Total
	Attitudinal change	Change of Societal Practices	Policy Intervention	None	
<i>Daily Graphic</i>	80	39	110	41	270
	29.60%	14.40%	40.70%	15.20%	100.00%
<i>Daily Guide</i>	24	8	35	10	77
	31.20%	10.40%	45.50%	13.00%	100.00%
Total	104	47	145	51	347
	30.00%	13.50%	41.80%	14.70%	100.00%

$$\chi^2 = 1.290$$

$$df = 3$$

$$p = 0.731$$

In the HIV/AIDS related stories examined, there was not much difference in how the two newspapers prescribed responsibility for solutions to the HIV/AIDS problem. Policy intervention which was the most popular, similarly appeared in *Daily Graphic* (40.70%) and the *Daily Guide* (45.50%) stories. Stories that called for attitudinal changes at individual levels were found in 29.6 percent of *Daily Graphic* stories and 31.2 percent of *Daily Guide* stories. The lack of a significant difference in the two newspapers was equally observable when it came to stories that called for changes in societal practices and those that did not ascribe responsibility for solutions at all. Chi-square test analysis ( $\chi^2 = 1.803$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.614$ ) also did not show any significant association.

Table 11: Comparison of the Use of Main Issue-Frames by Newspaper

Main Issue Frame	Name of Newspaper		t	p-value
	<i>Daily Graphic</i>	<i>Daily Guide</i>		
Prevention	105 (38.90%)	33 (42.90%)	-0.63	0.532
Transmission	20 (7.40%)	4 (5.20%)	0.67	.501
Impact - Political	3 (1.10%)	2 (2.60%)	0.93	0.354
Impact - Economic	6 (2.20%)	0 (0.00%)	1.37	0.188
Impact - Social	25 (9.30%)	4 (5.20%)	-1.78	0.152
PLWHA	8 (3.00%)	6 (7.80%)	-1.90	0.058
HIV Counselling & Testing	12 (4.40%)	4 (5.20%)	0.30	0.766
Curative Medicine	42 (15.60%)	12 (15.60%)	0.006	0.995
HIV/AIDS Statistics	10 (3.70%)	8 (10.40%)	-2.35	0.020*
Funding/Financing	15 (5.60%)	4 (5.20%)	0.12	0.903
Philanthropic Efforts	14 (5.20%)	0 (0.00%)	2.10	0.042*
Others	10 (3.70%)	0 (0.00%)	1.72	0.087
Total	270 (77.80%)	77 (22.20%)		

\*Indicates significant difference

The study found a significant relationship between the newspaper type and the main issue frames their stories focused on ( $\chi^2 = 20.033$ ,  $df = 11$ ,  $p = 0.045$ ). In order to actually determine the specific issue frames on which the two different newspapers differed, a *t*-test was performed. The results as can be seen from Table 11 above, indicated a significant difference for two HIV/AIDS issue-frames.

The HIV/AIDS statistics frame ( $t = -2.35$ ,  $df = 345$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ) varied significantly among the two newspapers. *Daily Guide* (mean [M] = 0.10; standard deviation [SD] = 0.31) published more stories which focused on the statistics of the disease than did the *Daily Graphic* newspaper (M = 0.04; SD = 0.19).

The other issue-frame which emerged as significantly varied between the two newspapers was the philanthropic efforts frame ( $t = 2.10$ ,  $df = 345$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ). For this frame, *Daily Graphic* (M = 0.05; SD = 0.22) rather emerged as the newspaper which published significantly more stories that primarily covered philanthropic efforts or activities than the *Daily Guide* (M = 0.00; SD = 0.00). In fact, the *Daily Guide* published no story at all which had this frame as its primary focus.

Aside from these two frames, The *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* did not significantly differ in their reportage on the other issue-frames.

### **5.7 Summary**

This chapter presented the findings and results gathered from data collected the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* newspapers between the years 2000 and 2015. These data help to find answers to the overall pattern and frames of media attention for HIV/AIDS issues in Ghana. This sets the stage for more in-depth discussions about these findings and how they also relate to the theoretical issues raised and the findings from previous literature.

## CHAPTER SIX

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 6.1 Introduction

This study was a quantitative content analysis of the reportage of HIV/AIDS issues by two leading newspapers in Ghana, the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*. The study was to specifically understand the pattern of coverage of HIV/AIDS across the study period, how the disease was framed and how the main issue-frames in particular, changed with time. Finally, the study was to examine the main sources used in the HIV/AIDS stories as well as determine whether any significant differences existed in the way the two newspapers covered the same issue. In this chapter, the discussion is on the key findings which address the research questions raised in this study. In the quest to discuss the findings, inferences and relations are made to relevant previous studies and the theoretical frameworks on which this study was grounded; the issue-attention cycle and media framing.

#### 6.2 Pattern of Media Attention

Out of the 693 editions sampled for this study, a total of 414 HIV/AIDS related stories were published by both newspapers. *Daily Graphic* published 337 (81.4%) stories and the *Daily Guide* had 77 (18.6%) HIV/AIDS stories. Aside from the inability of the researcher to acquire archived editions of the *Daily Guide* for the year 2000, the marked difference in the number of HIV/AIDS stories published by the two newspapers could be probably explained by the amount of publishing space that each of the newspapers had. For instance, as at the year 2015, the most recent year examined in this study, the *Daily Graphic* was publishing on average 72 pages while *Daily Guide* was publishing 22 pages. This presupposes that the *Daily Graphic* had more news space for HIV/AIDS related stories than the *Daily Guide* did. Also, because HIV/AIDS was hailed as a problem affecting the society and which probably

needed to be tackled by government, the *Daily Graphic* which according to Hasty (2005) is inclined to cover government officials and activities would have had more stories on HIV/AIDS. The *Daily Guide* which did not have any mandatory inclinations to cover government, might therefore have covered less government related stories some of which could have been related to HIV/AIDS.

As has been noted in some earlier studies in the western world (Bardhan, 2002; Brodie *et al.*, 2004; Stevens & Hull, 2013), press coverage of HIV/AIDS has been found to have generally declined over time. In these studies, coverage was found to have initially increased, peaked and then steadily declined. This finding was incidentally also supported by the results of this current study. The distribution of HIV/AIDS related stories in Ghana over the 15 year period similarly indicated a rise, peak and decline cycle. In 2000, there were 67 stories. This jumped to a peak figure of 149 stories in the next sampled year. The number of stories then showed a sustained decline from 149 to 73 stories in 2006, 56 stories in 2009, 41 stories in 2012, and finally to just 28 stories in the year 2015. This trend also supported the rise-peak-decline cycle suggested by the Down's (1972) issue-attention cycle. Between the years 2000 and 2003, the rise and peak in coverage was driven by the initial momentum gathered by the Ghana AIDS Commission, which was established in 2000. The GAC was able to provide a strategic direction, mobilise some funding, encourage the setting up of several NGOs and community based organisations (CBOs). By the year 2003, the GAC and its various partners had become very active in their interventions, hence, the attendant increase in press coverage. The subsequent decline in press coverage in the latter years of study could be attributed to waning funding of the GAC and its resultant decline in awareness-raising activities like seminars, workshops and marches, which the media preferred to cover.

Interestingly, the decline in media coverage realised in this study in Ghana is in contrast to findings from some related studies on the African continent. In a Panos Institute (2004) study, media coverage of HIV/AIDS issues in some Southern African countries was actually found to have increased. For example, Botswana showed significant increase in stories from 3 in the year 1995 to 402 stories in 2003. Similarly the declining news coverage of HIV/AIDS in Ghana is in variance with the non-linear trajectory observed in Kiwanuka-Tondo *et al.* (2012). In their study of press coverage in Uganda from 2000 to 2004, HIV stories were found to have declined from 2000-2002 but then increased from 2003-2004. This suggests that the pattern of coverage of HIV/AIDS issues in Ghanaian newspapers, at least in terms of story frequency, resembles trends found in Western countries than to those found on the African continent.

Swain (2005) notes that findings like what was observed in this study that point to a steady decline in news coverage of HIV/AIDS signal a dangerous emergent pattern. This is because the phenomenon creates the illusion that the disease is virtually cured and inadvertently leads to a false sense of complacency among the general public. This scholarly warning has potential relevance to the Ghanaian HIV/AIDS context where media attention appears to be steadily reducing.

A major claim cited by studies which found a decline in media coverage was the asymptomatic nature of declining coverage to the realities of the disease. For instance, Cullen (2006) and Kiwanuka-Tondo *et al.* (2012) found that while infection, prevalence rates, and the number of people living with HIV/AIDS were still considerable, press coverage was nonetheless declining. The findings from this current study indicate that HIV/AIDS media coverage in Ghana generally followed the trend of HIV prevalence rates. Both media

coverage and HIV prevalence rates rose from the year 2000 to 2003, then declined subsequently till 2015. However, a more critical appraisal of both trends reveal a crucial point of divergence. The rise, peak and decline pattern was more pronounced in the rate of media coverage than it was in that of HIV prevalence in Ghana. For example, with a prevalence rate of 3.6% in 2003, there were 149 stories published on HIV in the two newspapers. However, in 2006, with HIV prevalence rates dropping marginally by 0.4% to 3.2%, the number of stories dropped drastically by more than half from 149 to 73 stories. This trend followed throughout the other years. Therefore, this meant that the pattern of coverage was indeed not reflective of the realities of the disease in Ghana.

In terms of the type of articles that the two newspapers favoured in the coverage of HIV/AIDS issues in Ghana, results indicated a clear preference for straight news stories. Such stories accounted for 89.6 percent of all articles published. This meant that HIV/AIDS issues were rarely reported in feature style, as letters, commentaries or even as editorial stories. Since straight news stories are usually written with emphasis on the news making elements or hard facts, this may have led to the overlooking or underemphasising of several dimensions of the HIV/AIDS simply because they did not fit into the 'straight-jacket' style of straight news stories. Also, because straight news stories dominated publication among the two newspapers, it was not surprising that stories usually covered news making events or issues, and nearly always in the same manner. This lends support to the claim by Bardhan (2002) that HIV/AIDS press coverage has become overly routinized, more reactive than proactive, and emphasises passive description over active narration. Again, as observed in Panos (2004), newspapers in Ghana also rarely generated HIV/AIDS related stories from their own initiative. This is because, outside of straight news stories, journalists had to exercise more "enterprise" in order to write and publish a story. For instance, feature stories

by their nature are those that do not have to happen and cannot be written by formula; individual journalists make them happen. Ghanaian newspapers may be judged to be guilty of this as they mostly gave voice to HIV/AIDS issues when they reacted to news making events and issues by passively describing these news making events and issues in routine straight news stories.

When it came to the origin of HIV/AIDS stories in the two newspapers, media attention was primarily focused on local Ghanaian HIV/AIDS issues, with such stories representing 78.3 percent of all stories published over the study period. This finding was in disagreement with Stevens & Hull (2013) study of HIV/AIDS coverage in the United States of America. They found that majority of stories tended to cover foreign issues, particularly HIV/AIDS issues on the African continent to the detriment of HIV/AIDS issues among disproportionately affected racial sub-groups in America. From this study's findings, the case in Ghana appears to be significantly different. Only 13 percent of stories touched on HIV/AIDS issues in other African countries and an even lesser proportion of stories (8.7%) were on issues outside of the African continent. Most of such stories were sourced from international news organisations like the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and primarily covered either international conferences or controversial issues relating to drugs, crime, policies and government stances. The emphasis on local HIV/AIDS issues in Ghana might be explained by the fact that Ghana is located within Sub-Saharan Africa, a region popularly regarded as the epicentre of the epidemic. It therefore made sense for newspapers in a country like Ghana to focus on local issues when covering HIV/AIDS issues.

This current study also found that most HIV/AIDS stories were not given high prominence in terms of their placement in the two newspapers. An overwhelming 87.2 percent of all

HIV/AIDS stories were placed on 'other' pages. This meant that stories on HIV/AIDS were rarely placed in pages that signified high prominence like the front page, editorial page, centre spread page, and the back page. This may be due to the fact that news organisations did not consider HIV/AIDS issues as attention grabbing, hence the practice of relegating them to the relatively obscure 'other' pages.

### **6.3 Dominant Frames in HIV/AIDS Press Coverage**

In framing research, frames manifested in communicative text, could be categorised as either issue-specific or generic. Both types of frames were examined in this study. In terms of the main issue-frames manifest in HIV/AIDS stories, the findings of this study point to a dominance of prevention issue-frames at 44.4 percent of all stories. This was in contrast to Kasoma (2000) and Kiwanuka-Tondo *et al.* (2012) who found stories that focused on cures and medicines as the most patronised issue-frame in HIV/AIDS press coverage in Zambia and Uganda, respectively. In this study, the curative medicine issue-frame (14.5%) rather emerged as a distant second to the prevention issue-frame. The predominance of prevention issue-frames in HIV/AIDS press coverage is not without precedent in scholarly literature. Linda (2001) and Mekuria (2006) also found prevention and control as the main theme of HIV/AIDS coverage in Ugandan and Ethiopian newspapers respectively.

The early 2000s also marked the period where the Ghana AIDS Commission was established to combat the epidemic in conjunction with other governmental and non-governmental organisations. Since most of their activities or interventions revolved around HIV prevention and treatment methods, such as antiretroviral therapy (ART), it is not overly surprising that press coverage was dominated by prevention and to a lesser degree, curative medicine issue-frames. However, it must be mentioned that most of the prevention stories fell woefully short

of actually discussing important ways to avoid infection or control the disease. This is because the stories were preoccupied with covering prevention activities and events like seminars, workshops, public announcements, launches, fora, and marches. These events or activities were mostly organised at local or grassroots' level by NGOs and other community based organisations (CBOs) with support from the Ghana AIDS Commission. These events, mostly presented as straight news stories, appeared to be covered along similar lines: a highlight of the speeches delivered by authority sources, and the presentation of some facts about the disease. This unfortunate phenomenon was also observed in Mekuria (2006).

Stories that touched on the social impact or ramifications of the disease like stigmatisation and discrimination accounted for just 7 percent of all stories. Here again, the newspapers mostly resorted to the coverage of public or organisational officials' call for an end to stigmatisation. There was very little attempt to present or analyse the lived experiences of people living with the disease or cover other dimensions of discrimination and stigmatisation in their stories. It could be assumed that the newspapers failed in this regard because of the lack of flexibility that their preference for straight news stories afforded them. In other words, the newspapers were not able to comprehensively and dynamically address the social ramifications of HIV/AIDS within the confines of straight news stories.

The Ghana AIDS Commission has reported that the biggest contributor to new infections was unprotected casual heterosexual sex. According to GAC, condom use among people who engage in this practise is very low (18.1%) and is also hard to encourage (GAC, 2015). There also exists low knowledge about common local misconception about the transmission of HIV/AIDS among young men and women (GDHS, 2014). Regardless of the worrying picture that the above discoveries paint about the transmission of HIV/AIDS in Ghana, this study

found that only 6.5 percent of all stories examined employed the transmission of HIV as their primary focus. The Ghanaian media therefore appears to be ignoring the opportunity to go beyond coverage of mere mentions of HIV transmission in speeches to effectively educating people on the issue.

Aside from stories that centred on the funding of HIV/AIDS intervention activities and programmes (5.1%), all the other issue-frames accounted for less than 5 percent of all stories that were examined. This unfortunately meant that stories that primarily focused on HIV counselling and testing, PLWHA, the economic and political impact frames were rarely published even though such media coverage would have addressed critical areas of need in terms of HIV/AIDS issues in Ghana.

Several earlier studies (Kasoma, 2000; Mekuria, 2006; Kiwanuka-Tondo *et al.*, 2012; Mogambi *et al.*, 2013) have concentrated on specific-issue frames to the neglect of frames that are broadly applicable to several topics/issues and invaluable to theory building in framing research (De Vreese, 2005). Therefore, this study found it worthwhile to go beyond the examination of issue-specific frames in HIV/AIDS coverage to study how certain generic frames manifested in news stories on HIV/AIDS in Ghana. These generic frames included the examination of episodic or thematic framing of news stories, and the attribution of responsibility.

This study found out that episodically framed news stories which presented events, issues and personalities in discontinuity accounted for 297 (71.7%) of HIV/AIDS news stories, a clear majority. Thematically framed news stories presented HIV issues in a continuous manner and within relevant historical and socio-economic contexts. Such stories represented less than 10

percent of all stories. Those stories that could not easily be categorised as predominantly episodic or thematic made up 18.4 percent of all stories. It must be stated that both episodic and thematic stories have unique benefits: the former is more associated with awareness raising while the latter helps provide in-depth analysis and exposition of an issue. However, in the Ghanaian case, the excessive use of episodic stories in HIV/AIDS coverage might have promoted a non-contextualised understanding of the disease: one that was mostly event driven and which failed to provide comprehensive understanding beyond drawing awareness to HIV/AIDS events. This might also explain the almost universal awareness of HIV which the Ghana AIDS Commission (2015) claims has not translated into comprehensive knowledge and safe sexual behaviour among the general Ghanaian populace. According to GAC (2015), there are still challenges with demystifying common local misconceptions and eliminating mother to child transmission of the virus. According to Stevens & Hull (2013), well-rounded HIV/AIDS news stories with diverse perspectives could potentially slow the spread of the disease. Thematically framed stories are perfectly placed to address such challenges and more. Also, Niederdeppe *et al.* (2008) states that HIV news stories by providing more contextualised understandings of the causes and potential solutions of the disease, can promote support for individual, social and structural-level interventions.

Semetko & Valkenburg (2000), state that the attribution of responsibility framing indicates the way journalists and their news stories emphasise blame and responsibility when presenting a problematic event or issue like HIV/AIDS. Linking the previous discussion of episodic and thematic framing, Iyengar (1991) argued that the use of episodic frames, encourages news readers to hold individuals more responsible for social problems than does the use of thematic frames. This is oftentimes described as the unintended consequence of the use of episodic framing. Institutions and societies as a whole feel absolved of responsibility

for social problems like HIV/AIDS in episodically framed news stories since responsibility is so readily assigned to the people depicted in the news, whether they are indeed to blame or not.

Interestingly, though this study found a predominant use of episodic frames in news stories on the dynamics of HIV/AIDS, it did not correspond with an equally predominant use of individual responsibility, either for the causality or for the solution treatment. In the HIV/AIDS stories examined, institutions (governmental, non-governmental, intergovernmental organisations, corporate bodies) were primarily held responsible for the causality (45.4%) and the solution treatment (43.7%) of the problems of the disease. Individual responsibility was nonetheless at 29 percent for both causality and solution treatment. Another key finding in this area was that societal responsibility for both the causality (7.7%) and solution treatment (12.3%) was minimally framed in HIV/AIDS stories in the two newspapers. This is not good enough as social systems, practices and norms play key roles in the dynamics of the disease. For instance, social contexts such as poverty, patriarchy, disempowerment, and inequalities invariably increased the chances of HIV infection among certain people (Nassanga, 2000; Swain 2005; Mekuria 2006). Journalist and the newspapers in Ghana were therefore expected to considerably address such societal root causes and call for improvements in this regard.

#### **6.4 Changes in Main Issue-Frames over Time**

The tendency of the media to frame, that is, draw attention to certain aspects of an issue whiles minimising attention to others has been shown to change as the issue evolves over time (Nisbet *et al.*, 2003; Shih *et al.*, 2008). It was therefore expected that the issue-frames observed in the coverage of HIV/AIDS issues will not remain static but rather vary with time.

If and when stakeholders in HIV/AIDS management monitor and respond to such changes in the prominence of specific aspects (issue-frames) of the HIV/AIDS issue, they might be better placed to leverage on the media's influence. Results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test produced significant results in how six of the twelve issue-frames changed over time. These issue-frames were the prevention, transmission, political impact, PLWHA, HIV counselling and testing, and curative medicine issue-frames.

The prevention issue-frame was significantly used more often in 2000 than it was in 2006, 2009 and 2015. Prevention frames were also less prominent in 2015 as compared to 2003 and 2012. Though as earlier discussed, the use of the transmission and political impact frames as primary issue-frames accounted for a small percentage of total stories (6.5% and 1.7%), these two frames however did double from the year 2000 to 2015.

Stories that also primarily focused on the people living with HIV/AIDS frame also varied over time. Unfortunately, aside from the year 2015, all the other years had significantly less stories with this frame (in fact none at all) than the year 2006. For both the curative medicine and the counselling and testing frame, there were significantly more stories in 2009 than was observed in 2003. Additionally, for the curative medicine issue-frame, the year 2009 had more of such stories as compared to the years 2000 and 2015.

In response to a similar finding of significant changes in the issue-frames employed over time in Ugandan news media, Kiwanuka-Tondo *et al.* argued that the much touted fatigue experienced by editors and audiences might not have applied to the HIV/AIDS topic as a whole but to just some attributes of the topic or issue. This argument might be valid in their study where they found news coverage on HIV/AIDS issues as a whole to have declined from

2000 to 2002 and then increased in 2003 and 2004. They could therefore claim that the variation in the prominence of specific issue-frames over time was what was caused by editor and audience fatigue of specific attributes or aspects of the HIV/AIDS issue. That is, when journalists and editors sensed that audiences or they themselves had become desensitised to a particular issue-frame, such as the prevention frame, they tended to emphasise another issue-frame at the expense of the prevention frame.

This argument might partially explain the variation in six-issue frames observed in this study. This is because in the Ghanaian newspapers examined, the prevention issue-frame though it remained dominant, significantly declined in usage after 2003. On the other hand, the other frames like the transmission, curative medicine, political impact, and PLWHA frames significantly increased within that same period. In fact, in the year 2015, the transmission frame rose in prominence as the most dominant issue-frame with the prevention frame coming a distant sixth in prominence. This shows that in the media's coverage of important, long-running issues like HIV/AIDS, the emphasis/de-emphasis on specific aspects of the issue tended to change with time, in order to sustain media and public attention to the issue.

However, the point may additionally be made that the entire HIV/AIDS topic or issue in Ghanaian newspapers suffered from the infamous AIDS fatigue. This is because in this current study, coverage of HIV/AIDS issues as a whole was also found to have been on a steady decline after its peak in 2003.

### **6.5 Main Sources in HIV/AIDS Stories**

Source selection is a major tool used by journalists to frame an issue in a certain manner. Consequently, several scholars (Entman, 1993, cited in De Vreese, 2005; Tankard, 2001;

Shah *et al.*, 2002) have called for an examination of news sources in the quest to identify how issues are framed in the news media. Ideally, journalists require a wider expanse of news sources in order to maintain balance in reportage and tease out the several facets implicit in HIV/AIDS issues. Mogambi *et al.* (2013) argue that different news sources provide diverse values to news on HIV/AIDS. Contrary to this ideal, studies have shown that journalists mainly rely on official sources (Panos, 2004; Mekuria, 2006, Mogambi *et al.*, 2013). Regrettably, findings from this study point to a similar situation in which the two newspapers examined, gravitated towards the use of official sources (87.7%) as against unofficial sources (12.3%) in HIV/AIDS news coverage. Policy players (government organizations, politicians, both national and international administrators, among others), NGO authorities, scientists and researchers were the major official sources used in stories. In fact, most of these official sources were also monotonously used and reflected the equally monotonous nature of the HIV/AIDS events or issues that the newspapers covered. Unofficial sources like PLWHA, their family and friends, celebrities, and alternative medicine spokesperson received very little coverage. This practice might imply a silencing of alternate voices that could bring unique perspectives to the discussion of HIV/AIDS issues in the media. The preponderance of official sources might inevitably lead to news stories reflecting an “official” attitude to HIV/AIDS that does not resonate with the reality of most of the Ghanaian populace. Even in stories which presented glaring opportunities for the use of unofficial sources, they were not used. For instance, even when some stories revolved around PLWHA – issues of stigma, protection and support systems – the journalists in both newspapers generally still failed to source or quote PLWHA. Instead, the journalists focused on the government officials or NGO authorities. One might then question the moral right of the press to call for an end to stigmatisation of and discrimination against PLWHA when they themselves appear to be guilty of this same injustice. It might also be that journalists and their news stories may

unwittingly be reflecting a lack of enthusiasm among the Ghanaian society to integrate PLWHA in a truly inclusive manner.

## 6.6 Difference in Coverage by Newspapers

Norms, routines and constraints peculiar to news organisations have been identified as factors intrinsic to journalism which influence the frame-building process (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; De Vreese, 2005). In comparing how the peculiar organisational constraints and journalistic norms apparent in the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* influence the coverage of HIV/AIDS, this study attempts to answer the call of De Vreese (2005) for future research to link features of the production of news with the content (frame-building). Findings from this study after the computation of Chi-square tests and *t*-test indicated significant differences in the story type, story origin, and issue framing of the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*.

Though straight news stories dominated both newspapers' coverage of HIV/AIDS issues, the *Daily Graphic* appeared to have more diversity in story type than *Daily Guide*. The *Daily Guide* in fact did not publish any feature or commentary story across the study period. The fact that the *Daily Graphic* has more publishing space than the *Daily Guide* could account for this difference. Another reason which could account for this difference was the practice of the *Daily Guide* to publish HIV/AIDS stories as health stories in their health pages. This meant that the possibility to explore other story types to cover HIV/AIDS issues as art, science, culture, sexuality, religion, celebrity news, business and politics was not exploited.

Another area in which the difference in the two newspapers was apparent was the origin of story. The *Daily Graphic* had about 10 percent more stories on local Ghanaian HIV/AIDS

issues while the *Daily Guide* also published about 10 percent more stories which originated from outside of Africa than did the *Daily Graphic*. This meant that the *Daily Graphic* which is state owned was more inward looking than the privately owned newspaper, *Daily Guide*.

Finally, differences were also observed in the use of two HIV specific issue-frames (HIV statistics and Philanthropic efforts frames) between the two newspapers. The *Daily Guide* published significantly more stories which emphasised HIV statistics than the *Daily Graphic*. The *Daily Graphic* newspaper in turn had more stories which focused on philanthropic events and activities like donations and outreaches to stakeholders and PLWHA.

No other differences manifested in the way the two different newspapers covered the issue of HIV/AIDS. These findings were also observed in Kiwanuka-Tondo *et al.* (2012), where the story type, story length, journalist origin and issue frame variables also differed between a state-owned and a privately-owned newspaper in Uganda.

## **6.7 Summary**

This chapter helped to discuss the findings of the study in light of the research objectives and questions raised. Findings were also situated in light of the theoretical discussions that underpinned the work. This chapter in essence, engages in discussions that show how the findings of the study typified, complemented, supported or contrasted with other findings and theoretical suppositions.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 7.1 Introduction

This study aimed to conduct a quantitative content analysis of the reportage of HIV/AIDS issues by two leading newspapers in Ghana, the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*. The study was to specifically understand the pattern of coverage of HIV/AIDS across the study period, how the media framed HIV/AIDS issues and the sources used in such news stories. Of particular interest was how the specific-issue frames relating to HIV/AIDS also changed with time. Finally, the study was to determine whether any significant differences existed in the way the two newspapers covered the same issue. This final chapter of the study presents a summary of the key findings and the conclusions of the study. The limitations and relevant recommendations that stem out of the study are also presented here.

#### 7.2 Summary of findings

Similar to the pattern suggested by Down's (1972) issue-attention cycle, media attention of HIV/AIDS issues in Ghana rose from 2000, peaked in 2003, and steadily declined up to 2015, the last year of the study. This meant that the pattern of coverage of HIV/AIDS issues in Ghanaian newspapers, at least in terms of story frequency, resembled trends found in Western countries and that the epidemic was no longer an attention getter. Linked to this was the finding that though trends in media coverage and realities of the disease like the prevalence rate similarly rose, peaked and declined, the rate of decline in news coverage far exceeded that of prevalence rates.

HIV/AIDS stories were predominantly packaged as straight news, leading to several dimensions and aspects of the HIV/AIDS issue being ignored or underplayed because they

simply were not compatible with the straight-jacket style of straight news stories. The newspapers examined gave very little prominence in terms of story placement to HIV/AIDS stories. This may be due to the fact that HIV/AIDS issues were no longer considered compelling, hence the practice of relegating them to the relatively obscure 'other' pages. Media attention was however primarily focused on local Ghanaian HIV/AIDS issues reflecting the fact that the country was located in Sub-Saharan Africa, a region still popularly considered as the epicentre of the epidemic.

Press coverage of HIV/AIDS was dominated by prevention frames to the unfortunate neglect of other important aspects of the disease. Most of such prevention stories were preoccupied with covering events like seminars, workshops, public announcements, launches, fora, and marches. However, in the latter years examined under this study, prevention frames declined significantly to give way to other frames (transmission, political impact, and funding) which had hitherto not been as popular.

Findings discussed in the previous chapter also indicated a predominant and monotonous use of official sources in HIV/AIDS stories. This practice might inadvertently lead to the silencing of alternate voices that could bring balance in reportage and help unravel the several facets implicit in HIV/AIDS issues.

Another key finding discovered was the excessive use of episodic framing in stories on HIV/AIDS. This episodic coverage which was mostly event driven might have been helpful in raising awareness for HIV/AIDS events. It however might have also encouraged a non-contextualised and non-comprehensive understanding of the disease.

Responsibility for the causality and the solution of the pandemic was primarily attributed to institutions. Also, the Ghanaian society as an entity was rarely ascribed responsibility for the causality and solution of the problems associated with the disease. This is regardless of the key role that social contexts such as poverty, patriarchy, disempowerment, and inequalities played in increasing the chances of HIV infection (Nassanga, 2000; Swain 2005; Mekuria 2006).

Some differences were observed in the coverage of HIV/AIDS issues when the two different newspapers, *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* were compared. Though local straight news stories dominated both newspapers' coverage of HIV/AIDS issues, the *Daily Graphic* appeared to cover more of such local stories and have more diversity in its story type than the *Daily Guide*. Finally, the two newspapers differed in the use of two HIV specific issue-frames; HIV statistics and Philanthropic efforts frames. The *Daily Guide* published significantly more stories which emphasised HIV statistics while the *Daily Graphic* also had more stories focusing on philanthropic events and activities.

### **7.3 Conclusions**

Several studies in the Western world have pointed to a steady decline in news coverage of HIV/AIDS issues, a phenomenon which has been popularly termed the AIDS fatigue. This pattern has been less apparent in the few studies carried out in Africa. However, this study found that the AIDS fatigue had indeed affected the HIV/AIDS coverage in Ghana. The frequency of media coverage of HIV/AIDS issues in Ghana rose from 2000, peaked in 2003, and steadily declined up to 2015. This pattern of coverage lends support to the rise-peak-decline pattern of coverage suggested by Down's (1972) issue-attention cycle model.

In addition to this worrying trend, this study found that stories on HIV/AIDS issues were rarely generated from newspapers' own initiatives, prominently placed, or packaged in a manner that gave attention to voices most affected by the disease. This situation could create the illusion that the disease is no longer a threat, which in turn might lead to a false sense of complacency among Ghanaians.

Furthermore, press coverage of HIV/AIDS was found to have been dominated by prevention frames to the neglect of other important aspects of the disease. Even so, most of such prevention stories were preoccupied with covering events and the official speeches presented there instead of actually discussing important ways to avoid infection or control the disease. Also, the change in the prominence of the specific issue-frames over time in this study, could be linked to editor and audience fatigue with prior overused specific aspects of the HIV/AIDS issue. Therefore, the argument that journalists make important choices about the framing of issues which in turn affect the public's understanding of those issues (Kiwauka-Tondo et al., 2012), is one that this study also supports.

Finally, contrary to the claim of direct relation between episodic framing and attribution of individual responsibility by Iyengar (1991), this study did not find that the predominant use of episodic frames in HIV/AIDS news stories corresponded with an equally predominant use of individual responsibility. Responsibility for the causality and solution treatment was rather primarily attributed to institutions.

#### **7.4 Recommendations of the Study**

It is recognised that the primary mission of the news media or newspapers in Ghana and elsewhere is not necessarily to educate people about HIV/AIDS or unilaterally end the epidemic. However, with newspapers remaining a trusted medium to which millions turn to every day for information, they remain one of the most potent and efficacious tools to stem

and hopefully end the epidemic (Stevens & Hull, 2013; Niederdeppe *et al.*, 2013). In order for this vision to materialise, this section of the study hopes to highlight some practical implications and suggestions that stemmed from the findings.

The rise, peak, and decline pattern observed in press coverage, the researcher imagines, is not a result of intentional decisions by the news organisations. However, newspapers must make a conscious effort to sustain coverage on the various aspects of the disease. To counter any potential fatigue or routinization of HIV/AIDS news, newspapers should consider publishing on alternative HIV/AIDS newsworthy topics. These topics could include human-interest stories, science, culture, human rights, politics, religion, sexuality, commerce and art. Equally promising are ways that HIV/AIDS could be linked to compelling and current issues like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Also, researchers, health workers, media institutions, NGOs and other stakeholders engaged in managing the HIV/AIDS epidemic should be sensitive and responsive to how issue-frames in media coverage are changing. It may prove particularly beneficial in crafting and publishing constructive and relevant messages about HIV/AIDS management in the media.

Newspapers must depart from just reporting HIV issues as straight news stories from the perspectives of official events and speeches. News organisations should use diverse news story types when dealing with HIV/AIDS issues. There should also be diversity in the type of sources used in news stories, journalist must strive to employ alternative voices who are not normally represented to give depth and richness to their stories. In this regard, a more concerted effort should be made by news organisations to give more but dignified visibility to PLWHA in terms of their accomplishments and struggles. Newspapers must also accord

more prominence to HIV/AIDS issues than was observed in this study. HIV/AIDS issues should be told so compellingly that they regularly enjoy placement in prominent pages like the front, centre spread, editorial, and back pages.

All these practical suggestions to media organisations in Ghana will be extremely difficult to materialise without the support of other stakeholders like government institutions, institutions for higher learning and training in media studies, civil societies and other relevant non-governmental bodies. These stakeholders should continually partner media organisations to build the structures and capacities needed to make efficient use of the media in ending the epidemic.

### **7.5 Limitations of the Study**

Just like any other scholarly endeavour of its kind, this study had some limitations. A major limitation was that this study focused on the coverage of HIV/AIDS in two leading newspapers, the state-owned *Daily Graphic* and the privately-owned *Daily Guide*. The study was also limited by the years it focused on across a 15-year period. This meant that the findings of this study cannot be generalised to other news media forms like broadcast and online outlets and even other newspapers. However, to the extent that the two popular print news media selected for this study help set the agenda for other news outlets, the findings of this study may extend beyond the current sample to an unknown extent.

Another major limitation encountered was the difficulty in getting archived copies of the two newspapers, especially that of the private *Daily Guide*. This eventually had an impact on the amount of data that could be used for analysis. Comparisons between the newspapers had to be limited to the years where data was available for both newspapers. More effort and

resources should be put into preserving archives of major media organisations to facilitate future research endeavours like this. The wealth of information that is being lost to future generations and scholars because of the failure to properly preserve is regrettable, to say the least.

Again, a limitation the researcher encountered that might have been obvious in the work was the dated nature of scholarly studies on media analysis of HIV/AIDS in general. This was not entirely unexpected, considering the assertion by Bardhan (2002) and Swain (2005) that scholarship into the media representation of AIDS has declined just like how AIDS coverage had declined. It is hoped that this study will simultaneously address the dearth in current literature in this field and answer Swain's call for scholarly examination of HIV/AIDS in the media during this period of AIDS fatigue.

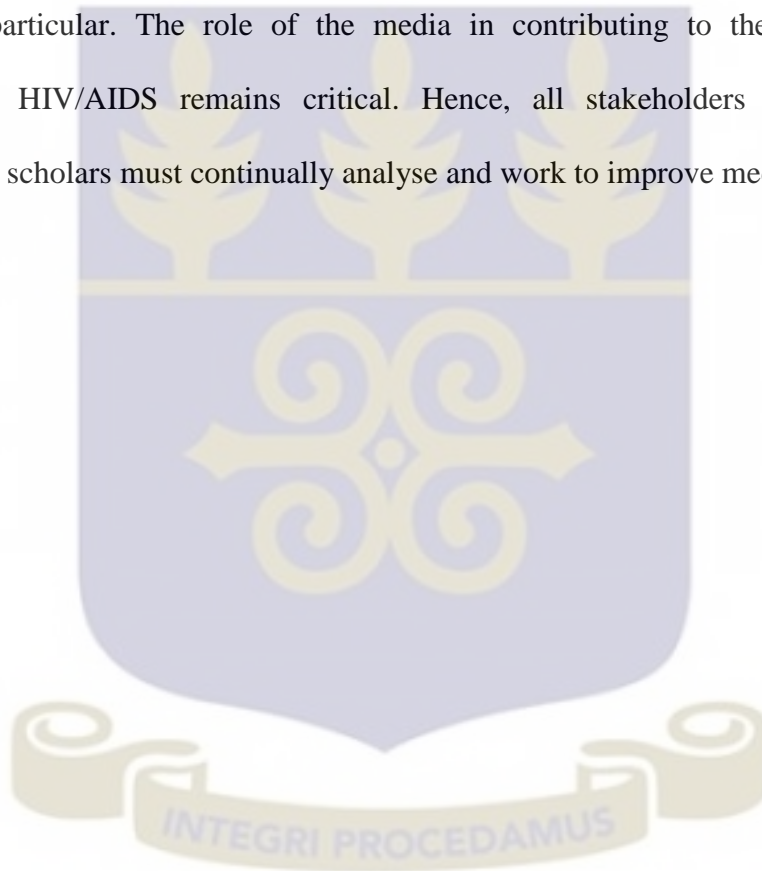
## **7.6 Suggestions for further studies**

Stemming from the findings and discussions undertaken in previous sections of this work, the researcher proposes possible areas that scholarly attention could be directed towards:

- Future studies in this field could consider widening the media sample to include radio, television, and online content.
- A study which examines and juxtaposes media content on one side and newsroom practices and opinions of media practitioners as pertains to HIV/AIDS coverage on the other might also be explored.

- A qualitative content analysis could also be ventured to understand the nuances of HIV/AIDS issues in the media that could not be addressed in a quantitative study as this.
- An examination of the impact of media framing of HIV/AIDS on the readers or audiences of newspapers will also prove very beneficial to the field.

This research is an addition to the body of knowledge on press coverage of health issues and HIV/AIDS in particular. The role of the media in contributing to the prevention and management of HIV/AIDS remains critical. Hence, all stakeholders including media practitioners and scholars must continually analyse and work to improve media coverage.



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## APPENDIX A

### HIV/AIDS STUDY CODING GUIDE

1. Name of Newspaper
  1. Daily Graphic 2. Daily Guide
2. Date of publication
3. Type of article
  1. Straight news 2. Feature 3. Editorial 4. Letters 5. Advertisements 6. Commentaries 7. Other
4. Origin of Story:
  1. Ghana 2. Africa 3. Foreign
5. Story placement:
  1. Front page. 2. Back page. 3. Centre spread. 4. Editorial page. 5. Other page
6. Main themes/issues:
  1. Prevention, 2. Transmission, 3. Impact (political/economic/social), 4. PLWHA, 5. HIV counselling and testing, 6. Curative medicine, 7. HIV/AIDS statistics 8. Victims and orphans 9. Government funding/financing 10. Philanthropic efforts 11. Mobilizing Information 12. Others
7. Main newsmaker (sources and actors) of story:
  1. Health centres/health workers, 2. Scientists or researchers (both medical and behavioural), 3. Policy players (government organizations, politicians, administrators, judiciary, professional, and international), 4. NGOs and other similar social groups, 5. Meetings and workshops, 6. Celebrities, 7. People living with HIV/AIDS and their friends and families, 8. Alternative medicine spokespersons, 9. None 10. Others.
8. Nature of Coverage
  1. Episodic 2. Thematic 3. Both
9. Causal Responsibility Framing
  1. Individual responsibility 2. Institutional responsibility 3. Societal responsibility 4. None
10. Treatment Responsibility Framing
  1. Attitudinal change 2. Changing of Societal Structures 3. Policy intervention 4. None



## APPENDIX C

### GUIDELINES FOR KAPPA INTER-CODER RELIABILITY TEST

1. Open the file KAPPA.SAV. Enter data from independent coders.
2. Specify on SPSS that the *Count* variable is a 'weighted' variable before conducting the analysis on the summarized data.
3. Select Data/Weight Cases...and select the 'weight cases' option with *Count* as the frequency variable.
4. Select Analyse, then Descriptive Statistics, the  
Crosstabs
5. Select Coder 'A' as Row and Coder 'B' as column
6. Click on the Statistics button, select 'Kappa' and then 'Continue'

Click OK to display the results for the Kappa inter-coder reliability.

