

NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THE 2010 DISTRICT ASSEMBLY ELECTION IN
GHANA: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF DAILY GRAPHIC AND DAILY GUIDE.

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that, except for references to other people's works which have been duly acknowledged, this thesis is a result of my own research conducted at the School of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. This work was supervised by Dr. Godwin Etse Sikanku.

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OCTOBER, 2015

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DR. GODWIN ETSE SIKANKU



DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to the Almighty God; my love, my rock, my anchor and my ALL. Thank You Father.



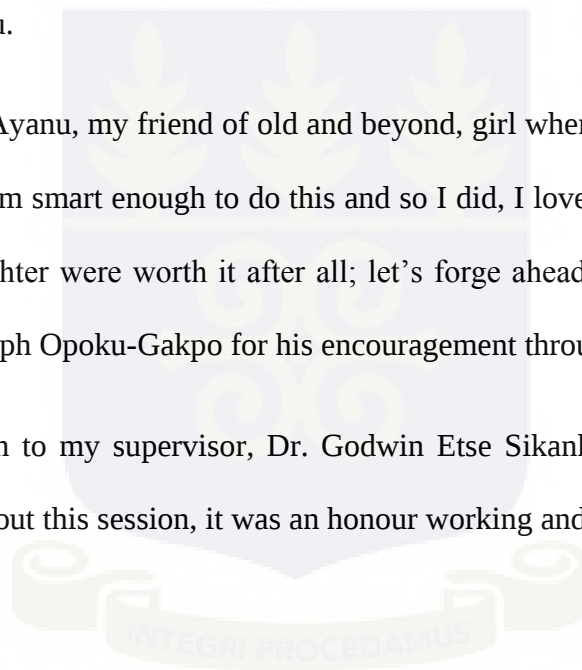
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My deepest appreciation to my parents, WOI & Mrs. Johnson Amedeka, for their endless support and encouragement all these years and especially through this programme, God richly bless you. To my siblings, Mercy, Pat and Mavis, I am grateful for the laughter and words of encouragement.

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ABSTRACT

This study content analysed the January to December 2010 newspapers of the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* to investigate the coverage of District Assembly elections in Ghana.

The objectives for the investigation were to examine the dominant frames used in reporting issues on District Assembly elections, the format used in the coverage, the prominence accorded to District Assembly elections and the frequency of the stories in the various editions. The framing and agenda setting theories supported the study.

The findings of the study revealed that the newspapers had not given much attention to issues on the District Assembly elections. Out of the newspapers' coverage for the entire year, the study obtained 73 stories on the District Assembly elections. Of the 73 stories, 59 representing 80.80 percent of the derived stories were found in the *Daily Graphic* while 14 stories representing 19.2 percent were found in the *Daily Guide*.

Stories of the District Assembly elections as reported by the newspapers were done using six identifiable frames; education, awareness creation, events and legal frames. The most dominant frame was events with 49.30% and the least being the legal frames with 9.60% of coverage.

Both newspapers predominantly framed stories on District Assembly elections as events and hence devoid of in-depth analysis of the issue. This finding implies the predominant use of the straight news story format in covering District Assembly elections as compared to features and editorials.

Findings also revealed that stories on District Assembly elections were not given prominence as over 95 percent of the stories sampled were found in pages other than the front page, centre spread or back page. The study concluded that attention was generally not accorded the District Assembly elections by the newspapers as 73 stories were accorded the elections out of the 634 editions of both newspapers for the entire 2010.

The study recommends that journalists pay particular attention to the reporting of District Assembly elections given its importance to the democratic and governance structure of the country. In this regard, attention and research should be accorded the issue in order to provide a detailed analysis of the topic in view.

This when done will not only educate the public but project the District Assembly elections as an important exercise thereby positively affecting public participation.

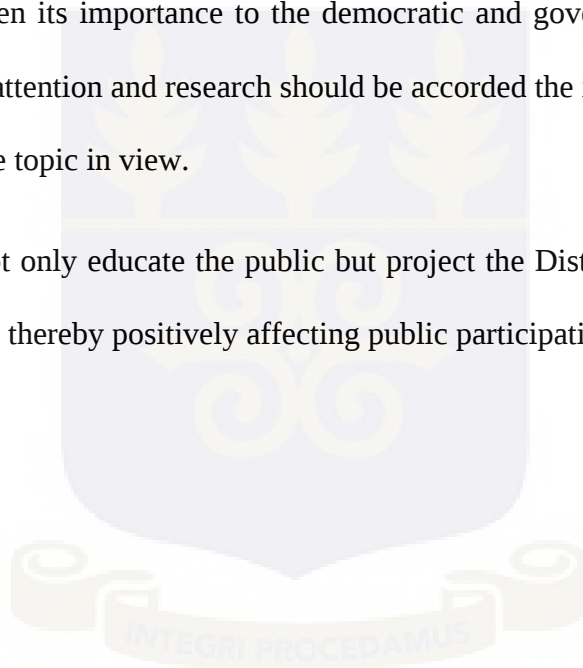


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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0. Introduction

The local government system in Ghana derives its powers from the central government under the decentralization system and is constitutionally backed by Local Government Act 1993, Act 462 (Ministry of local Government and Rural Development, 2010). The local government system in Ghana is sub-divided into three phases, the Metropolitan Assembly, the Municipal Assembly and the District Assembly. Members of the assembly are elected and designated to perform roles delegated to them by the assembly. The District Assembly elections which are held in the various districts in the country often attract media attention due to its importance to the governance structure of the country.

The role of the media during District Assembly elections cannot be underestimated given the influence the media can have on the populace who are expected to participate in the electoral exercise. According to Bradfield & Marsh (2014), “the relationship between the media and politics has long been a point of interest. No more so than elections when the role of the media becomes more important to citizens, politicians and society in general,” (p. 68). The media in Ghana is guaranteed freedom and independence by the 1992 constitution which allows the media to operate without interference and such operations include active participation and reportage of the electoral processes in the country (The Constitution of Ghana, 1992). As the media plays an integral role in the coverage of elections, its participation in the District Assembly elections is vital given the importance of local governance to good democratic systems.

This research seeks to examine the media coverage of District Assembly elections in Ghana. This study will however, focus on the 2010 district assembly elections due to the cancellation

of the elections which was initially slated for March 3, 2015 as a result of a court injunction acquired by an aspirant Mr. Benjamin Mensah. Therefore, given the short period of time accorded this research, the most recent District Assembly election which is the 2010 election will be studied.

1.1. Background of the study

The District assembly election under the Local government is constitutionally scheduled to be held every four years. Candidates vying for the assembly positions however, are expected to be independent of any political affiliation thereby making the elections non-partisan. According to the Electoral Commission of Ghana, one must be a citizen of Ghana and be 18years of age, a registered voter, and a resident of the district in which he or she seeks to be elected to be a qualified candidate. Assembly members serve a four-year tenure and can seek re-election for any number of terms. The assemblies are the highest offices of the local government and have other sub units such as the sub-metropolitan, urban, town, zonal councils and unit committees. The unit committee members are elected on the same day as District Assembly members. The functions of these sub units are designated by the law and also include functions which may be delegated by the various assemblies to which they belong.

The most recent District Assembly election was scheduled for March 3, 2015 before its cancellation by the Supreme Court on February 27, 2015.

1.1.1. History and Role of the Local Government.

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Ghana (2010), states that local governance did not start with the coming of the Europeans to the Gold coast. The various indigenous communities had their own ways steering their affairs with the chiefs as the heads and supported by elders and community leaders. However, its institutionalization started with the indirect rule system introduced by the British. Subsequently, the first municipal ordinance was passed in the then Gold Coast in 1953 and then the local government Act 54 in 1961.

The roles and functions of the District Assembly as spelt out in Section 10(3) of Act 462 include; responsibility for the overall development of the district and shall ensure the preparation and submission through the regional coordinating council for approval, formulate and execute plans, programmes and strategies for the effective mobilisation of the resources necessary for the overall development of the district. The assembly also promotes and supports productive activity and social development in the district and removes any obstacles to initiative and development as well as initiate programmes for the development of basic infrastructure and provide municipal works and services in the district (Local Government Profile, 2012).

Other functions performed by the District Assembly include responsibility for the development, improvement and management of human settlements and the environment in the district, maintenance of security in conjunction with security agencies, ensure ready access to courts and tribunals and other functions under the enactment.

According to the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (2010), the District Assembly derives its revenue from sources such as the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) which is the main source, revenue raised from local taxation, user fees and charges among others (p. 97).

1.1.2. Structure of the Local Government System

The structure of the District Assembly as spelt out by the Local Government Act, 462 of 1993 is characterised by four-tier structures. These structures operate under the regional, district and sub-district level. The structure consists of the Regional Coordinating Council on the first tier, the Metropolitan or Municipal or District Assembly on the second tier, and the Urban, Town or Zonal Councils on the third tier and the Unit Committee on the fourth tier. The Unit Committees represent the lowest and basic structure in the entire structure on which the other tiers are built upon. The Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) are set up in all ten regions with the administrative role of monitoring, coordinating and evaluating the performance of District Assemblies in the region. The RCC also monitor the use of all monies allocated to the District Assembly by the central government and review general public services in the region.

The local government system in Ghana therefore has the following structure;

- The Regional Coordinating Council
- The four-tier Metropolitan Assembly
- The three-tier Municipal or District Assembly
- Urban, Town, Area or Zonal Councils
- Unit Committees

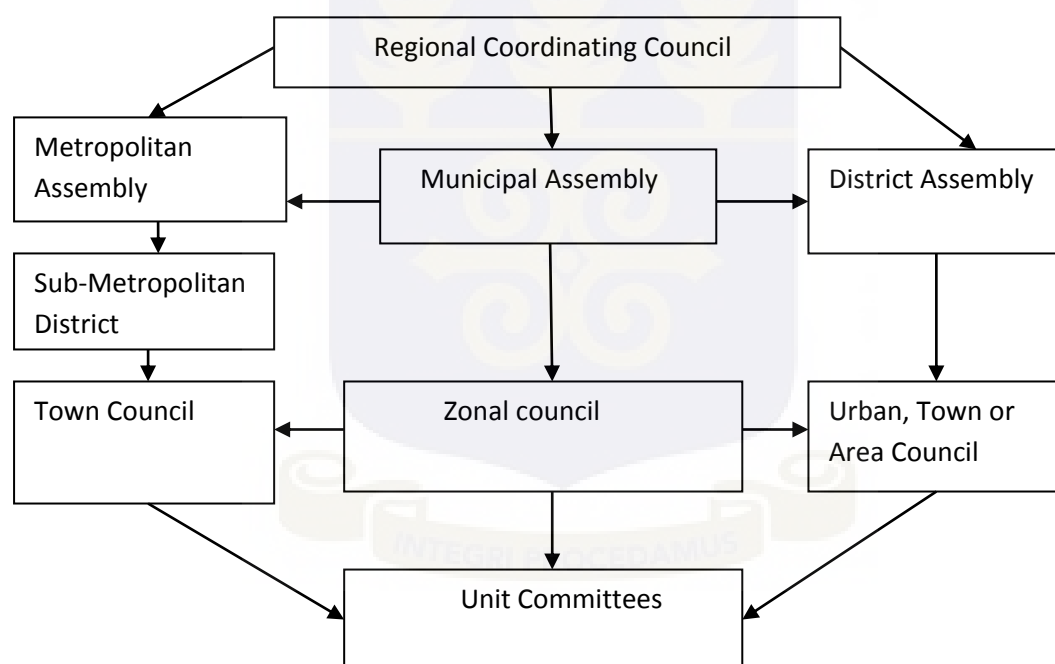
According to the Institute of Local Government Studies (2008), there are 10 Regional Coordinating Councils, 170 Metropolitan, Municipal or District Assemblies and about 1,300 Urban, Town or Zonal Councils as well as more than 16000 Unit Committees

The District Assembly consists of the District Chief Executive, two-thirds of members are directly elected and about thirty percent are appointed by the president after deliberation with

the chiefs and interest groups within the district. District Assemblies in Ghana are either Metropolitan assemblies, Municipal assemblies or District assemblies.

Metropolitan assemblies designated to area with population of about 250,000 and more. The municipal assemblies are one-town assemblies with populations of about 95,000 and more while the district assemblies cover areas with the population of 75,000 and over (Local Government profile, 2012). Currently, there are six metropolitan assemblies, 40 municipal assemblies and 124 district assemblies in the country. The District Assemblies are centrally headed by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

2.1. 3. Figure 1. Local Government Structure



1.1.3. Regional Coordinating Councils

The Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) are the highest tier of the local government in Ghana and are established in the 10 regions of the country (Zanu, 1996). The RCC consists of the Regional Minister who doubles as the chairperson, his deputies, the presiding member of each District Assembly, the chief executive of each district in the region, two chiefs from the

regional house of chiefs as well as the regional heads of the decentralised departments who have no voting rights.

According to Act 462, the Regional Coordinating Councils perform coordinating and administrative functions of monitoring, coordinating and evaluating the performance of the DAs in the region. The RCCs also monitor the use of all monies allocated to the DAs by any agency of the Central Government, review and coordinate public service generally in the region and resolve any conflict between a District Assembly and an agency of Central Government, public corporation, statutory body, and other institutions.

Other functions of the RCCs include; the provision of security, managing conflicts within the region, settling chieftaincy, tribal, land and religious disputes. The RCCs also coordinate district development plans and programmes and ensure that these plans and programmes are compatible with national development objectives, integrate economic, spatial and sectoral plans of ministries and sector agencies and ensure that these plans are compatible with national development objective

1.1.4. Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assembly

The Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies are second to the RCC's on the structure of the local government. The local government Act of 1993, 462 grants authority to the District Assemblies as the sole authority of local governance in Ghana. Based on demographic and settlement characteristics, local authorities are differentiated between Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2009). The Act highlights classifications under these three subsections on population and settlement characteristics. And these are;

- A Metropolitan Assembly is a Local Government unit or areas with population over 250,000,
- A Municipal Assembly is a one town assembly with population over 95,000,
- A District Assembly is a group settlement with a minimum population of 75,000 and a maximum of 95,000.

However, as these demographics and settlement characteristics change, the President has the authority as stipulated by Act 462, to make appropriate changes. Thus, since the commencement of this decentralization process in Ghana, various changes and adjustments have been made to the number of MMDAs in the country to suite the growing population and constantly changing demographics. At the commencement of this decentralisation process, there were a total of 110 local authorities comprising 3 Metropolitan, 4 Municipal and 103 District Assemblies (Zanu, 1996). These figures have evidently increased as highlighted above to meet Ghana's increase in population. According to Act 462 of 1993, the membership of the District Assemblies include, the District Chief Executive, two-thirds of its members are elected via universal adult suffrage, Members of Parliament representing Constituencies within the districts and also 30 percent of its members are appointed by the President in consultation with traditional rulers and interest groups in the district.

The MMDAs according to the law have the mandate to serve as administrative and developmental decision-making body in the district and is the basic unit of government administration. The MMDAs are also assigned with deliberative, legislative as well as executive functions and are established as monolithic structures which are assigned the responsibilities of bringing about integration of political administrative and development support needed to achieve a more equitable allocation of power, wealth and geographically-dispersed development in Ghana. They also serve as the planning authority of the district.

1.1.5. Sub-Metropolitan District Councils

The Sub-Metropolitan District Councils work directly under the Metropolitan Assemblies and have their roles being subsidiary and supportive considering the large size of the metropolitan assemblies. These Sub-Metropolitan Assemblies are divided into electoral areas and consist of 30 members. These members are elected from the Assembly within that Sub-Metropolitan District as well as other residents of that Sub-Metropolis appointed by President. The various Sub-Metropolitan Districts in Ghana as prescribed by law are listed below.

The Accra Metropolitan Assembly consists of the OkaiKoi North, OkaiKoi South, Ashiedu Keteke, Ablekuma North, Ablekuma South, Ayawaso Central, Ayawaso East, Ayawaso West, Abossey Okai, La and OSU Clotney. The Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly consists of the Asokwa, Bantama, Manhyia, Subin, Oforikrom, Tafo-Pankrono-Nhyiaeso, Kwadaso, Suame and Asawase. The Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly include; Sekondi, Tokoradi, Effiakwasiminstsim and Essikado Kentan. The Tema Metropolitan Assembly also include; Tema West, Tema East and Kpone-Katamanso. And the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly consists of Tamale, Tamale North, and Tamale South.

1.2. Significance of the Study.

District Assemblies enhance citizen participation in grassroots development as it relates directly with the citizens and consequently channelling their grievances and needs to the central government. The District Assemblies serve as an important premise for democracy and the media helps in the performance of this role either by informing or engaging citizens in discussions on issues concerning the relevance of the District Assembly structure and how it is expected to enhance development. This study is therefore relevant because it contributes to the general understanding of how District Assembly Elections are covered in Ghana by the media given the fundamental and basic role of the District Assembly in development and the

role of the media to inform. The study will also re-echo the growing need for and importance of effective media participation and coverage of elections at the local government level. This study will also help highlight how the media covers other elections outside the presidential and parliamentary elections. It will also add to the body of knowledge concerning media participation in district assembly elections in Ghana.

1.3. Problem statement

The importance of the District Assembly elections cannot be over emphasized. As the chairman of the Electoral Commission Dr. Kwadwo Afari-Gyan said, “district assembly elections are more important than presidential elections,” (VibeGhana.com, 2015). This is because the district Assembly is the basic structure in the country’s democratic ladder. Hence, the District Assemblies deal directly with the masses and are the direct implementers of any proposed developmental agenda by the central government based on their recommendations. In this case, an election to choose leaders at this level of governance is expected to elicit strong media interest and participation owing to the basic role of the media to inform, entertain and educate its public. The media also plays critical roles in ensuring development by reporting or covering issues directly related to the development of the society hence, making the coverage of District Assembly elections by the media an important endeavour.

However, media coverage and participation in District Assembly elections in Ghana is relatively low given the minimal media hype received by the elections over the years (Ahwoi, 2010).

The low level of participation by the media in District Assembly elections could implicate low level of awareness among citizens as well as a minimal of education on the importance of the elections given the influence the media has on public opinion. According to Ahwoi, 2010,

the media has a role to play in conscientizing citizens on issues of public interest such as District Assembly elections. It is important to understand how the media covers it due to the fundamental nature of the district assembly elections to governance structure of the country. Hence, this study seeks to investigate and assess the coverage of District Assembly elections with the 2010 district assembly elections as a focal area. Though studies have been conducted concerning elections by some scholars on presidential and parliamentary elections, very little literature exists on the media's participation in local government elections hence this research seeks to bridge that gap.

The Daily Graphic and the Daily Guide newspapers will be studied to determine how newspapers in Ghana covered District Assembly elections in Ghana- specifically the 2010 District Assembly elections. These papers were also considered because they are the widest circulating newspapers in the country and as well cut across the private and public newspaper sectors in the country.

1.4. Research Objectives

1. To identify the dominant frames used in the coverage of the District Assembly elections in 2010.
2. To identify the various formats in which stories on District Assembly elections were captured in 2010.
3. To examine the level of prominence given to stories on District Assembly elections in 2010.
4. To identify the frequency of coverage accorded to the District Assembly elections in 2010.

1.5. Research Questions

1. What are the dominant frames used in the coverage of the 2010 District Assembly elections?
2. What are the various formats in which stories on the 2010 District Assembly elections were captured?
3. What level of prominence was given to stories on the 2010 District Assembly elections?
4. What level of frequency was accorded to the District Assembly elections?

1.6. Operational Definitions

The operational measures seek to explain the use of certain terms within the research objectives and research questions.

Frames seek to investigate how stories on the District Assembly elections are framed and in this case, either to educate, create awareness or news story on an issue

Formats seek to identify the forms in which stories on the district assembly elections were captured. Forms in which the stories could be captured include features, news stories and editorials.

Prominence seeks to investigate the level of attention awarded stories on district assembly elections. This will be operationalized as the total number of stories per month with key words or appearance on the front pages, center spread or back pages of the Daily Graphic and the Daily Guide. These positions were selected as they are considered as prominent positions in the newspapers.

Frequency is operationalized as the total number of stories per month on district assembly elections as covered by the Daily Graphic and Daily Guide.

1.7. Summary

This chapter presented information on the District Assembly elections given cognisance to the structure of the Assembly, the legal foundation of the democratic subsidiary, the functions and roles of the Assembly among other relevant information on District Assembly elections as a whole. This chapter also presented the research questions and objectives of the study and with operational definitions, explained the use of certain key words for better understanding of the premise on which this study is established.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. Introduction

This chapter comprises the literature review and theoretical framework of the study. The framing and agenda setting theories support this study.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Framing Theory

Framing theory is based on the assumption that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). The theory has achieved growing relevance in the field of journalism, media and communication studies. Over the past four decades several scholars have offered different expositions on the theory. In broad terms, framing according to Dimitrova & Stromback (2005:404) “refers to the ways in which the mass media organizes and presents issues and events”.

Entman (2004:5) argues that “framing selects and highlights some facets of events or issues and makes connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and solution”. Framing as a theory has its roots in various disciplines such as Psychology (Kahneman 2003a; Kahneman and Tversky 1979, 1984), sociology (Gamson and Modigliani 1987, 1989; Goffman 1974), and Linguistics (Lakoff and Johnson 1981). As the theory posits, issues are characterised under various frames in the communication process. It is concerned with the selection and emphasis of various issues in society.

Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss & Ghanem (1991) define a frame as “a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration”(p. 34).

The theory emphasises the highlighting of certain facets of an issue to yield an intended outcome. In order to yield its intended results, communication is presented in frames and the various communication frames include: a message, a medium, a messenger, a medium, images, a context, high-level moral and conceptual frames. The choice of language is vital because language evokes frames – moral and conceptual frames. The major premise of framing theory however is that an issue can be viewed from various perspectives and be construed as having implications for multiple values or considerations. Framing refers to the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue (Scheufele, 1999).

According to Entman (1993) essential factors of framing are selection and salience: “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52). The framing and presentation of events and news in the mass media can thus systematically affect how recipients of the news come to understand these events (Price & Tewksbury 1997, p. 4).

According to de Vreese (2005), “some elements considered in the framing process include; the frame building and frame setting” (p. 52). Frame-building entails factors that influence the structural qualities of news frames (de Vreese, 2005). Framing is applied to how journalists select stories, facts, and the likes (Kwansah-Aidoo, 2005). News frames are formed through internal factors like occupational constraints of journalists, particularly editorial policies and news values and also through external factors like interactions between journalists and elites. Frames highlight some issues but downplay others. Journalists frame stories in particular ways in order to get people to either read or view. These important factors influence how a frame is built.

Two types of frames are visible in the framing processes which are episodic frame and the thematic frames. Episodic frame focuses on a single, specific event or issue at hand, whereas a thematic frame places issues and events on a larger, more analytical level (Iyengar, 1991, p. 2). Thematic frames are much less common. In particular, research has shown that political and election stories are framed in an episodic way, focusing on winning and losing, using a game or competition schema, emphasizing candidates' style, and highlighting polls (de Vresse, 2005). Techniques used in the framing process include the use of slogans, metaphors, stories, jargon, catchphrases, exemplars, contrast, artifact, spin and the like (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). When these catchphrases and metaphors are employed by journalists to communicate, the news has the potential to influence how the public feels about an issue.

Some devices used in the framing process include headlines or leads, positioning, font sizes, pull quotes and nut paragraphs. One of the important areas of framing theory is media research in journalism and political communication. Media researchers find framing theory helpful to analyze the imbalances and underlying power structures that mediate political issues and may be used also by spin-doctors for the tailoring of a political issue in election campaigns for a specific audience. Other sectors which may have the need for the framing theory are advertising, public relations among others.

Various Scholars have criticised the framing theory citing various reasons. Carragee and Roefs (2004) argued that the framing theory research fails to link the relationship between media frames and broader issues of political and social power.

Chong and Druckman (2007) also argue that framing as a theory does not take into cognisance the ability of the public to make meaning of information in the news stories and attribute the decision taken by individuals to dominant frames used in the coverage of the issue.

Despite the limitations of the framing theory highlighted by scholars such as Chong and Druckman (2007), it will particularly be useful in investigating how the media mediate and reports political issues specifically, the district assembly elections in Ghana. This theory will be useful in identifying how the print media covered the district assembly election and also to identify the format used in the coverage.

2.1.2. Agenda Setting Theory

This refers to the idea that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media place on certain issues (i.e. based on relative placement or amount of coverage) and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Agenda setting describes the powerful influence the media has on its audiences. This influence has to do with the media's ability to dictate to audiences issues which they deem important.

In fact previous scholars and academics have established some connection or relationship between agenda setting and framing. According to Dimitrova and Stromback (2005), aspects of Entman's definition of framing center on the issue of salience. That is not only the selection and highlighting of issues but "also emphasis on one aspect at the expense of others" (p.405). In addition both scholars write that: "Thus framing resembles agenda setting...the subtlety of framing is in the way it can construct reality, impact interpretations and influence audience responses and opinions toward a particular event after the event enters the public agenda. In other words, framing affects the perceptions of the event, not just its salience." (p. 405).

Agenda setting thrives on salience and this has to do with the highlighting of salient issues by the media in the creation of public awareness. The term 'salience' is used interchangeably with concepts such as awareness, attention, concern, popularity and importance (Burns, 1998). Edelstein (1993) also stated that salience typically has been employed by researchers

simply to discriminate among topics, leaving other facets of the concept largely ignored. Kiousis (2004) states that “the salience of an object is simultaneously determined by its position within an environment (external) and by its implicit qualities and properties (internal). According to McCombs and Shaw (1972), two basic assumptions underlie the theory of agenda setting. These assumptions state that, the press and the media do not reflect reality but rather filter and shape it. Also, the media’s concentration on few issues leads the public viewing those issues as more important than others. Cohen (1963) states that the press may not be successful in telling people what to think but are very successful in telling its audiences what to think about. Research methods which are viable in the identification of agenda setting processes include; content analysis of media and survey of audiences. This theory is applied in various sectors such as history, advertising, foreign and medical news (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Kiousis (2004) in a similar study highlighted salience as a central construct of the agenda setting theory.

A study conducted by Kiousis (2004) sought to introduce a conceptual model of media salience which is a key factor in agenda setting, suggesting it is a multidimensional construct consisting of three main facets; attention, prominence and valence (P. 71). This research was premised on the fact that though researchers defined and measured agenda setting using a number of variables, researches traditionally explicate the theory using a singular construct-salience. The agenda setting theory was tested through an exploratory factor analysis of the New York Times’ news coverage of eight major issues during the 2000 United States presidential elections. This research sought to find out whether attention, prominence, and valence emerge as major factors of media salience of issues in *New York Times* news content during the 2000 presidential election (Kiousis, 2004). The study content analyzed news coverage of eight main political issues. The eight major news issues were chosen from various sectors such as economy, health care, taxes, education, crime or violence, morality,

social security and defense. The data revealed that two dimensions of media salience were highlighted in the study; which were visibility and valence. As a result of this finding, these two indices (visibility and valence) can be used to measure the media salience construct which is central in understanding the agenda setting theory.

This theory is applied in this study in order ascertain the salience the media gives to district assembly elections in Ghana. The use of this theory will satisfy the level of attention given to District Assembly elections and this will be explicated by focusing on the frequency of the coverage and the level of prominence given to stories on District Assembly elections. This is due to the theory's emphasis on salience hence, satisfies the study's quest to establish the general salience accorded the district assembly elections.

2.2. Related Works

2.2.1. Introduction

Nadler & Hong (2012) argued the effectiveness of media-centered campaign strategies more broadly, remain ongoing subjects for debate in political science (P. 455). Hence, the role of the media in the electoral process is crucial to entrenching a democratic atmosphere. The media plays various roles in elections in order to ensure a free and fair process. Various studies have been conducted on the role of the media during elections and coverage of elections; specifically the district assembly elections.

2.2.2. The Importance and role of the media in elections.

According to the Ace Electoral Knowledge Network (2013), the media are essential to democracy and a democratic election is impossible without the media. According to the commission, the media provides a platform for the public to engage in public debates and also provide the public with adequate information about parties, policies, candidates and the electoral process itself in order to help the public make informed choices and hence, making

the role of the media in elections very vital to the democratic process in any country. Other roles of the media in elections as highlighted by the commission include; the media plays a watchdog role in democratic elections and safeguards transparency in the electoral process.

The general role of the media during elections is to inform the public about policies, candidates, and the electoral process however, it is important to identify the attention paid to the various media by the public for political information during elections.

A study was conducted by Haswell (1999) to examine the attention people pay to the media during elections. This study was based on the premise that the media is influential in shaping people's political thinking and behaviour. The study utilized the 1996 Australian elections and randomly selected 1797 eligible Australian voters using mail questionnaires and recorded a 61 percent response rate.

Findings reveal that individuals with high interest in politics paid particular attention to various media such as radio, television and newspapers for information about the electoral process and emerging issues. This finding shows the public's attention to information put out by the media during election season. This finding also entrenches the importance of the media's participation during elections to inform citizens on proceedings, policies and other evolving issues, serves its purpose to the public. However, it is also important to identify the medium best used by the public in deriving political information during the election season. .

2.2.3. The media and electoral coverage.

Temin & Smith (2002) conducted a study to examine the crucial role of the media during Ghana's 2000 presidential and parliamentary elections. According to them, the role of the media in promoting democracy in countries is vital. In countries developing their democracies, the mass media can play a formative role by changing public perception on

political issues (Temin & Smith, 2002). The object of this research was to assess how the media covered the partisan activities and whether or the media provided a thorough analysis of the campaign activities of the various political parties.

Temin & Smith (2002) used data from the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) was used. The media monitoring project of the centre used the content analysis method to analyse how much and what tone (positive, negative and neutral) of coverage the media accorded the parties and their candidates during the 2000 elections. The study reviewed the state owned media (newspapers, radio, television) and private media (newspapers and radio) over a seven and half months period where it uncovered disproportionate coverage of the activities of the parties as well as their candidates. The state owned newspapers reviewed were *Daily Graphic*, *Ghanaian Times* and the *Evening News* which favoured the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in terms of quantity and length of stories with 45 percent of coverage. *The Chronicle*, *The Dispatch*, *The Ashanti Pioneer* and *The Independent* were the private newspapers studied and it was revealed that 42 percent of coverage was accorded to the National Democratic Congress and 36 percent accorded to the New Patriotic Party. However, 52 percent of the 42 percent coverage accorded the NDC was negative while 11 percent of the 36 percent of stories on the NPP were negative.

Ghana Television (GTV) accorded more than 50 percent of its airtime to the NDC of which 91 percent of this coverage was in a positive tone while 22 percent of coverage was accorded to the NPP. These findings highlight the dilemma faced especially by state owned media who are constitutionally mandated to cover state events. However, the dilemma has to do with differentiating state events from the private party activities of the incumbent party in power.

Findings revealed that, though the media did cover the elections, the content of the coverage left much to be desired. Both print and electronic media lacked some form of critical analysis of the issues that arose in the run-up to the two rounds of voting. The study revealed that though the media were very adept in reporting, they still lacked an in depth scrutiny of issues they covered. On the whole, however, the media's coverage of Ghana's 2000 elections was very topical. Temin & Smith (2002) recommended that in the media's coverage of future elections, critical attention and analysis be made of stories which appeared on the front pages of the newspapers as well as stories leading the broadcast. In other words, the media should not solely report issues on elections, but be critical about how the stories are covered in terms of depth and careful examination about the facts of the issue. This recommendation resonates with a call made by Peter Schellschmidt who was the resident director of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, that whereas parties are to understand that the media are not supposed to function as mere mouth pieces, journalists must understand that information received must be treated responsibly and facts checked with all concerned.

In the same light, the report by the Commonwealth Observer Group for the 2012 general elections indicates that various media in Ghana such as print media, the electronic media, and social media were actively involved in the electoral process. The delegation was led by His Excellency Dr Pakalitha Mosisili, MP, former Prime Minister of Lesotho, and comprised thirteen eminent persons in total. The Observer Group was supported by a five-person staff team from the Commonwealth Secretariat. The group was not to supervise but observe the conduction of the 2012 general elections and make judgements accordingly. The group observed that candidates used leaflets, music, posters, billboards, road shows, images and social media extensively in the bid to reach targeted audience.

The group observed that the availability of large number of various media within the country as a result of its democratic nature, contributed immensely to the coverage of the general

elections by the media. The print media had devoted substantial space to covering of the electoral process by highlighting emerging issues, party platforms, analysing party manifestos activities of the Electoral Commission and the like. The group observed that the print media also highlighted the profiles of the presidential candidates. The major print media in the country such as the Daily Graphic, Ghanaian Times, Daily Guide, The Chronicle and the Crusading Guide were observed to have given in-depth reports on the electoral process. Content of some print media were observed to be partisan and the ownership pattern of such media was identified as a factor.

Radio and television in Ghana according to the report were robust in the reporting of the electoral process. The group observed however, that the state owned media, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, had given a balanced and fair opportunity to various political parties to utilise the medium in reaching its audiences.

This finding by the observer group highlights an improvement in the activities and balanced reportage by the state-owned media as during the 2012 general elections (Commonwealth, 2012), as compared to its reportage during the 2000 general elections (Temin & Smith, 2002). However, findings from both researches reveal that state-owned media is likely to favour the existing or incumbent government during and before electoral processes.

2.2.4. Framing of Electoral issues by the media

As this study sought to investigate how District Assembly elections is framed by the print media in Ghana, it is important to investigate how the other print media framed other electoral issues.

In order to investigate how electoral issues are framed, O’Gara (2009) conducted a study on the framing of the 2008 presidential election in print news. The study examined the

newspaper coverage of the Democratic and Republican presidential and vice-presidential candidates in the 2008 U. S. Elections. The study sought to investigate how the individual candidates were portrayed through the lens of the framing theory. The study focused on three major frames: experience, race and viability. A total of 225 newspaper articles randomly collected from *the New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune* and *USA Today* were content analysed. The research questions the study sought to answer were, what is the dominant frame used in the coverage of the 2008 presidential elections? Is there a relationship between the dominant frame used and candidate focus? Is there a difference in the way news-articles and non-news articles (feature stories and editorials) frame candidates? Which received greater amount of media attention during the 2008 elections, image or issue focus? What aspects of image are most frequently used in describing candidates? How often is age used in describing the candidates in the 2008 presidential elections? How often is gender mentioned to describe the candidates?

Findings revealed that the media continued to prioritize image and viability to policy issues. Findings also showed that the media paid little attention to the age of the candidates but discussed race, gender and experience thoroughly. The discussion on gender and the one female candidate was found to be stereotypical and harsher in tone especially in editorial pieces compared to discussions held on the male candidates. Findings of this research is contrary to what is seen as an improvement in the portrayal of female politicians as this findings shows that much emphasis is still being place on their gender rather than competence.

A study conducted by Rozell & Wilson (1996) identified how the press covered and framed the 1993 gubernatorial campaign news content in Virginia. The study content analysed six major newspapers which were the *Washington Post*, the *Richmond, Times-Dispatch*, and the *Virginia pilot*. It was realised that most of the issues covered were horse race covered the

elections. This is to say that coverage was highly based on the standings of the individual candidates in the public's eye than issues. It was also realised that, the republican candidate George Allen received more positive posts than Mary Sue Terry, the democrat candidate. Findings from the research resonates with discovery made by O'Gara (2009) that frames used in the coverage of elections had greater leanings towards image and personality rather than issues. This discovery may imply the lack of objectivity and in-depth analysis of policies proposed by the various candidates. This may misinform the public's choice of a competent candidate as the candidate with a more charismatic or preferable personality or image may not necessarily be the most competent candidate.

In a similar study was conducted by Abate (2013) to examine how privately owned print media outlet framed the 2005 Ethiopian national elections. The study employed content analysis to ascertain the frames and sources used in the coverage of the general elections. The framing theory underpinned the study. To achieve this purpose, two privately owned newspapers, *Addis Admas* and *Reporter* were selected for the study. The papers were selected for the high circulation and wide readership compared to other privately owned newspapers. The study focused on the publication period from September 11, 2004 when the elections became a subject matter to the media, to May 15, 2005, which was the day of the election.

Findings showed the dominance of issue frames compared to game frames. This finding is in contrast with findings discovered in the earlier reviewed literature by O'Gara (2009) and Rozell and Wilson (1996) which revealed that the image frame was prioritized over policy issues. This could imply that the media in Ethiopia paid critical attention to policy related issues which could likely contribute to the development of the country compared to the American media. However, both studies similar in terms of investigating the focus of the stories whether on policy issues or image. Findings from this research also showed that, the

media in Ethiopia were highly dependent on official sources while covering election related issues.

2.2.5. Media's Focus on District Assembly Elections

A seven-member commission of the Southern African Editors Forum (SAEF) observed the general elections in Malawi which was held on the 16-23 of May, 2014. The main objective of the study was to provide a general overview of media coverage of the elections which will serve as a guide for the media and stakeholders in future events. Also, the media aimed at reviewing the coverage of the elections by practicing journalists and stakeholders and subsequently, identify some outmoded electoral legislations which may serve as impediments to the freedom of expression of the media.

SAEF's findings was that, though the media covered the elections fairly well, it had failed to give equitable attention to the three phases of elections held which were the presidential, parliamentary and local government elections. It was revealed that the press gave 40 percent of its coverage to the presidential race, 11 percent to the parliamentary and one percent to local government elections. Malawi has 61 electronic and print media in operation with 34 radio stations, seven television stations and 20 print media houses. The SAEF mission monitored and assessed the coverage of all media houses but in the case of the print media, selected The Daily Times and The Nation as its sample and assessed their coverage of the elections two months before the electoral period in order to have a comprehensive view of its reporting styles. In assessing the media houses, the research focused on accuracy, fairness, balance, gender, language and many more as standards for the analysis. The research also involved interviews with stakeholders such as the chairperson of Malawi Union of Journalism (MUJ), the chief executive officer of the Malawi Media Council (MMC), the executive officers of the Malawi Editors Forum (MAEF), journalists who were covering the event, as

well as the some members of the general public to exude public perception about the media coverage of the elections. Language was a huge barrier or limitation in this research as some Malawi television and radio utilised both the local and the English language in broadcasting. This made it difficult for the team to effectively code the content of the reportage under the various codes or categories.

The report by SAEF shows the little attention or coverage given the local government elections compared to the presidential elections despite its importance to the democratic process of the country. According to the programme facilitator of IBIS-Ghana Ms. Safia, district assembly elections should be accorded the attention as the presidential elections as it forms the basic roots of democracy (GhanaWeb, 2014). She premised her argument on the non-partisan nature of the elections where the masses had the opportunity to vote for individuals they deemed competent as their representative at the local government level and not be swayed by political affiliations.

The method used which included the assessment of both electronic and print media expanded the scope of samples which goes a long way to validate the generalisation of the results or findings. The interviewing of stakeholder, journalists and some members of the public helped expound the views and the perceptions of the various interest groups which helps provides a deeper insight into the research. .

A study conducted by Farnsworth & Litcher (2012) investigated the media coverage of presidential elections as compared to gubernatorial elections with a case study of the 2005 gubernatorial elections in Virginia which could be equated to local government elections. This study sought to answer the questions, “do reporters covering the Virginia gubernatorial elections do a better job than their counterparts on a presidential campaign trail? This was in the bid to compare the level of attention given to gubernatorial elections in comparism to the

presidential elections as well as identify the level of attention given to the various candidates and how issues related to the various candidates were framed. Virginia was chosen because its gubernatorial elections take place in a calendar different from the presidential and senatorial elections. This according to the researchers allowed for a clearer test of gubernatorial news content. This study was conducted by content analysing the election reports by newspaper and television on the 2005 gubernatorial election. The contest was between Lieutenant Governor Tim Kaine, the Democratic nominee Jerry Kilgore and Virginia Senator H. Russell Potts Jr.

The selected newspapers include; the *Washington Post*, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, *Virginian Pilot* and *Roanoke Times and World News*. Data collected was from the sampled newspapers from October 2005 to November 2005. Findings revealed 344 news stories were realised from the various sampled sources representing the number of stories on the gubernatorial elections as reported by the media. *Richmond Times-Dispatch* accounted for 118, the *Washington Post* accounted for 96 of the stories, and the *Virginian Pilot* accounted for 45 of the campaign stories on gubernatorial elections. According to the researchers the level of attention given to gubernatorial elections by the various newspapers was far less compared to the attention given to presidential elections in Virginia. This finding seemingly can be equated to the findings on the media's attention and coverage of District Assembly elections in the Ghanaian context as reviewed earlier (Temin and Smith, 2002). As well as the accordance of one percent of the media space by Malawian Media to District Assembly elections (SAEF, 2014). Content wise, it was realised that coverage of the gubernatorial elections were framed on ideology, campaign performance, job performance, general personal evaluation, character and other.

This finding shows that similar to District Assembly Elections receiving little attention from the media, the media in the America also dedicated little attention to the gubernatorial

elections as compared to the presidential or general elections. However, though little attention was given to the gubernatorial elections, its coverage was detailed compared to the coverage given to District Assembly elections as discovered by Temin & Smith (2002). Here, issues covered were framed broadly to satisfy the various facets where the candidates are expected performed as mentioned earlier. This accounted for a detailed coverage of the gubernatorial elections as compared to the coverage of the District Assembly elections.

The reviewed works contributes to this study immensely as part of the reviewed literature sets the premise on the importance of the role of the media in elections as it goes to highlight the importance of media coverage during District Assembly elections. Also, some studies reviewed focused on the dominant frames used in the reporting of District Assembly elections which is a vital objective this study seeks to investigate.

2.2.6. Summary

This chapter expatiated on the theories underpinning the study and also reviewed related works or researches in similar fields. Owing to researches or studies on District Assembly elections, the study extended its review of related works to other jurisdictions such as media coverage of general elections in the local context and beyond. The study as well reviewed the gubernatorial elections which are held in the European countries due to their similarities in terms of the fundamental nature of those elections likened to the District Assembly elections.

The literature reviewed generally focused on the framing pattern of electoral stories, how the media covered elections, methodology, theoretical framework and findings of the related works from other countries contributed to premising this research in perspective for comparison in terms of methodology used. Therefore, this study draws its methodology from similar studies reviewed because the reviewed literature were more similar and relevant to this study in terms of methodology used.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction

This section of the study highlights the process by which the coverage of 2010 District Assembly elections in Ghana by the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* was studied. Content Analysis, a quantitative research method, was selected as the most appropriate method for this study as it provided the needed techniques for examining the coverage of the 2010 District Assembly elections by the two selected newspapers. The content analysis procedure provided a systematic procedure which highlighted the dominant frames in the coverage, the frequency, format and prominence of the stories on the 2010 District Assembly elections. The composite week sampling method was used in the sampling various editions of the selected newspapers for the study. Content Analysis was particularly useful to this study due to the ability to analyse large texts using the method (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

3.1. Content Analysis

In order to address the objectives and research questions raised, this study employed the content analysis. The content analysis was appropriate for this study because it helps in analysing texts. In addition, this method is a popular approach in efficiently investigating the content of media (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). According to Kerlinger (2000), “content analysis is a method of studying and analysing communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables,”(p.156). Content analysis has also been defined as, “a tool for observing and analysing the messages of certain communicators (Severin & Tankard, 1988). It is also defined as a systematic procedure for objectively determining what is being reported in the media (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2008).

Though the definitions highlight observation and analysis as important tools in this method, Kerlinger's definition highlights three major concepts of the method which are systematic, objectivity and quantitative. Content analysis is said to be systematic because it follows certain steps or guidelines. These steps include; formation of the research question or hypothesis, definition of the population in question, selection of an appropriate sample from the population, selection and definition of a unit of analysis, construction of the categories of content to be analysed, establishment of a quantification system, training of coders, coding content, analysis of data and conclusion (Wimmer and Dominick, 2002). The method is said to be objective because the personal biases of the researcher is exempted and the findings and findings should yield similar results should another researcher replicate the study. And, the quantitative nature of the method allows for the representation of findings for interpretation.

This study employed the content analysis method to enable an objective, systematic, quantitative description of the content of the newspapers under study (Berelson, 1954). Content analysis as method has been used in several studies involving media coverage of elections such as SAEF's report on Malawi's 2014 elections (SAEF, 2014), as well as the evaluation of the role of the media in Ghana's 2000 elections (Temin & Smith, 2002). The steps and guidelines outlined by Wimmer and Dominick (2002) served as a guide for the study.

3.2. Population

The population for analysis was all news stories on the 2010 District Assembly elections published in all editions of the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* from January 2010 to December 2010. The *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers are published six times in a week (Monday to Saturday). Thus, a total number of 312 editions of newspapers are

published for each of the papers in a year therefore amounting to a total population of 625 newspapers

3.3. Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The composite week method in the selection of the desired sample from the population was used in this research. Here, the dates of all Mondays in a month will be written and one date randomly selected. This will be done for the rest of the 5 days (Monday to Saturday) until all the days of the week have been accounted for to represent 1 selected weeks of a month (Wimmer & Dominick, 2002). This will also ensure a fair representation of the various daily editions and content across the month as the content of the newspapers may vary from day to day. *Daily graphic* for instance may have the Gender Column, the Education Column and the Editorial sections on differing days of the week.

Using the Composite weeks sampling in the selection of the sample, the sample size of 72 newspapers for each publication will be used. Hence, a total size of 144 news papers will be used in the study out of the 625 total populations of both the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* Newspapers over the one year period of the study.

3.4.Units of Analysis.

The units of analyses for the study were the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*. These two newspapers were selected to satisfy the categories of both private and public newspapers in the country. Also, according to research conducted by the Kuehnhenrich (2012), the *Daily Graphic* is the highest circulating newspaper in the country with the *Daily Guide* being the second in that regard. Other studies that have used the *Daily Guide* and the *Daily Graphic* as their units of analyses include; a study by Lokko (2011) to investigate newspaper coverage of oil and Gas issues in Ghana as well as a study by Botwe (2009) to investigate media coverage

of nutrition issues from 2006 to 2007. This study focusing on these papers will also help to analyse how the two most prominent newspapers in the country cover District Assembly elections. Articles which were studied include; features, editorials, straight news stories and letters to the editor. Preliminary coding exercise undertaken to test the coding instrument led to the identification of four dominant frames which will be considered in this study. These dominant frames include; education, awareness creation, events as well as legal frames. This study therefore will seek to investigate the dominant frames used in the coverage of the elections, the prominence accorded to District Assembly elections, frequency of the stories, and the format used in the reportage.

3.5. Data collection and Instrument.

Sampled editions were collected for analysis from the library of the School of Communications studies at the University of Ghana as well as the office of the *Daily Guide* newspaper in Accra. The data collection instruments for this research were the coding sheet and the coding guide. This was used in coding the various variables and themes found to be in the context of local government elections. Data derived were categorized of under the various themes or codes for measurement. The Coding guide was developed and used to guide the coding of stories in the newspapers in the in order to conceptualise and operationalise a wide variety of peculiar items of information to more limited set of attributes (Barbie, 1992).

3.6. Data Analysis and Presentation

The coded data from the sampled newspapers were analysed using the Statistics Package for Social Science (SPSS). Data derived from the content analysis of the three sampled newspapers were presented using the chi-square and frequencies. Frequencies such as the Graph and the Pie-Chart were used in the presentation of the data. The discussion will be

done in line with the research questions, objectives and theories enacted at the early stages of the research.



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.0. Introduction

This study sought to investigate the coverage of the 2010 District Assembly elections in Ghana by the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*. The study examined how the issues were framed, the format of the stories, and the level of prominence accorded stories on District Assembly elections as well as the frequency of the stories. This chapter is dedicated to the presentation of findings of this study. The information presented in tables and charts show the results obtained as they respond to the research objectives.

4.1. Description of the Content of the Newspapers.

In all, there were 73 stories on District Assembly elections in both newspapers in the year 2010. Stories in the newspaper however, were captured in various formats such as the straight news story, the opinion pieces, features, editorials, and letters to the editor among others. The *Daily Graphic* gave more attention in terms of coverage of issues relating to District Assembly elections as compared to the *Daily guide* newspaper with 59 stories for the entire year representing 80.8 percent of coverage and 14 stories representing 19.2 percent of the coverage. The percentage category was used in the presentation and analysis of the data. The highest number of stories found in an edition was four stories in the *Daily Graphic's* publication in the months of September and October 2010. The months of April and August sampled editions also recorded the second highest figure of three stories in an edition.

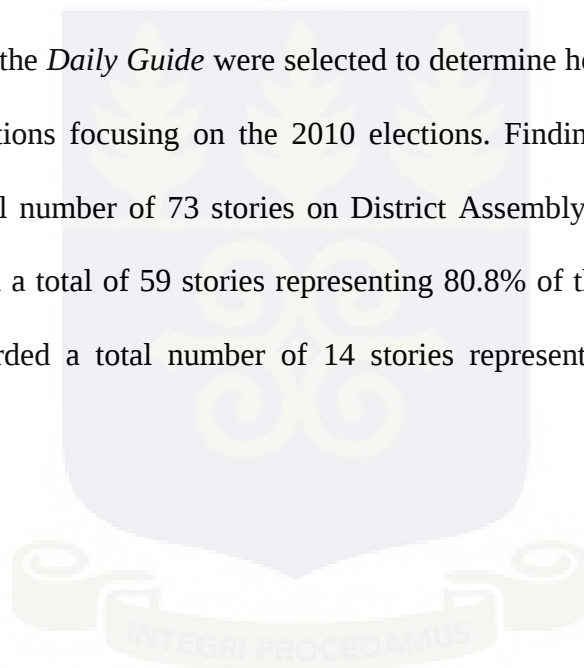
4.2. Data Obtained

Table 1. Stories by Newspapers

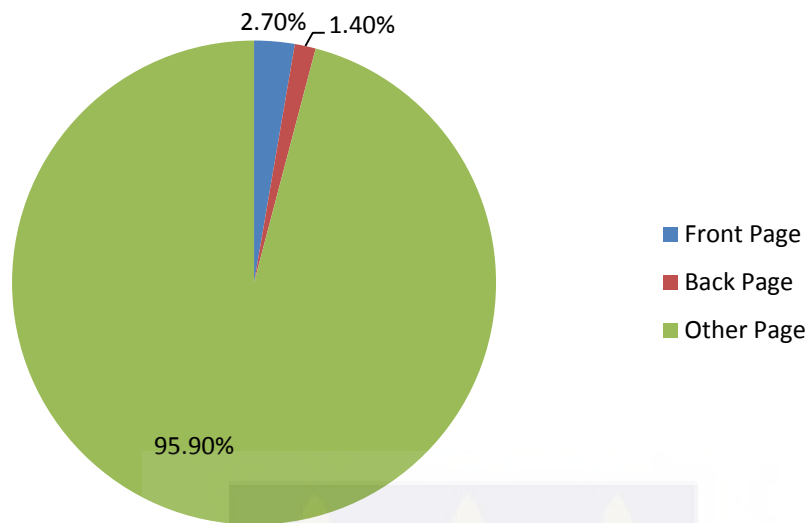
Name of Newspaper	Frequency	Percent
DAILY GRAHIC	59	80.8%
DAILY GUIDE	14	19.2%
Total	73	100.0%

4.2.1. Stories by Newspapers.

The *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* were selected to determine how the media covers the District Assembly elections focusing on the 2010 elections. Findings captured in Table 1 above, there was a total number of 73 stories on District Assembly elections in 2010. The *Daily Graphic* recorded a total of 59 stories representing 80.8% of the total population. The *Daily Guide* also recorded a total number of 14 stories representing 19.2% of the total population.

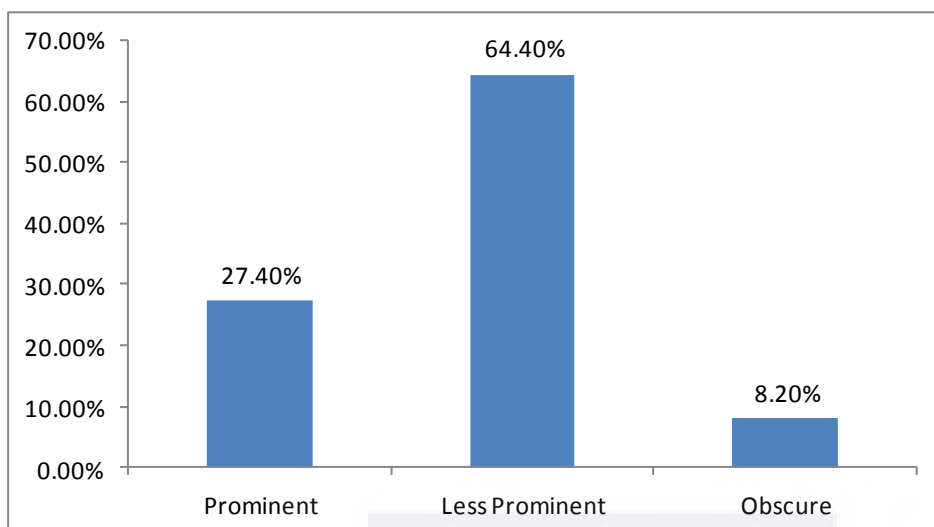


4.2.2. Figure 2. Page of Story.



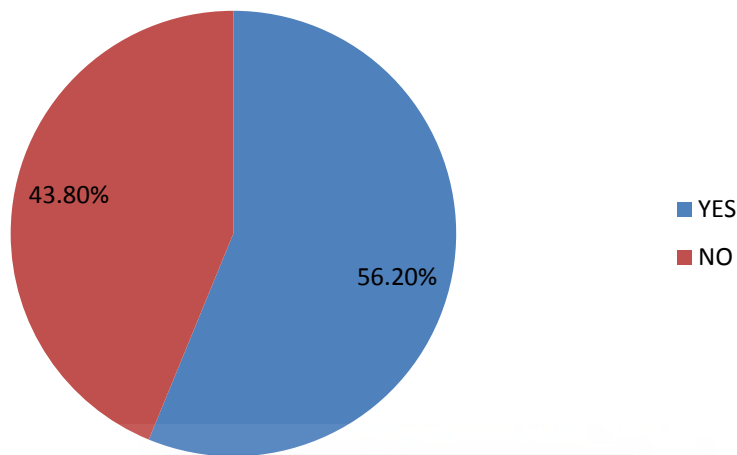
4.2.2. Page of Story

In order to determine prominence, the research sought to identify pages of the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* on which stories of the 2010 District Assembly elections were captured. The pages taken into consideration were the front page, the centre spread, the back page and others. As summarised in Figure 1 above, 95.9% of the stories were positioned in other pages aside the front page, centre spread and back page. Also, 2.70% of the stories were positioned on the front page of the newspapers and 1.40% of the stories were positioned at the back page.

4.2.3. Figure 3. Headline Size.**4.2.3. Headline Size.**

In determining prominence accorded stories on the 2010 District Assembly elections, the headline size was taken into consideration. As summarised in Figure 3 above, 64.40% of headline for the 2010 District Assembly elections were less prominent, 27.40% of headlines were prominent and 8.20% of headline stories were obscure.

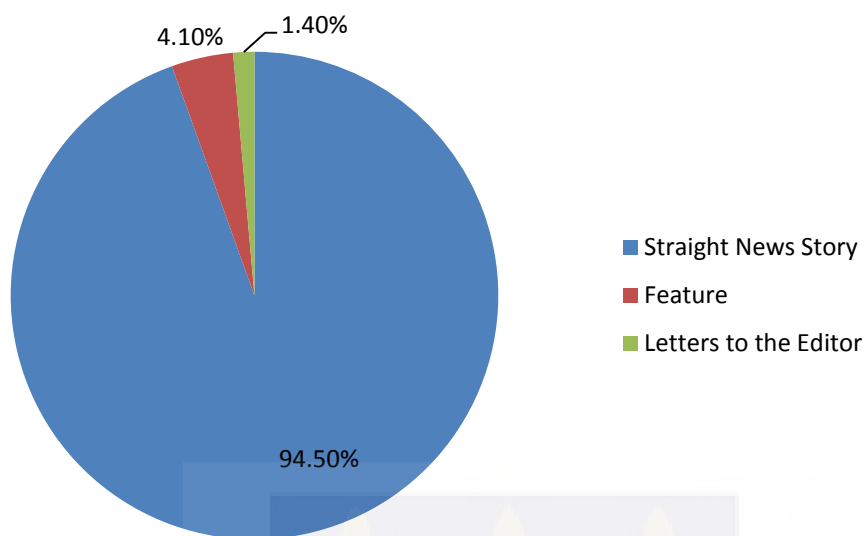
4.2.4. Figure 4. Photograph.



4.2.4. Photograph

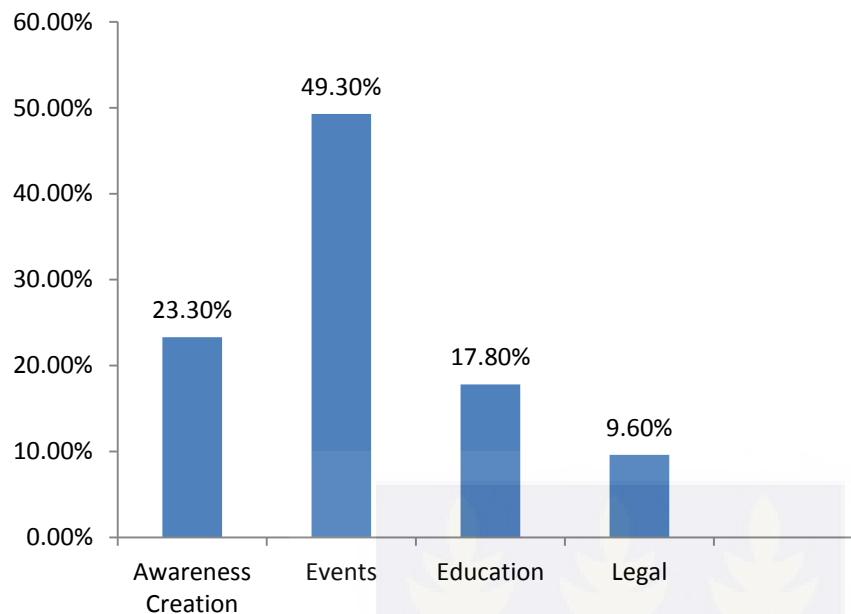
In order to establish the level of prominence given to a stories on the 2010 District Assembly elections by the selected newspapers, the study sought to examine whether the stories were accompanied by photographs or not. Findings from the newspapers showed that 56.2% of analyzed stories on the 2010 District Assembly elections were accompanied by photographs and 43.80% of stories had no photographs.

4.2.5. Figure 5. Format of Story



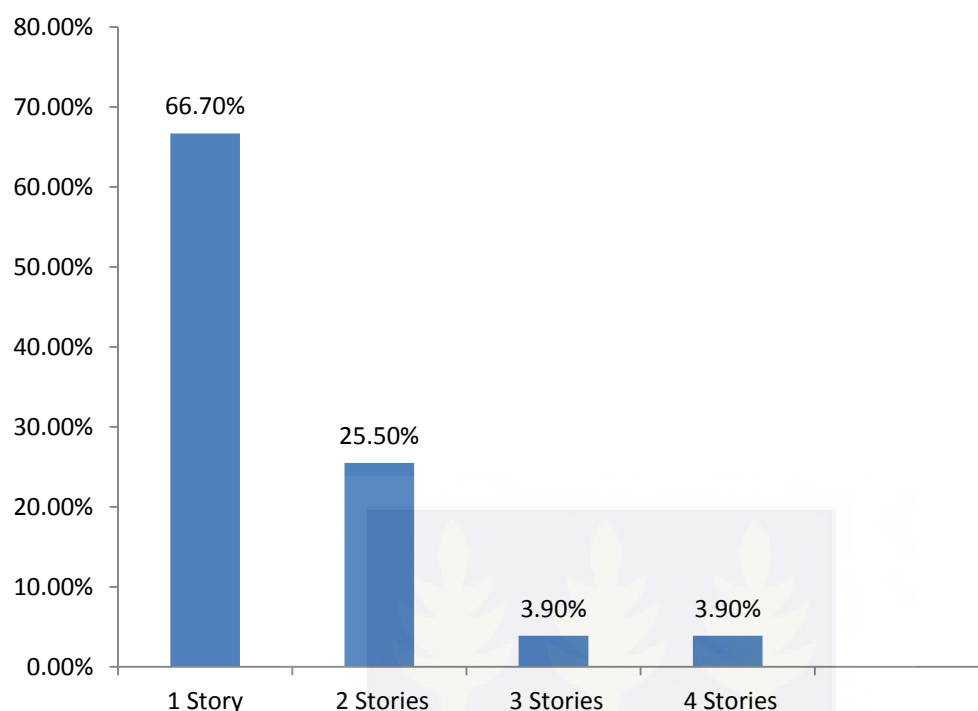
4.2.5. Format of the Story.

The study sought to find out how the stories on the 2010 District Assembly elections were captured and various categories such as the straight news story, Feature, Editorials, Letters to the Editor and Other formats were considered. As captured in Figure 5 above, 94.5% of stories being straight news stories, with 4.10% being Features and 1.4% of the stories being letters to the editor. None of the stories analyzed fell within the editorial category.

4.2.6. Figure 6. How the stories were framed.**4.2.6. How The Stories Were Framed.**

In order to identify how stories on the 2010 District Assembly elections were captured by the selected newspapers with framing categories such as awareness creation, events, education and legal frames as focal areas. As highlighted in Figure 7 above, 49.30% of stories analyzed were framed as events, 23.30% of the stories analyzed were captured to create awareness, 17.80% of stories were framed to educate the public and 9.60% of stories were legal frames.

4.2.7. Figure 7. Frequency of the Stories.



4.2.7. Frequency of the Stories.

In order to establish frequency, the number of stories on the 2010 District Assembly in an edition was taken into consideration. Figure 8 above shows that 66.70% of editions of the selected newspapers had one story in an edition. Also, 25.50% of editions of the selected newspapers had two stories on in an edition, 3.90% of the sampled newspapers had 3 stories in an edition and 3.90% had 4 stories in an edition.

4.3. Summary.

This chapter focused on the findings of the data derived from content analyzing the 2010 editions of the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*. The findings reveal that the *Daily Graphic* had more stories on the 2010 District Assembly elections compared to the *Daily Guide*. Four major frames dominated the coverage of stories on District Assembly elections; these were the awareness creation frame, education frame, event frame and the legal frames.

This chapter also reveals that majority of stories on District Assembly elections were journalists initiated than initiated by other sources such as the electoral commission, government authority, advocacy groups and district assemblies. Also, most stories on the 2010 District Assembly elections were captured as straight news stories as compared to feature stories, letters to the editor with none of the stories being editorial.

Findings also reveal that more than half of the sampled stories were accompanied with photograph. However, the headline sizes of the sampled stories were less prominent. Most stories on the 2010 District Assembly elections were found on pages other than the front page, back page, the centre spread and the back page.



CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS AND ANALYSIS

5.0. Introduction

This study sought to investigate how the 2010 District Assembly elections were covered by the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*. This chapter discusses the findings of the study by relating it to the relevant theoretical frameworks and related works. The discussions of the findings will be done under various themes such as the frame utilized in the coverage, the format of the stories, the frequency of the stories as well as the level of prominence accorded the District Assembly elections. Here, the content analysis of newspaper approach used by Lokko (2011) served as a useful guide. Though the study conducted by Lokko (2011) focused on issues on oil and gas which varies from District Assembly elections, was very similar in terms of methodology, theories and intent to investigate newspapers coverage of an issue, hence its use. The discussion will be done in line with the research objectives, theoretical framework and related works.

5.1. Format of the story.

An objective of this study was to identify the formats used in the coverage of stories on District Assembly elections. The findings of this study showed that newspapers largely captured stories on District Assembly elections in straight news formats. Findings showed a little over 90% of stories were captured as straight news stories with less than 10% of stories captured as feature stories and letters to the editor and none captured as editorials. This finding highlights the little or no attention the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* in itself accorded to District Assembly elections as editorials reflect the newspapers' view or position on an issue. The presence of less than 5% of features highlight the non-predominance of detailed, contextualised and analytical stories on District Assembly elections from the public-usually experts on the subject matter. This may limit thorough and in-depth education of the

general public on District Assembly elections as the feature as a writing format stipulates a detailed account of an issue. The less than 2% recorded for letters to the editor shows an abysmal public interaction on District Assembly elections as the letters to the editor allows of public expression of views on an issue. Findings however revealed that, over 90% of stories were captured as straight news stories which tended to be event oriented. This entrenches the finding by Gadzekpo *et al.* (2009) that most news stories in Ghana were routine and devoid of analysis and probing. Tankard *et al* (1991) describes frames as “ central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration”(p. 34). Thus the organizing idea for news content on District Assembly elections according to Tankard *et al* (1991) which supplies the context of the stories as straight news stories may yield possible consequences of depriving the public of vital detailed analysis of District Assembly elections. This could negatively affect citizens knowledge and participation in the elections as citizens may not be well informed.

5.2.0. Dominant Frames.

The four dominant framed found in stories on District Assembly elections; education, awareness creation, events and legal frame in the selected newspapers are discussed as follows:

5.2.1. Events

Findings from the story revealed that 49.30% of stories analyzed from the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* were framed as Events. This entailed a more event-oriented coverage where the stories revolved around an occurrence, or events covered by the media. In this type of coverage, less emphasis is placed on an in-depth analytical coverage on the District Assembly elections and its importance to Ghana’s democracy and governance.

Framing stories on District Assembly elections as Events may limit public knowledge on the District Assembly elections given its lack of analytical stance. It is also possible that the public may resonate with District Assembly elections as events without democratic meaning as a result of the frequency of the publication. The framing theory posits that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences (Scheufele and Tewsbury, 2007). Therefore framing District Assembly elections as events may possibly project it as a random news item rather than a deep democratic process in order to encourage public participation. Hence, framing of stories on District Assembly elections as events may not provide information in the right context in order to project the elections as a fundamental process to Ghana's democracy. The finding resonates with the findings of O'Gara (2009) that stories on U.S. general elections focused on the image of the candidate rather than on policy issues. This highlights the fact that, stories on the various candidates were likely to be less analytical and devoid of in-depth consideration of proposed policies, stories on the District Assembly elections in a similar fashion were ad hoc and event oriented.

5.2.2. Awareness Creation.

It was realized after the study that 23.30% were framed to create awareness of the District Assembly elections. These stories often highlighted the plans and stipulated date for the District Assembly elections and the need for public participation in the process.

It was interesting to note that, awareness creation which one could argue should have been the primary mode of coverage in order project the elections to the public in order to enhance public participation had a quarter of stories framed in that regard for the whole year.

This could possibly yield less public participation in the District Assembly elections given the minimal attention given to creating awareness and highlighting the importance and need for the electoral process to the general public.

5.2.3. Education

Stories which were framed to educate the general public on the District Assembly elections were 17.80% of the total publication. These stories were couched in a way to espouse activities of the District Assembly elections, its relevance and fundamental nature to Ghana's democracy. Owing to the relevant nature of this elections to Ghana's democracy and governance, one would have expected that most stories on the District Assembly elections to be framed in a way to educate the general public about the elections. As that would have presented a detailed, in-depth and analytical front to the stories thereby better informing the general public about the elections which could have also possibly improved public participation. However the less than a quarter (17.80%) stories coined to educate the public will evidently translate to a less informed audience and hence could have participation in the elections. Entman (2004) argues that framing selects and highlights some facets of events or issues and makes connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and solution" (p. 5). Thus, as the stories framed to educate were not major highlights it could have affected interpretation and subsequent participation by the general public.

5.2. 4. Legal

Findings from the study showed the presence of the legal frames in some of the stories reviewed. This frame was not present in most studies reviewed in the literature; however, this frame was discovered in most stories sampled for the study. Hence, the discovering of this frame adds to the body knowledge and findings of other related studies. As discovered, 9.50% of stories analyzed for the entire year were framed as legal issues. These stories deliberated on the need for the District Chief Executives (DCE) to be elected just as the Assemblymen/women are elected for during the District Assembly elections or otherwise.

And in order to implement this change, the stories highlighted the need for the amendment of the constitution in order to meet that requirement while other stories counted the need for DCE's to be voted for other than appointed as it currently stands; highlighting possible implications to the already established. The little attention given to the legal debate highlights the media's minimal attention on the legal aspects of the District Assembly elections which could limit public knowledge and view on the legal process of the elections.

5.3. Prominence accorded to stories.

Another objective of the study was to investigate the level of prominence accorded to District Assembly elections by newspapers in Ghana. In order to identify the level of prominence awarded the elections; the study measured the headline sizes of stories on District Assembly Elections in the various editions, the page of the story as well as investigated if the stories were accompanied with photographs. These categories are discussed as follows:

5.3.1. *Headline Size*

Findings revealed that, 64.40% of the headline sizes were less prominent, 27.40% were prominent and 8.20% of the headlines were obscure in both newspapers. The high percentage of less prominent headlines given to stories of District Assembly elections show the minimal attention and prominence given to District Assembly elections as the less prominent headlines may not prioritize stories on District Assembly for the public's attention. The framing theory posits that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences (Scheufele and Tewsbury, 2007). This goes to show that the level of prominence given to District Assembly elections in terms headlines may influence citizen's attention and priority given to stories on District Assembly elections by the general public.

5.3.2. Page of Story

Findings revealed that 95.90% of stories in both newspapers on District Assembly elections were positioned on pages other than the front page, the back page and the centre spreads which are positions designated for prominence by newspapers. It can be argued then that based on the positioning of the stories, prominence was not accorded stories on District Assembly elections. However, the positioning of the stories can also be attributed to the fact that newspapers group similar stories under various sectors and themes and designate pages on which stories that fall under the various categories are published. For example, the *Daily Graphic* has various categories such as gender, politics, entertainment and the like. Stories on District Assembly elections found in the *Daily Graphic* for the purposes of this study for instance were mostly published between pages 14 -16 which are designated for politics. Stories found in the *Daily Guide* however, were not limited to some specific pages. This was because these pages have been designated for the publishing of stories categorized under “political issues” under which stories on District Assemblies were categorized. According to Price, Powers, & Tewksbury (1995), the presentation of events and news in the mass media can thus systematically affect how recipients of the news come to understand these events (p. 4). Highlighting the importance of the placement of a story by the mass media, Kiouisis (2004) also states that “the salience of an object is simultaneously determined by its position within an environment (external) and by its implicit qualities and properties (internal). This argument by Kiouisis (2004) emphasizes the importance in the placement of a story by the mass media in setting a particular agenda which in this case making publicizing the District Assembly elections for public attention. Therefore, juxtaposing the findings to the theory and expectations of various scholars, it can be argued that stories on the District Assembly elections were not accorded prominence in terms of the placement of the stories. Though it may be argued that the designation of various pages for various sections of issues by some

newspapers may dent the argument that stories should be positioned on the front page, centre spread or back page to merit a salient description. It is important to note however that, stories which are perceived by the media as top stories in an edition are highlighted on the front pages with the detailed stories positioned in the inside pages. Therefore, 1.40% of stories in this study positioned on the front page shows that stories on the District Assembly elections were not perceived as top stories 95.90% of the publication period.

5.3.3. Photograph

Findings after the study revealed that 56.20% of the sampled stories had photographs while 43.80% of the stories did not have photographs. Photographs which are essential to enhancing the salience of an issue were clearly given attention in the reporting of the 2010 District Assembly elections in order to enhance prominence. Kiouisis (2004) in a study highlighted salience as a central construct of the agenda setting theory. Hence, it can be argued that the presence of pictures in most stories on District Assembly elections may play a major role setting the agenda towards increasing awareness on District Assembly elections. This finding affirms the finding by Kiouisis (2004) that two major dimensions of media salience are visibility and valence. Thus, making visibility in terms of photography and pictorial evidence essential in enhancing prominence in newspaper reports.

Findings from the various categories highlighted above to ascertain the level of prominence given to District Assembly elections; it can be argued that the stories on District Assembly elections were not accorded prominence. This is because except for the provision of photographs to enhance salience to the stories which fared averagely well, all other facets such as the headline size and placement of the story were given less attention by the media thereby resulting in less prominence attached to stories on District Assembly elections.

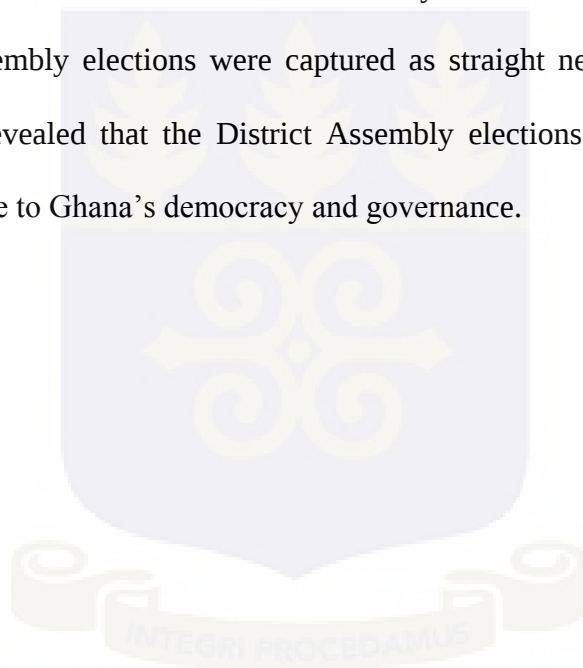
5.4.0. Frequency of Stories.

The study sought to investigate the frequency or the number of times stories on the District Assembly elections were published in the entire period of 2010. In all, 73 stories were ascertained from both papers. The *Daily Graphic* recorded a total number of 59 stories on District Assembly elections for the entire year while the *Daily Guide* recorded a total of 14 stories for the entire year. It can be argued that both papers did not give much attention to the District Assembly elections given the number of times stories were published on what can be described as one of the country's most important democratic processes. 73 stories out of the 365 publications is less than a quarter of the papers entire publication space for the entire year. According to McCombs & Shaw (1972) agenda setting refers to the idea that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media places on certain issues (i.e. based on relative placement or amount of coverage) and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences. This shows that the amount of coverage and emphasis given to the District Assembly elections may go a long way to influence the level of importance attached to the District Assembly elections by the general public. Hence, the low level of emphasis and attention accorded the District Assembly elections could have negatively influenced the public perception and participation in the District Assembly elections. This finding of low media coverage of District Assembly elections corresponds with findings by the Southern African Editors Forum (SAEF). After scrutinizing media coverage in the 2014 Malawian general elections, SAEF realized that 1% of media space was accorded their local government elections as compared to 40% and 11% compared to presidential and parliamentary elections.

5.5. Summary

This chapter discussed data derived from the sampled newspapers on how the 2010 District Assembly elections was captured in terms of frames used, format of the story, frequency and prominence accorded to the stories in general.

Findings revealed that stories on District Assembly elections where usually framed as events more than they are to educate or create awareness of the relevance of the elections. Stories with legal frames were also discovered to be relatively few. The study also revealed that less prominence was accorded to stories on District Assembly elections while in terms of format, stories on District Assembly elections were captured as straight news stories. In terms of frequency, the study revealed that the District Assembly elections received less attention considering its relevance to Ghana's democracy and governance.



Chapter Six

Conclusion and Recommendation

6.0. Introduction

This study sought to examine how the 2010 District Assembly election was covered by the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*. The framing and agenda setting theories underpinned the study. This chapter concludes the study highlighting the findings and discussions in previous chapters. Also identified in this chapter are the limitations of the study and the recommendations for research works in a similar context.

6.1. Summary of the Findings

Findings of the research revealed that the *Daily Graphic* had more stories on *District Assembly* elections as compared to the *Daily Guide*.

The outcome of the research revealed that the newspapers covered the District Assembly elections with four main frames; Education, Events, Awareness Creation and Legal frames. The most dominant frame found in the reports of the two newspapers was the framing of stories on District Assembly elections as Events. This reportage which was event-oriented in nature was at the expense of framing stories on District Assembly elections to educate the public on the elections on its relevance to the country's democracy and governance, Create awareness for the electoral process and the exploitation of the legal aspects of the District Assembly elections. One can therefore argue that in the coverage of District Assembly elections by the newspapers, priority was not given to the education of the public on the process and its importance as well as creating awareness of the electoral process and the legal observations of the District Assembly elections.

Findings from the research also revealed that most of the stories on District Assembly elections were captured as straight news stories. This finding gives indication that the

newspapers preferred to cover stories on the District Assembly elections in a less analytical and informative way thereby providing less information to the general public about the democratic process.

The study also revealed that stories on District Assembly elections were not given prominence as most stories on District Assembly elections were found in other pages other than the front page, back page and the centre spread. Also, though most of the stories were accompanied with photographs, most of the stories had less prominent headlines. One can argue then that District Assembly elections were not accorded prominence by the two selected newspapers.

Also, out of the year's publication, 73 stories on District Assembly elections were found in the selected newspapers. This figure, one can argue, is inadequate in projecting the District Assembly elections as an important democratic endeavor. This finding indicated a low level of attention given to the 2010 District Assembly elections by both the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*. This could in tend affect public perception of the democratic process thereby attaching less importance to the District Assembly elections which could possibly lead to low participation in the electoral process by the general public.

Overall, the attention given to the 2010 District Assembly elections by the two newspapers was low given the relevance of the electoral process to the democratic system of the country. Stories covered by the media were usually in a straight news format which is less analytical and informative. This means that journalists captured events and reported on speeches made at the functions without generating story ideas, researching on the topics in order to procure solid background information on the issue at hand and further provide analytical views and implications for public consumption and benefit. The influence of the media on public perception and attitude based on media projections cannot be belabored. Hence, the public

may attach less importance to the 2010 District Assembly electoral process as a result of the agenda set by the media in the coverage.

6.2. Study Limitations

Owing to the time and budgetary constraints of the study, the study was not extended to take into cognizance public perception of the information given by the media on District Assembly elections or the adequacy of the channel of information used in the dissemination of information on the District Assembly elections. These areas can be further exploited by the other researchers in order to provide a deeper insight into communication factors of the District Assembly elections.

This study failed to include the sources of the stories published in the newspapers which would have given an insight into the number of stories generated by the newspapers in themselves and stories which were initiated by the general public and other sources. This would have helped in establishing the level of attention the newspaper in itself gave to the District Assembly elections.

6.3. Recommendations

Considering the important role of the media in elections, this study recommends that the Electoral Commission together with the District Assemblies organize seminars for the media prior to District Assembly elections in Ghana. These seminars should focus on highlighting the importance of the district Assembly elections to the governance structure of the country as well as highlight some policy frame work backing the District Assembly elections to enable informed reportage by the media. This will help generate interest in terms of media participation in the entire electoral process.

On the basis of the findings, this study seeks to recommend that journalists pay particular attention to the reporting of District Assembly elections given the sensitivity of the electoral process to the governance of the country. Here, much attention and research should be accorded the issue in order to provide a detailed analysis of the topic in view as this will go a long way to not only educate the public but project the District Assembly elections as an important exercise. Given the important role of the media to inform, educate and entertain its publics the level of attention the media accorded to the electoral process is likely to positively affecting public participation.

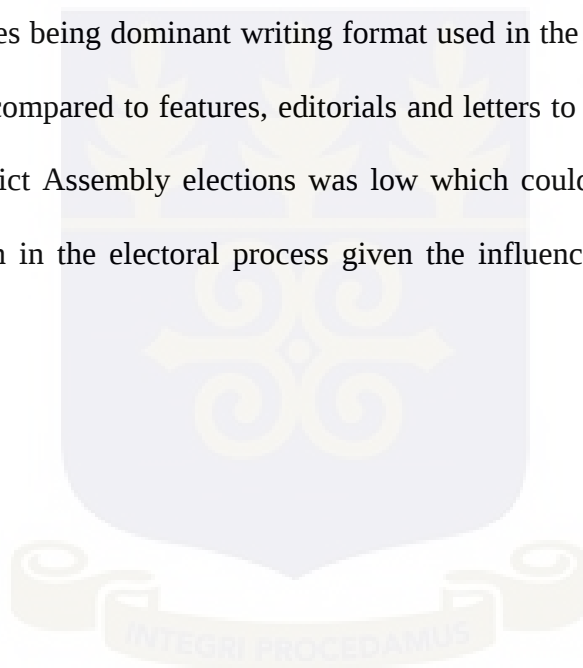
The study also recommends that a research be conducted to investigate how the ownership of media can influence its level of attention given to issues on District Assembly elections. As this will help draw an empirical evidence to address findings made in for example this research where the Daily Graphic recorded more stories on the 2010 District Assembly elections as compared to the Daily Guide.

6.4. Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the findings and discussions in the previous chapters in the bid to draw conclusion on the study in line with its objectives and research questions. This study was limited to the content analyses of the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide's* coverage of the 2010 District Assembly elections. The study sought to investigate the frames used in the coverage, the format, the prominence and frequency accorded stories on the District Assembly elections. The study showed that the media employed the various frames such as awareness creation, education, events and legal frames. Event oriented frames were found to be dominant in both newspapers which implies that stories on the District Assembly elections were less analytical or in-depth.

The legal frames being the least employed study, adds to the body of knowledge and discoveries made in the course of this research as it differs significantly from frames utilized in other studies on District Assembly elections or elections in general. This study generally contributes to the framing theory as its findings show the various frames used in reporting on District Assembly elections. This is important because the role of the media to inform its audience on various issues is critical owing to the fact that the way an issue is framed could go a long way to affect public opinion.

Findings also reveal that less prominence and frequency was accorded stories on the elections with straight news stories being dominant writing format used in the coverage of the District Assembly elections as compared to features, editorials and letters to the editors. Overall, the attention given to District Assembly elections was low which could consequently result in low public participation in the electoral process given the influence the media has on the public opinion.



Appendix One

Coding Sheet

A. Date of Publication.....

B. Page of Story

1. Front Page 2. Back Page 3. Centre Spread 4. Editorial Page 5. Other Page

C. Headline Size.....

D. Photograph.

1. Yes 2. No

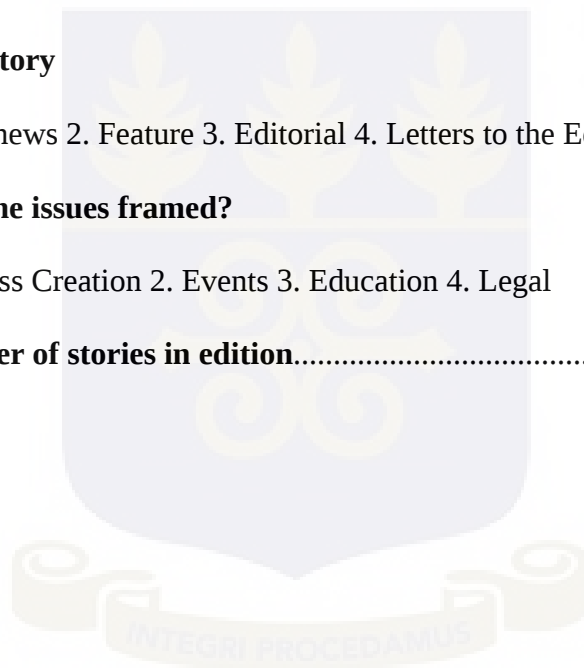
E. Format of Story

1. Straight news 2. Feature 3. Editorial 4. Letters to the Editors 5. Other

F. How were the issues framed?

1. Awareness Creation 2. Events 3. Education 4. Legal

G. Total number of stories in edition.....



Appendix Two

Coding Guide

A. Date of Publication: Write the date of the publication in the space provided (in digits). This will start with the day, month and the year s(e.g. 09/10/2015).

B. Page of Story:

1. Front page
2. Back page
3. Centre spread
4. Other

C. Headline Size: This takes into consideration the entire area covered by the area. This will be attained by multiplying the length of the headline (from the first letter to the last letter) by the width (i.e. the height of the first letter) in centimeters. Below are the measurements which will serve as a caveat for the headline sizes.

Headline Size	Range/cm2
Prominent	1.4×27 Upwards
Less Prominent	0.3×27 Upwards
Obscure	Less than 0.3×27

D. Photograph: Photographs which accompany the story or is in relation to the story.

The options to be coded are

1. Yes
2. No

E. Format of the story: This is considered as the way a story was captured or the writing style used in the reportage. The options include:

1. Straight news story
2. Feature
3. Editorial
4. Letters to the Editor
5. Other

F. Frames: This entails the dominant frames that are identified in the various stories.

The frames to be identified in this study include:

1. **Awareness Creation:** Stories couched to hype the District Assembly elections or to encourage citizens to partake in the electoral process and also highlighting the relevance of the elections to Ghana's democracy or the need for public participation. Terms to be considered are, "citizens are encouraged to participate", "this election is relevant because" or other similar phrases.
2. **Events:** In this context stories reported from speeches, meeting at town hall, workshop, conferences, interview with a journalists, inauguration, inspection, expert opinion, commissioning of event and other related events. Couching this frame as "events" was used in a study by Lokko (2011) on Newspaper coverage of Oil and Gas issues in Ghana. Though this study is not an electoral study, it is similar to this research in terms of its theory and methodology underpinning the study. Hence, making it an eligible reference for this study.
3. **Education:** Stories which are captured to highlight the processes, ideology, intent and notion behind the District Assembly elections.
4. **Legal:** Stories which capture legal backing, constitutional reviews and reforms on District Assembly elections, and other similar frames.

G. Total number of stories in an edition: Total number of stories on District Assembly elections in every sampled edition.



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