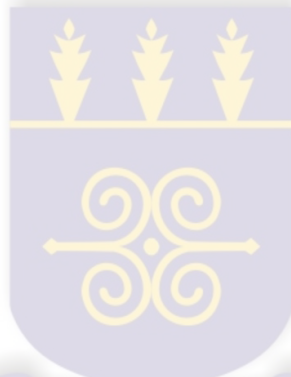


**NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THE 2012 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION PETITION:  
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE *DAILY GRAPHIC***

**BY**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON, IN  
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF THE  
MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES**

**OCTOBER, 2014**

## DECLARATION

I declare that, except for reference to other scholars work which have been duly acknowledged, this dissertation is as a result of my own research conducted at the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. The work was supervised by Amb. Dr. Margaret I. Amoakohene.

.....

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(Supervisor)

Date.....



.....

Benjamin Agyekum

(Student)

Date.....

## **DEDICATION**

This piece of work is dedicated to the glory of God Almighty, my family

&

to all lecturers of the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon.



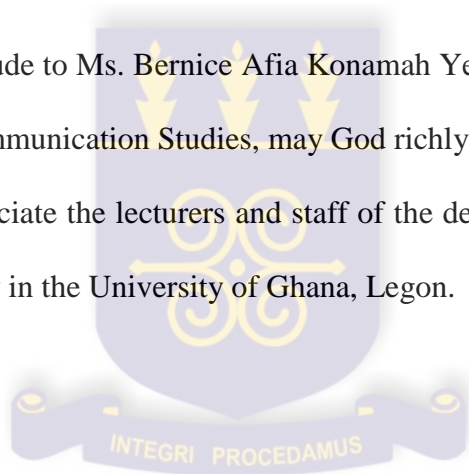
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I am forever grateful to the Almighty God for the gift of life, mercies and divine provisions through His son Jesus Christ. I am most appreciative to my caring mother and uncle, Ms. Comfort Kumi Yeboah and Mr. Peter Oppong respectively, my siblings Rene, Portia and David.

Specifically, I would like to sincerely thank Dr. Margaret I. Amoakohene, my lecturer and supervisor for this dissertation. Aunty Maggie, passing through your hands has made me a better person and my passion to pursue a career in the field of Public Relations has been meaningful.

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Finally, I would like to appreciate the lecturers and staff of the department for their support and assistance throughout my stay in the University of Ghana, Legon.



## ABSTRACT

This study is a quantitative content analysis of the state-owned *Daily Graphic*'s coverage of the 2012 presidential election petition at the Supreme Court of Ghana. The principal goal of the study was to determine the level of prominence and fairness attached to the coverage of the election petition by the newspaper. The study also sought to determine the dominant tone, whether positive, negative or neutral with which the newspaper covered the election petition.

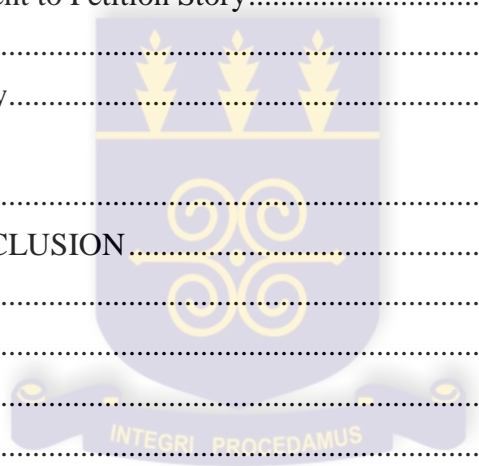
A constructed week was used to sample editions of the *Daily Graphic* within the study period (April to August, 2013) for analysis. There were 219 stories identified by headlines where the election petition or the names of the main parties involved in the petition was mention. The study utilized the framing theory as the bases for the analysis of the stories.

Generally, stories on election petition were classified to be prominent in terms of the size of story and headline as well as story enhancement and the article type. However, the *Daily Graphic* could have done better in terms of placement of election petition stories since most of the stories on the election petition were not found on the front pages of the newspaper but on "the other" pages. The findings show that the *Daily Graphic* was fair with its coverage of the 2012 presidential election petition. Most of the stories had either positive or neutral tone. However, the findings of the study indicated that the dominant tone of the election petition was positive.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Ghanaians, on December 7 and 8, 2012, exercised their right under Article 42 of the 1992 Constitution by joining long queues to cast their ballots in the presidential and parliamentary elections. Voting had to be suspended and continued on December 8, 2012 at some polling stations across the country due to the breakdown of the newly introduced biometric verification machines.

The Chairman of the Electoral Commission (EC), Dr. Kwadwo Afari-Gyan , on December 9, 2012 declared President John Dramani Mahama of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) as the winner of the presidential poll with 5,574,761 valid votes cast (57.7%). On the other hand, the presidential candidate of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo placed second with 5,248,898 valid votes cast (47.74%). The battle shifted from the campaign grounds to the Supreme Court on December 28, 2012 when Akufo-Addo; his running mate, Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, and the National Chairman of the NPP, Mr. Jake Obetsebi-Lampsey, filed a petition under Article 64 of the 1992 Constitution; Section 5 of the Presidential Election Act, 1992 (PNDCL 285) and Rule 68 and 68 A of the Supreme Court (Amendment) Rules 2012, CI 74.

The petition was premised on the grounds that there were 11,138 polling stations where alleged infractions relating to over-voting, voting without biometric verification, different polling stations with the same serial numbers and some presiding officers failing to sign pink sheets

occurred. Therefore, the petitioners pleaded with the court to annul 4.3 million votes at the polling stations where the alleged irregularities occurred. President Mahama, the EC and the NDC (National Democratic Congress), who were the first, second and third respondents, respectively, denied the allegations and argued that President Mahama won the elections fairly and transparently.

Appeals were made by some individuals and institutions especially Mr. Gabby Asare Otchere-Darko, Executive Director of the Danquah Institute for the election petition case to be broadcasted live. Prior to the hearing of the substantive case at the supreme court, the Chief Justice, Justice Georgina Wood followed such appeals and directed that the proceedings of the 2012 presidential election petition be broadcast live via television and radio. Consequently, the Supreme Court endorsed the live telecast of its proceedings via television and radio. The Supreme Court sat on the substantive case from April 16, 2013 and declared a verdict on the August 29, 2013.

The news media, and more specifically print media, serve as valuable sources of information and powerful modes of communication (Cissel, 2012). The media play a vital role in every democracy and their importance in politics is indispensable. The Canadian-based International Development Research Centre (IDRC, 2008) for example, posits that the free flow of information is the lifeblood of democracy. The commencement of democratic and constitutional governance in Ghana under the Fourth Republican Constitution has seen the media play cardinal roles such as getting the citizenry informed on issues about politics, especially during election periods.

According to Mughan and Gunther (2000), democratic citizens everywhere mostly depend on the media and less on family, community and other intermediary institutions as a primary source of political information. Modern political communication practices are extremely mediated, and the mass media play a critical role as a foremost source of political information for most citizens (Norris, 2000). Albeit other methods of direct communication exist, they have by no means substituted the mass media (Plasser & Plasser, 2002). Ghana as a democratic state or country is a classic example of these assertions thus it is not surprising that during election periods, most people are glued to their television and radio sets, newspapers and currently the social media for information.

The newspaper, unlike television or radio, produces information that the reader can interpret at their leisure without any time constraint (Carter, 2000). Gavis (2004, p. 7) for instance argues that:

Newspapers may not have the reach of the broadcast media, but they are important for at least three reasons. First, newspapers are likely to be the media of choice among 'opinion-makers' who may influence others in their community. Secondly, newspapers provide a deeper analysis than is often possible on radio and television. Thirdly, the press has an investigative capacity unrivalled by the broadcast media – major stories often 'break' in the press and are then taken up by broadcast journalists.

This study focuses on the print media in Ghana with regard to how the unprecedented 2012 presidential election petition was framed by the state-owned newspaper (*Daily Graphic*).

### 1.1.2 The Daily Graphic

After its establishment in 1952, the *Daily Graphic* took an active interest in the political and social activities of the country. A British newspaper giant, the Daily Mirror Group, set up the *Daily Graphic* in Ghana mainly for political as well as economic reasons (Asante & Gadzekpo, 2000). The *Daily Graphic* also became the most effective public communication medium in Ghana during the post-independence era basically due to factors like financial security, use of better equipment, good management and a well-trained indigenous editorial staff (Asante & Gadzekpo, 2000). Consequently, it was incorporated as a statutory corporation in 1965 and has since remained a state-owned organization (Asante & Gadzekpo, 2000).

In 1999, the Graphic Corporation was converted into a limited liability state-owned company. The name was therefore changed to the Graphic Communications Group Limited to epitomize the transition. The *Daily Graphic* is currently published by the Graphic Communications Group Limited. The paper is published six times a week (Monday to Saturday) and also has its stories published at its website ([www.graphicghana.com](http://www.graphicghana.com)). It has specialized sections for politics, business, foreign news, women's affairs, features, regional news, metropolitan news, education and sports.

The *Daily Graphic* is purposively selected for this study because of two basic reasons. Firstly, the *Daily Graphic* as a state-owned newspaper has a constitutional mandate to “afford fair opportunities and facilities for the presentation of divergent views and dissenting opinions” (Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992; Article 163). This presupposes that the *Daily Graphic* serves as a suitable media platform for the researcher to measure how fair the coverage

of the election petition was for the main parties (petitioners and respondents) at the centre of the 2012 presidential election petition.

Secondly, the *Daily Graphic* is known to be the most read and widely circulated newspaper in Ghana (Temin & Smith, 2002; BBC World Service Trust, 2006). According to the Ghana Media Standards Improvements Project (GMSIP, 2009), the most preferred newspaper in Ghana was the *Daily Graphic*. It is therefore not surprising that the *Daily Graphic* seems indispensable on all 'Newspaper Review Programmes' via the various broadcast media in Ghana. The dominant nature of the *Daily Graphic* in the Ghanaian print media makes its coverage of the unprecedented 2012 presidential election petition an issue of concern for all parties involved in particular and Ghanaians as a whole.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Ghana has conducted six different elections but never has any presidential election results culminated in an election dispute contested in any court of competent jurisdiction except the 2012 election. This makes the 2012 elections not only a historical antecedent but a prominent issue in itself. The polarized nature of the election petition in 2012 presented a test case for many institutions in the country. The country's judicial system was put to the test and the media faced a challenge on reporting on an issue that had no precedence. The interest of this study was, therefore, to investigate how the state-owned *Daily Graphic* reported the election petition.

### 1.3 Objectives

The purpose of the study was to analyze the coverage of the 2012 Presidential Election Petition by the *Daily Graphic* in terms of the following specific objectives:

- To find out the level of prominence the *Daily Graphic* attached to the stories on the election petition case in its coverage.
- To find out the level of fairness with which the *Daily Graphic* reported on the election petition case at the Supreme Court of Ghana.
- To find out the dominant tone with which the *Daily Graphic* covered stories on the election petition case.

### 1.4 Research Question

In line with the aforementioned objectives the study sought to find answers to the following questions:

Research Question 1: How did stories on the election petition case published in the *Daily Graphic* show the level of prominence given to the case?

Research Question 2: How did the coverage of the *Daily Graphic* on the election petition case indicate the level of fairness in its reportage?

Research Question 3: How did the stories on the election petition case published in the *Daily Graphic* show the newspaper's dominant tone?

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

The study was limited to the period the election petition was heard at the Supreme Court of Ghana, spanning April 16 to August 29, 2013. Also, the study was focused on news stories, editorials, opinions/columns, or letters to the editor in the *Daily Graphic* which were related to the 2012 election petition. The *Daily Graphic* was purposively chosen because it was considered among the topmost newspapers in terms of circulation and readership.

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

This study will add to literature on framing analysis in press coverage of election protests, especially from the Ghanaian perspective. It would be very helpful for the management of the *Daily Graphic* to know how fair their coverage of the 2012 presidential election petition was. The parties involved in the petition would also know how they were covered by the *Daily Graphic*. The findings of this study will also help managers of the *Daily Graphic* to ascertain whether or not it complied with the paper's mandate and constitutional requirements of affording fair and equal coverage for all parties that were involved in the election petition.

### **1.7 Operational Definitions of Terms**

The following are the operational definitions of terms that were used in this study:

**Newspaper item:** Refers to any straight news story, editorial, opinion/column, or letter to the editor which would be the key unit of analysis for the study.

**Prominence:** The level of importance attached to stories determined by the type of story, placement of item, size of headline, size of story and the availability of story enhancement.

**Fairness:** The level of neutrality with which the newspaper items were reported. This refers to whether a story was slanted towards one side or not (favorable or unfavorable for one side).

**Tone:** The discourse of the story as to whether the general tone was positive (friendly/encouraging/exhortation/conciliatory), negative (hostile, confrontational, adversarial) or neutral (neither positive or negative but merely informative or explanatory).

**Coverage:** The publishing of a news item on the election petition case or a communicative event concerning the Supreme Court during the period of the election petition case.

**Petitioners:** The party that commenced the election petition at the supreme court (In this case Jake Obetsebi-Lampitey, Nana Addo Dankwah Akuffo-Addo and Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia )

**Respondents:** The parties that the petitioners brought the petition against at the Supreme Court (President John Dramani Mahama, the NDC party and the Electoral Commission).

### **1.8 Organization of the Study**

The study is organized in five chapters. Chapter One introduces the study and lays the background by discussing a brief history of the press in Ghana and an overview of the 2012 presidential election petition case at the Supreme Court of Ghana. The newspaper (*Daily Graphic*) to be content analyzed has also been discussed as well as the objectives, significance, scope and key terms of the study. The second chapter discusses the theoretical framework (framing theory) which formed the basis for all arguments in the study. It also presents a review of literature related to this study. Conceptual arguments and findings of previous studies that espoused the framing theory and/or content analysis of newspaper coverage around the world are reviewed under the second chapter. Chapter three describes the methodology used for the study. Data collection and analysis processes are contained in this chapter. Chapter four provides the findings of the study. The findings are then discussed and analyzed in the chapter five. The fifth chapter of the study also summarizes the findings, outlines some limitations of the study and provides some recommendations for future studies.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The intent of this chapter is to review existing literature and previous research on newspaper coverage and content in relation to the problem this study seeks to investigate. Theoretical perspectives and related studies which sets the study in context are discussed.

#### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

Most studies into mass media content are underpinned by such theoretical constructs as mass media agenda setting, framing, media gatekeeping, media structure and ownership among others. This study is anchored in the framing theory. The pioneering work of Ervin Goffmann on frame analysis in 1974 is regarded as the foundation of the framing theory. Therefore, Goffmann is widely known as the founder of the framing theory (Botan & Hazelton, 2006). Since the emergence of the framing theory, it has been one of the widely used theoretical perspectives in mass media and communication analysis in general and in the analysis of media coverage of political issues in particular (Shih, et.al 2008). Stromback and van Aelst (2010) are of the view that in contemporary communication research, the framing theory is one of the most principal concepts.

Media framing is the way in which information is presented to its audience (Cissel, 2012). The framing theory asserts that the media focus attention on events and place them within a field of meaning. The theory attempts to explain how these meanings are constructed through

communication (Entman, 1993). This implies that the focus of framing goes beyond the salience of topics that make the news to the quintessential issues at stake in the media reportage.

Notwithstanding the popularity of the framing theory, it has not been universally defined (Botan & Hazelton, 2006). Different scholars have defined the theory of framing differently. For instance Entman (2004) asserts that framing is essentially about selecting and highlighting some aspects of issues and events that promote specific interpretation among audience. Similarly, Verser (2007) defined framing as selecting and emphasizing certain facets of experience or ideas and prioritizing them over others. This implies that framing is not only a conscious effort but a strategic one to choose some issues and events at the neglect of others.

Also Miller (2002) writes that framing can be executed by the media through the inclusion of explicit subtopics of calculated size strategically placed to augment in the telling of the news story as well as through the style of narration, the article's general tone and through the particular details purposively included in or excluded from the story. Framing theory then, assumes that realities or facts can be reconstructed through presentation (Chen, 2004). The framing theory "proposes that how an idea, issue or personality is presented (framed) in the media influences how people think about the issue or personality (Tetteh & King, 2011, p. 505)." For Salwen and Stacks (2008), framing is the main idea around which the content of news is contextualized through emphasis, exclusion and elaboration offered by editors. Payne (2008) shares a similar assertion that framing can be described as an ideological contextualization of gatekeeper's choices of content. Payne's description of framing assumes a direct relationship between framing and gatekeeping where framing should be a determinant of gatekeeping.

McCombs (2004) posits that gatekeeping and framing are therefore interlinked in that framing constitutes the ideological contextualization of content choices by gatekeepers.

Out of a critical analysis of the different perspectives other scholars have on what framing is, Stromback and Luengo (2008) asserts that there exist an agreement among scholars that, the framing theory is essentially about choice of words, emphasis, sourcing, placement, use of images and other journalistic ways of reporting the news. Vreese (2005) maintains that framing is very important to content studies because stories that are able to go through the gatekeeping process are not treated the same way. Similarly, Baylor (1996) opines that journalists are selective not only about the stories they cover but how they cover them and present the final message to the audience. Framing remains one of the most influential ways through which the media shape public opinion (Druckman, 2007). This implies that the media is capable of framing stories in different ways even after stories have been selected by gatekeepers.

Research on media coverage should not be limited to gatekeeping analysis alone which is primarily centered on the news selection process as well as why some stories are used by editors and others not. But mass media coverage of events and analysis of bias should also be underpinned by the framing theory (Peng, 2008). Cissel (2012) asserts that “framing is a tool used by the media and politicians to make salient points that would direct their readers to a desired frame of mind.” This means that framing is an apt theory to examine the level of prominence with which the media cover political issues such as elections. According to Maher (2001) the elusiveness in the practical identification and measurement of frames arises precisely

because frames are often latent rather than explicit. It is implicit in Maher's assertion that frame identification is not straightforward and for that matter quite difficult to measure and identify.

Some prescriptions have been made for identifying and measuring frames. Among the plethora of suggestions, some scholars maintain that frames are manifested by the presence or absence of specific key words, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematic reinforced clusters of facts or judgments (Vujacovic, 1998). Miller and Riechert (2001) advocate that in the process of frame identification, the key words should be mapped out and counted in terms of frequency within the data collected. Once keywords have been obtained, they can be used to create a catalogue of all their variations or similarities which match to the mental lexicon that are associated with them and then evaluated within the particular master frame in which they are cast (Scott, 2004).

In their reportage on the election petition, the *Daily Graphic* presented the public frames based on which public opinions were made. The focus of the study was therefore to find out how the state-owned *Daily Graphic* covered the 2012 presidential election petition and the dominant frame the newspaper used in reporting on the case.

### **2.3 Review of Related Studies**

Research on framing and framing analysis of press coverage of elections abound. However, there is very little research on press coverage of election petitions and protests due to the occasional nature of the phenomenon. Temin & Smith (2002, p. 585) for instance asserts that:

The role of the media, both state-owned and private, is an important and often overlooked component of any election, particularly those occurring in developing

countries. Unfortunately, the existing academic literature on the subject is thin, especially concerning the recent flurry of democratic elections in Africa.

Frère (2011) studied elections held in six countries of Central Africa – Burundi (2005), the Central African Republic (2005), the Democratic Republic of Congo (2006), Congo Brazzaville (2002, 2007), Chad (1996, 2001, 2006) and Rwanda (2003) after experiencing post-conflict situations. The study attempted to show the many challenges faced by the media while covering the post-conflict elections in Central Africa. Frère (2011) noted that the media operated in an insecure and economically challenging environment. Journalists were attacked and some were even murdered in line of duty. There was also the lack infrastructure, inadequate equipment and untrained staff. According to Frère (2007) conflicts increases pressure on independent media, leading most of them to serve influential politicians in order to be secured or simply survive. Frère (2011) found that although the Electoral Laws in these six countries decreed that the media should ensure equal and fair coverage during elections, the media conspicuously demonstrated favouritism towards the incumbent president. Frère (2011) asserted that imbalance, either quantitative or qualitative characterized the media monitoring reportage during the post-conflict elections. The current study sought to establish bias in the way the *Daily Graphic* reported the election petition.

Temin & Smith (2002) examined the crucial role of the media in Ghana's 2000 campaign and elections in which the John Agyekum Kufuor's New Patriotic Party (NPP) defeated Jerry John Rawlings' National Democratic Congress (NDC). Temin & Smith (2002) noted that while the media endeavoured significant efforts to ensure fair coverage to the various political parties, the ruling NDC received the bulk of attention. The study found that the coverage of political party

activity by the state-owned print media (*Daily Graphic* and *The Ghanaian Times*) favoured the ruling NDC in terms of quantity and length of stories. The current study used quantity and length of story as a variable to measure the level of prominence with which the *Daily Graphic* covered the election petition. Temin & Smith (2002) indicated that overall, 45 percent of all political stories carried by the state-owned newspapers focused on the NDC. According to Temin & Smith (2002) the tone of the state-owned newspaper's reportage was quite balanced, with both the incumbent and opposition parties receiving largely positive or neutral coverage, with relatively few negative stories appearing in the state-owned press.

Amoakohene (2007) did a content and document analyses of two newspapers (the state-owned *Daily Graphic* and the privately owned *Ghanaian Chronicle*) in Ghana. The purpose of the study was to compare these newspapers' coverage of two different constitutional governments (President Kufuor's NPP and President Rawlings' NDC). Amoakohene (2007) focused on the relationship between the mass media and government during the 1993-1994 and 2001-2002 parts of the NDC and NPP regimes respectively. Using measurement indicators such as size, direction and tone of political stories, Amoakohene (2007) found a systematic bias in the reportage of the two newspapers. The *Daily Graphic* favoured the ruling administrations while the *Ghanaian Chronicle* was against the NDC in particular. Amoakohene (2007) concluded that the level of prominence given to political stories is mainly as a result of relations between political systems and the media.

Khudiyev (2005) also studied 2003 post-election protests in Azerbaijan to determine bias in the press coverage of the protests. The study used a content analysis of three highly circulated local

newspapers, one state owned and the others privately owned, during a three-week period following the election day when the main subject of local newspapers' coverage was protest actions in the streets of the capital city, Baku. The study found that significant differences exist in newspaper coverage reflecting differences in ownership. The study showed how ownership of media outlets affects political coverage of the street protests by opposition party supporters through unbalanced coverage and framing. It was found that the state-owned media had a favourable tone towards the government police and actions of the police forces during the mass disorders. The current study sought to find out the dominant tone (positive, neutral or negative) with which the *Daily Graphic* reported the election petition.

Closely linked to the study of Khudiyev (2005) is a study by Lynett (2011). Lynette (2011) studied how some U.S. and British newspapers reported the Kenyan post-election crisis of 2007 and 2008. A qualitative content analysis of publications of the *New York Times*, the *Associated Press*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *Reuters*, a U.K. news service between December, 2007 and March, 2008 was done. The findings showed that reporters characterized the crisis more often as stemming from a complex sociopolitical circumstance that was further agitated by allegations of fraud in the presidential election. The study also found that most of the articles were reported using the narrative journalism style which framed the stories as sympathetic and humanizing.

A study by Goretti (2007) content analyzed two newspapers on conflicts in Northern Uganda, namely *The New Vision* which is government owned and *The Monitor* which a private newspaper. Three years (1998, 2000 & 2003) was sampled for the study consisting of the first six months of the three years and was further progressively narrowed down to a week of each

month. The study, among others, sought to examine the prominence and tone of the coverage of conflicts in terms of bias, confrontational or conciliatory. It was found out that the government newspaper was largely biased towards government and confrontational in its reports, while the private newspaper used a more conciliatory tone and was more balanced (not biased) on its coverage of the conflict using various sources for its stories. As regards placement, the stories were given relatively high prominence since quite a number of them dominated the front page (Goretti, 2007).

In measuring the level of prominence and tone with which nursing homes were covered from 1999 to 2008 in the United States, Miller et al (2012) also content analyzed 1,704 articles from four leading national newspapers – the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune* and *Los Angeles Times*. It was found that most of the articles were news stories and about one-quarter were on the front page of the newspapers. Also most articles were negative or neutral in tone, and very few were positive (Miller et al, 2012). Similarly, the current study sought to measure the level of prominence and dominant tone of the election petition coverage by the *Daily Graphic*.

Andrade (2013) also measured prominence and tone of coverage with which Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks was framed after the Ecuadorian government granted him political asylum at its embassy in London. The study content analyzed 380 articles in English and Spanish newspapers from various continents (North America, Europe, Australia /New Zealand, Asia, and Latin America). The study specifically sought to examine the tone and how prominent the newspapers covered Assange. Andrade (2013) found out that the tone was generally

neutral/positive towards Assange and the European newspapers gave more prominence to Assange than newspapers from North America and other continents because only newspapers from Europe mentioned Assange on their front pages.

Also, Freyenberger (2013) examined how Amanda Knox was framed in newspaper articles around the world during the four years she was imprisoned in Italy. Knox is an American woman who was accused of the 2007 murder of Meredith Kercher, one of the women who shared her apartment. Knox was freed in 2011. The purpose of the study was to determine tone of coverage as well as prominence by story placement. The results showed that mentions of Amanda Knox were more negative in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Story placement was more prominent in newspapers of Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and China. (Freyenberger, 2013). The current study sought to measure prominence by story placement but considered other variables like type of story, size of story, size of headline and type of enhancement.

In measuring tone of coverage, Busher (2006) content analyzed 194 articles from the *New York Times* to determine how Hillary Clinton was framed after her decision to run for the 2000 New York senate elections. The study, essentially among others, sought to measure the tone with which coverage was made. The study showed that majority of the articles were covered with neutral tones. The study omitted content such as editorials, columns, and political cartoons because it intended to examine the information an individual would find when searching for political information about a candidate (Busher, 2006). The current study sought to analyze different types of stories (straight news, editorials, opinion/column etc.) published by the *Daily Graphic*.

Brunken (2006) also sought to find out the tone with which the government responded to Hurricane Katrina (a natural disaster caused by a massive storm) immediately after its occurrence in 2005 at New Orleans. A total of 531 stories were content analyzed from four newspapers (two elitist and two local) in the United States. The elite newspapers used were the *Washington Post* and *The New York Times* because they are said to set the agenda for the nation. The local newspapers were *The Advocate* and the *Times Picayune* because of the proximity to the disaster. It was found that the tone in general was relatively neutral (Brunken, 2006). Brunken (2006) asserts that the tone of the elitist newspapers were more positive than that of the local newspapers on the government's response to the crisis.

Cummings (2006) did a content analysis of how two leading newspapers framed the 2004 presidential elections in the United States. A total of 173 news articles were analyzed, out of which there were 105 news stories, 50 columns, and 18 editorials. The study sought to identify bias in the coverage of the two presidential candidates (George Bush and John Kerry) during the final two weeks prior to the elections. The study which focused on *The Washington Times* and *The New York Times* found that most of the articles published on the front-page of *The Washington Times* were in favour of Bush while a quarter of them supported Kerry and few were neutral. The *New York Times* on the other hand also had half of its front-page stories in favor of Kerry while less than half favoured Bush with few being neutral. "Both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Times* were found to be guilty, according to the study data, of favoring one presidential candidate over the other during the critical final two weeks of the Election of 2004" (Cummings 2006, p. 35).

Davis (2004) examined how the mass media framed the South African general elections in 2004. It was found out that newspaper coverage of the election was generally neutral and the incumbent party in power, African National Congress (ANC), dominated the coverage followed by the main opposition party, Democratic Alliance (DA). However, the DA got more coverage than other opposition parties. Davis (2004) argues that these two parties were most active on the campaign and had high profile leaders that attracted the media to cover their election events.

Using content analysis, Grbeša (2012) examined how the major newspapers in Croatia used certain frames (success, suitability and integrity) to report about the two front-running candidates (Milan Bandić and Ivo Josipović) in the second round of that country's 2010 presidential elections. The paper primarily examined if there were any differences between Ivo Josipović and Milan Bandić in terms of their visibility in the newspaper reports. The time frame for the study was during the official campaign of the second-round presidential election (December 28, 2009 to January 8, 2010). The study sampled 202 articles from four leading newspapers in Croatia: *Jutarnji list*, *Večernji list*, *Slobodna Dalmacija* and *Novi list*. The study found that while Ivo Josipović was framed as suitable for the position, honest and decent, and as likely winner, Milan Bandić on the other hand was framed predominantly as dishonest, unsuitable and a loser. Grbeša (2012) asserts that the 2010 presidential election in Croatia was essentially framed as a battle between a good guy and a bad guy. Also, the study found that Milan Bandić was more prominent in coverage than Ivo Josipović since it appeared that he was the central concern of most articles than his opponent Ivo Josipović. Grbeša (2012) suggests that newspaper framing of the candidates during the 2010 Croatian election may have contributed to the victory of Ivo

Josipović. It is therefore quite obvious that the newspaper coverage of 2012 second-round presidential election was biased in favor of Ivo Josipović.

Khan (2003) did a quantitative content analysis of photos and the captions carried on the websites of *The New York Times*, *Times*, and *The Economist* to understand the visual framing of Iran's 2009 controversial presidential election. Khan collected 102 photos from the three newspaper websites and put them into different framing categories. The study found that the three newspaper websites gave considerably more visual coverage to the runner-up candidate, Mousavi, than the incumbent reelected president, Ahmadinejad. This implies that Mousavi gained more prominence in the overall coverage than Ahmadinejad. Khan (2003) emphasized that apart from Mousavi, the three newspaper websites almost unnoticed the other two Iranian presidential candidates, who had also contested the election, lost it, and protested against the results. Khan (2003) maintains that, the overall visual coverage gave the impression as if there was only one opposition leader (Mousavi) in Iran and a two-party political system. The study also found that quite a significant amount of the total coverage was unfavorable towards Ahmadinejad. It can therefore be said that the coverage of the 2009 presidential election in Iran was somewhat biased in favor of Mousavi (Khan, 2003).

The review of related literature and theories in this chapter was helpful in appreciating the directions taken and discoveries made by other scholars in this area of study. Essentially, the above reviewed literature were helpful in understanding the key factors that needed further probing and confirmation or disputing, and contributed to shape the methodological design of the

study. The next chapter discusses the specific techniques and steps taken in identifying, collecting and analysing the data for the study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This study examined how the *Daily Graphic*, a state-owned newspaper, covered the 2012 presidential election petition at the Supreme Court of Ghana. The chapter explains the method used for collecting data for the study and discusses the research design, sampling procedure, units of analysis, coding scheme and procedure for data analysis. To be able to respond to the research questions within the theoretical perspective of framing, the study was conducted using quantitative content analysis.

#### 3.2 Research Method

Content analysis was chosen because it is one of the most practical methods for examining media content (Rife et al, 1998). There are several definitions for content analysis (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Neuendorf (2002) defines content analysis as the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics while Krippendorf (2004) defines it as a research technique that is used for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context. Also, the method of content analysis can be defined as “the systematic assignment of communication content to categories according to rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those categories using statistical methods (Riffe et al, 2005, p. 3).”

In cognizance of the notion that content analysis is the methodology for “making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of message” (Holsti, 1969, p. 14.),” the researcher deemed it most appropriate to identify and quantify framing patterns in the

newspaper coverage of the 2012 presidential election petition in Ghana. Babbie (2009) asserts that content analysis is among the most appropriate methods for studying processes or events occurring over a long period of time. Babbie's assertion also influenced the selection of the content analysis method because this study examined the coverage of the 2012 presidential election petition for five consecutive months (April to August, 2013).

### **3.3 Universe and Sample**

The universe for this study was all newspaper editions published by the *Daily Graphic* within the study period. There were 132 editions published by the newspaper from April to August, 2013. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2000), determining an adequate sample size is one of the most controversial aspects of sampling. But studies in content analysis reveal that there is no particular standard for determining a representative sample. However, Wimmer and Dominick (2000) explain that the sample size may largely be determined by factors such as the type, purpose, complexity of study, the amount of acceptable sampling errors as well as time and financial constraints. Taking into consideration the various factors (especially time) that influences a sample size as explained by Wimmer and Dominick (2000), the sample size for this study was 60 editions of the *Daily Graphic*.

#### **3.3.1 Sampling procedure**

The work of Cummings (2006) guided this study to construct a week out of each month (April-August) in such a way that at most two each of all the publication days (Monday-Saturday) of

the *Daily Graphic* within the study period was randomly selected for representation in each month. The researcher sampled two Mondays (selected at random from the five Mondays available in the month of April, and two Tuesdays selected at random from the available Tuesdays in the month of April as well). This process was repeated through to Saturday for the month of April, May, June, July and August. This was done by writing the dates of all Mondays in April 2013 (1<sup>st</sup> , 8<sup>th</sup> , 15<sup>th</sup> , 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>) on a piece of paper. The papers were then folded and dropped into a bowl. Afterwards the papers were mixed up and two of the papers were picked, one at a time. Record was kept of the date of each selected paper and the paper dropped back into the bowl before the next one was picked. Each time an already drawn date was selected in subsequent picks, it was ignored and dropped back into the bowl until the required number of two papers (dates) were selected. The process was repeated for the rest of the days in April and for the rest of the months within the study period. Twelve editions were selected for each month within the study period thus the total sample size was 60. The total number of stories analysed from the sampled newspaper editions were 219.

### **3.4 Data Collection Technique**

The works of Amoakohene (2007) and Andrade (2006) guided the formulation of the coding scheme for this study. The data collection focused on stories published by the *Daily Graphic* on the election petition within the time frame of the study. The content categories were type of story, size of story, placement of story, size of headline, type of enhancement, tone of story and bias.

### **3.4.1 Unit of analysis**

The unit of analysis can be described as the smallest unit of a content analysis (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). Any story (straight news, editorial, opinion/column, letter to the editor or an independent cartoon or picture ) in the *Daily Graphic* that made reference to the 2012 presidential election petition within the study period was identified as a unit of analysis for this study.

### **3.4.2 Coding Process**

Content analysis is basically a coding operation that seeks to synthesize distinctive pieces of information into a more comprehensive set of data (Babbie, 2009). Wimmer and Dominick (2003) explain coding as the placement of unit of analysis into content categories. The units of analysis identified during the data collection process were assigned to various content categories on a coding sheet (see Appendix B). The content categories were operationally defined as follows:

- **Type of story** – this is basically about the typology of the unit of analysis. This would be categorized as: straight news, editorial/commentary, letter to the editor, opinion/column and an independent cartoon/photograph. Straight news stories are considered more serious than the others because they present hard news and are carefully constructed to enlighten readers (Encyclopedia of Public Relations, 2005). Saunders (2006, p. 158) opines that “article type lends insight into what reporters and editors consider to be more

salient.” Advertisers’ announcements and publications that were advertisements were not considered for analysis.

- **Story size** – this refers to the full length of stories or space occupied by the stories including any photograph, cartoons or photocopies of letters/documents that accompanied them.). “The physical space devoted to an element of a particular story in a print news medium, frames the story in such a way that elements taking more space will be more influential in readers’ interpretation of the story” (Peng 2008, p. 363). The size of the story was measured as more than full page, full page, between full and half page, half page, between half page and one-third page, one-third page, between one-third page and quarter page, quarter page, between quarter page and one-eighth page, one eighth page and less than one-eighth.
- **Placement of story**– this refers to the page on which a story was placed. The page on which a story is placed has an influence on the prominence of the story and the importance readers may attach to it. For instance Saunders (2006) asserts that front page articles are often reserved for the most high-profile candidates and political personalities. Carter (2000) also maintains that, the front pages is mostly viewed as the major selling point of the newspaper, it is what attracts the potential reader to buy the paper and read further. The front-page stories thus obviously gain more attention from readers than stories on middle-spread. Story placement was categorized into the following: front page (lead), front page (other), back page, center spread and any other page.
- **Headline size:** This simply refers to the size of a story’s headline. As elucidated by Kenney and Simpson (1993), although news stories may appear on the same page, they may have different levels of prominence due to differences in the size of headline.

Kenney and Simpson's categorization of headline size into streamers, spread heads, two-column heads and one-column heads was espoused. Headlines that went across a whole page, fell under the category of "streamers," and those that were more than two columns wide but less than streamers were put under the category of "spread heads." Two-column heads and one-column heads, as their names imply, were headlines that were two columns wide and one column wide respectively.

- **Story Enhancement** – this relates to whether a story was accompanied by any image (photograph) or not. The categories under this were: story with photograph, story without visual, story with a cartoons, stories accompanied by photocopies of letter/document, stories with photographs and photocopies of letter/visual and stories with any other enhancement type.

- **Tone of story:** this measures the general tone of the story as:

I. **Positive** (friendly, conciliatory, encouraging, exhortation) for example "Whichever way the decision of the Supreme Court goes, Ghanaians must stand firmly together as one nation to embrace a fragile democracy and heal the wounds of a battered nation "

II. **Negative** (hostile, confrontational, adversarial) for example "Do they think we are stupid, you sit there and frown like a voodoo deity, when Addison is talking, you shut him down and beat him with sticks but when it comes to Tsatsu, when he gets angry, you ask him apologetically if he is angry. Tsatu's cross-examination was for how many days? Didn't Atuguba and co see that the questions he was asking were nonsensical?"

III. **Neutral** (using words that does not portray the story with either a negative or a positive tone) for example "Mr. Addison had given Dr. Afari-Gyan a list of 905 polling station pink sheets which the EC boss had said were not signed by presiding

officers, to identify, and which was opposed by the commission's lead counsel, Mr. James Quashie-Idun, on the grounds that the document was already in evidence before the court."

- **Bias** – this refers to whether articles are heavily slanted towards one side or neutral. For this study, slant is defined as “selecting details that are favorable or unfavorable to the subject being described” (Severin & Tankard, 2001, p. 101). Stories would be measured in this regard whether they are:

- I. **Favourable** (showing support, approval or praise) for any side such as “Nana Addo Dankwah Akufo-Addo deserves a Nobel Peace Prize for seeking peace after the 2012 presidential election. Akufo-Addo’s penchant for peace and tranquility to prevail in the country deserved applause.”
- II. **Unfavourable** (showing opposition, disapproval or criticism) for one side such as “Nana Boakye claimed in an interview that the ruling NDC was using Dr. Charles Wereko Brobbey, Kofi Akpaloo and Akua Donkor to prosecute its diabolic agenda.”
- III. **Neutral** (neither favourable nor unfavourable but merely factual, informative or explanatory) such as “the president of the court urged the parties to try to be impersonal but professional” and “Most Rev. Bishop Boi-Nai also entreated both leadership of the New Patriotic (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) to prevail on their respective supporters to limit their expectations of the outcome of the court case since the judgment could go either way.”

**NB:** See Appendix A and B for coding guide and coding sheet respectively

### 3.4.3 Coding Reliability

Stempel (1989, p 5) defines reliability as “simply consistency in classification”. In other words, reliability in coding refers to the consistency of measurement instruments; that is, the ability to arrive at the same results every time, regardless of who is applying the measurement instrument or when they are being applied (Stempel, 1955). The work of Andrade (2013) guided the test of coding reliability by using Holsti’s formula. Holsti’s formula is  $2A / (Na+Nb)$ , ‘2’ indicates the number of coders; ‘A’ represents the number of agreements or decisions made on each content category by coders while ‘Na’ and ‘Nb’ stand for the number of units (stories) analyzed by each coder. The researcher trained an independent coder (a graduate student) who assisted in testing for the reliability of the coding. About ten percent (30 stories) of the sample were randomly selected and tested for reliability. Below is an illustration of the results of the final round of the test.

#### *Holsti Formula (Calculation for Intercoder Reliability)*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Holsti Formula</b>	<b>Agreement</b>
Story Type	$2 (30) / (30 + 30)$	100%
Story Size	$2 (30) / (30 + 30)$	100%
Placement of Story	$2 (30) / (30 + 30)$	100%
Headline size	$2 (30) / (30 + 30)$	100%
Enhancement Type	$2 (30) / (30 + 30)$	100%
Bias	$2 (27) / (30 + 30)$	90%
Tone of Story	$2 (28) / (30 + 30)$	93%

### **3.5 Data Analyses Technique**

The descriptive statistical method of analysis was used in analyzing content categories. In cognizance of the research objectives, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software was used to analyze coded categories from the content analysis. Through the use of the SPSS software, data from the content analysis was converted into frequency tables and cross-tabulations as a way of summarizing them into formats that can be easily understood. The development of frequency tables from the content analysis also helped to discover and compare patterns and relations that emerged.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Introduction

The findings of the research are presented in this chapter. The findings were arrived at through analysis of data that were collected via the processes described in Chapter Three. The results were submitted using graphical and narrative descriptions, including frequencies, percentages and cross tabulations. This dissertation aimed at finding out the level of prominence and fairness with which the *Daily Graphic* reported on 2012 presidential election petition case at the Supreme Court of Ghana. The study also aimed at determining the dominant tone with which the *Daily Graphic* covered the election petition. Analysis of data was therefore conducted in line with these objectives. The findings were used to address the three research questions that engaged the attention and directed the course of this study. The findings of each of the seven categories, which were used to code the data are presented in the section below.

#### 4.2 Level of Prominence

##### Research Question 1:

**How did stories on the election petition case published in the *Daily Graphic* show the level of prominence given to the case?**

The figures (frequencies, tables and chart) below present findings on the level of prominence with which the *Daily Graphic* covered the 2012 presidential election. The variables under this section are type of story, size of story, placement of story, headline size and enhancement type.

### 4.2.1 Type of Story

**Figure 1: Story Type**

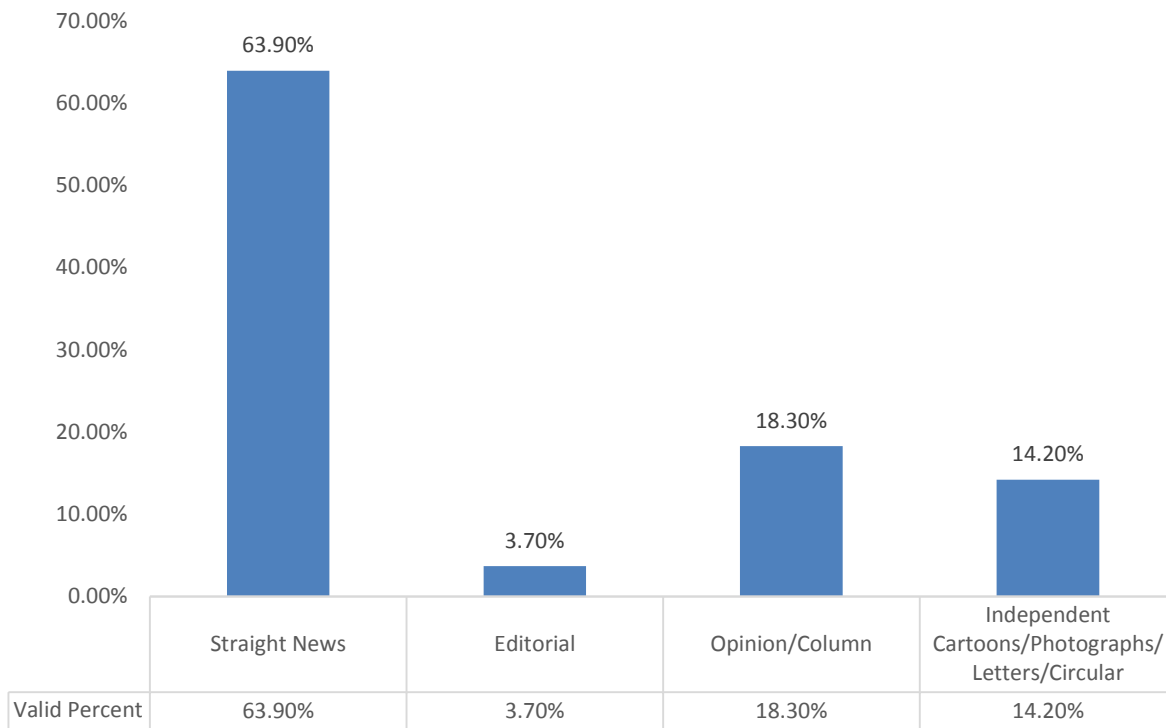


Figure 1 above shows the frequency distribution of items according to the type of stories which appeared in the newspaper. Majority of stories on the election petition were straight news. As observed from Figure 1, more than 60 percent of stories analysed were straight news (63.9%).

This was followed by opinion stories with 18.3 percent, independent cartoons/photographs/letters/circular with 14.2 percent and the least was editorials with eight stories representing 3.7 percent of all the sampled stories.

#### 4.2.2 Size of Story

**Table 1: Story Size**

Story Size	Frequency	Valid Percent
More Than Full Page	30	13.7
Full Page	23	10.5
Between Full And Half Page	34	15.5
Half Page	22	10.0
Between Half Page And One-Third Page	18	8.2
Between One-Third Page And Quarter Page	13	5.9
Quarter Page	21	9.6
Between Quarter Page And One-Eight Page	22	10.0
One-Eighth Page	11	5.0
Less Than One-Eighth Page	25	11.4
Total	219	100.0

Table 1 illustrates the size or total length of stories that made reference to the election petition in the *Daily Graphic*. It is observed from the table above that 34 stories (15.5%) occupied more than half page but less than a full page, 30 stories representing 13.7 percent occupied more than full page. Also, 23 stories representing 10.5 percent occupied a full page long as well as 23 stories (10.0%) were between quarter page and one-eighth page long.

Also, 21 stories (9.6%) were quarter of a page, 18 stories (8.2%) were between half page and one-third page, 13 stories were between one-third of a page and quarter of a page and 11 stories representing 5.0 percent were one-eighth of a page.

### 4.2.3 Placement of Petition Story

**Figure 2: Placement of Story**

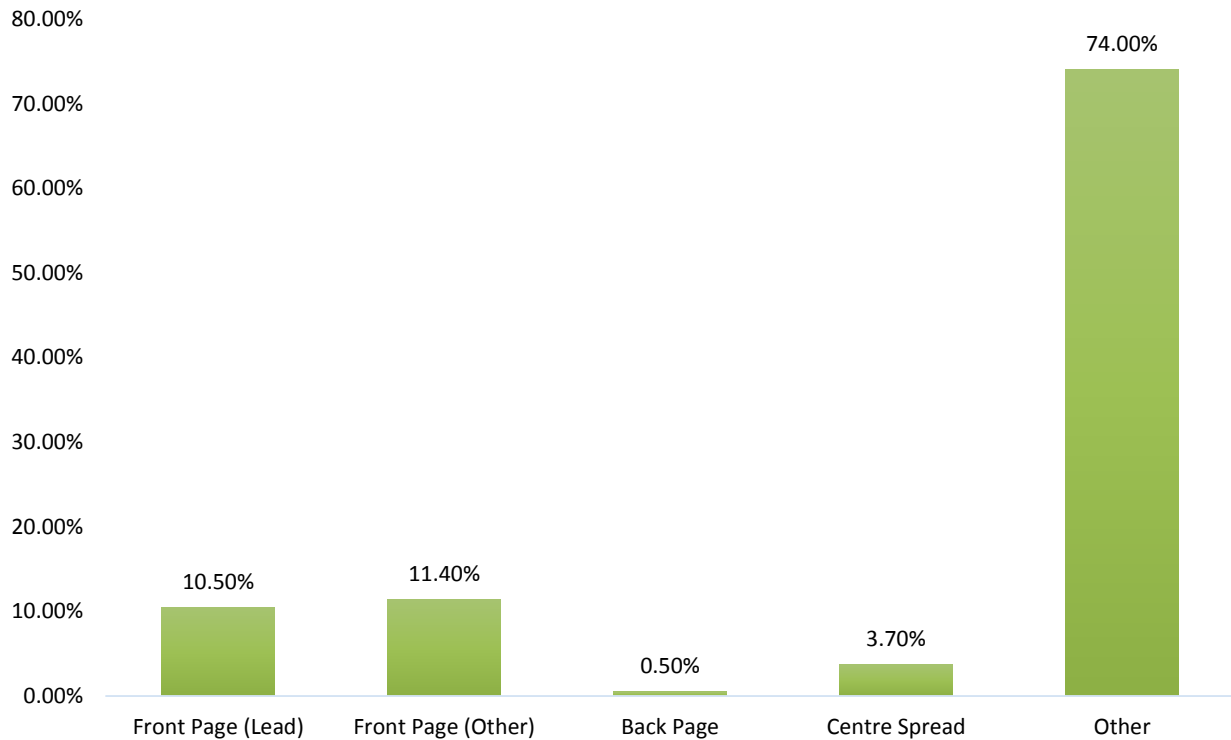


Figure 2 shows the distribution of stories on the election petition in terms of their placement in the *Daily Graphic*. As can be seen, the most proportion of the stories carried by the *Daily Graphic* were in “other pages”. The findings show that 162 stories (74.0%) were in other pages of the newspaper. However, 23 stories (10.5%) were placed on the “front page (lead)” while 25 stories (11.4%) were on the “front page (other)”, 8 stories (3.7%) were at the centre spread and only one story (0.5%) was found at the back of the newspaper.

#### 4.2.4 Headline Size

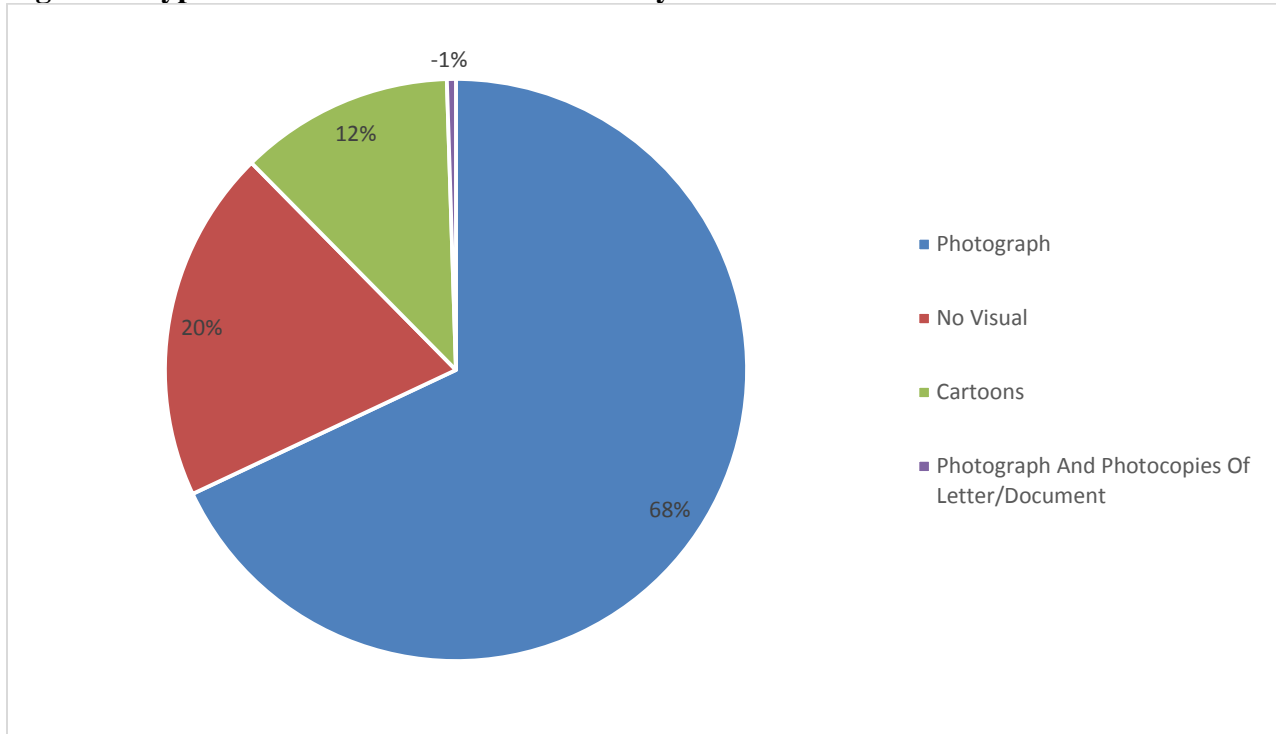
**Table 2: Headline Size**

Headline Size	Frequency	Valid Percent
Streamer	49	22.4
Spread Head	65	29.7
Two-Column Head	38	17.4
One-Column Head	67	30.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2 above, illustrates the size of stories headlines in the *Daily Graphic*. Headline size of stories on the election petition in the *Daily Graphic* was measured to find out the level of prominence attached to stories on the petition in terms of the size of headline. As observed, more than 20 percent (22.4%) appeared under the most prominent headline size (streamers). The next category of prominent headline was the spread head where close to 30 percent (29.7%) of the stories were spread head sized. Also, 67 stories (30%) were one-column head sized and there were 38 stories representing 17.4 percent which were two-column head sized.

#### 4.2.5 Type of Enhancement to Petition Story

**Figure 3: Type of Enhancement to Petition Story**



The pie chart above illustrates the type of enhancements used by the *Daily Graphic* in covering the election petition stories. It is observed from the chart that 149 stories representing (68.0%) had photographic enhancement while 26 stories (11.9%) had cartoons as enhancement type. Also, one story (0.5%) had photograph and photocopies of letter/document attached. On the other hand, 43 stories representing less than 20 percent (19.6%) had no enhancement attached to them. It can be summarized that majority of stories had enhancement like photograph, cartoons or photocopies of letter/document attached to them.

### 4.3 Bias in Petition Story

**How did the coverage of the *Daily Graphic* in the election petition case indicate the level of fairness in its reportage?**

Table 3 below, illustrates the findings on the level of fairness with which the *Daily Graphic* covered the 2012 presidential election petition. The bias in stories on the election petition was measured with variables like favourable or unfavourable and neutral in cases of no bias in the stories.

**Table 3: Bias in Petition Story**

Bias	Frequency	Valid Percent
Favourable for Petitioners	8	3.7
Favourable for Respondents	6	2.7
Unfavourable for Petitioners	3	1.4
Unfavourable for Respondents	2	.9
Favourable for Petitioners And Unfavourable For Respondents	1	.5
Favourable for Respondents And Unfavourable For Petitioners	1	.5
Neutral	198	90.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>100.0</b>

As observed from Table 3, the findings show that, 198 stories representing 90 percent of the 219 stories analysed were neutral, which means they neither favoured the respondents nor the petitioners and were factual, informative or explanatory. On the other hand, eight stories (3.7%) were considered favourable towards petitioners and six stories (2.7%) were favourable towards the respondents. Three stories (1.4%) were unfavourable towards petitioners while two stories

(0.9%) were unfavourable towards respondents. One story (0.5%) was considered favourable towards petitioners but unfavourable for respondents and vice versa.

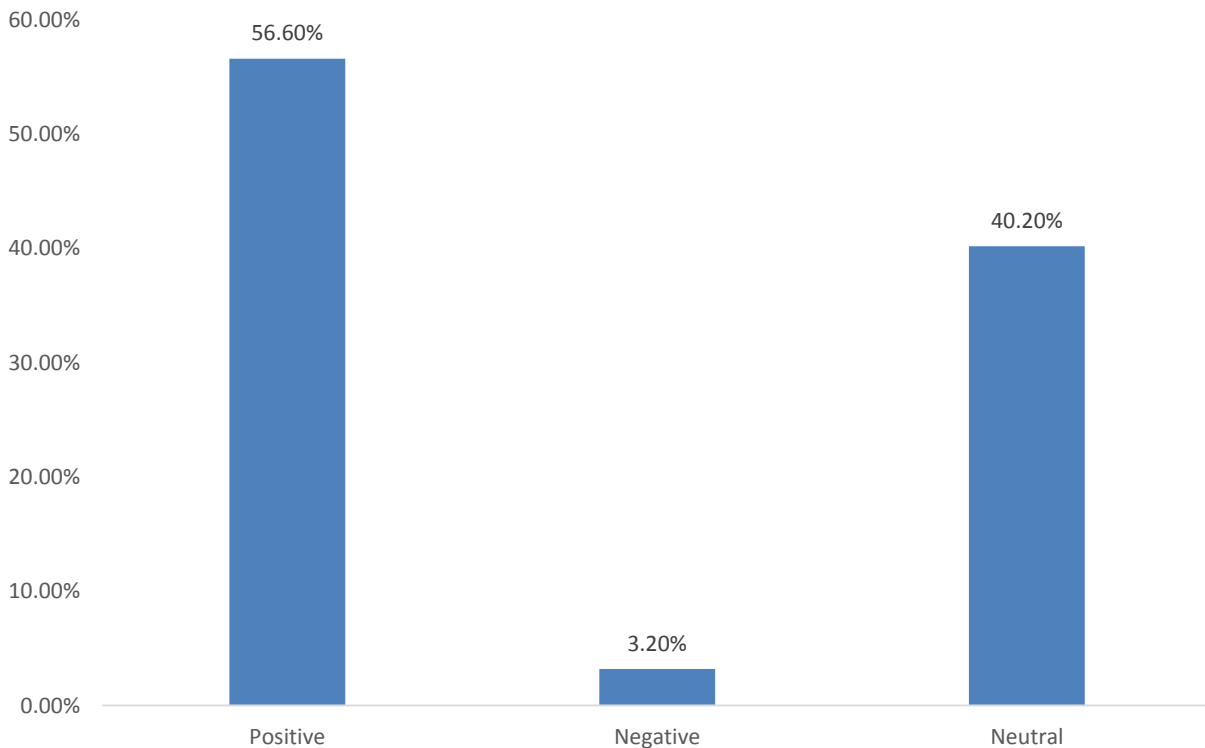
#### 4.4 Tone of Petition Story

##### Research Question 3:

*How did stories on the election petition case published in the Daily Graphic show the newspaper's dominant tone?*

Figure 4 below presents results on the tone of items published in the Daily Graphic on the 2012 presidential election petition. Tone in election petition stories was measured by three variables either positive (friendly or conciliatory), negative (hostile or confrontational) or neutral (neither positive nor negative).

**Figure 4: Tone of Story**



The findings show that more than half (56.6%) of stories on election petition were positive and 40 percent were neutral. Seven stories (3.2%) out of the 219 stories analysed were coded with negative tones. Generally, most of the stories (96.6%) were either positive or neutral in tone but the positive tone dominated.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

This study explored how the state-owned *Daily Graphic* reported on the 2012 presidential election petition. It involved a content analysis of 219 articles to determine the level of prominence and fairness as well as the dominant tone of coverage. This chapter discusses the findings outlined in the preceding chapter and attempts to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of the study. This discussion entailed assessment of key points noted in the findings with inferences from the perspectives gained through review of the framing theory and other related studies discussed in Chapter Two. The chapter also acknowledges the limitations of the study, makes recommendations for future studies and finally draws some conclusions.

#### 5.2 Prominence

As applied here, prominence “refers to the positioning of a story within a text to communicate its importance” (Kiouisis, 2004, p. 71). As argued by Watts et al (1993), stories in the media indicate their importance to the audience by virtue of their placement, length, or treatment. A story’s prominence is influenced by its placement, size, pictures and other aesthetic tools (Kiouisis, 2004). Accordingly, this study measured the level of prominence given to the 2012 presidential election petition by using type of story, placement of story, size of story, headline size and enhancement type as indicators.

Unlike Busher (2006) who avoided other types of newspaper content such as editorials, letters to the editor, opinion columns and cartoons, this study did otherwise. The results showed that a

majority (63.9%) of the articles analyzed were straight news stories. This was similar to the findings of Cummings (2006) where more (60.7%) of the articles were in that category. Miller et al (2012) also found more articles (89.8%) that were news stories than editorial, columns or letters and associated the most of prominence with the straight news type story. The findings therefore imply that the coverage of the *Daily Graphic* on the election petition by article type was prominent enough.

Miller et al (2012) asserted that prominence includes the location (front page, front section, elsewhere) of stories. This study accordingly measured prominence by taking into cognizance the placement of the story. As noted by Andrade (2013), stories located on the front page of newspapers are more prominent than those found elsewhere. The findings of this study showed that less than one-quarter (21.9%) of the stories analyzed were placed on the front page of the *Daily Graphic* while a substantial number (74.0%) of the articles were placed on other pages. This was similar to the findings of Miller et al (2012) that about a quarter of the stories analyzed were placed on the front pages. As noted by Saunders (2006), the front page of newspapers are reserved for high profile personalities. The results show that the *Daily Graphic* did not treat the election petition stories with much prominence in terms of placement although 63.9% of the stories were in the straight news category.

As noted earlier, there is a significant relationship between length of the news article and its perceived importance (Cissel, 2012) and “the physical space devoted to an element of a particular story in a print news medium frames the story in such a way that elements taking more space will be more influential in readers’ interpretation of the story” (Peng 2008, p. 363). This

means that the larger the size of a story in the newspaper, the more its prominence. The study showed that 109 stories (49.8%) were at least half a page large constituting less than 219 of the articles analyzed. On the other hand, 110 stories (50.2%) were less than half of a page. It can therefore be said that the coverage of 2012 presidential election in terms of story size was somewhat prominent.

Another variable that was used to measure the level of prominence was enhancement of stories. Khan (2003) also measured the level of prominence given to the election petition in terms of whether stories were accompanied with visuals or not. The results showed that most of the stories (80.4%) were accompanied with visuals as compared to 19.6 percent which had no visuals. In terms of enhancement, it could be said that the coverage of the election petition was with much prominence.

The headline size of stories was also another indicator this study adopted to measure the level of prominence. As noted by Kinney and Simpson (1993), though stories may appear on the same page, they may have different levels of prominence due to differences in headline size. The findings of this study showed that a little over half (51.8%) of the stories were more prominent (streamer and spread head sized) while a little below half (48.2%) of the stories were less prominent (two-column and one-column sized). In terms of the size of headline, the election petition stories was somewhat prominent.

The findings of this study showed that the *Daily Graphic* covered the election petition with a significant level of prominence. This level of prominence was communicated by the newspaper through the various variables (story placement, size, type, enhancement and headline size) used

in measurement. Quite a good number of stories were placed at the front pages, most stories were straight news stories, most stories were also at least half-paged sized and most of the stories were also accompanied with enhancements.

### **5.3 Bias**

As indicated earlier, Miller and Riechert (2001) advocated that in the process of frame identification, key words should be mapped out and counted in terms of frequency within the data collected. Accordingly, fairness of each story analyzed was determined by identifying key words that denoted a slant towards any side or otherwise. The findings of this study did not support the findings of Amoakohene (2007), Temin & Smith (2002) and Frère (2011) where the State-owned media were biased or favourable towards the ruling (incumbent) government in their reportage. The results of the study indicated that most (90.4%) of the stories analyzed were presented neutrally. This means that almost all the stories reported on the election petition did not favour any side to the detriment of another. This presupposed that the level of fairness with which the *Daily Graphic* reported on the 2012 presidential election petition was very high. What this finding means is that the *Daily Graphic* honored its constitutional obligation as a state-owned media of being fair. If the assertion that a bias in media is a failure of the “news market” (Sutter, 2001) is anything to go by, then it can be noted that the coverage of the 2012 presidential election by the *Daily Graphic* was not a failure of the “news market.”

The finding that government newspapers were more biased in their coverage than private newspapers (Goretti, 2007) was not supported by this study. The findings of this research

disagreed with those of Cummings (2006), Grbeša (2012), Goretti (2007), Khan (2003), Khudiyev (2005) which all found high levels of bias in the newspapers they studied.

#### **5.4 Dominant Tone**

The results of the study indicated that generally, the tone of the coverage was either positive (56.60%) or neutral (40.20%). Relatively few (3.20%) of the stories had negative tones. Similarly, Busher's (2006) study of the tone with which the *New York Times* framed Hillary Clinton found that most the articles had neutral tones. Andrade (2013) also found a generally neutral/positive tone in the coverage of Julian Assange by English and Spanish newspapers from various continents. The findings of this study supported the assertion by Brunken (2006) that the tone of elitist newspapers was more positive in their coverage since the *Daily Graphic* can be classified as an elitist newspaper in Ghana.

#### **5.5 Implication for the Framing Theory**

As posited by Entman (2004), framing relates to the process through which some aspects of news items are highlighted to promote a particular interpretation among audiences. This means that news items that go through the gates of editors to get published, may not be given the same treatment and prominence. Framing of stories is carried out through headlines, sub-heads, photos and captions, source selection, quote selection, logos, statistics and charts, among a few other story characteristics (Vreese, 2005). As argued by McCombs (2004), gatekeeping and framing are interlinked in that framing constitutes the ideological contextualization of content choices by gatekeepers.

In this study, analysis of framing measures such as type of story, story size, story placement, headline size and visuals revealed that differences in the way stories were framed could make some articles more prominent than others. A typical case was witnessed when most stories were placed on the other pages of the newspaper while relatively few were placed on the front page. Also, most of the stories reported on the election petition case were straight news stories. Additionally, it was observed that more than half of the stories analyzed had less than half a page while relatively few were at least half of a page. The headline size of the stories was also framed differently where a little over half of the total stories analyzed were bigger than the others.

As argued by Stromback and Luengo (2008) through the activation of some stories at the expense of others, framing can promote particular trains of thought projected in stories. The findings of this study indicated that the newspaper highlighted and projected the idea of neutrality in its reportage. The dominance of nonbiased and pleasantly (positive and neutral) toned stories presupposes that the *Daily Graphic* either consciously or otherwise framed the coverage of the election petition fairly devoid of alarming negative tone of coverage. The findings of this study therefore supports the tenets of the framing theory.

Although the election petition case was very polarized, the *Daily Graphic* managed to frame almost all the stories fairly. There is therefore the need for the media in Ghana to report election related issues without bias as the *Daily Graphic* did in covering the election petition. The fact that the *Daily Graphic* did not cover the election petition to favour the incumbent government, suggests that the state-owned media in Ghana currently operates with an appreciable level of independence devoid of government interference. This is a good news for the Ghanaian democracy because previous studies such as Amoakohene (2007) and Temin & Smith (2002) found that the state-owned media were biased towards the incumbent government. In essence,

the *Daily Graphic* through framing, reported on the election petition with fairness and a significant level of prominence. Through framing also, the reportage on the election petition by the *Daily Graphic* ignored the use of negative tones but highlighted and promoted both positive and neutral tones. The *Daily Graphic*'s framing of the 2012 presidential election petition had the potential to lead readers to perceive the election petition as peaceful since the dominant tone of the coverage was either positive or neutral. The *Daily Graphic* framed most of the election petition stories devoid of confrontation and adversaries thus could not have instigated any form of political conflict or violence in the country.

## **5.6 Recommendations**

Although findings generated from the study were very useful, the generalizability of the results to other media types such as radio and television, should be treated with caution. This is because the study was limited to only the *Daily Graphic* newspaper's coverage of the 2012 presidential election petition. It is therefore recommended that future studies consider a comparative study of *Daily Graphic* and other leading newspapers in Ghana. It would also be very interesting to adopt a broader media studies in the coverage of election issues by not looking at only newspapers, but also at television and radio stories.

## **5.7 Limitations**

This study had some limitations. The research method adopted for the study was a quantitative content analysis. Although the method is very valuable in communication research, it only provides a description of the content of newspaper coverage of the election petition. The method

was incapable of determining for instance, why editors reported the way they did and also the effect of the coverage on the opinion of the audience of the newspaper.

Regardless of the limitations, the researcher believes that this study has provided an insightful view into the coverage of the 2012 election issues in Ghana. It is the hope of the researcher that the findings and recommendations made will go a long way to improve research in the media coverage of election issues. The researcher considered this study as an addition to the body of knowledge in the study of framing and newspaper coverage of election issues.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

Primarily, this study sought to explore how the 2012 presidential election petition was framed by the *Daily Graphic*. The analysis of the findings was to establish the level of prominence and fairness with which the state-owned newspaper covered the election petition as well as the dominant tone of the coverage. The study used the quantitative content analysis approach to explore the stories. Generally, stories on the election petition were framed prominently in terms of the size of headline and story, enhancement and the type of story. However, *Daily Graphic* could have done better in terms of placement of election petition stories because most of the stories on election petition were not found in the prominent pages of the newspaper but the “the other” pages. With regards to the overall tone, the study showed that the coverage of the election petition was framed either positive or neutral but the positive tone dominated. Also the findings indicated that the election petition was framed with much fairness. Therefore, to a very large

extent, one can say that the *Daily Graphic* adhered to its constitutional obligation of affording fair opportunities to divergent and dissenting views.

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## APPENDIX A

### CODING GUIDE

**Q1. Reference Number** – Story identified by serial number starting from 001.

**Q2. Date of Publication:**

Enter actual date as day, month and year of publication (mmdd) with no space or punctuation

(e.g. 1504 = April 15)

**To find out the level of prominence the *Daily Graphic* attached to the stories on the election petition case in its coverage;**

**Q3. Story Type:**

1. Straight news
2. Feature
3. Editorial
4. Column/Opinion
5. Letter to the editor
6. Independent Cartoons/photographs/letters/circular

**Q4. Story Size**

1. More than full page
2. Full page
3. Between full and half page
4. Half page
5. Between half page and one-third page
6. One-third page
7. Between one-third page and quarter page
8. Quarter page
9. Between quarter page and one-eighth page
10. One-eighth page
11. Less than one-eighth page

**Q5. Placement of the story**

1. Front Page (Lead)
2. Front Page (Other)
3. Back page
4. Center spread
5. Other

**Q6. Headline size**

1. Streamer
2. Spread head
3. Two-column head
4. One-column head

**Q7. Enhancement Type**

1. Photograph
2. No visual
3. Cartoons
4. Photocopies of letter/document
5. Photograph and photocopies of letter/document
6. Other

**To find out the level of fairness with which the Daily Graphic reported on the election petition case at the Supreme Court of Ghana**

**Q.8 Bias**

1. Favorable for petitioners
2. Favorable for respondents
3. Unfavorable for petitioners
4. Unfavorable for respondents
5. Favorable for petitioners and Unfavorable for respondents
6. Favorable for respondents and unfavorable for petitioners
7. Neutral

**To find out the dominant tone with which the *Daily Graphic* covered stories on the election petition case;**

**Q.9 Tone of story**

1. Positive
2. Negative
3. Neutral



APPENDIX C

Newspaper Editions Analyzed in 2013 (April-August)

<b>Month</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>
<b>April</b>	<b>15, 29</b>	<b>30, 16</b>	<b>24, 3</b>	<b>11, 4</b>	<b>26, 19</b>	<b>27, 13</b>
<b>May</b>	<b>6, 20</b>	<b>28, 14</b>	<b>22, 8</b>	<b>9, 30</b>	<b>17, 3</b>	<b>25, 11</b>
<b>June</b>	<b>10, 24</b>	<b>18, 4</b>	<b>12, 26</b>	<b>20, 13</b>	<b>7, 28</b>	<b>22, 1</b>
<b>July</b>	<b>8, 29</b>	<b>23, 2</b>	<b>17, 31</b>	<b>25, 11</b>	<b>5, 19</b>	<b>13, 27</b>
<b>August</b>	<b>26, 12</b>	<b>6, 20</b>	<b>14, 21</b>	<b>1, 29</b>	<b>30, 9</b>	<b>10, 31</b>