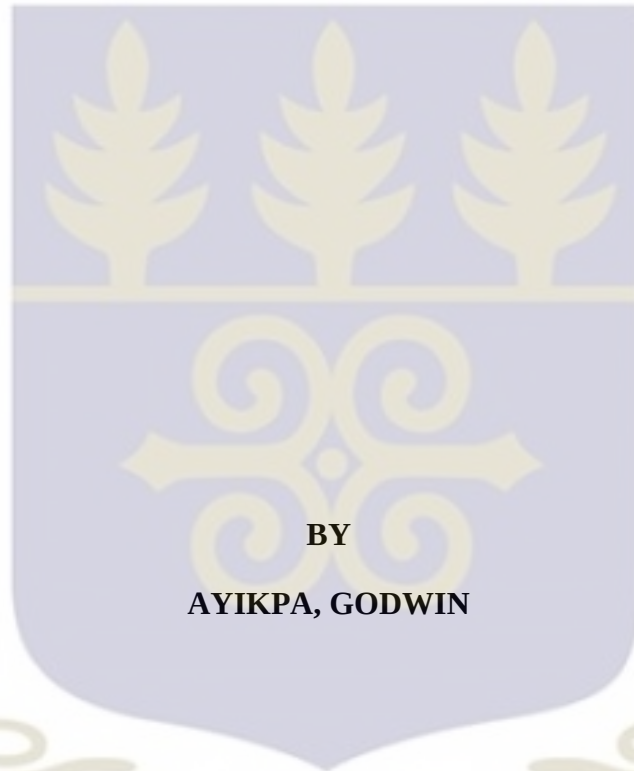


**FRAMING THE ACCRA FLOODS: HOW THE DAILY GRAPHIC AND THE DAILY
GUIDE NEWSPAPERS COVERED THE FLOODING IN ACCRA.**



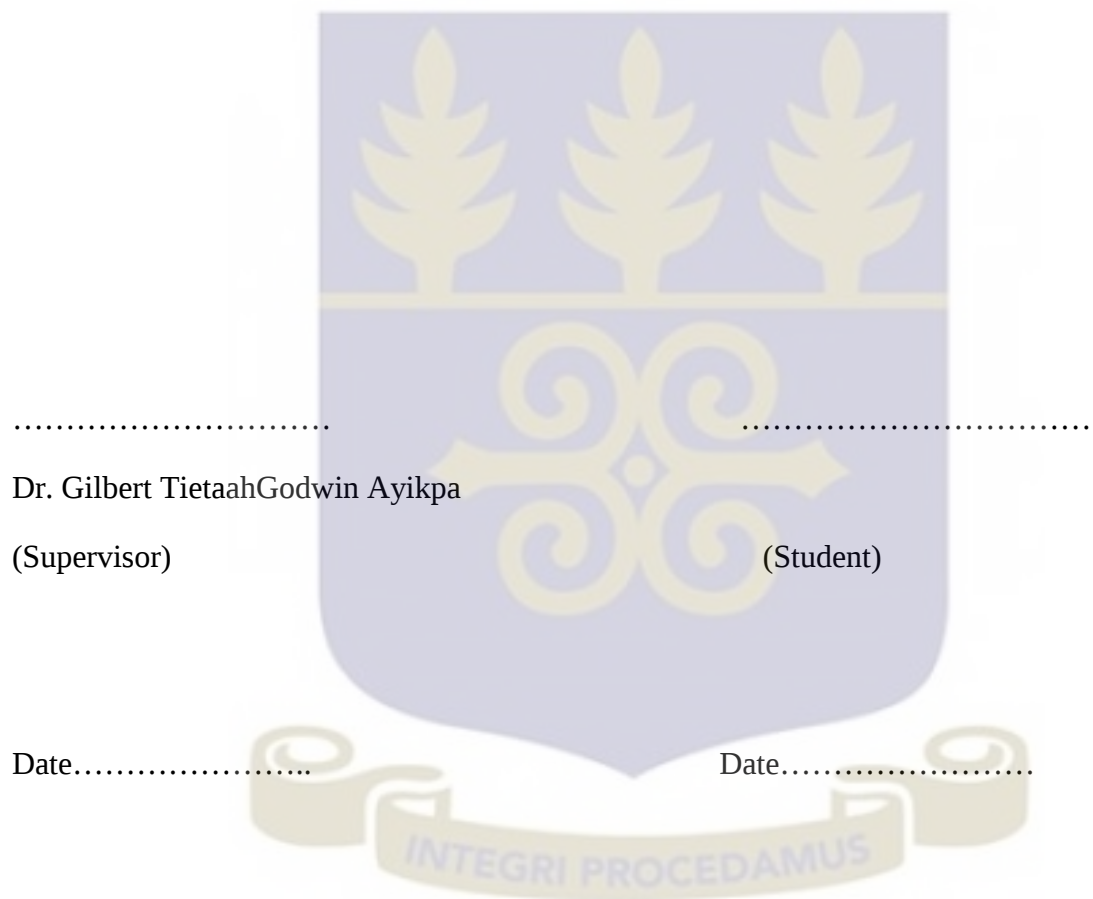
**BY
AYIKPA, GODWIN**

**THIS LONG ESSAY IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MA
COMMUNICATION STUDIES DEGREE**

OCTOBER, 2015

DECLARATION

I declare that, apart from references in other works cited and duly acknowledged, this dissertation is the result of my own research carried out at the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. The research was ably supervised by Doctor Gilbert Tietaah.



DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to God for His constant blessing and mercies throughout the course. Without His grace, I could not have completed this course. Also, I dedicate it to my lovely children; Kandi and Kallis.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The successful completion of this study was greatly as a result of the constant mercies and guidance of the Most Gracious god whom I could not have done anything without. The gratitude I owe Him is not a mere mention of Him since I cannot pay Him in any measure for His sustenance and guidance.

In carrying out this work, I particularly enjoyed the moral support and encouragement of Rachael Oman, who would always remind me of the benefit I would gain if I successfully carry through this programme.

Worthy of mention also is my indefatigable supervisor, Dr. Gilbert Tietaah. His constructive suggestions, meticulous editing and fatherly encouragement endeared him to everyone. I am particularly grateful to him for his patience and resolve to help me get a good work done despite my inability to meet his deadlines sometimes.

I cannot complete this page without thanking the hardworking lecturers at the department whose intellectuality had inspired me a lot.

To Mr. Eric Agyekum Boansi, my course mate, you deserve my acknowledgement for tediously analysing my findings with me. God bless you.

Mr. Adam Kaeti Kumah, you gave me a challenge and that is another reason behind this success.

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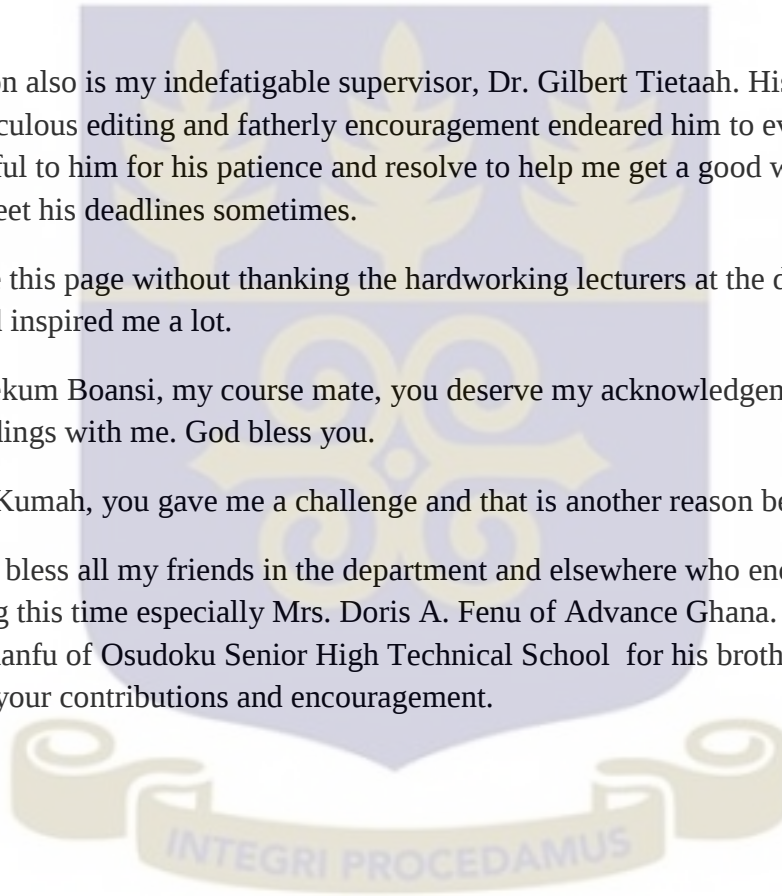


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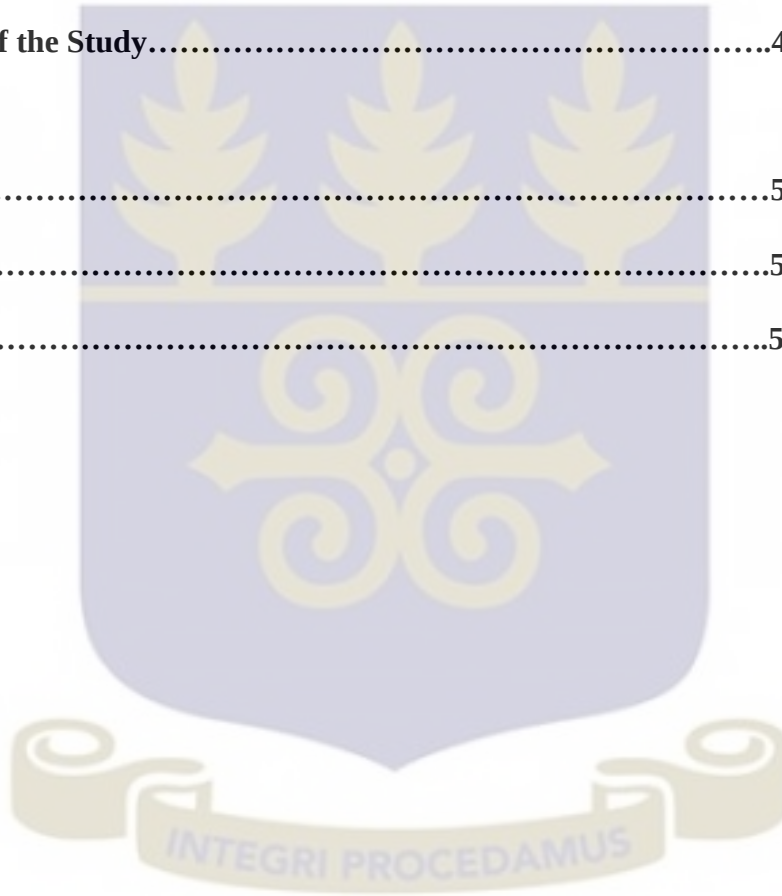
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ABSTRACT

Flooding is undoubtedly one of the global natural disasters with the most debilitating effects on both humans and other living things alike. It is the leading and most frequent cause of natural disaster fatalities worldwide. It has become such a global concern that both developed and developing countries give maximum attention to it in finding ways of minimizing, if not preventing, its effects. The objective of this study is not to describe the impact of flood events on human populations in terms of mortality, injury and displacement but to look at the extent to which the media give prominence to stories of flooding in the capital of Ghana and the angling of the reportage on this natural disaster. The period between 2014 and 2015 has been full of several flooding disasters in Accra with unforgettable loss of lives and property. It was expected of the print media especially to give comprehensive coverage of these occurrences in order to give valuable information about prevention, recovery and mitigation. The focus is on two print media in Ghana; the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*.

The study found out that most of the stories on flooding focused on the loss of human lives and properties. Other aspects of flooding that were highlighted in the newspaper articles include ordeals and challenge of flood victims, effects of flooding on human lives and donations to flood victims. The study further found that nearly 60% of flood stories were placed on the front, centre and back pages of the two newspapers indicating that the two attached prominence to the phenomenon. Findings from the work also suggested that there were no real significant differences between the coverage of *Daily Guide* and *Daily Graphic* on the subject. The study concluded by suggesting that journalists must desist from unnecessary sensationalisation of flood-related stories. Rather, they should attach a great deal of professionalism to their reportage.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Statement

Flooding can be explained as a significant rise of water level in a stream, lake, reservoir or coastal region. More colloquially, one can say flooding is the presence of water in areas that are usually dry. For the purpose of this study, flooding includes any inter-related phenomena such as hurricane, cyclone and attendant consequences such as fire, drainage and displacement. There are diverse and interrelated factors that account for flood events. Apart from weather factors such as heavy or sustained precipitation or storm surges from cyclones, important human factors are also implicated. These human factors include structural failures of dams and inadequate drainage systems. Particularly in third world countries, building in waterways is a common cause of the disaster. Patterns of land use and massive increases in population growth are potential precipitators of vulnerability to flooding as a natural phenomenon. When flooding occurs, there is mortality as well as indirect and direct displacement of people. Even though the immediate causes of death in floods include drowning and trauma or injury, the accompanying infectious diseases that follow over time are very deadly. The risks posed by future flood events are significant given population growth, proximities of populations to coastlines, expanded development of coastal areas and flood plains, environmental degradation and climate change.

In a report by the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO) in 2010, it is suggested that although Ghana is vulnerable to disasters, the dominant one that has cost the nation in recent years is flooding. For instance, a heavy rain in Accra in October, 2011 flooded

many suburbs of the city culminating in massive destruction. The impact of this disaster was huge. Prior to that, the devastating flooding in June, 2010 in Ashaiman swept away properties worth millions of Ghana cedis (Osei, 2013).

Due to the level of catastrophic effects of flooding, it is not enough to devise strategies to minimize these effects or attempt to prevent them without analyzing how the phenomenon is covered by the media in terms of its effects and level of education on the risks posed by it. Given the fact that people turn to heed to and assimilate information that comes through mediated channels, the importance of the role of the media in covering this phenomenon cannot be underestimated. Luhmann (2001) argued that the media serve as the public's primary introduction to risk. Environmental risks, such as the impact of flooding, are especially more likely to be discovered through a mediated channel than any other source. More importantly, since early signs of the disaster are appropriate warnings that keep people conscious of the dangers of flooding, it is worthwhile to be abreast of these signs through mass media education before and after the disaster. This is particularly the reason why the media's role becomes very critical.

How the print media cover the phenomenon of flooding in Accra, the capital of Ghana, and the pre-flooding, flooding and post-flooding education by the print media will form the basis of this research with focus on two print media selected on the basis of ownership, circulation and readership.

1.2 Problem Statement

Since issues of pattern of land use, settlement in waterways and land degradation are pronounced causes of flooding in Accra, policies on urban planning and governance issues should be brought to the fore to address the phenomenon. Accra has been and continues to be the worst hit during flooding in Ghana. The concern is that since it is the capital of the country, policy issues that should address the basic human factors of flooding must be functional. Also, the majority of the news media are located in Accra and thus would be affected by the effects of the disaster. The media play a major role in bringing policy-makers to the domain of solving problems that affect the general populace in any democratic state. Considering the advocacy role of the media in informing the public on certain predictable disasters by giving fear appeals and preventive information ahead of them, it is critical to find out whether the print media are employing this role in their coverage of flooding in Accra. Given that the two newspapers are the most widely circulated and most read dailies, their influence in informing and educating the populace on issues that affect them and how this education informs public policies is relevant. It will therefore be useful to analyse their flood stories to determine the nature of coverage they give to flooding in Accra and whether they engage in risk communication and education during flooding seasons.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study will content-analyze the coverage given to incidences of flooding in the capital of Ghana. Over the decades, the phenomenon of flooding as a disaster has persistently cost the

nation millions of dollars. Being a perennial occurrence, the kind of education the media will give in terms of pre-flood and post-flood coverage on measures to adopt in averting at least the human cause of the disaster should be of interest. Thus, the purpose here will be to bring to the attention of the media the emerging need to cover flooding and other disasters not only when they occur but also before and after; as a way of dealing with the impacts and constantly reminding urban dwellers of the human causes.

As its objectives, the study therefore sought to:

- a. determine the kind of prominence the two newspapers gave to flood stories,
- b. examine what the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* attributed flooding to in the capital city,
- c. establish the nature of messaging the two dailies included in their coverage of flooding and its related issues,
- d. find out how flood stories were framed by the two newspapers.

1.4 Research Questions

The research would attempt to answer the following:

- a. What prominence do the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* give to incidences of flooding in Accra?
- b. What is the nature of stories published on flooding by the two newspapers?
- c. What tone is given to flood stories published in these newspapers?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

Based on the research questions above and the context of news judgment and attribution, the study sought to test the following hypotheses:

H1: The two newspapers would be more likely to focus on covering the disaster as it happened than playing their educational role on the phenomenon during off-peak flooding season.

Justification for the hypothesis basically stems from the theory of value of news judgment. This is because the newspapers consider the occurrence of flooding and the effects it has worthier than information on prevention since the former is deemed to be something more devastating in terms of the impact and currency as underpinned by the news value theory. Also, since the public would almost always consider stories of flooding with images of people rendered homeless or property submerged in water more newsworthy to read than safety or preventive stories, the newspapers are easily and likely to focus on coverage of the disaster scene stories than the preventive and risk communication aspect of the disaster.

H2: There is likely to be a relationship between newspaper and the frame given to the disaster in the coverage. The rationale for this hypothesis is that according to the ownership theory by Shoemaker and Reese (1991), what gets published, how it gets published as well as distribution is influenced by who owns the media. As a result, a state-owned newspaper's attribution or framing of a disaster that could be triggered by ineffectual policies is likely to be different from a privately-owned newspaper which could have a parochial agenda; be it political or purely commercial. While the *Daily Graphic* is state-owned and is likely to be more favourable to the government, the *Daily Guide* is a private newspaper whose leaning to an opposition party is a

common knowledge. Thus, attribution of the disaster to lack of proper policy on urban planning for instance could be weighed differently by the two papers.

1.6 Scope of the Study

There are about 136 newspapers in Ghana today. Some are state-owned while the majority are privately owned. These newspapers cover varying issues on daily, bi-weekly and weekly basis. This study narrowed this extensive scope to only two newspapers; the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* whose stories on flooding during 2014 to the first half of 2015 were analysed. The reason for this period was mainly due to the fact that a couple of flood incidences during the period happened to be one of the most disastrous and catastrophic in the annals of Accra.

1.7 Significance of the Study

There seems to be a dearth of education on the human causes of flooding in Ghana. Whether the inhabitants are well-informed but defy this education is another problem to critically look at. The media possess a powerful influence in the messages they transmit. People consider the media as their primary source of information concerning social problems. The media therefore are powerful in the public's perception and definition of these social issues.

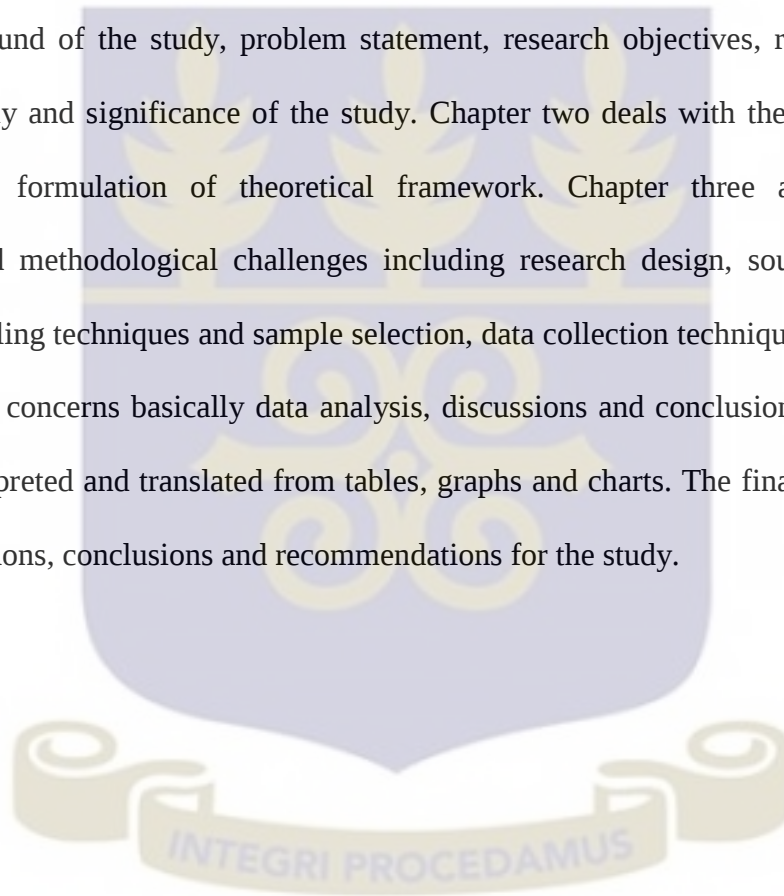
Findings from this study will be a significant basis for future research to assess the effect of risk communication on the problem on public awareness and preparedness for future occurrence.

Additionally, the outcome should serve as a constant notice to the newspapers about their role in comprehensively covering disaster stories alongside preventive and safety information. It will

ultimately be useful in re-conferring that task on other media if they are not doing it already. Finally, the findings should serve as valuable information for shaping public policies on urban and town planning as a way of avoiding at least the human factor of disasters.

1.8 Outline of the Study

The study is presented in five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction to the study which includes background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, scope of the study and significance of the study. Chapter two deals with the review of related studies and the formulation of theoretical framework. Chapter three also explores the methodology and methodological challenges including research design, source of data used, population, sampling techniques and sample selection, data collection technique and instruments. The next chapter concerns basically data analysis, discussions and conclusions. In this chapter, the data are interpreted and translated from tables, graphs and charts. The final chapter involves summary, limitations, conclusions and recommendations for the study.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The need to read, synthesise and analyse related works on a phenomenon under study is very relevant so as to have a view about what other researchers have been able to find out about the topic. This analysis may take the form of comparison of methodologies applied, theoretical frameworks that underpinned the research and findings in order to draw on similarities or differences that are relevant to the current study.

Flooding is an environmental natural disaster with catastrophic effects. It usually results from heavy rainfall when the natural water courses are unable to contain the volumes of water at a time. In this study, it is defined to include storms, tides, and even tropical cyclones and their attendant consequences as fire, siltation and displacement. A review of related works under the broad topic of natural disaster coverage by newspapers has been considered appropriate by the researcher. This review process entails an analysis of documents that dwell on information related to the problem under investigation. Since the phenomenon of flooding is a global concern, many researchers the world over delved generally into the impact it has on life and property. The focus on the impact was to make people become conscious of the activities that bring about the disaster with a view to taking measures to avert it. However, other researchers considered the risk communication aspect that goes with coverage of these disasters. Based on the fact that newspapers need to inform the public on the dangers of these disasters, the

researcher reviews related works which combined risk communication with newspaper coverage of the phenomenon.

Alharbi (2014) content-analysed the coverage of cyclones by some media in Australia. He focused on how the media, in covering the cyclones in Queensland, accompanied the reportage with risk communication which serves as pre-informing the general public about the occurrence and effects of the cyclones. Since Alharbi (2014) focused on risk communication component of newspaper coverage of the disaster, he employed the theory of Extended Parallel Processing Model. Though his theory is not specifically grounded in communication research, it involves a relevant construct that relates to a role the media can play in covering disasters. This model deals with fear appeals. Witte (1992,p.329) stated that fear appeals at large are “persuasive messages designed to scare people by describing the terrible things that will happen to them if they do not do what the message recommends.

In his data collection, Alharbi (2014) applied the news-network websites to analyse risk news stories during the cyclones in Queensland as published in the *Brisbane Times* and *The Australian Newspaper*. Data was limited to a six-day time period from 28 January to 2 February, 2011. The data analysis was conducted to examine the types of coverage as well as the risk communication component. The finding was that, the *Brisbane Times* published more articles on the disaster than *The Australian* with a total of 45 with an average of 8 articles per day as against 18 articles with an average of 3 articles per day respectively. Regarding the fear appeal stories for risk communication, the two newspapers constructed considerably low risk communication stories. The *Brisbane Times* had 8 percent (75 instances) out of 274 instances for both fear appeals and efficacy whiles *The Australian* had 4 percent (19 instances) out of 104.

Alharbi's (2014) conclusions were that the media during disaster might consider publishing more feature articles and may have to construct fear appeals as well as focus primarily on information that concerns the public. What was noteworthy in his finding was the fact that the newspapers involved did not dwell more on the fear appeal or risk communication aspect in their coverage. This might have reduced the devastating impact of the disaster since more fear appeals would have meant that a lot of people had prepared for the occurrence. It is therefore a reason why the research under study considers risk communication in coverage of flooding a concern to look at.

In a study carried out by Rainey and Ruyan in 1992 in the United States of America, the researchers did an analysis of how newspapers in North Carolina provided coverage of residential fire deaths and drowning of children involved in the disaster. Their analysis was to determine accuracy and completeness of the coverage of the phenomenon covering a 13-month period. Their study found out that 78 percent of the drowning involving children had been covered by the newspapers and 96 percent of fire fatalities. They also acknowledged the importance of newspapers in covering disaster by stating that newspapers report on these disasters with more detailed information including causes and giving warning signs ahead. While these researchers were more concerned about accuracy and completeness of coverage, they made a vivid conclusion that buttresses the concern raised by Alharbi (2014) in the Brisbane cyclone. This concern is that newspapers should give more warning signs in their coverage ahead of disasters.

Myles (2006), in a review of a study by King and Goudie in 2006, also did a study on another cyclone that caused a lot of havoc in Queensland in 2006. The study aimed at determining the usefulness and adequacy of media coverage during such disasters and how media coverage aided

the residents in avoiding further devastation and destruction by allowing them individually and as a community to be prepared for the impact the cyclone would have. This disaster was named Cyclone Larry. The methodology was the creation of a database which was reviewed to determine various variables such as which media sources were most useful and which information sources prompted preparation after the cyclone warnings were used.

In the preparation for the cyclone, the media sources were the most acknowledged sources for prompting action on yard cleaning. For preparation prompted by warnings, the media again were the most acknowledged source of information. The discussion and finding drawn from this study were that: newspapers and radio were the most accessible and noted media sources for obtaining current information and that, most people perceived warning and advice notices to be helpful and instigated action to prepare for the coming cyclone. The usefulness of this finding has been the fact that when information on disasters is covered by newspapers, people have easy access, take them seriously and become more prepared for such disasters.

Relevant to this study in terms of placement of disaster stories is a study by Smith, Cho, Gielen and Vernick in 2007. They monitored four newspapers in Maryland, USA and observed that the news media, for those matter newspapers, were an important available channel of communication in promoting the effective preventive strategies for fires. To probe further, they did a news coverage analysis as a way of recommending the role of the media in the prevention of injuries during fire outbreaks. Smith *et al* employed agenda-setting theory as a conceptual guide for determining variables to analyse content in the newspaper articles. Thus, they coded for prominence and content, newsworthiness as well as preventive strategy messages. Also, they applied framing in order to identify how the reports on fires were framed.

In terms of placement for newsworthiness, 32 percent of a total 374 news articles over a one year period appeared on the first page of the newspapers. Also, 88 percent of the news articles talked about the consequences of the disaster, 58 percent indicated the causes of the disaster. With regards to framing, 25 percent of these articles put the stories in the context of public health issue whereas 36 percent contained information on prevention. The conclusion was that, the role of the media in framing discourse on disasters in order to suggest ways of preventing the disaster and putting the information in a context that impinges on public safety should be a major concern to look at.

In an analysis of media agenda setting during and after the Hurricane Katrina in the United States of America, Barnes *et al* (2008) made very interesting findings regarding the role of the news media in disaster occurrence and preparedness. Agenda setting focuses on the deliberate coverage of topics or events with the goal of influencing public opinion and public policy. The researchers in this study conducted a quantitative content analysis of four (4) prominent newspapers to examine how the print media gathered and distributed news to shape public priorities during Hurricane Katrina.

The methodology they employed involved the selection of four major newspapers representing local, state and national populations: the *Times Picayune*, the *Advocate*, the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*. The *Time Picayune* and the *Advocate* are locally circulated in Louisiana while the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* are widely circulated across states. They selected the articles from August 25, 2006 through to September 25, 2006. The reason for the period was to look for thematic changes and trends as the disaster response evolved.

Coding was appropriately done for the selected articles into various categories such as preparation, mitigation, response and recovery. They coded prominence of each article to mean placement, section and length. In terms of framing, the articles were coded as episodic, thematic or both. If articles contained elements such as quotations from health professionals, they were coded according to health context.

Their findings revealed that of the 1590 articles analysed, 52 percent were published by the local newspapers and 48 percent by the national newspapers. Most of the articles (78 percent) focused on response and recovery with only 8.9 percent emphasizing mitigation and preparation. Also, of the articles focusing on preparation, 65 percent (72 of 111) appeared in the national newspapers and only 35 percent (39 out of 111) were published in the local newspapers. The researchers revealed that a higher proportion of articles on mitigation and preparation (44 of 142 representing 30 percent) appeared on the front page as against those on recovery and response (166 of 1247 representing 13 percent). Interestingly and very relevant to this study was the findings on placement of articles and the implication. The researchers found out that placement of the articles in the editorial sections reflected each newspaper's ideological position on the issue in question. Front page articles rarely mentioned a health context of the publications (0.7 percent). Disaster policy was mentioned more often (4.4 %) in front page articles than in articles which appeared in other sections.

Based on the analysis, they concluded that media's agenda setting role underscores the valuable contributions of news media to social issues involving disaster response and recovery. However, they intimated that the media failed to adequately represent key public health roles necessary before, during and after a disaster and that, agenda setting also tends to promote disaster relief

policies by reflecting on social problems retrospectively while rarely dealing prospectively with future disasters.

This conclusion becomes more relevant to the study on content analysis of how the two newspapers covered flooding in Accra, the capital city of Ghana since there is the need to assess whether the said newspapers played any risk communication role before, during and after the flooding. More importantly, given that the flooding challenges in Accra have become cyclical-occurring like an annual ritual-, it was necessary to find out if coverage by the newspapers was reactive or prospective in their framing of the issues.

In 2014, Bohensky and Leitch undertook a systematic newspaper analysis of how the Brisbane flood which took place in 2011 was framed by the media. Their analysis was a one year period study which focused on learning as an aspect of resilience in relation to two themes: perceived links between the flood and climate change and perceived roles of government in managing the flood. The researchers searched all national and Queensland newspapers to get a total of 47 publications. Their findings were similar to Smith et al's in that the newspapers focused more on the role of government in managing the disaster rather than the cause.

Another related work to this study, under the broad definition of flooding for the purpose of this research, which was also cited in the work of Gakpey (2011) on fire disaster, was a study done in the United States of America by Morehouse and Sonnet in 2010. The two researchers analysed articles published in four newspapers; the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Arizona Republic* and *Albuquerque Journal*. Their focus was to explore media coverage of disaster events by looking at the common elements of the coverage in terms of the story lines carried by the different newspapers. It also involved the newspapers' role in articulating environmental

problems and the kind of solutions they proffer. Specifically, their attention was on the extent to which the newspapers integrated the themes of fire into their coverage. These themes are climate, fuel management, science and public policy. The belief was that when good news coverage about a disaster comes with frames such as policy alternatives, the stories would ultimately facilitate collective alternative actions in preventing the disaster. As such, the researchers used the framing theory to undertake this study.

The study found out that, there was a difference necessitated by the themes of public policy, fuel management, science and climate even though the stories in the four newspapers were very similar. Also, it was found out that the news media played a very big role in triggering public perception and awareness of the disaster through images of the destructive nature of the event as well as quotations from public health professionals. This finding was very similar to the analysis done by Barnes *et al* on the Hurricane Katrina disaster in that they also concluded by stating the media's agenda-setting role in disaster stories tends to promote disaster relief policies by reflecting on social problems retrospectively.

In a content analysis of two newspaper coverage of fire outbreaks in Ghana, Gakpey (2011) employed framing theory to look at what kind of frames the *Daily Graphic* and the *Chronicle* gave to instances of fire disaster in their coverage. His work is similar to the current study but the phenomenon he studied was not an annual occurrence. Therefore, the anticipation in terms of pattern, trend, frame and regularity in coverage involving fear appeals will not be the same for an annual phenomenon and unpredicted occurrence.

In his analysis of coverage by these two newspapers spanning over six months, Gakpe made some interesting findings. Concerning the extent of news coverage of fire outbreaks, his result

suggested that the quantity of fire disaster stories the two newspapers published was inadequate and not appreciable. In similar way was the issue relating to safety information on fire. What was more revealing also in his findings was the fact that the state-owned newspaper, the *Daily Graphic* covered 72 percent of the fire disaster stories as against 28 percent by the private newspaper, the *Chronicle*. It was not clear whether this could be ascribed to ownership of the newspapers. Very clear from this analysis was the fact that the newspapers in question did less in carrying preventive communication in their reportage. This lack of enough risk communication in reporting disasters especially those that are seen to be an annual occurrence like flooding must really engage the attention of the citizens in order to make a case for the media to constantly and consciously factor it as a major role in their coverage.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This research analysed the comprehensive nature of coverage given to the worrying issue of flooding in Accra by *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers. Coverage referred to the selection of which stories get published, where they are placed and also the angle in which they are presented for public consumption. Two relevant media analysis theories that grounded this study have been the theories of framing and news judgment which this chapter discusses in details.

The work focuses on content-analysing news coverage on flooding in the capital of Accra. It was not adventitious to choose this topic for investigation since the impact of flooding globally on humans and property is very devastating.

2.3 News Judgment Theory and Framing Theory

News judgment theory is based on the idea that a news story that should get covered and published should contain news values such as prominence, proximity, timeliness, human interest, magnitude, frequency and impact. This is supported by Galtung and Ruge (1965) when they emphasised that it was the news value aspects of news events that would make such stories more likely to get coverage in the news media. In the context of this research work, the news values that might inform coverage could be the bizarre nature, the human interest, the impact as well as prominence.

With regard to framing theory, it was Iyengar (1991) who first applied it in the analysis of media studies. The theory suggests that the media are capable of attributing responsibility to problems in a way that could influence what and how people think about the causes of the problems.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter dealt with synthesizing and analyzing some works deemed to be related to the current study on analysis of media coverage of natural disasters worldwide. Except for Gakpe's work on content-analysing newspaper coverage of fire disaster in Ghana, all the works reviewed are foreign. While majority of them were about flooding, quite a number dwelt on fire outbreaks and cyclones. What appeared to run through all of them as a focus or area of concern and relevance to the current study has been the role the media play in informing the citizens prior to

these disasters or during the occurrence alongside coverage of the disaster itself. More importantly was the attribution of these happenings and how the themes in the coverage are framed to engage public mitigation, preventive and discovery policies as a way of averting some of the disasters that are caused by human errors. All of these are serious statements on the fact that the media should be in the forefront of putting fear appeals in their stories in order to make people prepare for any such occurrence. Also, this role must go along with completeness and accuracy in the coverage of the disasters themselves.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter focused on the data gathering processes and how they relate to the topic. Specifically, the chapter dealt with the research approach, data collection instruments, population and sampling techniques, as well as the limitations of the research methods employed in the study.

3.1 Content Analysis Design

Neuendorf (2002) cites content analysis as the fastest growing research technique in the last couple of years in the field media research. Since media content is message and content analysis design uses messages other than human beings as its level of analysis, the choice for this research design is justified. Content analysis is defined as a systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics (ibid). Krippendorff (2004, p.18) describes content analysis as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inference from text to the context of their use". Wimmer and Dominick (2011) note that content analysis can be used to describe contents, compare media contents to real world, test hypotheses of message characteristics, assess the image of a particular group in society, and establish a starting point for media studies. Therefore, any study that has any of the uses outlined by Wimmer and Dominick can apply the content analysis method. To this end, the method is deemed appropriate for the current study. This is

because content analysis is seen as the most suitable method to study the coverage of flooding in newspapers.

Content analysis is done in stages. The following steps of content analysis, as outlined by Wimmer and Dominick (2010), guided this study: formulation of the research hypothesis or question, 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 and pilot study, coding the content according to the established definitions, analysis of collected data and finally conclusion. Content analysis includes thematic analysis of texts, indexing and identification of themes or major ideas in a document or sets of documents. These texts include field notes, newspaper articles, technical papers, or organizational memos (Wimmer and Dominick, 2010).

According to Rose, Spinks and Canhoto (2015, p.7), content analysis is highly regarded in media and communication studies because it is “a flexible research approach that can be applied to a wide variety of text sources”. Helped by the availability of computer software programs, content analysis can cope with large amounts of data. It can be used to investigate a topic longitudinally through the examination of contemporary texts. Krippendorff (2004) further argues that content analysis is an unobtrusive research method, in that it can be used to analyse naturally-occurring data without the physical presence of the researcher at the time the event occurred. As a result, content analysis may be helpful in reducing the problem of social desirability bias amongst respondents when researching sensitive topics (Insch et al. 1997; Harris 2001). Krippendorff

(2004) further makes a case for content analysis by claiming it can cope with large volumes of data.

However, content analysis has been criticised for its tendency to reduce meaning to patterns of frequency counts which can lose sight of the subtle, ambiguous or contextual significance (Lokko, 2011, p.53). This implies that content analysis ignores in-depth qualitative properties and contextual meanings of texts. It is generally aligned with studying patterns embedded in texts; primarily newspaper articles.

3.2 Universe of Study

The universe consists of all members within the population. The population comprised all editions of the *Daily Guide* and the *Daily Graphic* published in the year 2014 and from January, 2015. Thus, the universe was composed of all issues of the two newspapers from January 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015. This was due to the constraints of time and resources on the part of the researcher. This gave a total number of 939 published editions with each of these editions of the newspapers having an equal probability of being selected. In all, a sample size of 216 editions of the newspapers was selected for the study.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

The composite week sampling method was applied in this study to select the sample. The choice of the composite method was influenced by the probability nature of the sampling approach, which emphasized on giving each member of the population an equal chance of selection. According to Dugle (2013), the probability method of sampling is highly regarded in terms of

content analysis studies. Using the simple random sampling method, each day of the week that the two newspapers published was selected.

A composite week was constructed for each month and the samples selected accordingly. This was because of how beneficial composite sampling is to a researcher; it can improve spatial or temporal coverage of an area without increasing sample number and can reduce sampling cost.

For instance, all the dates of Mondays in the month of January were written on pieces of paper and placed in a box. Of them, one was selected at random. This procedure was repeated for Tuesday through to Saturday, since the two newspapers publish on Monday to Saturday, excluding Sunday. At the end of the process, seventy two (108) editions of each newspaper were selected. Thus, a total of 216 issues of the newspapers were used to constitute the sample size of the study. This sample size constituted 23% of the total universe, making the sample size more appropriate and representative of the population.

3.4 Unit of Analysis

The units of analysis for this study were news stories, articles, features, editorials and letters to editor that were published in the two newspapers within year under consideration. These stories and features were on flooding and flooding-related issues.

3.5 Data Collection and Coding Procedure

The data for the study were collected by a Coding guide. A coding guide was developed and used to guide the coding of the identified stories in the newspapers. To help in the coding process, some content categories were generated. Stories were coded for the subject of the story,

tone of the story – whether positive, negative or neutral. Also, each story was coded for type of story format, context of story, focus of the subject of the story-caution, benefits, risks, challenges-, source, placement of story and enhancement. The content categories that were used are operationally defined below.

Type of Story: This had to do with whether the story was a straight news story, a feature, an editorial, a letter, opinion, a rejoinder or retraction. The story type category was developed and coded because it helped determine which types of stories from the two newspapers focused on flooding and its related issues. The above shows the various ways through which issues of flooding can be brought to the knowledge of the public. With this category, the researcher was able to identify the type of story that dominates issues of flooding covered by the newspapers.

Nature of Frame: The nature of frame in the news stories was coded either as an event only story (episodic) or issue coverage devoid of event mention (thematic). When the story contained both frames, it was coded mixed. The nature of frame category was of immense importance because it enabled the researcher to code the story as such. This ultimately underlines what prominence is given to the story. This means this content category was important in terms of knowing whether flooding stories are discussed from events or through other means or a mixture of the two.

The Focus of Story: This was coded as the direction of the subject matter, whether the subject matter of the story was on caution, awareness creation, risks, causes of flooding, challenges. This

category helped determine aspect of flooding which the journalists mostly focused on in their reportage.

Tone of the Story: The tone of the story was coded as positive, negative and neutral in terms of the language used in reporting on flooding issues. Here, favourable and complimentary language was coded positive whereas unfavourable and uncomplimentary meant negative. Those that did not fall in any of the above categories were coded neutral. The importance of this particular content category is that it helped the researcher to establish the nature or the mood with which stories on flooding are covered.

Placement of the Story: This has to do with the page on which the story appeared, which in a way, signifies the importance attached to the stories. Per the agenda setting-framing theory, the page in which a story is placed determines the importance that is attached to that story. Specifically, stories and articles on the front page, middle page and the back page are seen to be more significant and seem to easily catch the eyes of the readers. It was therefore, the aim of this category to investigate the importance attached to issues of flooding through the page numbering.

Context of the Story: This refers to the event at which newspapers covered the flooding stories. It sought to establish whether the stories were listed as speeches, meeting at the town-hall, workshop, flooding site, interview with a journalist, inspection or commissioning of a project to deal with flooding. The context of story category was important in helping establish the locations and circumstances under which the issues of flooding of stories were discussed.

Source of Story: This means the individual or institution from whom the initial story was derived by the journalist. It could be the journalist's own initiative, from a victim, fire officer, NADMO officials, government official or others. The source of a story is very critical to the credibility of the story and how the public receive the information. Therefore, it was imperative on the researcher to identify the various sources of news item on flooding.

Story Purpose: This refers to the objective behind the publication of the story. Stories are not couched in a vacuum. They are published to elicit a certain response from the story, hence the purpose was coded as whether it sought to inform, warn or educate. This category provided the necessary means to establish which of the story objectives was prominent in the coverage.

3.6 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data analysis is the process of evaluating data using analytical and logical reasoning to examine each component of the data provided. Analysis for the study was based on the data gathered from respondents. After generating the required data from the content analysis, the SPSS software was employed to analyse the findings. The data collected was tabulated and also presented in diagrams. The reason for tabulation was to make it simple for anyone to analyze.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the raw data collected from the responses of the sample size is collated and analyzed. The data collation software 'SPSS' was used to analyse the data obtained and the findings have been depicted using frequency tables, pie charts and bar graphs to make them very easy to understand.

4.1 Findings

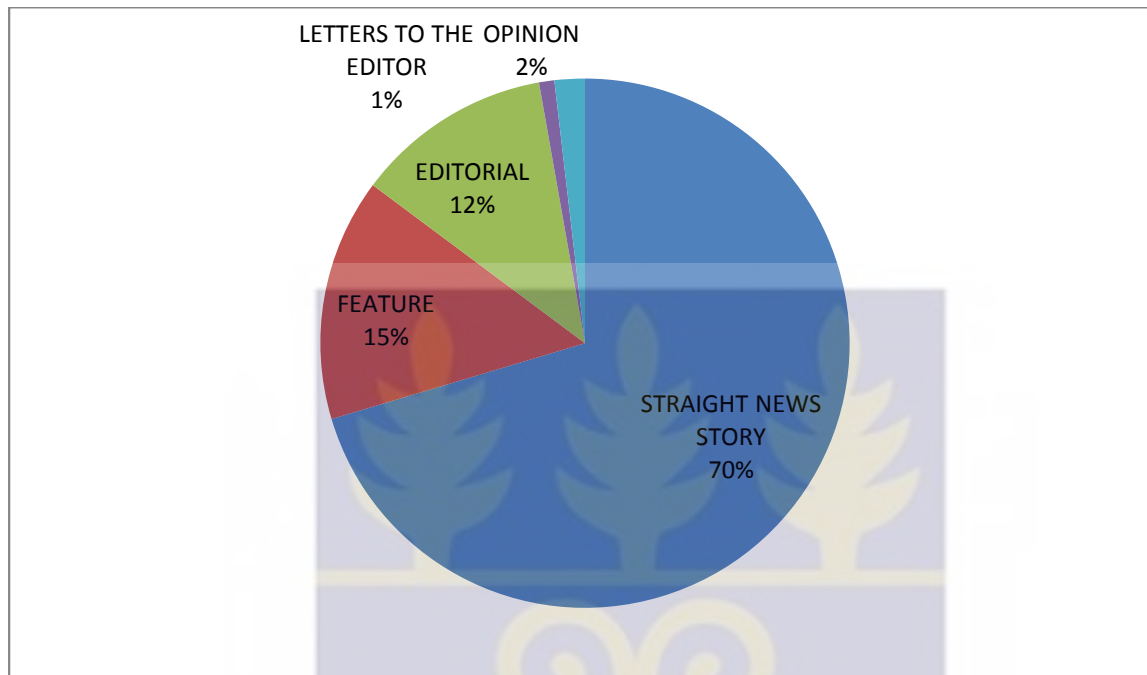
The findings of this study were derived from the content analysis conducted in chapter three of this study. In all, 108 stories from *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* were coded over a period of one and half years.

4.1.1 Type of Newspaper

Type of Newspaper	Frequency	Percent
DAILY GRAPHIC	58	53.7
DAILY GUIDE	50	46.3
Total	108	100.0

The table above shows that slightly more than half of the stories were derived from *Daily Graphic* while those of *Daily Guide* were eight stories less than the former.

4.1.2 Type of Stories on Flooding



The figure above shows that seven out of each of the stories used in the study were straight news, while slightly more than one-tenth was editorials from the two newspapers. 15% were feature stories, with opinion writings and letters to the editor recording below 5% each. This indicates that most flood-related issues are reported by the newspapers as straight news.

4.1.3 Nature of Frame

Nature of Frame	Frequency	Percent
EPISODIC FRAME	33	30.6
THEMATIC FRAME	51	47.2
MIXED FRAME	24	22.2
Total	108	100.0

From the above table, almost one-third of the stories were reported as event-only (episodic); almost half of the stories were reported devoid of any organized event mentions, with a little more than one-fifth combining both. Some of the organized events identified in the stories were press conferences, organized tour of flood areas by government officials and other non-governmental organizations.

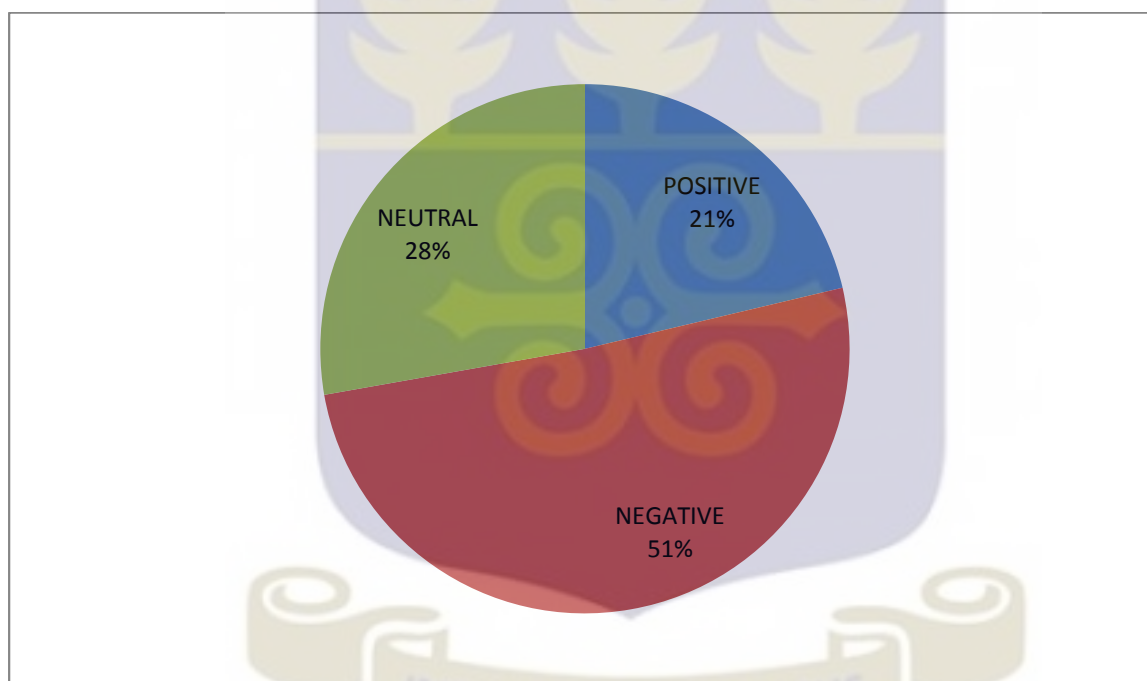
4.1.4 Focus of Flood-Related Stories

Focus of Flood-Related Stories	N	Percent	Percent of Cases
CAUTION, APPEAL AND AWARENESS CREATION	31	12.0%	28.7%
DEMOLITION OF BUILDINGS IN WATERWAYS	21	8.1%	19.4%
RISKS	15	5.8%	13.9%
CAUSES OF FLOODING	21	8.1%	19.4%
CHALLENGES CONFRONTING THE COMBAT OF FLOODING	15	5.8%	13.9%
EFFECTS OF FLOODING	35	13.5%	32.4%
VICTIM'S ORDEAL	34	13.1%	31.5%
CASUALTIES AND PROPERTIES LOST	53	20.5%	49.1%
OTHER	6	2.3%	5.6%
DONATION	28	10.8%	25.9%
Total	259	100.0%	239.8%

A multiple response analysis of the variables showed that nearly half of the stories on flooding focused on casualties and properties that were lost during moments of flooding. Additionally,

nearly one-third of the stories centred on the ordeals and plights of flood victims (31.5%) and effects of flooding (32.4%). A quarter of the stories (25.9%) were on donations from government, corporate and private individuals; more than quarter of the stories (28.7%) were devoted to cautions, appeal and awareness creation on the causes and effects of flooding. One-fifth of the stories were each centred on the causes of flooding and demolition of buildings in waterways, which also happens to be a major cause of flooding.

4.1.5 Tone of Stories



The tone of half of the stories (51%) used in the study was negative; one-fifth was positive while more than a quarter were neutral. Neutral stories did not have any positive or negative connotation. Such stories were unbiased and did not favour any of the actors in the stories. The positive stories centred on the donations, awareness creations and efforts by government to control flooding.

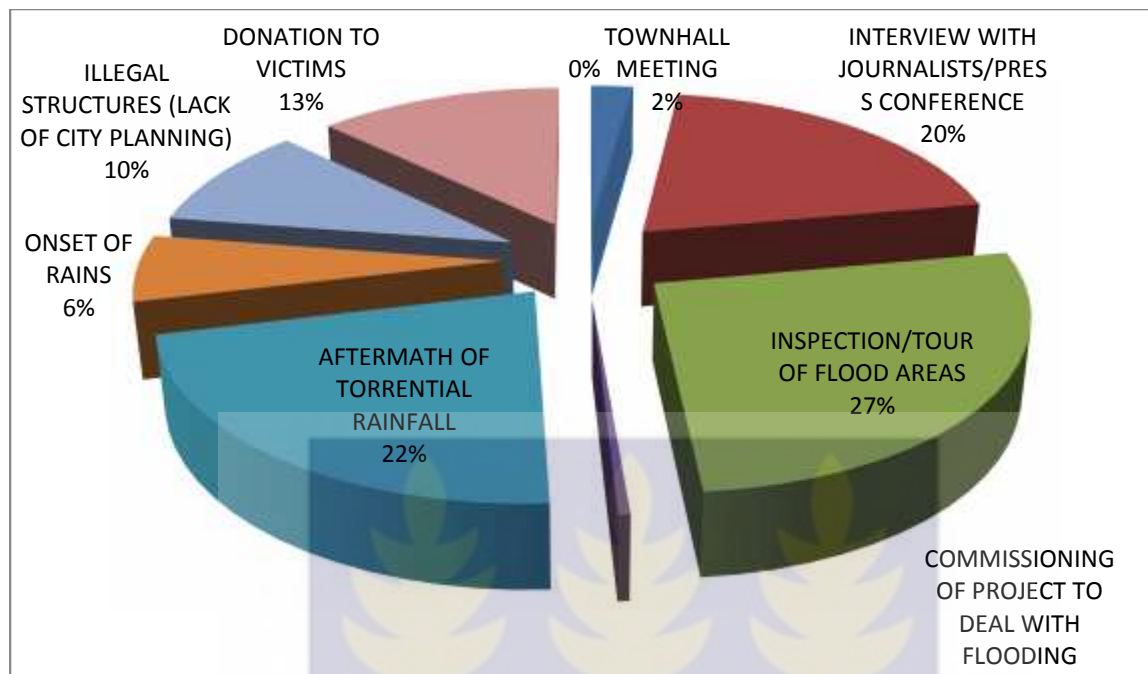
4.1.6 Placement of Stories

Placement of Stories	Frequency	Percent
FRONT PAGE	42	38.9
BACK PAGE	7	6.5
CENTRE SPREAD	15	13.9
OTHER	44	40.7
Total	108	100.0

The placement of a story is an indication of the prominence which is attached to a particular issue, according to assumptions behind the framing theory. From the table above, nearly two-fifth of the stories was on the front page, signifying the highest form of salience. The next important form of salience is the back page, which featured only 7% with almost 15% placed in the centre spread of the newspapers. The rest of the pages were coded as ‘other’ and it involved stories that do not belong to any of the page categories mentioned above; 40% of the stories fell into this category.



4.1.7 Context of Flooding Stories



The context of the story explains the circumstances under which the events in the story happened or unfolded. Inspection and tour of flood areas recorded the highest with 27% of the stories, followed by aftermath of torrential rains, which is related to the former. This implies that most stories on flooding emerge during the rainy season and/or after heavy rainfall. After these, one out of five stories was recorded through interviews with journalists and press conferences. Donation to flood victims constituted 13% while illegal structures and lack of city planning also accounted for 10% of the stories.

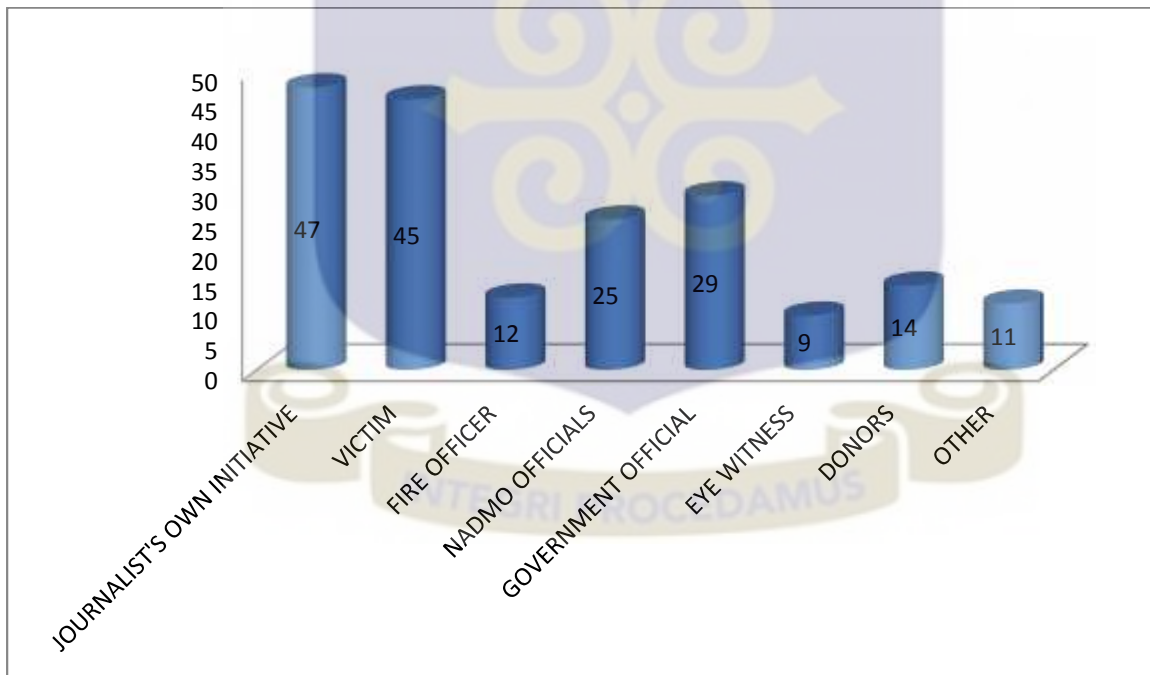


4.1.8 Accompaniment of Stories by Pictures

Accompaniment of Stories by Pictures	Frequency	Percent
YES	80	74.1
NO	28	25.9
Total	108	100.0

Nearly three out of four stories (74%) were accompanied by pictures while the rest were without any picture.

4.1.9 Sources of Stories



A little above two-fifth of flood-related stories (45.2%), as captured in the content analysis, were initiatives of journalists, who mostly decided to tour vantage points after heavy downpour to

ascertain the extent of damage of the rains to properties and lives. Almost the same figures were recorded for stories that emanated from flood victims. A total of 66 stories (62%) were attributed to officials of National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO), Fire Service personnel and government functionaries, including ministers of state, metropolitan, municipal and district chief executives (DCEs). Donors, thus private and government organizations, individuals and philanthropists, charity-based organizations and religious groups, also constitute a major news source (13.5%). From the foregoing, it means flood is major news during rainy seasons due to the varied news sources from diverse stakeholders.

4.1.10 Purpose of Stories

Purpose of Stories	N	Percent	Percent of Cases
INFORM	92	64.3%	85.2%
WARN	38	26.6%	35.2%
EDUCATE	13	9.1%	12.0%
Total	143	100.0%	132.4%

Nearly two-thirds of the stories sought to inform. A quarter of them were warning signals while almost one-tenth was meant to educate the reader about the causes, effects and challenges of flooding.

4.2 Comparative Analysis of *Daily Guide* and *Daily Graphic*

The comparative analysis was conducted through a cross-tabulation of the various variables on the coding guide. The objective was to establish the two newspapers reported the flood stories

either differently or similarly. This would help inform the discussion on framing as well as enrich the discourse on the theories that were utilized in this study.

4.2.1 Cross-tab Analysis of Newspaper Type and Focus of Story

		TYPE OF NEWSPAPER		Total
		DAILY GRAPHIC	DAILY GUIDE	
FOCUS OF STORY	CAUTION, APPEAL AND AWARENESS CREATION	20	11	31
	DEMOLITION OF BUILDINGS IN WATERWAYS	10	11	21
	RISKS	7	8	15
	CAUSES OF FLOODING	10	11	21
	CHALLENGES CONFRONTING THE COMBAT OF FLOODING	4	11	15
	EFFECTS OF FLOODING	14	21	35
	VICTIM'S ORDEAL	13	21	34
	CASUALTIES AND PROPERTIES LOST	23	30	53
	OTHER	5	1	6
	DONATION	15	13	28
Total		58	50	108

The above table shows there was a significant difference in the ways the newspapers reported or focused on the stories. For instance, out of the 34 stories that focused on the ordeals and plight of flood victims, the *Daily Guide* accounted for over 60% of the content while the *Daily Graphic* had only below 40%. The *Daily Guide* (57%) also focused more on casualties and properties lost than the *Daily Graphic* (43%). The latter (65%) also focused more on flood stories that border on awareness creation and caution than the former (35%). Additionally, the *Daily Guide* (65%)

highlighted more stories with negative tone; for instance stories on effects of flooding received more coverage than the *Daily Graphic* (35%).

4.2.2 Cross-tab Analysis of Newspaper Type and Tone of Stories

		TYPE OF NEWSPAPER		Total
		DAILY GRAPHIC	DAILY GUIDE	
TONE OF STORY	POSITIVE	17	9	26
	NEGATIVE	25	33	58
	NEUTRAL	16	8	24
Total		58	50	108

Positive stories were coded as those that focused on efforts being made to ease the impact of flooding. They include stories that centred on donations, efforts to curb the problem of flooding among others. The negative-toned stories are the ones that involved the victims' ordeal, loss of properties and lives, challenges impeding implementation of strategies to deal with flooding. The neutral stories reflected neither negative nor positive tones. With reference to the above table, majority of the stories (65%) from the *Daily Graphic* had positive tone which sharply contrasts with the *Daily Guide* which had 56% of their stories being negative. Two-thirds (67%) of the stories that were neutral came from the *Daily Graphic*, while the latter had just one-third of it.

4.2.3 Cross-tab Analysis of Newspaper Type and Placement of Stories

		TYPE OF NEWSPAPER		Total
		DAILY GRAPHIC	DAILY GUIDE	
PLACEMENT OF STORY	FRONT PAGE	25	17	42
	BACK PAGE	6	1	7
	CENTRE SPREAD	8	7	15
	OTHER	19	25	44
Total		58	50	108

This table is particularly useful, especially when the theories used for this study were framing and the theory of news judgment. This implies that the placement of a story on particular page of a newspaper reveals a greater deal about the prominence and salience attached to it. From the table above, the *Daily Graphic* attached more prominence to flood stories than the *Daily Guide*; the former had almost 60% of the total stories on flooding on the front pages. The stories on the back pages were also dominated by stories from the *Daily Graphic* with 86% of the stories. Out of the stories placed on the other pages other than the front pages, back pages and the centre spread, the *Daily Guide* had 57% of the total number while the *Daily Graphic* recorded only 43%. From the foregoing, it implies the state-owned newspaper highly regarded flooding as a major issue that is worth considering and publishing for public consumption.

4.2.4 Cross-tab Analysis of Newspaper Type and Placement of Stories

		STORY ACCOMPANIED BY PICTURE		Total
		YES	NO	
TYPE OF NEWSPAPER	DAILY GRAPHIC	42	16	58
	DAILY GUIDE	38	12	50
Total		80	28	108

80 stories were placed on the front pages. Slightly more than half of them were from the *DailyGraphic* while 48% were from the *Daily Guide*.

4.2.5 Cross-tab Analysis of Type of Newspaper and Context of Stories

		TYPE OF NEWSPAPER		Total
		DAILY GRAPHIC	DAILY GUIDE	
CONTEXT OF STORY	TOWNHALL MEETING	2	3	5
	INTERVIEW WITH JOURNALISTS/PRESS CONFERENCE	25	20	45
	INSPECTION/TOUR OF FLOOD AREAS	29	31	60
	COMMISSIONING OF PROJECT TO DEAL WITH FLOODING	0	1	1
	AFTERMATH OF TORRENTIAL RAINFALL	29	21	50
	ONSET OF RAINS	6	8	14
	ILLEGAL STRUCTURES (LACK OF CITY PLANNING)	13	9	22
	DONATION TO VICTIMS	19	10	29
Total		58	50	108

The cross-tab analysis of the two variables indicates that no significant differences were recorded between the newspapers in relation to context under which the stories were published. However, it is worthy of note that the *Daily Graphic* (55%) recorded more stories through journalists' initiatives than the *Daily Guide* (45%). Similarly *Daily Graphic* (58%) recorded more of the stories that were reported in the aftermath of torrential downpour than the *Daily Guide* (42%). Again, the state press reported more of their stories from press conferences and interviews than its private-owned counterpart.

4.2.6 Cross-tab Analysis of Type of Newspaper and Sources of Stories

		TYPE OF NEWSPAPER		Total
		DAILY GRAPHIC	DAILY GUIDE	
SOURCE OF STORIES	JOURNALIST'S OWN INITIATIVE	28	19	47
	FLOOD VICTIMS	20	25	45
	FIRE OFFICER	6	6	12
	NADMO OFFICIALS	14	11	25
	GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL	18	11	29
	EYE WITNESS	3	6	9
	DONORS	11	3	14
	OTHER	6	5	11
Total		56	48	104

The objective behind this cross-tabulation was to identify the differences that exist between the two newspapers in terms of their sources of information concerning flooding and its related issues. The data from the table above points out that there are significant differences in how the

two newspapers obtained their stories for publication. For instance, 47 stories were derived from personal initiatives of journalists and press conferences; 60% of the journalists' self-initiated stories were captured in the *Daily Graphic* while 40% were recorded from the *Daily Guide*. These kinds of stories involved situations where journalists decided to roam through major points noted for flooding in the country after a heavy downpour to identify and report cases of flooding in the affected communities. Flood victims were also major sources of information. Their afflictions and challenges are of serious importance to the public; hence a lot of attention is paid to them. *Daily Guide* leads in this category with 56% of such stories while the *Daily Graphic* used only 44%. In a similar fashion, the *Daily Guide* reported two-thirds (67%) of the stories that had eye witnesses as sources, as against the *Daily Graphic* with only one-third (33%). Out of the 29 newspaper stories that cited government officials, ministers, members of Parliament, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs) as sources, a little more than 60% were obtained from the *Daily Graphic* while the *Daily Guide* recorded a little below 40% of such stories. Since the *Daily Graphic* covered more donation stories than the *Daily Guide*, donors were cited as sources in the former than in the latter with 78% and 22% respectively.

4.2.7 Cross-tab Analysis of Type of Newspaper and Sources of Stories

		TYPE OF NEWSPAPER		Total
		DAILY GRAPHIC	DAILY GUIDE	
PURPOSE OF STORY	INFORM	53	39	92
	WARN	18	20	38
	EDUCATE	9	4	13
Total		58	50	108

The nature of the stories from the *Daily Graphic* made their news stories more informative than the *Daily Guide*. The former recorded almost 60% of the stories coded as informative while the latter was a little below 40%. However, the *Daily Guide* stories tended to warn more than the *Daily Graphic* with 52% of the stories that were coded as playing a warning purpose to the public. The *Daily Graphic* had close to 70% of the educative stories while the *Daily Guide* reported just a little above 30%.

4.3 Analysis of Findings

The analysis of the findings will be conducted with recourse to the theoretical framework and the literature that were reviewed in the study.

4.3.1 Relationship between Data and the Theories

The news judgment theory is anchored on the news stories that get covered and published should contain news values such as prominence, proximity, timeliness, human interest, magnitude, frequency and impact. Galtung and Ruge (1965) emphasised that it was the news value aspects of news events that would make such stories more likely to get coverage in the news media. The framing theory shares some similarities with the news judgment theory, hence the discussion would lump the two theories. This is because the extent to which a news organization attaches the news elements of prominence and magnitude to particular news item would dictate how the news story would be framed and presented to the public. Iyengar (1991) regards the framing theory as the ultimate determinant of news prominence and salience.

One major determinant of the news worthiness of flooding stems from the placement of such stories in the newspapers. The data suggests that a greater amount of significance was attached to flooding issues by the two newspapers. From the framing and news judgment perspectives, stories that are placed on the front page, centre spread pages and the back pages are seen as more salient than the ones in the other pages of the same newspaper issue. The data showed that 60% of the stories of the stories on flooding were identified from front pages, centre spread and the back pages, with the front page accounting for almost 40%. 40% of the flooding stories were placed on the other pages apart from above-mentioned ones. This is an indication per the placement assumption of the theory. Thus, to a larger extent, the data confirms the theory.

In a similar dimension, the state-owned *Daily Graphic* accorded more importance to the flooding incidents through page placement than the private-owned *Daily Guide*. Out of the 42 front page stories on flooding, 25 stories (59%) were from the state press while the latter recorded 17 stories (41%) on the front page. The placement of the stories on the relevant pages indicates that flood stories indeed possess the news elements of prominence and relevance. The understanding is that flooding is a major issue in Ghana and a routine source of news especially in the rainy seasons. The period during which flooding became a major issue was in the month of June in 2015, during which the infamous “June 3 Disaster” occurred. That incident inundated the front pages of the two news outlets consistently in that month. The incident was presented with all seriousness and as much as more than ten stories on flooding could be found in one edition of a newspaper.

The news judgment principle of proximity was very high, especially among stories that involved donations. In one newspaper story, the donors, the Indian Community in Ghana, asserted that their gesture has been prompted by the fact that "... flooding appears closer to all of us than we think". This remark was made in the wake of the June 3 disaster, which occurred at the Kwame Nkrumah Circle near Adabraka, one of the most centrally-located suburbs of the capital of Ghana and a major commercial hub. This means the flood stories tend to grab attention because when it involves loss of lives and property, it puts people in frenzy, as the casualties could involve their friends, relatives and fellow countrymen and women.

To further illustrate the theories of news judgment and framing in the newspapers, the study realized that some activities of flooding receive more media attention than others. For instance, flooding stories that centred on the casualties and properties lost during floods accounted for almost half of the stories (49%). This was followed by stories on the rampaging effects of flooding (32%), which is still related to the first point. Stories on flood victims' ordeal (32%), caution, appeal and awareness creation (29%), demolition of structures on waterways (19%) and causes of flooding (19%) followed in that order.

Another determinant of news judgment and framing is use of pictures to accompany the stories. Most important stories often come with pictures. To this end, this study decided to establish the use of pictures as a complement to the actual text. Close to three-quarters (74%) of the stories were accompanied by pictures while the rest were not.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is the concluding aspect of the study. It explicates the summary of the key findings and discusses the findings in detail. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the limitations of the study, suggestions for future studies, recommendations and finally the conclusion of the study.

5.1 Summary of Study

This study was undertaken with the purpose of uncovering how the media in Ghana, particularly the print media, *Daily Guide* and the *Daily Graphic* to be specific, cover issues of flooding. The motivation to do this study stemmed from the incessant flooding that engulfs major parts of Accra, the capital city, after heavy downpour. The flooding situation has been on-going for a long time and the media in recent times have devoted a great deal of time in discussing this menace. It therefore became imperative for this researcher to undertake a study into this, with the aim of establishing, among other things, the focus, context and the frame with which stories on flooding are reported by the media.

Through the theories of framing and media ownership, the study identified that, indeed, media coverage of issues differs greatly. The study adopted content analysis as its research method, with a coding as the instrument of data collection. The findings revealed that the state-owned *Daily Graphic* reported more neutrally than its private counterpart, *Daily Guide*, which reported in either a positive or negative tone, depending on its house style. Beyond the differences in the

coverage, the study further found that the two media tend to use their platform, particularly the feature, opinion and editorial stories, to advance and caution the public about the effect and impact of flooding.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

The findings will be discussed with reference to the research questions set out in chapter one of this study.

1. What prominence do *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* give to flooding issues?

The placement of a story suggests the prominence which is attached to a particular issue, per the principles underpinning the framing theory. The study findings reveal that the two newspapers place much importance to the issue of flooding. 60% of the stories on flooding were located in the prime pages (front page, centre spread and the back page) of the newspapers. Only 40% were placed on the other pages, apart from the ones listed above. The *Daily Graphic* attached more prominence to flooding, as nearly 60% of the flooding stories located on the front pages were obtained from the newspaper.

Another indicator of story prominence is the use of pictures as accompaniment with newspaper stories text. Nearly three-quarters of the flood-related stories were accompanied by pictures to tell story effectively.

2. What is the tone of stories on flooding by *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide*?

Generally, the tone of the newspapers was negative. They tended to highlight the inadequacies and government's inability in confronting the menace. The stories also dwelled more on the

plight, ordeals and challenges of the flood victims than the government's efforts at addressing the situation. The *Daily Guide* was harsher in tone than the state-owned newspaper, which was a bit more neutral in their reportage on flooding.

3. What is the nature or format of stories published on flooding in the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*?

Stories on flooding are mostly captured as straight news item than the others. They were stories that were mostly the results of the initiatives of journalists who mostly decide to tour flood-prone areas after a heavy downpour.

The frames for the stories are mostly thematic, which means the stories were conducted without any mention of a specific event under which the event took place. The reason for this is because a number of the stories focused on victims' ordeal and problems, aftermath of heavy rainfall and the loss of properties and lives during floods. All these are stories that do not necessarily require an event to cover.

4. What frames are used by the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* in their reportage of flooding issues?

The findings revealed that most of the stories (two-third) as reported by the two newspapers were without event mention while one-third were episodic indicating that in most cases, the two papers use thematic frame in their reportage of flood stories.

5.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

In spite of the significant findings of this study, it was limited in a number of ways. The purpose of this section is to discuss the limitations and proffer suggestions that can help correct and inform future studies into this phenomenon:

Firstly, this study was limited in terms of the sampling frame. The researcher conducted this research over a period of one and half years. Although a number of stories were identified and used for the study, the period could have been widened. The reason is that flooding is not a recent case in Ghana, hence a crucial study into it must be conducted over longer period of time in order to identify more information and enrich the data. It impacted on this study in terms of how limited the data and for that matter, the findings cannot be entirely generalized to cover almost the periods in which flooding occurred. Future studies can widen the scope to, for instance, five years or more to cover a lot of stories.

In addition, the selection of the two newspapers did not represent the entire print media sector. There are more than twenty newspapers in Ghana, hence the researcher could have covered a lot more newspapers than *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide*. This means it would be a hasty and an invalid conclusion to generalize the findings of this study to the entire population or universe. Further research into this must accommodate more newspapers to create room for a comparative discussion of findings and proper discussion of the findings.

Finally, this study was limited in terms of financial and time constraints. In fact, the two limitations outlined above were derived from this particular shortcoming. The time for this study was practically four months, which is inadequate for this study to be carried out on a larger scale.

In view of this challenge, the researcher had to rely on two newspapers to complete on time, as an expansion of the population would cause delay and stall the steady progress of this study. Due to financial challenges, the study relied on just two newspapers and a limited time frame. A larger sample frame means training coders and paying their services to code the stories in the newspapers. This could not be done because of the financial setbacks. Future students can start in advance to get a longer period of time to do this study on a much larger scale.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends that:

- i. Regulatory bodies such as the National Media Commission should impress on newspaper owners to be professional and uphold higher standards of professional practice.
- ii. Professional associations like the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) and Private Newspapers Association of Ghana (PRINPAG) must implore their members to uphold the ethics of the profession. For instance, these bodies can train their members on the need to desist from the publication of pictures showing images of children and mothers who are victims of flooding. Also, they must implore their members to eschew sensationalism and exaggeration of issues.
- iii. The media must provide their platforms to be used as tools for sensitization of the public on the need to avoid activities that predispose them to harsh realities of flooding in times of rains. The onset of the rainy season must be accompanied by massive public awareness programmes through the media. All these constitute proactive measures to curtail the floods, and the media's role in this case, cannot be overlooked.

- iv. The media must be socially-responsible to the plight of people who are affected by the floods. Much media space must be dedicated to talk about their plights, challenges and problems.

5.5. Conclusion of the Study

The study set out to examine media, specifically newspapers, coverage of flood-related issues. It was conducted on the heels of the June 3rd flood and fire disaster where more than 150 lives and several properties worth millions of Ghana cedis were lost.

It was necessary to conduct this study because flooding continues to destroy properties and lives in Ghana, especially during the rainy season (May to July). Through a content analysis of *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide*, the study found that stories on flood awareness were very low while a number of them focused on the devastating effects of flooding on victims. This means the media do not engage in intense public awareness campaigns before the commencement of the rainy season. Although the causes of rainfall-induced flooding go beyond media coverage, it is believed that the devastating impact of flooding would be reduced if people are forewarned through effective media campaigns.

Despite the setbacks this study faced, the findings proved that the study was very useful. The findings clearly demonstrated that the study was empirically conducted and answered all the research questions adequately. The literature and the theories were duly reflected in the study. In the literature, in terms of theory, the theory confirmed the major assumptions of the theories that underpinned the study.

APPENDIX 1

CODING GUIDE

1. Type of Newspaper

1. Daily Graphic.
2. Daily Guide.

2. Type of Story:

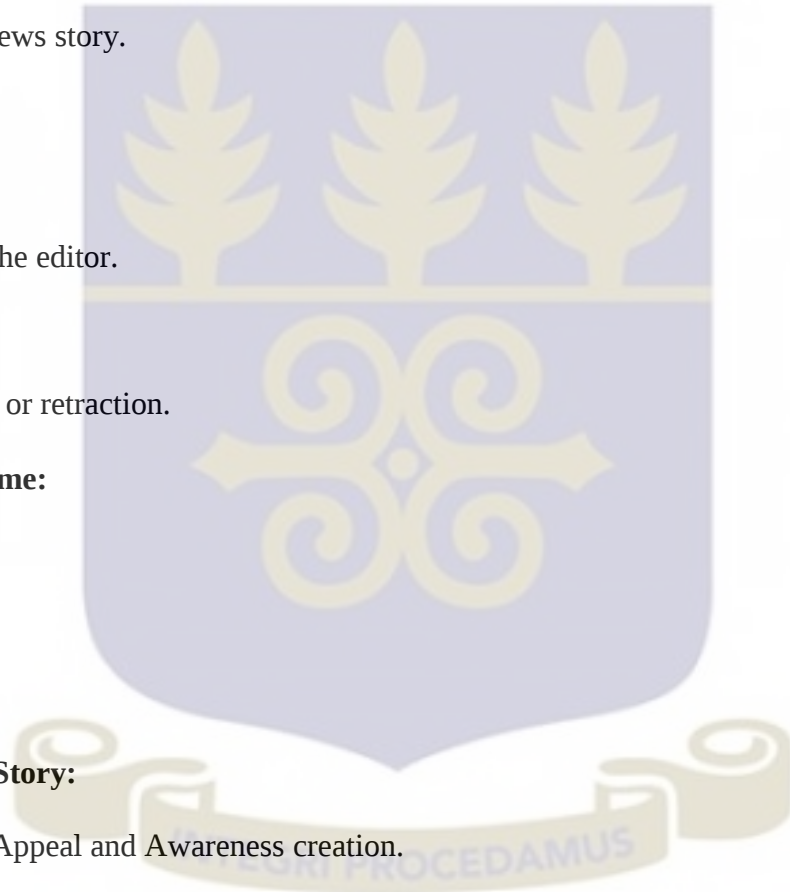
1. Straight news story.
2. Feature.
3. Editorial.
4. Letter to the editor.
5. Opinion.
6. Rejoinder or retraction.

3. Nature of Frame:

1. Episodic.
2. Thematic.
3. Mixed.

4. The Focus of Story:

1. Caution/ Appeal and Awareness creation.
2. Demolition of buildings on waterways
3. Risks.
4. Causes of flooding.
5. Challenges.
6. Effects of flooding.



7. Victims' ordeal.
8. Casualties and properties lost.
9. Other.
10. Donation

5. Tone of the Story: The tone of the story was coded as:

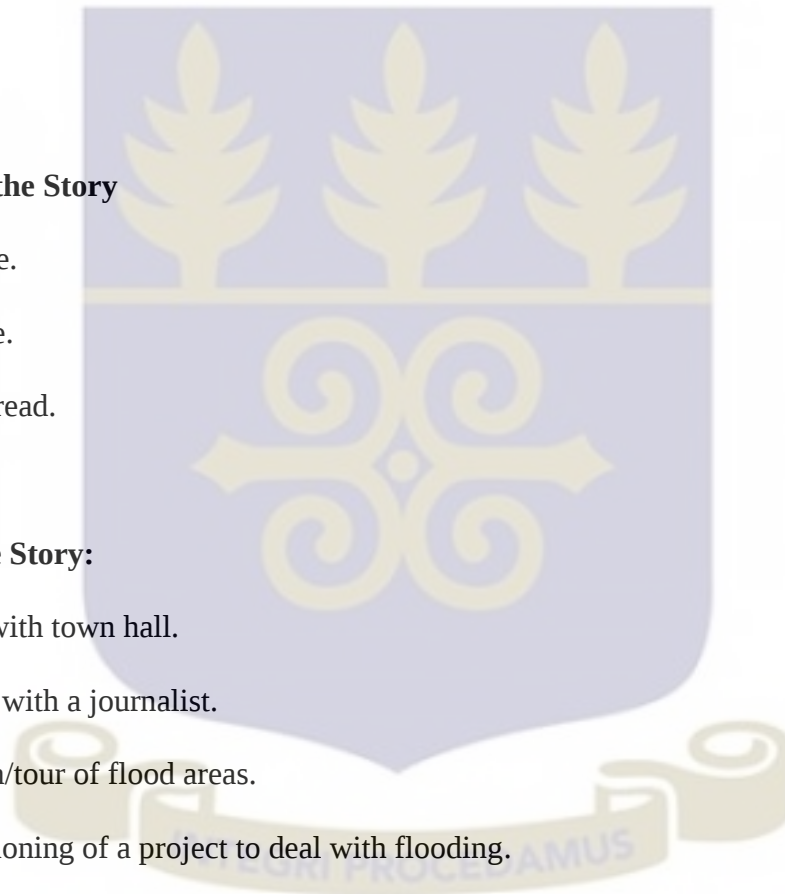
1. Positive.
2. Negative.
3. Neutral.

6. Placement of the Story

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

7. Context of the Story:

1. Meeting with town hall.
2. Interview with a journalist.
3. Inspection/tour of flood areas.
4. Commissioning of a project to deal with flooding.
5. Aftermath of torrential rainfall.
6. Onset of rains.
7. Illegal structures (lack of city planning).
8. Other.



8. Story Accompanied by Picture

1. Yes.
2. No.

9. Source

1. Journalist's own initiative.
2. Victim.
3. Fire officer.
4. NADMO officials.
5. Government official.
6. Eye witness.
7. Other.

10. Story Purpose

1. Inform.
2. Warn.
3. Educate.



Q9: Source

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