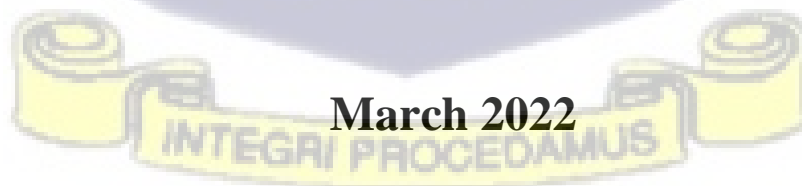


**AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS OF THE GHANAIAN  
MEDIA FRAMING OF THE 2012 ENERGY CRISIS**

**BY**

**FREDERICK BAIMBILL-JOHNSON**

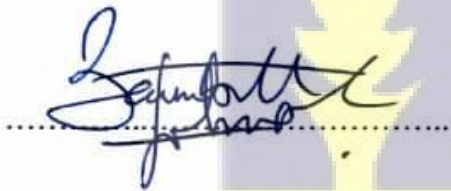
This Dissertation is submitted to the University of Ghana, Legon in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Award of **MA in  
COMMUNICATION STUDIES Degree.**



**March 2022**

## DECLARATION

I, Fred Baimbill-Johnson, do hereby declare that with the exception of the works cited which have been duly cited, this study is the outcome of my own original research under the supervision of Dr. Lucky Emeka Umejei of the school of communication studies at the University of Ghana; and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere. I take responsibility for any error(s) that may be found in this work.



.....

Baimbill-Johnson Frederick

(Candidate)



.....

Dr. Lucky Emeka Umejei

(Supervisor)



## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God for granting me the Grace to complete it. Also, to my wife, Grace Akosua Smith and my twin sons, Thierry and Terry, for being my constant Blessings.

I also dedicate it to my friends Isaac Ainooson and Jeffery Yeboah whose support and encouragement have contributed to the success of this work.

Finally, I dedicate the work to everyone who directly or indirectly assisted in the completion of the work.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines audience perception (Students, Academics, Policymakers) of media reporting of Ghana's energy crisis of 2012 in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers. While earlier studies focused solely on the reporting of the crisis in the media, this study compares journalists' rationale and audience perspectives of media reporting on the Ghana energy crisis. Drawing on audience reception and framing theories and a semi-structured interview with civil society activists, journalists, academics, students, and spokesperson of the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG), the study finds that, there is a divergence between journalists' rationale and audience perspectives of media reporting of Ghana's energy crisis of 2012. The finding has broad implications for media reporting of crisis in Ghana and much of sub-Saharan Africa.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Introduction/Background

The world continues to experience destructive crises. The largest economic crisis to hit the United States since the Great Depression was in 2008. This crisis had an impact of all Banks in the financial system, and its effect was widespread. The impact of that crisis was felt across the world, eventually resulting in a global recession (Sorkin, 2009). Aside financial crises, the world witnessed an intentional food contamination case in 2008, by a Chinese food company known as Sanlu (ibid). The food company had products, including baby formula. Six (6) children died as a result and almost 300,000 people became ill around the world (Coombs, 2007).

In the history of many organizations, crises are unusual moments. According to Bernstein, (2013), “crisis is any situation that is threatening or could threaten to harm people or property, seriously interrupt business, significantly damage reputation and/or negatively impact the bottom line of an organization” (p.4). Regester and Larkin, (2005) also assert that organizational crises are specific, unforeseen, and unusual events or series of events that create serious uncertainty and threaten high-priority goals of organisations.

Thus, a crisis is any natural, accidental or intentional event that severely impacts people, property, and/or the environment. It may jeopardize the organization’s standing through

deaths, injuries, significant destruction or contamination of products. The organization's continued existence may be threatened.

In 2012, Ghana grappled with a terrible energy crisis. The crisis compelled what was described as an “expensive and embarrassing” load shedding programme by the Electricity Company of Ghana, designed to equip utility consumers with information to effectively plan, while the bigger problem of increasing the generation capacity to the national grid was tackled (Graham, 2015).

The negative impact of the crisis was alarming and relentless, swelling the costs of doing business and hampering production and growth — particularly in energy-sensitive sectors of mining and manufacturing — all of which had grave consequences on profits and employment as well as for government revenue targets (Centre for Policy Analysis, 2012).

A World Bank report of 2013 indicated that the second most significant challenge to business activities in the country is electricity, and that in 2007 during the power crisis, Ghana lost about 1.8% of GDP. The Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) in its 2015 publication also indicated that on the average, the country lost about US\$ 2.1 million per day through the power crisis alone, and that in 2014, the country lost about US\$680 million (about 2% of GDP) due to the power crisis. The publication further indicated that “firms that did not have access to sufficient electricity had lower output, and that not having sufficient electricity lowered firms' annual sales by about 37-48%”.

Reliable electricity supply is therefore significant for firm growth, expansion and development. “Ghana’s annual electricity consumption per capita since 2010 has been averagely below 400 kWh compared to the global minimum average of 500 kWh for lower middle-income developing countries” (Energy Commission, 2015). Despite recording a marginal increase from 399 to 410 kWh per capita between 2013 and 2014, the country still had a significant electricity energy deficit to be cleared (Ackah, 2015).

Many firms that did not have a backup system during the periods of shut down, downsized or changed their line of business (IMANI, 2014). ISSER (2015) found that of about 350 medium and small-scale enterprises (SMEs), only 20% had access to backup generators, while only 10% of micro finance firms visited had backup generators.

About 1000 workers lost their jobs between December 2014 and start of second quarter 2015, due to low industrial output as a result of inadequate power (Energy Commission, 2015). Both Ghanaian and foreign owned businesses and households who were seeking to understand what was happening around them, resorted to media reportage to gain insight into the situation.

The Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) attracted a lot of negative media attention due to the power crisis because the Company does not only because the company has some operational and managerial challenges that trouble public institutions; importantly it is the target of public annoyance and ridicule over the problems of electricity in Ghana. The ECG plays a frontline role between most Ghanaians and their electricity industry (Graham, 2015).

The news media, and more specifically print media, serve as prized sources of information and influential means of communication. The public's picture of the energy crisis in Ghana was largely shaped by the media (Boateng, 2015). This power controlled much of what people understood of the energy crisis daily (Cissel, 2012). The need for information during the crisis was huge, and the mass media was heavily depended on for information and had the greatest impact of educating Ghanaians on the power situation. The print media did not only limit themselves to reporting the crisis but became powerful actors in it by employing media frames to explain problems of energy supply in Ghana (ibid).

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Agyepong (2016), examined newspaper frames of the energy crisis in 2012 from February to December 2014 and January 2015.

After content analysing a total number of 144 publications out of the universe of 626 publications of the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* the following four dominant frame categories emerged:

Cause - this is where the content of the story outlines the issue(s) which has/have led to the electricity crisis.

Effect - when the author of the story discusses the consequences of the problem.

Informational frame - these are those stories that highlight the regular and unannounced nature of the erratic electricity outages.

Solution - this is where the newspaper outlines measures, activities and projects put in place to end the problem.

This study therefore extends Agyepong's (2016) analysis of the framing of the 2012 Energy crisis in Ghana. Agyepong (2016) identified four dominant frames underpinning Ghanaian newspapers' coverage of the energy crisis in Ghana. However, Agyepong's study did not provide insight into how stakeholders-audiences, who are readers of the two newspapers perceive Ghanaian newspapers framing of the energy crisis. This study fills this gap in by providing audiences expectations (students, academics, civil society, energy commission officials, who are readers of the two newspapers) of media coverage of the energy crisis. Additionally, the study provides a comparative analysis of audience expectation of the framing of the energy crisis and journalists rationale for privileging the four dominant frames of the energy crisis.

The study does this through a semi-structured interview with stakeholders/audiences (students, civil society, academics, government officials, who are readers of the two newspapers). The reason is to understand how audiences' perceive the role of journalists in reporting crisis. This will enable journalists to understand what audiences expect of journalists in covering crisis in Ghana.

The analysis of the perspectives of audiences regarding newspaper frames in this study is important because it will contribute to the extension of the discussion on the evolution of normative ideals of engaged journalism which recommends citizens participation in the generation of news content. It is only when journalists align with the implementation of these ideals in their daily journalistic routines, that news content will meet the expectations of audiences.

## 1.2 Objectives

To adequately respond to the problem identified earlier, the overarching objective of this study is to examine audiences' expectation of Ghanaian newspapers framing of the 2012 energy crisis. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. Examine audiences' perspectives of the framing of the energy crisis in the two newspapers
2. Examine the rationale of journalists framing of the 2012 energy crisis in Ghana from the perspectives of editors and reporters who covered the crisis.
3. Compare audience perspectives and journalists rationale of the framing of the energy crisis in the two newspapers.

## 1.3 Research Questions

- RQ1. What is audiences' perspectives of the framing of the energy crisis in the two newspapers?
- RQ2. What is journalists' rationale for the dominant framing of the energy crisis in Ghana?
- RQ3. What are the differences and similarities between audience perspectives and journalists rationale for framing the energy crisis in the two newspapers?

## 1.4 Significance of Study

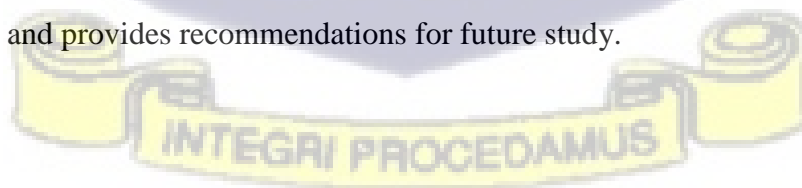
This study is significant because there is a dearth of literature on audience/stakeholders expectations of journalists' coverage of crisis in sub-Saharan Africa. In the Ghanaian context, this study promises to make a novel contribution to academic research on crisis reporting in the Ghanaian media as it would enable journalists to understand what audiences expect of the media in reporting on crisis.

### **1.5 Scope of Study**

To examine stakeholders/audiences perspectives of newspapers coverage of the 2012 energy crisis representatives of key stakeholders' institutions-including students, civil society activists, academics, officials of ECG- who are readers of the two newspapers were interviewed. The study interviewed representatives of this broad segment including students (two-undergraduate and postgraduate), civil society (two), academics (two), government officials (PR at ECG) and two journalists (one from each newspaper) who covered the stories and two editors (one from each newspaper) who selected the stories for publication in the two newspapers.

### **1.6 Organization of Study**

This work is organized into five chapters. Chapter one provides background of the study, provides the statement of problem, delineate objectives, research questions and significance of study including scope. Chapter Two reviews literature on the study and provides a theoretical frame work for the study. In Chapter Three the research methodology is discussed. It also, explains the sample size, sampling methods and instrumentation used in the data collection. The Fourth Chapter analyses the data and presents findings while Chapter Five is the conclusion which discusses the findings of the study and provides recommendations for future study.



### 1.7 Stakeholders/Audiences (Operational definition)

**Editors:** This refers to the people who determined the contents of the newspapers and the attendant frames of the energy crisis.

**Reporters:** This refers to people who researched the energy crisis and wrote stories on it.

**Officials of ECG (Spokesman of ECG):** This is the person who has the mandate to build and maintain a favourable image for the Company.

**Students: One Postgraduate and undergraduate:** These are people enrolled in institutions of higher learning with the main aim to acquire knowledge and apply or transfer same.

**Civil Society:** These are groups organized around energy issues with the sole aim to ensure societal good and prevent any form of deviationism.

**Academics:** These are people employed in institutions of higher learning to teach and research so will be in the position to make insightful contributions to the study.

### 1.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explicitly introduced the research topic highlighting the gap it seeks to fill and the questions that will direct the research. This introductory chapter precludes my intentions in the next chapter where I review literature relating to crisis, framing, audience expectation and a theoretical framework.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.0 Introduction

The chapter reviews related literature on the study of media framing and how it finds expression in crisis communication. For the purposes of clarity, elements to be discussed are captured under the following categories: The concept of crisis, Energy crisis in Ghana, Media and crisis communication, Media and crisis framing, News media routines and audience expectations. This chapter also discusses the Theoretical underpinnings of the study. Specifically, the audience reception theory was used for this study.

#### 2.1 The concept of crisis

Scholars have provided diverse definitions of the term crisis. Coombs (2012) defines crisis as “the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization’s performance and generate negative outcomes” (pp. 2-3). Fearn-Banks (2011), defines crisis as “a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting an organization, company, or industry, as well as its publics, products, services or good name” ( p.1). Stamsnijder (2002) argues that “a crisis is an emergency in the sense of an unexpected event or a series of events which has an extensive damage or impact on the ones involved”. Muller et al. (2009) state “the most useful definition of a crisis is that it is a threat which is accompanied by uncertainty and unpredictability and requires urgent actions” (p.8). These definitions of

crisis have some common characteristics. These characteristics include, crisis is often unexpected, creates a certain risk and the response time is short (Ulmer et al., 2007). Ahmed (2006) argues that “some of the essential features of crises are that they are a disruption of routine, an escalating flow of events together with a sense of losing control of the situation, heightened media attention, followed by scrutiny, inquiry, speculation, and, eventually, the proliferation of negative publicity”.

Damages resulting from crises are wide-ranging and can be physical, economic and psychological, (Malone & Coombs, 2009). Crises vary, but they usually involve excessive anxiety and potential injury to an organisation’s reputation because, quickly, the organization attracts unwanted public attention. Types of crises are more specific to business products or services, for business organizations, (Eunyoung, 2013).

## **2.2 Media and Crisis communication**

Rosenthal et al (2001) define crisis communication as “offering information from transmitters to receivers for the purposes of reducing the tangible and intangible consequences of an event”. Communication during crisis is very important to provide all parties with adequate and complete information. Gray (2003) postulates that crisis communication manages the outcome, impact, and public perception of a crisis. De Wolf & Mejri (2013), explained crisis communication as the response an organization offers to a crisis situation as it endeavors to reduce the damage to its corporate image, while Hale et al. (2005) regard crisis communication as a process of collecting information, processing same, making decisions and distributing necessary data to address a crisis situation to all stakeholders.

Theorists and practitioners generally agree that crisis communication should be considered as an amalgamated and important component of the overall crisis management process. To successfully maintain a positive relationship with key stakeholders, effective crisis communication is essential (De Wolf & Mejri, 2013). Therefore communication is very critical in every crisis management situation. A crisis or the threat of crisis creates a need for information. Information is collected, processed into knowledge and shared with others through communication (Coombs & Halladay, 2010).

The media can serve as a conduit to carry instructions to the public, arouse sympathy, emphasize efforts to attain wide public support for mitigating actions, promote confidence in leadership, reduce the number of public enquiries, and offer useful coverage that may assist future communication efforts (Moreira, 2007). As the media are part of the team of early responders (Simpson & Cote, 2006), they have the prospect to play a variety of roles in crisis situations.

Elmasry and Chaudhri (2009), conducted an analysis of how the Virginia Technology University shootings was covered in the news. They examined how through cultural repair efforts, South Korea relied on the press to help fix the damage caused to its international reputation by the tragedy at Virginia Tech.

In 2007, 32 Virginia Tech University students and faculty were killed. The gruesome murders by Seung-Hui Cho are regarded as the deadliest school shooting in America (ibid). News of the incident was the lead story around the world and in the United States, dominating broadcast and front pages for several days. Seung-Hui Cho was identified as

a South Korean student raising issues of national and cultural identity. Due to the international and public dynamics of the event, the media was instrumental in the political and public discourse about the shootings. Overall, results suggest that through positive coverage in *Korea Times* and *Chosun Ilbo* newspapers, South Korea was able to repair its damaged international reputation. The media condemned the actions of the gunman as not representative of the Korean National culture.

The media often plays the role of an information resource in a crisis. Researchers recommend that practitioners view “stakeholders, including the media, as partners when managing a crisis” (Ulmer et al., 2007, p. 36). Throughout the crisis management process, communication is critical. Each level of the management process demands the creation and sharing of knowledge –the need to collect and decode information. All of these could be achieved when the media is cultivated and seen as a strategic partner. However, the media has also been heavily criticized as fueling tension in crisis situations and have by this seriously impacted organizations performance and generated negative outcomes (Coombs 2007).

Holladay (2009), content analysed publications about chemical accidents in the United States of America, focusing on the unique types of information that have been included.

The chemical accident crisis is one of the most common type of crises that occurs in the US (Holladay, 2009). Recent statistics show that about 400 chemical accidents were recorded annually between 1996 and 1998 (Elliot, Wang, Lowe & Kleindorfer, 2004). Like other crises, such chemical accident crises stress the need for organizations to communicate with stakeholders.

Holladay (2009) used content analysis of 91 media reports to examine how crisis managers effectively got out their side of the story through the news media. She studied the immediate news coverage of crises that involved chemical accidents. She found that that organizational messages were absent in the news coverage. Whether the news media deliberately ignored crisis response messaging from organizations or the organizations failed to provide timely information to the news media, the news media hardly sourced a member of an organization in its news story. According to her, organizations' sides of the story were not adequately represented in the news media.

The results are damning for managers of crisis situations because one of the foremost recommendations of crisis communication is putting out "your side" of the story (Ogrizek & Guillery, 1999; Lerbinger, 1997). Crisis managers were exposed by the study for how ineffective they were at being integral to crisis news coverage.

Most people often learn of crisis situations through the media; they do not experience the situations themselves. While some interested individuals may visit an organization's website, many others are likely to rely on local media coverage for information. It is therefore important that organizations do not misjudge the influence of media coverage on public opinion (Meijer 2004; Carroll & McCombs 2003; Ogrizek & Guillery 1999; Marra 1998).

The media must be engaged effectively in crisis communication. Media partnerships are often the best channels for such engagements. In crisis situations, news media reports can be effective in minimizing or inflicting more damage to an organization's reputation (Moreira, 2007).

### 2.3 Media & Crisis Framing

Park (2012) sought to investigate the episodic and thematic frames employed by *Chicago Tribune* and *The ProQuest* newspapers of Illinois. He asserts that in the thematic frame, the object of the coverage is abstract and impersonal in the background stories. By contrast, the personal viewpoint or experience of the media forms the approach of the episodic frame. According to him, the media will not be playing its hallowed watchdog role if the personal viewpoint dominates the coverage on political corruption. This is the popular expectation of audiences in a democratic society.

The results of his study indicate that personal view point of stories (episodic framing) far outweigh the impersonal (thematic framing) stories. Thematic-frame stories formed 38% of the sampled articles that deal with structural causes, background, impacts, or solutions of corruption. In summary, a regular reader of the sampled newspapers would have read more news articles about a corrupt individual than stories of corruption as a systematic or societal outcome. The newspapers consider corruption as act of individuals rather than as a societal phenomenon.

Stories that employ the episodic frame arouse more personal ascriptions and give a different influence on media users' perception compared to stories that use the thematic frame which suggest more structural attributions of media reports. (Iyengar, 1990).

Yeboah (2014), also sought to investigate the tone of positive, negative and neutral, employed by the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*, to frame two major Presidential candidates, John Dramani Mahama and Nana Akufo-Addo, in the 2012 Presidential campaign.

He contends that a Positive (favourable) frame means the story or article on a party's candidate portrays the political candidate in a positive light. Negative frames refer to report or articles that portray a political candidate in a negative light. Neutral means the story neither portrays a political candidate in a positive nor negative light.

His findings revealed that out of the 174 stories for both candidates, 162 were covered as positive stories representing 93.10 per cent, 11 were covered as negative representing 6.32 per cent and finally 1.0 was covered as neutral representing 0.57 per cent. Out of the 95 stories for Mahama, he had 94 positive stories representing 98.94 per cent and 1.0 neutral story representing 1.06 per cent. Out of 79 stories for Akufo-Addo, 68 were positive stories representing 86.06 per cent, 11 negative stories representing 13.92 per cent and no neutral story. Out of the 162 positive stories for both candidates, Mahama had 94 representing 58.02 per cent while Akufo-Addo had 68 representing 41.97 per cent.

To determine the appropriate response strategy to employ in crisis communication, framing analysis provides an important aid for crisis managers to reduce the battering to an organization's image (Boyd, 2000; Coombs, 2006). Through framing research, several types of crisis response strategies have been developed and tested (Coombs, 1999; Coombs & Holladay, 1996; Benoit, 1995).

Some frames are frequently used in the news. Neuman, Just, & Crigler (1992) cited in Seon-Kyoung and Gower (2009) identified some frames, often used in news coverage in the US. These types of frames include: conflict, economic consequences, human impact, and morality. In an analysis of newspaper and television news stories, Semetko and

Valkenburg (2000) used these frames to study how news stories dealt with crisis such as international crime and globalization in 1997 during the meeting of European heads of state in Holland.

Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) coded four Dutch national newspapers with the highest circulation rates, the *Telegraaf*, *Algemeen Dagblad* (AD), *Volkskrant*, and the *NRC Handelsblad* (NRC), and three national daily television news programmes with the highest viewing figures, *NOS Journaal*, *RTL Nieuws*, and *Hart van Nederland*. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) identified five crisis (international crime, environmental problems and globalization) news frames in Holland in order of predominance: “attribution of responsibility, conflict, economic, human interest, and morality”.

### ***Human interest frame***

Human-interest frame “brings a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem” (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 95). “In crisis situations, the frame stimulates the psychological pulse of people, which ultimately leads them to a more negative attitude toward the crisis” (Padin, 2005, p. 13).

### ***Conflict frame***

The conflict frame is used in such a way as to reflect conflict and disagreement among individuals, groups, or organizations. Neuman et al. (1992) cited in Seon-Kyoung and Gower (2009), found that conflict was commonly used by U.S. news media. In the Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) study, the conflict frame was the second most common frame, and the more serious the newspaper, the more the conflict frame was in evidence.

News is a dramatization of crisis, and the present over the past (Bennett, 2002). The tendency to resort to dramatizing crisis jointly moves in tandem with balance. By publishing the opinions of legitimate representatives of conflicting sides, Journalists quest for dramatic tension is achieved (ibid).

### ***Morality frame***

This frame puts the event, problem, or issue in the context of morals, social prescriptions, and religious tenets. Neuman et al. (1992) cited in Seon-Kyoung and Gower (2009), revealed that the morality frame was subtly used by Journalists through quotations or inference, instead of an actively professing the norm of objectivity.

### ***Economic frame***

The economic frame concerns itself with the economic effects of an event, challenge or issue on individuals, organizations, or nations. Neuman et al. (1992) cited in Seon-Kyoung and Gower (2009) postulated that this common news frame sees the news value in the impact of an incident, and its economic effects on the public (Graber, 1993).

### ***Attribution of responsibility frame***

This frame is defined as “a way of attributing responsibility for a cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group” (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 96). Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) noted that “serious newspapers” often used the attribution of responsibility frame.

### 2.3.1 News Media Routines & Audience Perspectives

Today's media ecosystem is riddled with dwindling public trust, fierce competition, commercialization, and expanding opportunities for audience participation. As a result, using frames in the news media must be done with caution. These factors force journalists to rethink the difficult balance they must strike between professional autonomy, social duty, and public demands (Wurf & Schoenbach 2014).

There have been numerous suggested types of journalism's social purposes. Dimmick (2011), for example, described the following social functions of the mass media in general: monitoring, interpretation, linking, transfer of values, and distraction. According to Habermas (1999), journalism has a role in molding public opinion through fostering public discourse. Others, focusing on news, referred to it as an amplifier, granting credence to their viewpoints (Green, 1992). Others, however, maintained that journalism's fundamental goal is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing: "To provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing" (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 17). Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1963) established a typology of authoritarian, libertarian, communist, and social responsibility press models in their seminal normative four theories of the press (Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm, 1963). Expectations of how the press should operate in society are obviously incorporated in these models, not just in regard to the state, but also in respect to the public that the press is expected to serve.

When individual journalists internalize these social functions, they become meaningful and manifest themselves optimally in practice. A large body of work focusing on journalists' role conceptions has been contributed to by academics (e.g., Cassidy, 2005;

Chung & Nah, 2013; Hanitzsch, 2011; Mellado & Van Dalen, 2013; Tandoc et al., 2012; Weaver et al., 2007; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986). Since these roles are journalists' understanding of how they "ought to do their work" (Mellado & Van Dalen, 2013, p. 861), they are sometimes based on several levels of expectations including public perceptions. The viewpoints of only journalists informed earlier research studies of role conceptions, though the results of these studies evidently showed a link between the beliefs journalists held of their roles and their belief of what their audiences expect from them (Weaver et al., 2007). Knowing what role expectations there are is a sure way to broaden the understanding of journalistic roles.

As a result, role expectations refer to what determines how journalists think about their roles: the actors' scripts (Biddle, 1986). Although what journalists believe their audiences expect of them is an important element of journalistic role conceptions, research on audiences' role expectations is limited, particularly outside the United States (Tandoc & Duffy, 2016).

According to a survey, the American public expects journalists to play four roles: "being a good neighbor, functioning as a watchdog, being fair and truthful, and reporting quickly" (Heider et al., 2005, p. 231). Although being a watchdog was ranked as the most important function for journalists, audiences expected journalists to be nice neighbors above all else (Heider et al., 2005). Being a good neighbor entails qualities similar to those found in public journalism, such as concern for one's neighborhood (Heider et al., 2005). A poll of Internet users in America rated the function of disseminating information as the most important, followed by the civic role, which is interpreted to include citizen participation in decision-making (Nah & Chung, 2012).

Three components of audience expectations were discovered in a study of adults in Hong Kong: extensive coverage, objective coverage, and positive coverage (Guo, 2000). The research, conducted during a national election campaign found a "strong link between audience expectations and attentiveness to media public affairs material," according to the study (Guo, 2000, p. 148). Those who read election news in newspapers, for example, are accustomed to receiving complete and objective coverage (Guo, 2000). Role expectations were defined in the study as "public perceptions of what the news media should do" (Guo, 2000, p. 134).

As a result, the audience not only has the capacity to alter journalism via their choices, but they also have the ability to give media its *raison d'être* through their expectations. The public validates journalism's existence and, of course, is an important economic component that allows it to function (Vos et al. 2019).

Although it is agreed upon that role expectations of journalists are what is expected of them, the source of these expectations which are the audiences remains underexplored (Heider, McCombs, & Poindexter, 2005; Nah & Chung, 2012).

Against this background, the present study, sought to examine audiences' expectations of the framing of the energy crisis in 2012 and compare their expectations with journalist's rationale of the framing of the energy crisis in the two newspapers, namely: the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*.

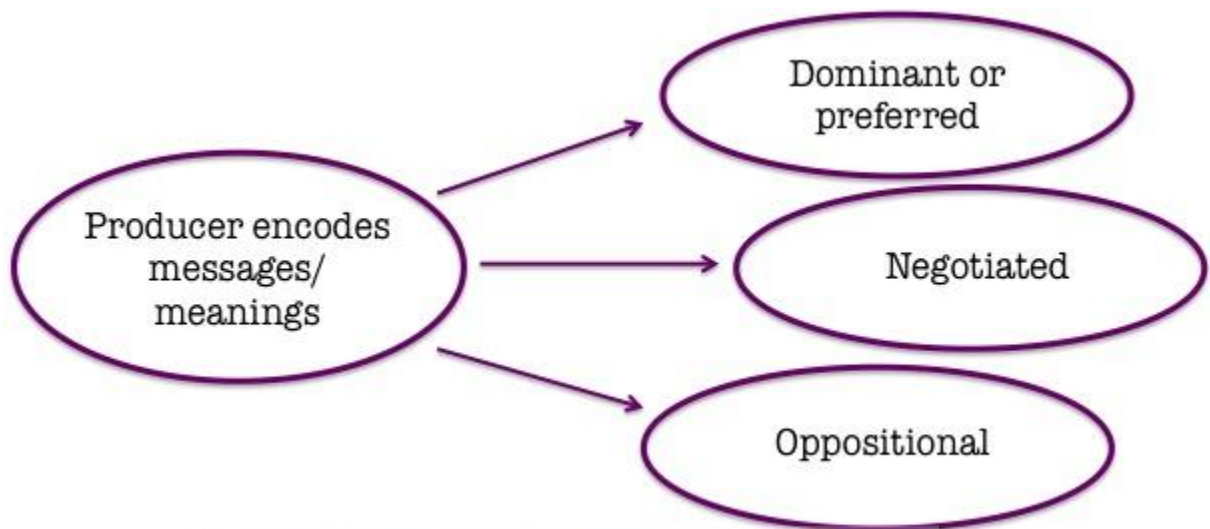
## 2.4 Theoretical Framework

### 2.4.1 Audience Reception Theory

Stuart Hall's audience reception theory, popularly known as the "Encoding/Decoding" model, which was first published as a working paper of the Centre for Culture Studies in Birmingham in 1973 and republished in 1980, was a watershed moment not only for the study of news audiences, but for media studies in general. Hall's (1980) intervention, a theoretical convergence of hitherto conflicting traditions, critical and administrative, signified the start of an exciting phase of audience research (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009). The agenda of the critical tradition (concerns with power and ideology) and the empirical focus on audiences that had traditionally been associated with the positivist tradition of communication research were brought together by Hall, who wrote his piece as a critique of positivist media sociology, which had been the dominant paradigm of communication research (Gitlin, 1978).

As a result, Hall's approach aimed to "incorporate both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the communication process" (Hall, 1988 cited in Morley, 1996, p. 323). Communication, according to Hall, was a dynamic circuit. He claimed that the same event might be encoded in various ways. Messages are fundamentally polysemic, notwithstanding Hall's assertion that there is a favored meaning. Hall developed three decoding positions for audiences relating to media communications, based on Parkin's (1971) political sociology: dominant-hegemonic/preferred, negotiated, and oppositional reading patterns as shown in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1 Audience Reception Theory



Source: Hall, (1988)

Morley's (1980) *Nationwide* study has widely been the empirical application of the "Encoding/Decoding" model (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009). Morley examined the different interpretations of the popular current affairs programme on BBC, *Nationwide*, by audience groups. Each group was homogenous, representing a distinct demographic profile. The study demonstrated that readings of the text were based on "cultural differences embedded within the structure of society which guide and limit the individual's interpretation of messages" (Morley, 1992, p. 118). Thus the "meaning" of a text or message was understood as being produced through the interaction of the codes embedded in the text with the codes inhabited by the different sections of the audience (Morley, 1992). The "Encoding/Decoding" model and Morley's study have been criticized for class determinism, linearity and for introducing two problematic terms, the "preferred reading" and the "negotiated decoding" (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009).

The model has also been criticized for emphasizing interpretation and underplaying other processes such as comprehension, which play an important part in the decoding of the news (ibid).

Morley has stated that audience members' rejection of the prevailing message can often be attributable to a lack of comprehension (due to inadequate literacy and educational capital) rather than an opposing interpretation (Livingstone, 1998b). Despite these criticisms, Hall's approach and Morley's study were crucial in establishing the discipline of audience research and making "visible an audience which has hitherto been devalued, marginalized and presumed about in policy and theory" (Livingstone, 1998b, p. 240). This visibility, as Livingstone (1998a, p. 195) points out, is important theoretically, practically, and politically (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009).

Following Hall (1980) and Morley (1980), various more research studied audience interpretation, according to Hanitzsch (2007). (Gamson, 1992; Lewis, 1991; Liebes, 1997; Kitzinger, 1993; Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992; Philo, 1990). The Glasgow University Media Group, which is known for its research into news production and content, got involved in audience research (Eldridge, 1993). Philo (1990) conducted an excellent study on the receipt of news concerning the 1984–85 British miners' strike. Philo and his colleagues conducted interviews with a variety of audience groups using a methodology similar to that used in the nationwide survey. The groups were shown 12 photographs from the strike coverage and asked to remark on them. Philo discovered that those who were most reliant on the media had the strongest belief in the dominating media framing. Those who relied heavily on television news assumed that the majority

of picketing was violent, reflecting the fact that violence was a key frame in news coverage, which is consistent with Hall's preferred reading pattern. Those who rejected the media story, on the other hand, had firsthand knowledge of the events, knew the strikers and their families, or had access to alternative sources of information (Philo, 1990, p. 47).

Similarly, research from Greece emphasizes the value of firsthand personal experience in dealing with difficult news stories (Madianou, 2007). As part of a larger ethnography of news consumption, the study looked at how two events (an incident in Greek-Turkish relations and an international crisis, particularly the Kosovo conflict in 1999) were received (Madianou, 2005b). While the news discourse in both the national incident and the Kosovo crisis remained essentially ethnocentric, the viewers' reactions were clearly differentiated, according to the study. During the national incident, viewers questioned the dominant news discourse (oppositional reading), which characterized Greek-Turkish relations as a "family" affair, whereas in the Kosovo case study, some interviewees reverted to an ethnocentric discourse in line with the news content (Madianou, 2007), which is in line with the preferred reading. Personal experience could be one explanation for the discursive alterations. The majority of interviewees who questioned the content of national news did so by drawing on their own personal experiences (for example, compulsory military duty), which gave them the confidence to question the dominant discourse provided in the news. (ibid).

The events in Kosovo, on the other hand, were mostly mediated since few individuals had direct involvement with the fighting and hence were less prepared to be critical of

news coverage. Another explanation for the viewers' discursive changes was observed in the study (Madianou, 2005b): viewers felt comfortable criticizing the dominant discourse in the news by understanding news broadcasts about an incident in Greek-Turkish ties as an internal, "family" matter. Many interviewees, however, felt compelled to accept the prevalent nationalistic discourse and establish their identity in response to an international conflict that they saw as a danger to their culture and identity from the outside during the Kosovo war (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009). This second argument emphasizes the reality that news reception is a relational and dynamic process that incorporates not only national news and local viewers, but also, inevitably, international news and audiences. (Madianou, 2005b, 2007).

A number of insights emerge from the research on news audiences. Although interpretation cannot be predicted, research shows that it is influenced by a number of factors, including the text itself—and the ideological climate that shaped it—(Lewis, 1991; Liebes, 1997; Morley, 1980; 1992; Philo 1990), comprehension and the educational capital that this implies (Morley, 1999; Liebes, 1997; Madianou, 2005b), pre-existing beliefs and expectations (Bird, 1992; Liebes, 1997; Kitzinger, 1993), social class and other demographic variables, as well as the availability of alternative sources and the degree of exposure to and reliance on the news media (Madianou, 2007; Philo, 1990). The audience reception theory is relevant to the study in that it will help to establish the connection between audiences' expectations of the frames of the energy crisis in 2012 and how these expectations influenced their reading patterns (dominant, negotiated or oppositional) of the news items relating to the energy crisis.

### 2.4.2 Framing Theory

Various definitions have been offered by different scholars as to what constitutes framing. According to Tankard (2001), framing is basically defined as “a central organising idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration” (p.100). Whereas Carragee and Roefs (2004) define framing as constructing meanings concerning issues by their patterns of emphasis, interpretation, and exclusion, D’Angello (2002) considers framing as cognitive structures which unconsciously lead the individual to what is to be noticed and which define that situation for the individual.

There are several different channels through which media content is communicated to its audience, all of which are designed to further the objectives of the source that is distributing it (Cissel, 2012). A "frame" in social theory is a system of interpretation, group of tales, and stereotypes that people use to comprehend and react to events (ibid). Framing in communication describes how news media coverage can influence public opinion by utilizing particular frames to aid readers in comprehending (Mc Combs & Shaw, 2002).

Placing this within the Ghanaian context of the 2012 energy crisis, the power that the media had to be able to shape public opinion became obvious. The mass media is the fulcrum between public agenda and individual citizens (Collins et al, 2006). Herman and Chomsky (1988) have pointed out that the, “mass media serve as a system for communicating images to the general populace” (p.16). When the mass media produce news stories about an issue, the news stories circulate certain knowledge, and then the knowledge influences people’s opinions about the issue (Collins et al. 2006). This is

because the media emphasize issues by bringing them into the domain of the public sphere. Van Dijk (1993) has argued that the media have always demonstrated social power by controlling the minds of individual audiences. Ofori-Birikorang (2009) has also contended that through news production the media provide knowledge to their audiences, and such knowledge, in turn, exerts crucial influence in deciding the direction of citizens' understanding. In other words, the media are generally viewed as an important driving force in determining how events and conditions of individual group experiences are socially defined (Gamson & Modigliani 1999).

When Ghana had an energy crisis in 2012, press coverage of the issue certainly supplied some interpretive frameworks through which Ghanaians could make sense of what was happening. By outlining the circumstances leading up to the crisis, how it happened, its effects, and steps taken to repair the harm, the media served as newsmakers.

By focusing on a particular news story, the media always select a few salient issues from a range of issues that are available in the real world (Nelkin, 1995). A fascinating technique to evaluate how the print media might amplify and support a predominate public culture is through framing theory. The media's portrayal of Ghana's energy crisis served to both inform and reaffirm public perceptions of the industry. The Ghanaian public was likely prepped by the media to view the energy crisis in a particular light. Although the specific signals we each took away from the coverage may have been very different, the prevailing myths about the energy sector were repeated and reinforced, which may have comparable long-term effects.

## 2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have broadly engaged with the literature on crisis, the role of the media in crisis communication and how audience expectations impact news media outputs. This chapter has highlighted through the audience reception and framing theories, the interconnection between the news media and audiences within the culture of meaning making. The next chapter will set out the methodology to be employed to measure audience expectations of journalistic routines as highlighted in their framing of the energy crisis in 2012.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter of the research concentrates on methodology and design of the study. According to Given (2008 p.75), research methodology consists of the assumptions, postulations, rules, and methods—the blueprint or roadmap—that researchers employ to render their work open to analysis, critique, replication, repetition, and/or adaptation. This chapter deals with the profiles of the selected newspapers, research approach and design. The chapter also discusses how data was gathered and analyzed and the instruments used for the analysis.

The following research questions guided the study:

- RQ1. What is audiences' perspectives of the framing of the energy crisis in the two newspapers?
- RQ2. What is journalists' rationale for the dominant framing of the energy crisis in Ghana?
- RQ3. What are the differences and similarities between audience perspectives and journalists rationale for framing the energy crisis in the two newspapers?



### 3.1 Research Approach

The two primary paradigms in academic research are qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. In qualitative research, the researcher looks into the meanings and insights of a situation (Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Levitt et al., 2017). This research methodology is a sort of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data in order to infer meaning from these data for a better understanding of social life, through studying certain people or locations (Punch, 2013). It consists of observations and interpretations of people's reactions to various situations, as well as snapshots of people's reactions in natural settings (Gentles et al., 2015). Qualitative research is exploratory in nature, and it aims to explain "how" and "why" a particular social phenomenon, or program, behaves the way it does in a given setting. It aims to assist us in comprehending our social environment and why things are the way they are (Polkinghorne, 2005). Its goal is to give a comprehensive explanation of human behavior, emotion, attitudes, and experiences (Tong et al., 2012).

Quantitative research, on the other hand, is concerned with quantifying and analyzing variables in order to obtain results. It entails the use of statistical tools to analyze numerical data in order to answer questions such as who, how much, what, where, when, how many, and how. Extending on this concept, Aliaga and Gunderson (2002) define quantitative research methods as the process of collecting data in numerical form and analyzing it using mathematical approaches, particularly statistics, to understand a problem or phenomena.

Quantitative research entails gathering data in order to quantify information and apply it to statistical analysis in order to support or refute competing assertions. Furthermore, according to Williams (2007), quantitative research begins with the formulation of a problem, the formulation of a hypothesis or research question, the evaluation of relevant literature, and the quantitative analysis of data.

However, according to Creswell (2006), quantitative research fails to grasp the context or setting in which people converse. In addition, in quantitative research, participants' voices are not directly heard.

From this premise, the research, therefore, employed a qualitative approach in collecting and processing data. Qualitative research is a type of research approach that helps in developing explanations of social phenomena (Hancock, 2002). By this approach, this study examined audience expectations (stakeholders-students, academics, ECG officials etc) of the framing of Ghana's energy crisis in the media. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people construct meaning, that is, how they make sense of their world and their experiences in it (Merriam, 2009).

The study draws upon qualitative interviews to investigate audience expectations of media framing of Ghana's energy crisis of 2012 from January to December. This study is considered qualitative because it is interested in understanding through the perspective of stakeholders how they made sense of the coverage of Ghana's energy crisis of 2012 in the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*.

### 3.2 Research Design

Research design is the strategy, the plan and the structure of conducting a research project (Carriger, 2000 cited in Rebaone & Phuthi 2016). This definition is consistent with Amoani (2005), who explained that research design is an arrangement of conditions for collecting and analyzing data relevant to the researcher in the most economic manner that determines the samples size, sampling techniques, the type of data and how to collect it as well as the method of data analysis. The nature of the research problem or topic being addressed, the researchers' personal experiences, and the study's target audiences all play a role in choosing a research design (Cresswell, 2008).

The study adopted a case study research design by treating the energy crisis as a case through which audience perspectives relating to the energy crisis and captured in the Daily Graphic and Daily Guide were assessed.

### 3.3 Sampling

Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) describe a sampling population as the larger group to which one aspires to apply results of a research finding. In this study, 2 students (1 undergraduate & 1 postgraduate), 2 academics, 2 energy activists, 1 reporter and editor each of the selected newspapers (*Daily Graphic and Daily Guide*) and the Spokesperson of the Electricity Company of Ghana were sampled.

### 3.4 Sampling Technique

According to Lindlof & Taylor (2002), sampling technique guides researchers in their choices of whom to observe or whom to interview. The sampling technique of a study as

advanced by Given (2008), is dependent on the objectives of the study. In accordance with the objectives of the study, the purposive sampling technique was employed.

Purposive sampling may be defined as selecting units (e.g., individuals, groups of individuals, texts, institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions (Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

A purposive sampling method was used to select the target population who are sufficient to answer the research questions because as individuals they can provide important and diverse perspectives on media framing of the energy crisis as agreed by Maxwell (1996) who defined purposive sampling as a type of sampling in which, particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be accessed from other choices.

Reporters were particularly sampled because as active participants in news selection and production, they are information rich and could help maximize understanding of the news frames of the energy crisis as highlighted by Schwandt (1997) cited in Lindlof & Taylor (2002) who argues that individuals or institutions are chosen because they may be good reason to believe that 'what goes on there' is critical to understanding some process or concept, or to testing or elaborating some established theory.

Students, academics and energy activists were also purposively sampled because they are well placed to critique media frames of the energy crisis because of their intellectual dispositions and orientations. *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* are relevant to the study because their news clippings on the energy crisis will serve as key reference points to critique responses from the interviewees.

### 3.5 Sample Size

A sample size of 2 students (1 undergraduate & 1 postgraduate), 2 academics, 2 energy activists, 1 reporter and editor each from the selected newspapers (*Daily Graphic and Daily Guide*) and the Spokesperson of the Electricity Company of Ghana was also selected, bringing the total number of interviewees to eleven.

### 3.6 Data Collection Strategies

There are several kinds of qualitative interviews including in-depth, unstructured, semi-structured, intensive, collaborative and ethnographic (Lindlof, 2005; Hancock, Windridge & Ockleford 2007). In this study, I preferred the qualitative semi-structured interview over structured interviews to ensure flexibility and to accommodate new questions emerging from the interaction between interviewer and interviewee (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 316).

Semi-structured in-depth interviews are described as the most widely used interviewing format for qualitative research and “can occur either with an individual or in groups” (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 316). This sort of interview is conducted once involving an individual or group. They may last only 30 minutes or may go on for several hours (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 316). In this study, a cross section of Ghanaians (Students, CSOs, Academics, Reporters and the spokesperson of ECG) were interviewed individually. The researcher and interviewee met at an agreed place and each interview lasted between 30 and one hour, forty-five minutes.

### 3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The interviews conducted to ascertain the perspectives of 2 students (1 undergraduate & 1 postgraduate), 2 academics, 2 energy activists, 1 reporter and editor each of the selected newspapers (*Daily Graphic and Daily Guide*) and the Spokesperson of the Electricity Company of Ghana on media frames of the energy crisis which started in 2012, were guided by a study carried out by Agyepong (2016).

In her research, Agyepong (2016), examined newspaper framing of the energy crisis in 2012. She conducted a content analysis of newspaper stories related to the energy crisis using the following frame categories:

Cause - this is where the content of the story outlines the issue(s) which has/have led to the electricity crisis.

Effect - when the author of the story discusses the consequences of the problem.

Informational frame - these are those stories that highlight the regular and unannounced nature of the erratic electricity outages.

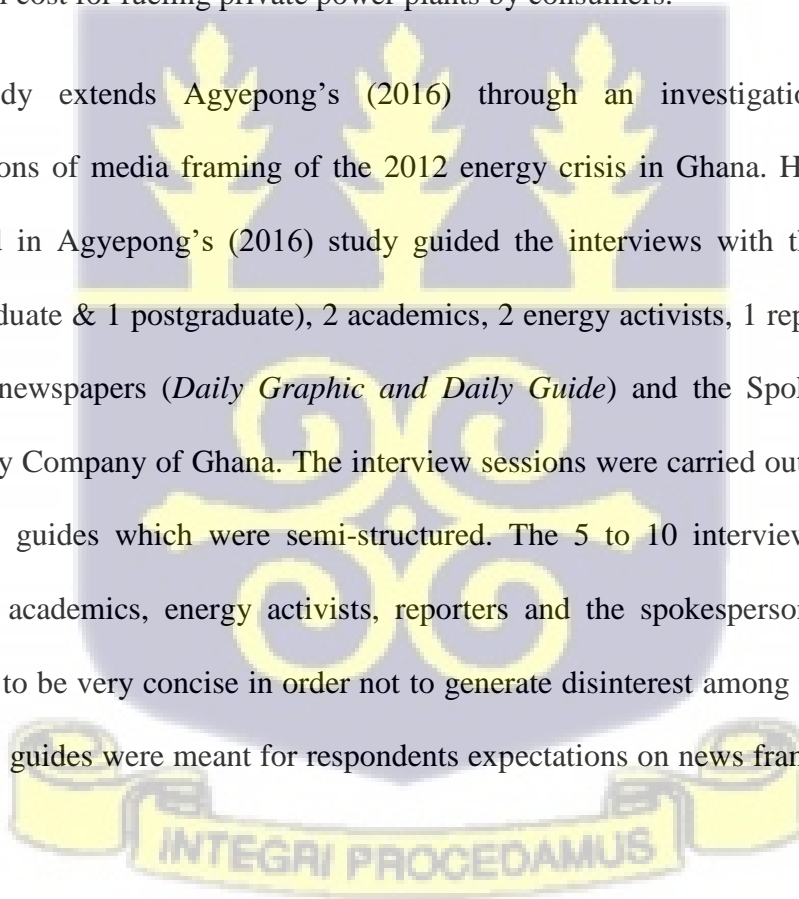
Solution - this is where the newspaper outlines measures, activities and projects put in place to end the problem.

Her study indicated that “cause” was the highest frame on the electricity crisis, representing 34.4%. Most of the stories that projected the “cause” frame outlined such factors as irregular supply of gas and crude oil from Nigeria, irregular maintenance of power plants, ineffective electricity policy and technical faults, such as breakdown of gas turbines as causes of the crisis. “Solution” recorded the second highest frame with

27.2 percent of stories. The stories on “solution” frame were generally on the assurances and measures by government and electricity producers to stabilize power supply.

The “solution” frame was closely followed by the “informational” frame with 19.2 percent. The “informational” frame dealt more with the unannounced and erratic power outages experienced by consumers. Surprisingly, the “effect” frame received little attention as compared to cause, solution and informational frames. 14.4 percent of stories coded were on the effects of the problem and particularly dealt with the adverse effects of the electricity crisis on businesses (for example, collapse of businesses) and additional cost for fueling private power plants by consumers.

This study extends Agyepong’s (2016) through an investigation of audience expectations of media framing of the 2012 energy crisis in Ghana. Hence, the frames identified in Agyepong’s (2016) study guided the interviews with the 2 students (1 undergraduate & 1 postgraduate), 2 academics, 2 energy activists, 1 reporter each of the selected newspapers (*Daily Graphic and Daily Guide*) and the Spokesperson of the Electricity Company of Ghana. The interview sessions were carried out with the help of interview guides which were semi-structured. The 5 to 10 interview guides for the students, academics, energy activists, reporters and the spokesperson of ECG, were designed to be very concise in order not to generate disinterest among respondents. The interview guides were meant for respondents expectations on news frames of the energy crisis.



### 3.8 Data Analysis

The first set of questions (see Appendix 1-5) centred on the role of journalists in society and audiences perspectives on how socially responsible journalists are. In this section, I was interested in how journalists understood their roles and how audiences perceive journalists as socially responsible.

The second set of questions provided insight into the rationale for framing the energy crisis in 2012 and audiences expectations of such frames. I was interested in the motivations behind such frames and to critique whether audiences were satisfied with such frames or not.

The third set of questions is concerned with a comparison between the rationale for framing the energy crisis and audience expectations. I was interested in establishing a convergence or diverge between the rationale and audience expectations.

This was done by recording the interviews with a laptop after seeking consent from interviewees. The interviews will be analysed by playing back the recordings over and over then transcribing the text into textual materials (transcripts). Several copies of the transcript will be printed to prevent loss of data. With facts broken down into manageable pieces of printed matter, the researcher will do multiple readings of the transcripts; searching for types, classes, sequences, themes or patterns that were related to their expectations of media framing of the energy crisis. The aim of this process was to assemble or reconstruct the data in a meaningful or comprehensible fashion. After this, the recurrent patterns were put into the research questions and analysed.

### 3.9 Validity and Reliability

Cohen and Crabtree (2006), remark that if a piece of research is invalid then it is worthless. Validity means truthful. Validity attempts to answer the question of knowing how authentic, accurate and right a qualitative study is (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative researchers are more interested in authenticity than in the idea of a single version of truth. Authenticity means giving a fair, honest and balanced amount of social life from the viewpoint of someone who lives it every day (Newman, 2006).

In this study, the researcher addressed the issue of validity by interviewing 2 students (1 undergraduate & 1 postgraduate), 2 academics, 2 energy activists, 1 reporter and editor each of the selected newspapers (*Daily Graphic and Daily Guide*) and the Spokesperson of the Electricity Company of Ghana. Data was obtained by the researcher playing a subordinate role and allowing the respondents to do much of the talking on open-ended questions posed to them. All interviews were recorded so as to ensure that all details, as presented by the respondents were captured.

The researcher also used respondent validation by sending transcribed interviews back to interviewees for cross-checking and validation. Marvasti (2004), believes that research participants may consider research findings invalid if the findings do not reflect their experiences or feelings.



### 3.10 Ethical Issues

The researcher identified three main areas of ethical issues as explained by Kusi, (2012). These issues are access, informed consent and confidentiality. In research, it is unethical to enter into an organisation or social groups to collect data without permission from the gatekeepers of the organisation (Creswell. 2005). As a result, introductory letters were sent to the interviewees by the researcher seeking their approval to be interviewed.

Again, the respondents were informed about the interviewer's intention to record the interviews, and the recordings done upon the consent of respondents. Respondents were assured of their privacy, anonymity and confidentiality.

### 3.11 Profile of the Daily Graphic

The *Daily Graphic* was established in 1950 by the Mirror Group of London, which first started operations in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and later in the Gold Coast (Elinam, 2014). The *Daily Graphic* initially started as a private entity aimed at disseminating information to the entire Gold Coast on development issues within the British Colony and the Crown (ibid). The Paper was later nationalised in 1962 based on mutual agreement between the then President of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and 'Cecil King and brothers'--owners of the Mirror Group-- which resulted in the change of status and focus of the *Daily Graphic* as a state-owned medium, whose vision was to spur the social, economic and political development of the country through information and education (Anokwa, 1997).

The *Daily Graphic* underwent several organisational and editorial changes in the hands of the various military regimes that ruled the country after the overthrow of the Kwame Nkrumah government on February 24, 1966 (ibid). Anokwa contends that one significant change that occurred was the change in name of the Paper from the *Daily Graphic* to the *People's Daily Graphic*, under the Rawlings-led PNDC regime. Its focus was geared towards informing and educating the masses on the mission and ideals of the Revolution that brought the AFRC, and later, the PNDC regime to power. The name of the Paper was however reverted to its former name, the *Daily Graphic*, soon after Ghana's transition to the Fourth Republic in 1992. The *Daily Graphic* weaned itself from government subvention in the early 2000, which enabled it to gradually assert its independence as a Limited Liability Company and from government control (Elinam, 2014).

The Paper has since carved a niche for itself as the largest circulating newspaper in Ghana, publishing six times weekly, with diversified content that appeal to different demographics, printing about 200,000 copies daily, representing about 45 percent of the daily newspaper circulation in Ghana, according to the 2006 survey of the African Media Development Initiative.

### **3.12 Profile of the Daily Guide**

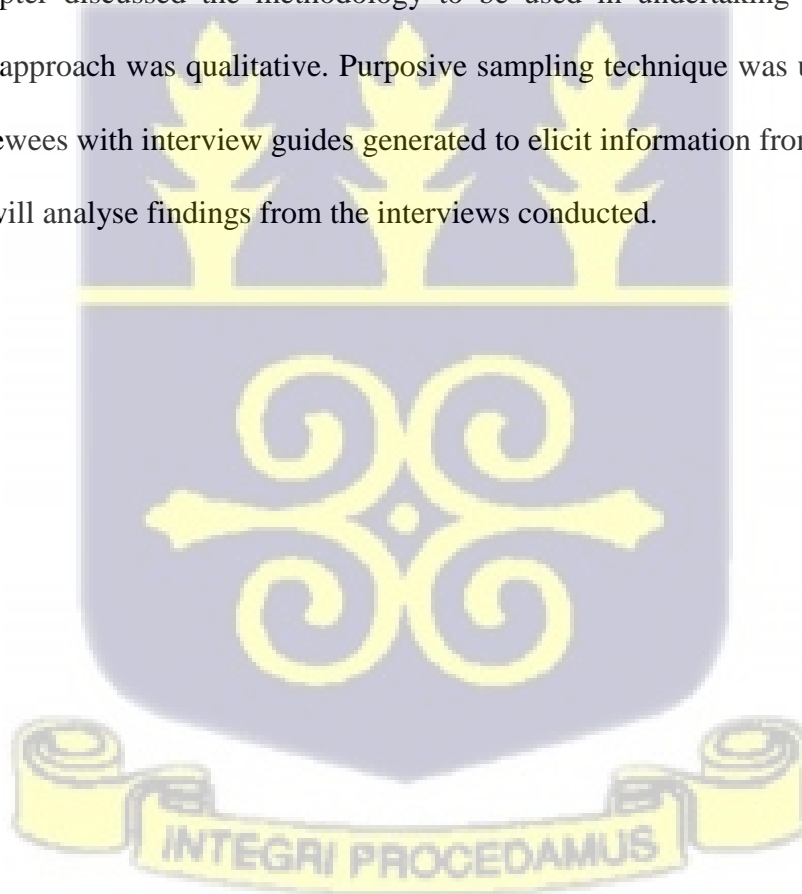
The *Daily Guide* was established in 1984 with name *Sports Guide*, a weekly newspaper to provide information for sports enthusiasts on the various sporting disciplines both local and international (Elinam, 2014). The Paper transformed itself into a medium for political and general-purpose newspaper during the Rawlings-led PNDC era, and later

became a bi-weekly newspaper in 1986 which necessitated the change of name from *Sports Guide* to *The Guide* (ibid).

The Paper metamorphosed into a daily publication in 1998 and assumed the name the *Daily Guide* newspaper, arguably becoming the second largest-selling daily newspaper after the *Daily Graphic* since 2000, publishing six-times daily, with about 100,000 circulations daily (African Media Development Initiative, 2006).

### **3.13 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the methodology to be used in undertaking this study. The research approach was qualitative. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the 9 interviewees with interview guides generated to elicit information from them. The next chapter will analyse findings from the interviews conducted.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study and discussions of the data collected, using in-depth interviews with reporters and editors of the *Daily Graphic*, and the *Daily Guide*, Students, Civil Society Organisations, Academics as well as the spokesperson of the Electricity Company of Ghana. For the purposes of discussing findings of this paper, interviewees may also be referred to as ‘respondents’.

The following frame categories, guided the study:

- Cause - this is where the content of the story outlines the issue(s) which has/have led to the electricity crisis.
- Effect - when the author of the story discusses the consequences of the problem.
- Informational frame - these are those stories that highlight the regular and unannounced nature of the erratic electricity outages.
- Solution - this is where the newspaper outlines measures, activities and projects put in place to end the problem.

The findings of the study are discussed within the context of research questions posed by this study, the literature reviewed and theory discussed.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### *4.1 RQ1. What is audiences' perspectives of the framing of the energy crisis in the two newspapers?*

This part of the findings and discussions focuses on the interviews conducted with students, civil society organisations, academics and the spokesperson of the Electricity Company of Ghana. The purpose of the interview was to find answers to the second research question that sought to find out audiences' perspectives of the framing of the energy crisis in the two newspapers.

Predefined variables of what constitutes 'good journalism': Fairness, Impartiality, Balance, Credibility, Insightful and Relevance were generated from reviews<sup>1</sup> and captured on the interview guide to facilitate the process.

Based on these variables, out of the seven people interviewed, two (student & CSO) noted that the framing of the energy crisis met their expectations as highlighted by a respondent from a civil society organization and captured below:

In 2012 yes. My expectations were met. Most news articles were unbiased, the media used experts to speak to the issues adequately, media perspectives were as objective as they could be and in as much as a lot of emphasis was placed on the causes of the crisis politically, you could clearly see therein after that a lot of effort also went into finding a solution and most media houses did a great job in projecting that.

(Interview with participant 7 – Civil society activist)

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<sup>1</sup> [What's good journalism? - Quora](#) retrieved 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2022

However, the remaining five stressed that their expectations were not met. The spokesperson of ECG was of the view that the media failed to bring to light the foundation of the energy crisis. He indicated that the crisis did not take a day to occur. It was a culmination of several factors including neglect in improving the nation's generation capacity which the media failed to investigate.

The ECG spokesperson's point of view supports Gadzekpo's (2009) contention that newspapers in Ghana are generally undercapitalized and little more than cottage industries, limiting their ability to produce investigative reports and cover a wide range of specialized subjects, including the complexities of the energy crisis. As a result, the culture of investigative journalism and scientific reporting in state-owned newspapers remains weak, overall content is low, and 'propaganda' stories or officialdom-centered perspectives occupy a major portion of the news space.

According to the spokesperson of ECG, if the media had brought the challenge with power generation in this country to the fore, it could have broadened knowledge concerning the energy crisis but the media either through ignorance, disinterest or agenda, did not focus on them and attributed responsibility of the cause of the energy crisis to ECG.

Further, the spokesperson said the media neglected the views of ECG concerning the energy crisis. According to the spokesperson both state-owned and privately-owned media, gave disproportionate coverage to ECG unlike other players in the energy sector like the Volta River Authority (VRA) and the Ghana Grid Company (GRIDCo):

The print media didn't give us a balanced platform to air our views. Most of our stories were shelved and never used. This prevented people from understanding our operations. This went to deepen the negative perceptions about ECG already making rounds.

(Interview with participant 1 – ECG Spokesperson)

The respondent also holds the view that although the frames used by journalists on ECG is a way of representing the views of government as far as policies to remedy the power crisis are concerned, such frames were not necessarily the reflection of ECG's views. According to him, the media focused more on narratives from government representatives to the virtual neglect of the views of the power distributor.

He expressed disappointment in situations where news stories on topical issues such as intervention put in place to remedy the power situation and system improvement projects (solution frames) were repeatedly attributed to the government as if management of ECG had no hand in the remedial actions on-going. He states:

ECG introduced so many interventions to better the power situation. We contracted KarPower but it looked as if this intervention idea was from government. Ameri, Cenit, Asogli and other power producing initiatives were ideas of the ECG, but it was hyped in some media as if it belonged to government.

(Interview with participant 1 – ECG Spokesperson)

According to the respondent, all these 'solution frames' were attributed to government by the news media to the total neglect of ECG as if the power distributor lacked the technical know-how to handle the energy challenge.

The responses from some respondents in academia, CSO and a student give some level of credence to the violated expectations of the spokesperson of ECG concerning frames used by the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* relating to the energy crisis.

One respondent from the academic community said his expectations were moderately met and advanced that this gap in expectations was probably due to challenges journalists face:

In any case, journalists may be limited by the availability of resources, adequate training and access to information.

(Interview with participant 9 – Academic)

A civil society activist who was also interviewed noted that his expectations were not entirely met due to the following reasons:

Some of the reportage from various media houses lacked objectivity. Others also didn't check the accuracy and credibility of their source of information before disseminating it so you realise there were times that contradicting viewpoints were received from the same media house

(Interview with participant 7 – Civil society activist)

An interviewee pursuing postgraduate education also noted the following:

I was really expecting to get more information on the power outage schedule for various areas so as to know how to plan ahead. In addition, I was also on the lookout for immediate solutions electricity power suppliers and the government were going to implement in order to reduce the effect of the then crisis.

(Interview with participant 11 – Postgraduate student)

To paraphrase, the five respondents whose expectations were not met noted that they expected the media to facilitate broad-based, honest and open discussion concerning the

energy crisis and improve appropriate public understanding and response through education.

These assertions are in line with some aspect of the audience reception theory advanced by Liebes, (1997) that audiences pre-existing beliefs and expectations will always influence their reading (dominant, negotiated or oppositional) of news items.

This challenges journalists to reconsider the delicate balance between professional autonomy, social responsibility, and public demands. Reactions to these challenges fluctuate between the claim that listening to what the public wants is the duty of a responsive journalism and the warning that this would actually mean a sell-out to the audience, resulting in a (further) decline of news media quality (Wurff & Schoenbach, 2014).

Jointly, the respondents particularly a member of a civil society organization noted the role of the journalist in society as follows:

I think the role of journalism in society is to inform, educate and entertain society's broad spectrum of audiences. In more ways than possible, journalism is supposed to reflect and represent the society we live in. I believe doing this gives this noble profession the credence it deserves as the fourth estate of the realm

(Interview with participant 6 - Civil society activist).

The reporters also reiterated their role is to inform, educate and entertain audiences. One Daily Guide reporter explained that the role of journalists is to empower the underprivileged and promote development:

The role of the journalist is to use his/her skill, resources and platforms (media) to disseminate information, educate the public, expose wrong, empower the underprivileged and promote development.

(Interview with participant 2 – Daily Guide reporter).

Among others, the role of journalism is to scout, monitor and objectively report on the happenings in society and the operations of the government (all arms of government inclusive). We also highlight various issues of social concern in order to help solicit for temporary or permanent solutions to these issues

(Interview with participant 3 - Daily Graphic reporter)

The view that news media have a part to play in society is an inherent and important component of the image the press has of itself as an institution.

The formation of the image of the press is an outgrowth of a socialization that has prescribed norms like truth, fairness, objectivity amongst others to guide news production. It is in the implementation of these norms in daily journalist routines, can we therefore conclude that a journalist is socially responsible as noted by one of the reporters interviewed:

Keep the people informed. The media must not withhold information from the people. Information is light, power and wealth. The social contract between the media and the public is to bring light (right information) to them so that they can make informed choices and better their lives

(Interview with participant 3 - Daily Graphic reporter)

Social responsibility of journalists has attracted a lot of academic literature and has found space in the realm of on-going debates with researchers like Kleemans & Hendricks (2009), Yadav (2011), Uzuegbunum (2013) amongst others. Social

responsibility of journalists is an ethical issue and should therefore be explored extensively for the good of society.

In the interviews conducted, whereas some of the respondents converged in agreement that journalists are socially responsible, others particularly one respondent from academia diverged in disagreement and advanced the following:

Due to commercial reasons, some media outlets or houses tend to set agenda that will appeal more to potential business owners who are more likely to patronise the services of the said media house. This makes it very difficult for me to entirely trust their reportage as the intent may not be known every time

(Interview with participant 8 - Academic)

Relating social responsibility of the media to the frames chosen by the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* to report the energy crisis of 2012, the interviewee from the *Daily Graphic* acknowledged a shortfall:

To a large extent my media house tried to be socially responsible in framing the energy crises. We tried to shine light on the energy crises in total; the causes, the impact, the solutions and the assurances though I believe there is more room for improvement.

(Interview with participant 3 - Daily Graphic reporter)

These social responsibility gaps of media reportage as confirmed by the extract above from the interview conducted with the reporter from *Daily Graphic*, was corroborated by a member of a civil society organization who was also interviewed:

It was relatively fair as the media gave official sources adequate space and attention to inform the public. However, little effort was put into avoiding the partisanship and sensationalism that was associated with it. In some cases, technical analysis gave way to politicisation.

(Interview with participant 7 – Civil society activist)

To support the extract above, Limpitlaw (2011) believes that the media's role as a 'separate player on behalf of the public against the agencies of power,' and that media organizations: 'take a position between government agencies and the public,' is only true to a certain extent, because many media outlets (print or broadcasting) are fundamentally part of government and, as a result, will not play any role that is not part of governance.'

In this regard, Macquail (2013) recommends that the media serve as the principal means of self-regulation for journalists. Ethical norms and other considerations guide journalists in their interactions with others. Respect for the privacy and dignity of subjects, knowledge of the implications of publicity, and honesty in the collecting of information and dealing with sources are all essential principles of these values.

Audience expectations appear to be a crucial indicator for which journalistic norms, rules, and values are currently under public consideration – and thus more likely to be discursively (re-)formed, (re-)interpreted, and/or (re-)considered – especially when compared to professional journalists' own roles (Hanitzsch et al., 2019a). Audience acceptance is thus not only a source of public legitimacy as a primary form of journalistic capital, but it also represents a vital economic facet of journalism's functioning as a source of revenue (Vos et al., 2019). As a result, it is critical to have a deeper knowledge of what people demand from journalism in order to survive.

When asked the extent to which the evolution of the normative ideals of engaged journalism, align with the implementation of these ideals in journalist routines, one reporter stated the following:

To a large extent my daily journalistic work is underpinned by the normative ideals, ethics, guidelines, rules and regulations. For me, it is a matter of integrity and being true to myself. I always look into the future when undertaking my journalistic work, because I would not want to look back to my professional life with regrets. I am a strong believer in the norm that a journalist's work is a piece of history and archive for generations unborn. Hence must be done well

(Interview with participant 2 – Daily Graphic reporter)

However, the interviewee did not refute the place of politics in news shaping and agenda setting which is in consonance with the assertion of Mcquail (2003) that there are deeply embedded conventions and customs in the history of journalism itself that makes such 'service to politics' central. He went on to say that, above all else, the continuous events of public importance that journalism is obligated to report on are frequently political in some sense and are also of relevance and interest to news viewers. As a result, it stands to reason that during unusual times of crisis, such as the 2012 energy crisis, the news media will willingly assist government, both by positive actions of news selection and access, as well as through omission or self-censorship.

#### ***4.2 RQ2. What is journalists' rationale for the dominant framing of the energy crisis in Ghana?***

The first part of the discussion sought to present the analysis and findings on the rationale behind the frames used to represent the energy crisis from the perspectives of editors and reporters. It focused on the analysis of the interviews conducted with editors and reporters of the two newspapers—the *Daily Graphic*, and the *Daily Guide*. The responses have been grouped under the following themes: informing the public; agenda setting; and increasing sales and maximising profits. The names of the editors and

reporters interviewed for this study were not mentioned by the researcher for the sake of confidentiality.

#### **4.2.1. Informing the public**

Interviews conducted with editors of the two newspapers—the *Daily Graphic*, and the *Daily Guide*, on the rationale behind the frames used on the energy crisis, have indicated that framing of the crisis, whether cause, effect, informational or solution, were not words necessarily crafted by journalists to represent the situation. The editors asserted that the frames used were words uttered by players in the energy sector on social platforms which the media picked and put in the public domain to enlighten Ghanaians on happenings in the energy sector, so as to enable Ghanaians make decisions on the power situation.

Editor of the *Daily Graphic*, thought that the fundamental duty of the media is to educate and inform the public, and in doing so, the media do not manufacture information but rather report exactly what has been said, who said what, to whom or about whom it has been said, how it has been said, where, and leave it to the public to deliberate on. This is what he said:

In my view, it is not the newspapers that actually brought about these frames. It was as a result of what industry players themselves were saying to Ghanaians that the media picked, so if you heard the media report on cause, effect, solution and what have you, it is not the media manufacturing them, but they were the messages that were coming from industry players that the media decided to report.

(Interview with participant 4 - Daily Graphic editor)

Editor of the *Daily Guide* newspaper, also thought that the media primarily, are there to inform the public on whatever is happening in society, which directly or indirectly

affects the citizenry. This, to him, is because the citizenry have the right to information, the right to know, and it is the duty of the journalist to inform the citizenry at any given time, what is happening around them. He averred that during the energy crisis, the citizens were supposed to know what the issues were, what industry players were saying, for them to be able to make informed decisions. The duty of the media is to report exactly and objectively, statements made on social and political platforms, in whatever manner it is being said. According to him:

We are only reporting the views of industry players. It's not for me to edit your speech for you. So if you are a spokesperson or energy expert and you go on a platform and you recklessly use derogatory words, or you go on a platform and use maybe, politically incorrect words and you are taken on, do you blame me? Even though you say the media has framed it, but you said it? I'm only amplifying what you have said. That is my job, I am just reporting it, and so you don't blame the media for that.

(Interview with participant 5 - Daily Guide editor)

He asserts that in general, the media are basically there to serve society, and that one way to do that is to inform Ghanaians on the developments in society at any point in time. This argument finds expression in literature, where Gadzekpo (2011) thinks that the media's roles are to facilitate information flow between the public and those that govern them, and in extension, facilitate information among citizens and different cogs of society.

On the rationale for the dominant frame of 'cause', the editor of *Daily Graphic* explains that they engaged more in the 'cause' reporting rather than 'solution' and 'effect' reporting because there was a lot of confusion concerning what exactly led to the power crisis. He contends that even currently, there is the lack of clarity on what caused the

energy crisis. According to him, the *Daily Graphic* gave more prominence to the ‘cause’ frame in order to clear the confusion but made little gains.

Editor of the *Daily Guide* also maintains that during the energy crisis, the need to establish the cause of the crisis was high on media programming because the citizens needed an appreciation of the situation. He asserted that what made the ‘cause’ frame high on media agenda, was the fact that players in the energy sector (VRA, GRIDCo and ECG) were trading blames and made it difficult for Ghanaians to understand and appreciate events. On the issue of ‘cause’ frames, editor of the *Daily Guide* was of the opinion that taking into account the large proportion of concealed information during the crisis, the newspaper consciously began to focus on seeking out and reflecting the cause of the crisis:

. . . after a while, we had a feeling that there was a lot of concealed information on the cause of the energy crisis. Being aware of this, *Daily Guide* deliberately started to find and provide space in the paper for the cause of the power crisis.

(Interview with participant 5 - Daily Guide editor)

Editors of the two newspapers interviewed also contend that the media exist to reflect the day-to-day happenings in society. They are also of the view that whatever happens in society, whether concrete or abstract, which has the tendency to affect the lives of people in society ought to be exposed and dealt with. In their view, media frames are channels through which social issues that affect the everyday survival of people are unearthed.

According to editor of the *Daily Guide* newspaper, there are many issues that need to be covered, but since the media cannot be everywhere, it is what comes to the attention of the media that they turn the spotlight on. In his view, the media also made public education on the effect of the energy crisis crucial because everybody was talking about matters arising.

The editor of *Daily Graphic* also advanced that, the reason behind the various frames used during the energy crisis were not necessarily to portray ECG or any other player on the energy chain in the negative, but rather reflect the reality of what is happening in society, and juxtapose this reality with the way social actors view the problem and how they intend to approach it.

I think basically, newspapers are a reflection of society. Whatever the society is saying is what the newspapers put out there. It is the concerns that people raise about their livelihoods that newspapers highlight. So it will be wrong to assume that it is the newspapers themselves who put out those frames. Words used by individuals and social groups as reflects the energy crises are what newspapers highlight.

(Interview with participant 4 - Daily Graphic editor)

The implication of the above assertion is that, newspapers are there to serve as the voice of the voiceless in society; a mirror whose duty it is to reflect the realities of the challenges facing people in society; and also that media frames are channels through which society can see and come to terms with the true reflection of itself, and the socio-economic challenges it is engulfed in.

This assertion finds expression in the views of Kwansah-Aidoo (2003), who also contends that the media reflect the reality in Ghana. The media tries to connect abstract scientific knowledge to people's lived experience through local and national stories and

frames. This also finds expression in the argument of McQuail (2005), who considers the use of frames by journalists as the typical manner in which journalists shape news content within a familiar frame of reference and accord it some latent structure of meaning, and also in a way that makes the audience see the world in a similar way as journalists do.

This is in line with Newell's (1997) assertion that, over time, people's perceptions of social reality will become more closely aligned with the realities of the mass media because the images of the world portrayed by the media will be accepted as accurate representations of reality by media audiences.

#### **4.2.2. Agenda Setting**

The second theme generated from the related responses from the two editors interviewed on the rationale behind the frames used on the energy crisis, is the issue of agenda-setting. The role of the media therefore comes to the fore when there is the need to revisit the history of agenda-setting in the context of crisis communication.

The two editors did not exclude themselves as parties in the agenda-setting process. According to them, there was the conscious effort of repeatedly giving prominence to some issues concerning the energy crisis that were already in the public domain, and raising the importance of such issues by deliberately highlighting them on a regular basis, so as to get them rooted in the minds of the public.

Editor of the *Daily Graphic* newspaper, also pointed to the fact that apart from newspapers setting the agenda for national debate on the energy crisis through their investigations into the activities of players in the energy sector, they also set agenda that

compel the public to call their leaders to account for statements they make on social platforms. He emphasised thus:

We also generated issues because we did investigations into Government's interventions to end the power crisis. For instance, we generated a story about KarPower, which is an Independent Power Producer (IPP), engaged to resolve the emergency for an extended contract term of 10 years. I mean, this raises a lot of questions. The media did its own investigation and we put it in the public domain, so the media sometimes do investigations to unearth some of these issues and put them out to the public and end up setting the agenda for national debate.

(Interview with participant 4 - Daily Graphic editor)

According to the editor, it was through an investigative report of the *Daily Graphic* that brought the KarPower contract terms into the public domain. The work of the *Daily Graphic* justifies the call by Alao and Asekun-Olarinmoye (2007), which challenges the media to move beyond the traditional role of educating, informing and entertaining the public, to a more scientific role of stimulating debates and sensitizing people for participatory decision-making and action.

Several media analysts point out how media and public opinion concentrate on novelty, personalization and dramatization (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2007; Weingart et al, 2000). The novelty criterion implies that the media must have new input to continue covering an issue, and that for the energy crisis to remain high on the media-agenda, they must provide new exciting features over time through investigative journalism.

The editors also stressed that apart from the media setting the agenda, there were also crucial instances where issues concerning the energy crisis were not necessarily generated by the media, but by interested groups in society for intellectual and advocacy purposes. According to the editor of the *Daily Guide* newspaper, some of these groups

like the African Centre for Energy Policy (ACEP) set the agenda for some crucial national issues including the energy crisis. According to him:

Media is there to set agenda, yes, but some of these issues are not necessarily issues raised by the media. We pick them from social groups and other notable individuals, and we throw them out, and it becomes an issue and people start talking about it.

(Interview with participant 4 - Daily Graphic editor)

The agenda-setting function derived from the frames of the energy crisis supports Kaniss (1991) call for the media to set an agenda that can influence how citizens think about social issues and how they evaluate their leaders. People tend to include or exclude from their cognitions what the media include or exclude from their content. People also have a tendency to place value on what closely mirrors the media's emphasis on events, problems, and people.

Like newspapers everywhere, Ghanaian newspapers have played an important role in sparking debate on national problems and are seen as critical to Ghana's transitional democracy and long-term development. They remain the primary avenues for communicating policy and change, and hence can serve as a valuable barometer for local views toward specific difficulties such as the energy crisis, providing useful insights into the amount of public attention, awareness, concern, and action on this topic.

#### **4.2.3. Increasing Circulation and Maximizing Profits**

Another outstanding concern expressed by both editors has to do with the need to make profit as media organisations. They maintain that even though they owe society the duty to inform, educate and entertain the public, and are also enjoined by the 1992

Constitution to hold the government accountable to the people, they nevertheless have their own interests to protect in order to stay in business.

In the view of the respondent of the *Daily Guide* newspaper, media organisations, especially those in private practice, are always accused of not being fair to Government. He noted that the issue of fairness in crisis reporting is a relative term in journalism practice because what may be fair to one reporter might not be fair to the other. He added that besides the need to serve the interest of society, media organisations also have their own paramount interest— make profits, recoup their investments, and remain in business. On the issue of providing access and fair coverage to the Electricity Company of Ghana during the energy crisis, the Editor of the *Daily Guide's* assertion is that, newspapers, as much as possible, tried to provide space for all players in the energy sector but conceded that power relationships always come to play. He admits the inequalities in terms of spaces devoted to players in the energy sector thus:

We did our best, but obviously the larger chunk of space is given to notable figures in government, industry and academia because we are also considering other factors. Mind you, we are not a charity organisation. We are a business with over 100 employees all over the country. We need to remain in business; we need to pay our employees; we have to recoup our production costs; and in doing so, we have to protect our brand, meet the need of our clients.

(Interview with participant 5 - Daily Guide editor)

The reasons assigned by the respondent to justify why government and other key personalities always received a larger chunk of coverage than other players on the energy chain, perfectly fits into the perspective of Hamilton (2004), who argues that newspapers are businesses, therefore are affected by market forces, and that coverage of

local newspapers might be influenced mainly by economic rather than sociological reasons.

The temptation for newspapers to perform when it comes to their target audiences and how to satisfy the demands of such audiences can be understood from the perspective of Gentzkow and Shapiro (2007), who explain that media firms may sometimes slant their news reports toward the beliefs of their consumers to satisfy their audience and maximise profits.

The above assertion by Gentzkow and Shapiro (2007), then presupposes that at all times, newspapers, in their daily routines of news reporting, would have to frame certain people or institutions in a certain manner to meet the expectations of the larger chunk of readers who are interested in institutions like the Electricity Company of Ghana or individuals being covered.

The editor of the *Daily Guide* also intimated that every media organisation has its own reason for remaining in business in a competitive media market such as Ghana's, and that with the market as the determinant factor, whichever brand people choose to patronise over another would depend on the content of the newspaper, as well as the agenda for which that newspaper has been set up to achieve. This supports the reason why newspapers have their distinct editorial policies which translate in how they operate. The view of the editor of the *Daily Graphic*, from the perspective of state-owned newspaper is that, state-owned newspapers primarily gave equal access to all players in the energy sector as a fulfillment of a constitutional mandate. But state-owned

newspapers' reason for meeting such constitutional mandate is also predicated on a certain obvious economic motive disclosed by the editor in the excerpt below:

The print media do not take any particular posture to say that we are favourable to government and not favourable to ECG, GRIDCo or VRA. This is because your aim is that you want to sell the newspaper first of all. In other words, these critical players are the people who will buy your paper and they will love to see that their stories are being carried. You can see on the wall that in all these papers, we have given adequate front pages to all. So the issue is what is it that they are saying that if you put out on the front page of the paper will sell your paper? That is the posture we adopt.

(Interview with participant 4 - Daily Graphic editor)

He further asserts that state-owned media always strive to adopt a neutral stance towards all, always based on the 1992 Constitution that enjoins state-owned media to give equal coverage to all parties on a given issue. The editor states thus:

The Constitution mandates us to give equal coverage to all on any given issue. It is difficult to keep those goals of attaining equal coverage though, because players in the energy sector were doing different things at different times. Some were not even doing anything at all, but you are mandated to give them coverage, and what do you do?

(Interview with participant 4 - Daily Graphic editor)

He also admits that apart from the *Daily Graphic* fulfilling the constitutional mandate of giving equal coverage to all players on the energy chain, the paper also has a primary goal to achieve, which is maintaining its dominance on the market by increasing circulation and maximising profits. He adds that as a paper that has weaned itself from government subvention over a decade ago, it would definitely have to be profit-oriented, grow as a limited liability company, and be able to generate enough resources to pay the salaries of its large employee workforce.

Efforts by the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* to endeavour to give equal coverage to all parties in the energy sector are in one way fulfilling their constitutional mandate, and another way of managing the corporate pressure to maximise profits in an era of chain newspapers and conglomeration (Bagdikian, 2004). This also implies that as much as state-owned newspapers try to meet their primary obligation of informing, educating and entertaining the public through provision of equal access, they also must adopt a strategy to maximise profits to remain economically viable and competitive.

***4.3 RQ3. What are the differences and similarities between audience perspectives and journalist's rationale for framing the energy crisis in the two newspapers?***

This last part of the findings and discussions focuses on the similarities and differences between audience perspectives and journalists rationale. Out of the seven people interviewed, two (student & CSO) noted that the framing of the energy crisis met their expectations and that the rationale behind the frames were justified. The editors and reporters interviewed noted that their news items had three main rationale: inform, agenda setting and profit making.

In her work, Agyepong (2016) states that the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* paid more attention to the 'cause' frame (34.4%) followed by the 'solution' (27.2%), 'informational' (19.2%) and the 'effect' (14.4%) frames. Commenting on her four frames during the interview, the respondents noted that, the proportion of attention given to the frames were appropriate because all that Ghanaians were interested in during the crisis was the cause and interventions being put in place to remediate the crisis. They added that if the reporters had paid more attention to the 'effect' frame, the government

in power would have been made unpopular and would have portrayed the media houses as anti-government, which was corroborated by the editors and reporters:

I agree. The level of political polarisation in the country is huge. To this end, a large majority consume media content with a political lens. Concentrating on the 'effect' frame would have been detrimental

(Interview with participant 3 – Daily Guide reporter)

However, the remaining five respondents indicated that their expectations were not met and that the rationale for the framing of the energy crisis was to a certain extent misplaced. They added that paying more attention to the 'cause' frame (34.4%) followed by the 'solution' (27.2%), to the neglect of 'informational' (19.2%) and the 'effect' (14.4%) frames did not speak well of the profession of journalism. They opined that if journalists had paid a little more attention to the effect of the crisis on businesses and the livelihood of Ghanaians in general, they believe that the crisis which started in 2012 would not have ended in 2016. They assert that the crisis prolonged because journalists did not give enough concern to its effect which could have put pressure on government to act quickly.

This finding implies that, stakeholder expectations are not being met as far as crisis communication and coverage in the media are concerned. This has dire consequences on media trust in Ghana and sub Saharan Africa because audiences do not trust the media to deliver objectivity and well-researched work during crisis reporting.

Several audience studies have focused on the public's deteriorating faith in the news media. According to Van der Wurff and Schoenbach (2014), comprehensive survey research undertaken in the United States shows that the percentage of people who have

little to no trust in the news media has increased from 26% in 1976 to 60% in 2012. For Denmark, the barometer survey suggests a growth from 50% in 1997 to 51% in 2010.

However, the findings do not represent dominant literature as some countries have made gains and are gradually building public trust in the media. Van der Wurff and Schoenbach (2014) indicate that in the Netherlands, 35% did not trust the media in 1997 and 33% in 2010. In Germany 51% did not trust the media in 1997 but 45% in 2010, in the United Kingdom 80% in 1997 but 79% in 2010.

The displeasure expressed by the respondents over the media coverage of the crisis and their violated expectations is underpinned by the notion that, most journalists in the country are aligned to some political parties and are therefore not able to criticize government:

A number of journalists in this country belong to some political parties so criticizing their own means they will not get their share of the booty

(Interview with participant 8 – Academic)

Based on these assertions, they concluded that they do not trust the Ghanaian media to provide a fair coverage of crisis in the country because media has greatly fallen off the wagon in delivering on their mandate as the fourth estate of the realm as said by an academic interviewed and captured below:

The media as we know today has become completely ultracrepidarian to the extent that, the agenda setting and framing nature of the media has metamorphosed in indoctrination. Media men and women assume absolute knowledge of any and everything in society and because of that,

misinformation rather than simple information and unbiased reportage is being peddled every day. So no, in all honesty, no! I don't trust the Ghanaian media to provide a fair coverage of crisis in the country.

(Interview with participant 9 – Academic)

The findings of this study have broad implications for media reporting of crisis in Ghana and much of sub-Saharan Africa. As a growing continent, it is expected that the role of journalism should be to advance public interest and hold leadership to account at every level of governance. Journalists must come to a continual consciousness of viewing news consumers as independent, active, and integral component of the communication process with opinions and expectations.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This study has shown, first, that respondents are of the view that journalists are irresponsible in generating content and publishing them. Secondly, the study has revealed that the frames used by the selected newspapers to discuss the energy crisis of 2012 were generated from the activities of political actors and players in the energy sector though there were attempts to set the agenda as well. Also, the study has shown that majority of the respondents interviewed had their expectations violated because they wanted the media to give more publicity to the effect of the crisis on the citizenry. These findings are relevant because they will help to increase awareness of the place of public opinion in news content development.

Though some respondents were displeased with the percentage allocation of frames by the newspapers as stated in Agyepong (2016), there was no evidence in the data collected to confirm that the respondents interviewed for this study did oppositional, or

preferred readings though it can be suggested through inference which would have supported the audience reception theory. In the next chapter, I will summarise the findings, give some recommendations and draw the conclusion.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Introduction

This last four chapters have presented literature and findings on journalist's rationale for the frames used in discussing the energy crisis of 2012 and audience perspectives of the frames used. This research has revealed that the expectations of some of the respondents of what marks good journalism were not met. Some audiences expected the newspapers sampled to be socially responsible by highlighting the impact of the energy crisis on the citizenry. This finding is relevant to the coverage of crisis in Ghana and much of sub-Saharan Africa because it will serve as a good feedback system to journalists and help them measure the extent to which they are aligning their daily journalistic routines with the normative ideals of engaged journalism where audience expectation influences news content. This study has added to academic literature on crisis reporting in Ghana and much of sub-Saharan by the inclusion of an element that critiques audience expectations of crisis reporting which extends the discourse on engaged journalism.

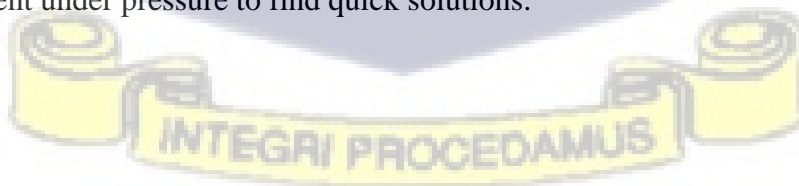
#### 5.1. Summary of Findings

The findings of the study are grounded on data collected through in-depth interviews with editors and reporters of the two daily publications, students, civil society organisations, academics as well as the spokesperson of the Electricity Company of Ghana.

Firstly, majority of the respondents interviewed are of the view that they lack confidence in the ability of journalists to do diligent work when reporting any crisis in the future.

Responses given by editors of the *Daily Graphic*, and the *Daily Guide* based on the in-depth interviews conducted with them to examine the rationale behind the frames on the energy crisis have revealed that newspapers used the cause, effect, information and solution frames with the purpose of informing the public on happenings in the energy sector and set agenda for debate on issues of national interest. The editors also claimed that apart from newspapers playing their traditional functions, there is the need for them to also increase circulation and maximise profits to be able to remain in business.

Other in-depth interviews were conducted with students, civil society organisations, academics as well as the spokesperson of the Electricity Company of Ghana on their perspectives of the frames used. Out of the seven people interviewed, two (student & CSO) noted that the framing of the energy crisis met their expectations because news stories on the energy crisis were unbiased and objective. However, the remaining five indicated that their expectations were not met because most of the news stories on the crisis were not well researched. They added that, reporters and editors should have paid more attention to the effects of the energy crisis on the citizenry and businesses to put government under pressure to find quick solutions.



## 5.2. Limitation of the Study

Owing to time constraint, only one player in the energy sector that is the spokesperson of the Electricity Company of Ghana was interviewed. Data collection also posed some limitations because respondents were reluctant to give out information which they read as sensitive to be divulged.

## 5.3. Conclusions

The role of the media is crucial in crisis situations as they provide information to the general public to enable them to make critical decisions. It is therefore important to understand how newspapers, in the performance of their roles, use frames to represent situations. This study sought to examine stakeholders perspectives of newspaper frames of the energy crisis. The following are the conclusions drawn from the study:

Newspapers, in the discharge of their primary functions rely heavily on frames when it comes to crisis reporting. The frames used by newspapers in the energy crisis were primarily aimed at informing the public, setting agenda for debate on issues of national interest and increasing circulation and maximizing profits. Newspapers, to a large extent, discharged their duties, using frames that represented the views of players in the energy sector.

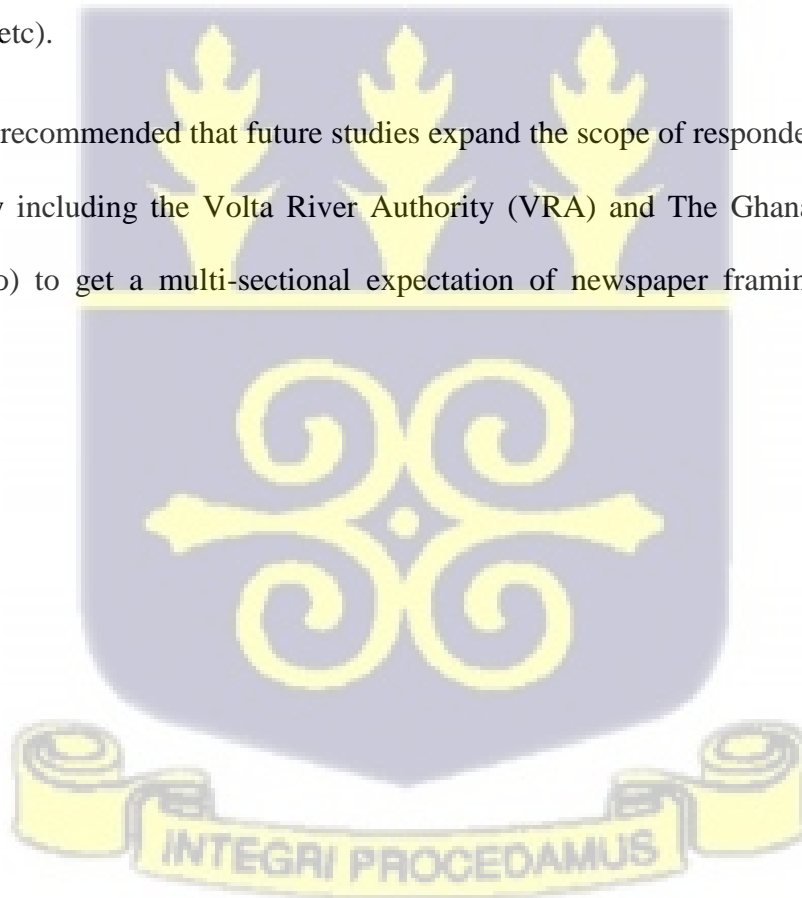
The study also concludes that in as much as the frames met the expectations of some of the respondents, majority of them had their expectations violated.

#### 5.4. Recommendations

This research has provided a thriving academic environment for future studies on framing of crisis situations. With this study focusing just on news stories in two daily newspapers--the *Daily Graphic*, and the *Daily Guide*, subsequent studies should consider increasing the number of newspapers in order to extrapolate.

This study only concentrated on the cause, effect, information and solution frames. Future studies can expand the scope to look at prominence given to the stories (front page, back page or inside stories) and story treatment (feature, news story, opinion, editorial etc).

It is also recommended that future studies expand the scope of respondents in the energy sector by including the Volta River Authority (VRA) and The Ghana Grid Company (GRIDCo) to get a multi-sectional expectation of newspaper framing of the energy crisis.



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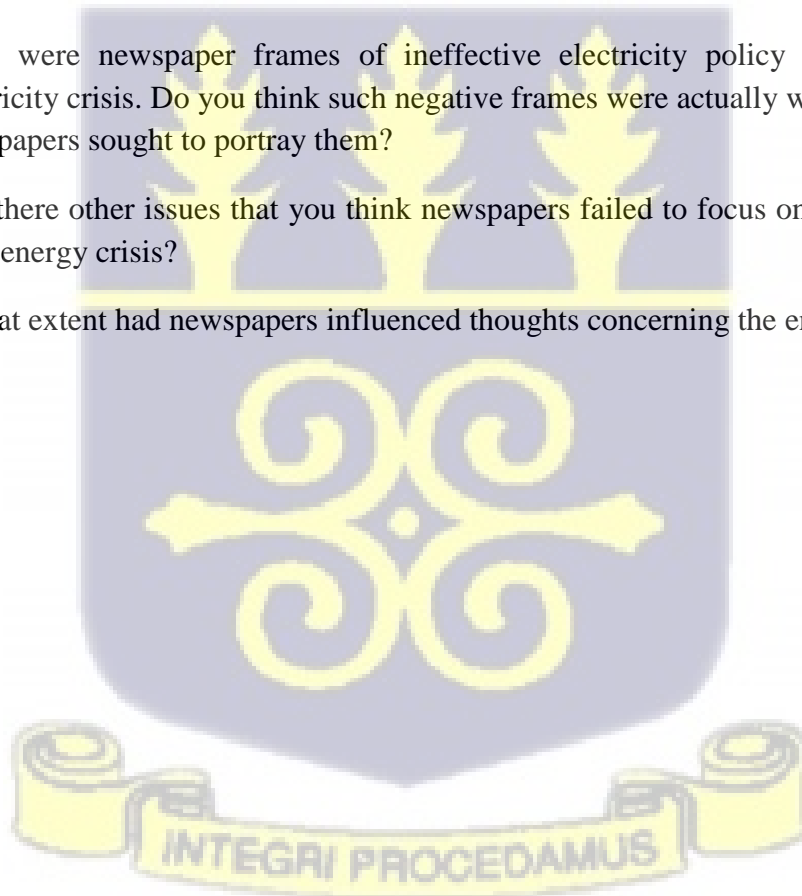


## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I

#### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ECG SPOKESPERSON

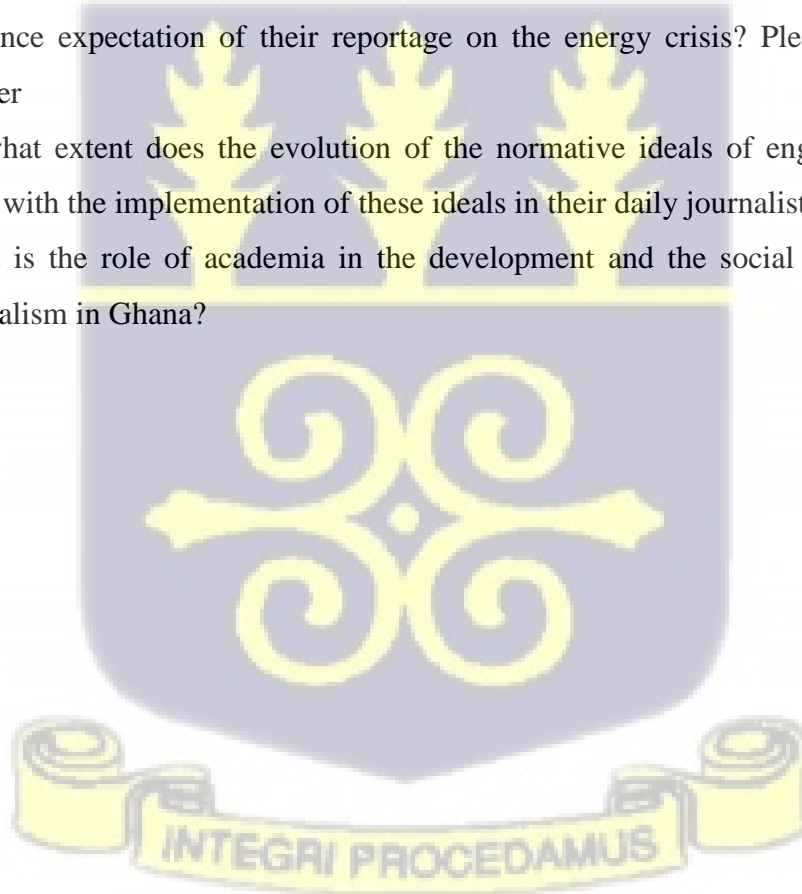
1. For the sake of record, may I know your name and your role in the Electricity Company of Ghana?
2. What in your view was the general posture of the *Daily Guide*, and the *Daily Graphic* towards the energy crisis?
3. Would you say that newspapers properly represented the views of the Electricity Company of Ghana during the energy crisis?
4. Which issues dominated the crisis that you think newspapers should not have given much attention?
5. There were newspaper frames of ineffective electricity policy as cause of the electricity crisis. Do you think such negative frames were actually warranted the way newspapers sought to portray them?
6. Were there other issues that you think newspapers failed to focus on in their framing of the energy crisis?
7. To what extent had newspapers influenced thoughts concerning the energy crisis?



**APPENDIX II**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ACADEMICS**

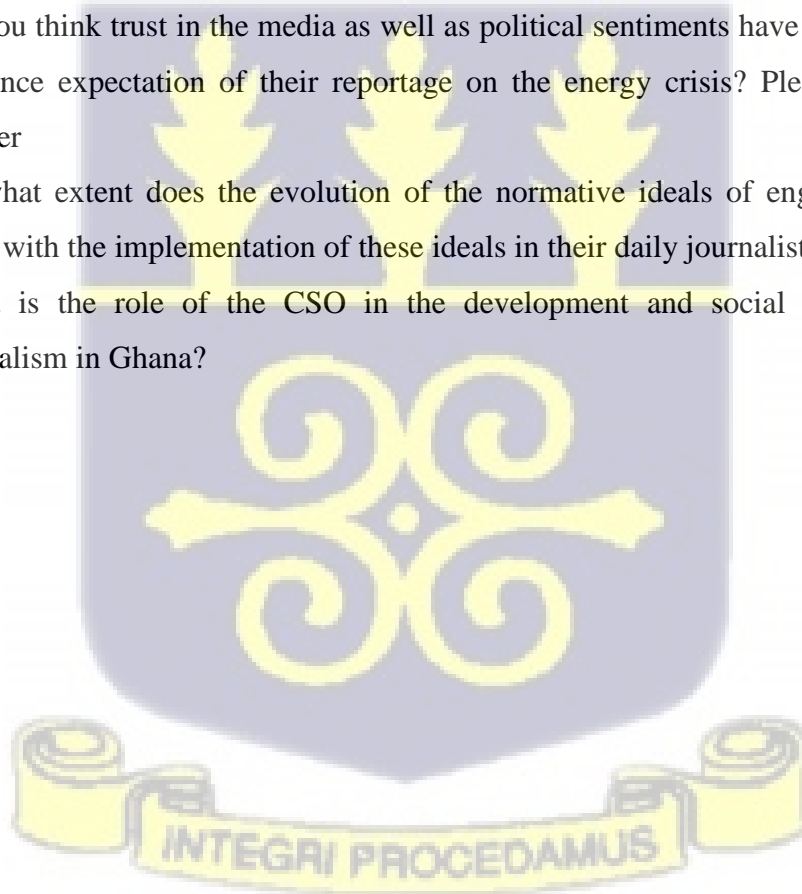
1. What is the role of journalism in society?
2. In your view, do Ghanaians have a fair understanding of the role of the press in society? Please explain your answer
3. What are the norms that should guide news production?
4. What was your expectation of the Ghanaian press framing of the energy crisis of 2012?
5. Did the reportage meet the expectations of the public? Please explain your answer
6. How do audience expectations differ from the role orientations of journalists?
7. Do you think trust in the media as well as political sentiments have any influence on audience expectation of their reportage on the energy crisis? Please explain your answer
8. To what extent does the evolution of the normative ideals of engaged journalism align with the implementation of these ideals in their daily journalistic routines?
9. What is the role of academia in the development and the social responsibility of journalism in Ghana?



**APPENDIX III**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVISTS**

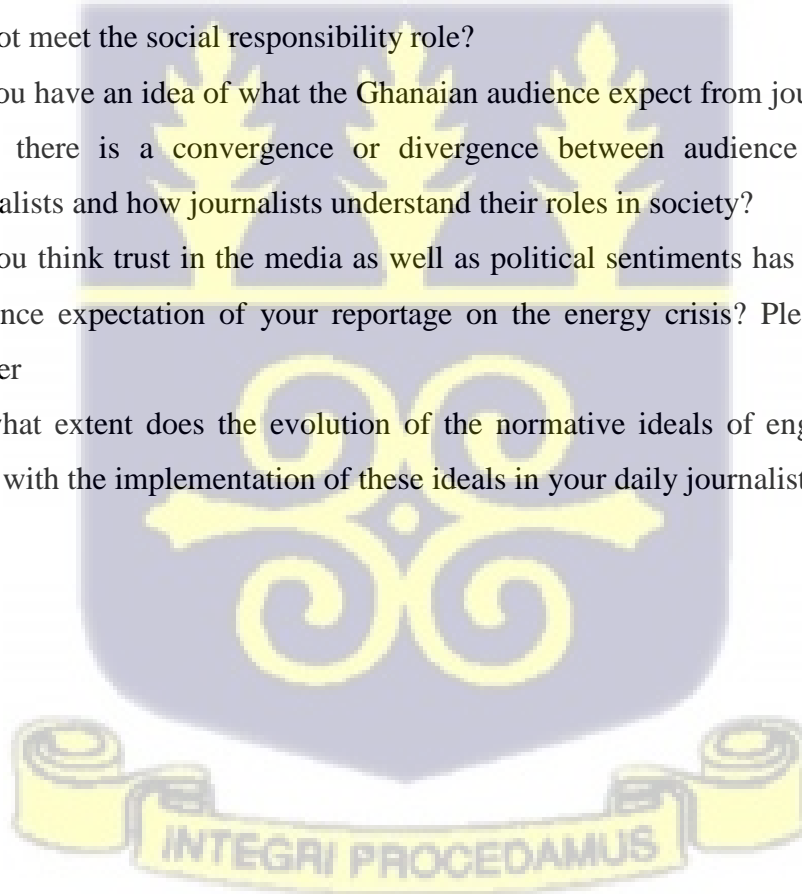
1. What is the role of journalism in society?
2. Do you think Ghanaians have a fair understanding of the role of the press in society?  
Please explain your answer
3. What are the norms that should guide news production?
4. What was your expectation of the Ghanaian press framing of the energy crisis of 2012?
5. Did the reportage meet the expectations of the public? Please explain your answer
6. Do audience expectations differ from the role orientations of journalists? Please explain your answer
7. Do you think trust in the media as well as political sentiments have any influence on audience expectation of their reportage on the energy crisis? Please explain your answer
8. To what extent does the evolution of the normative ideals of engaged journalism align with the implementation of these ideals in their daily journalistic routines?
9. What is the role of the CSO in the development and social responsibility of journalism in Ghana?



**APPENDIX IV**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR JOURNALISTS**

1. What is the role of journalists in society?
2. Do you think Ghanaian have a fair understanding of the role of the press in society?  
Please explain your answer
3. What are the norms that guide news production?
4. In your estimation, what do you understand by social responsibility of the press?  
Please explain your answer
5. To what extent was your newspaper (reporting) socially responsible in framing the energy crisis of 2012?
6. In what ways did your newspaper meet the social responsibility role?/ In what ways did not meet the social responsibility role?
7. Do you have an idea of what the Ghanaian audience expect from journalists? Do you think there is a convergence or divergence between audience expectations of journalists and how journalists understand their roles in society?
8. Do you think trust in the media as well as political sentiments has any influence on audience expectation of your reportage on the energy crisis? Please explain your answer
9. To what extent does the evolution of the normative ideals of engaged journalism align with the implementation of these ideals in your daily journalistic routines?



**APPENDIX V**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENTS**

1. What do you think is the role of journalism in society?
2. What factors influence these role expectations?
3. How do you prioritize these role expectations?
4. Do you trust the Ghanaian media to provide a fair coverage of crisis in the country?  
Please explain your answer
5. What was your expectations of the Ghanaian press framing of the energy crisis of 2012?
6. Did the reporting meet your expectations of journalism? Please explain your answer
7. In your estimation, how do you think the Ghanaian press should cover crisis?

