

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**NEWSPAPER FRAMING OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESSES
LEADING TO THE 2012 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN GHANA**




EMILIA AKORTIA

JULY, 2015

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

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**A THESIS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA
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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE MASTER OF
PHILOSOPHY IN COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA STUDIES (MEDIA
STUDIES) DEGREE.**

JULY, 2015

DECLARATION

STUDENT’S DECLARATION

I, Emilia Akortia declare that this Thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE:.....

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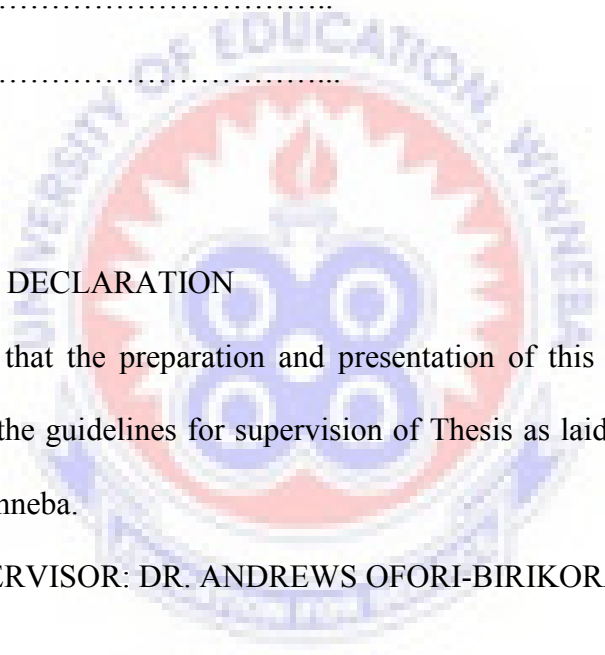
SUPERVISOR’S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: DR. ANDREWS OFORI-BIRIKORANG

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DATE:.....



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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Dr. Mrs. Joan Awunyo Akaba who when the whole world saw me as an ordinary stone, saw me as gold in its unrefined state and picked me up, Mr. Samuel Yorke Aidoo who continued the work of refining me and to my first love Sydney-Wilson Ahiave who has made me a better person.



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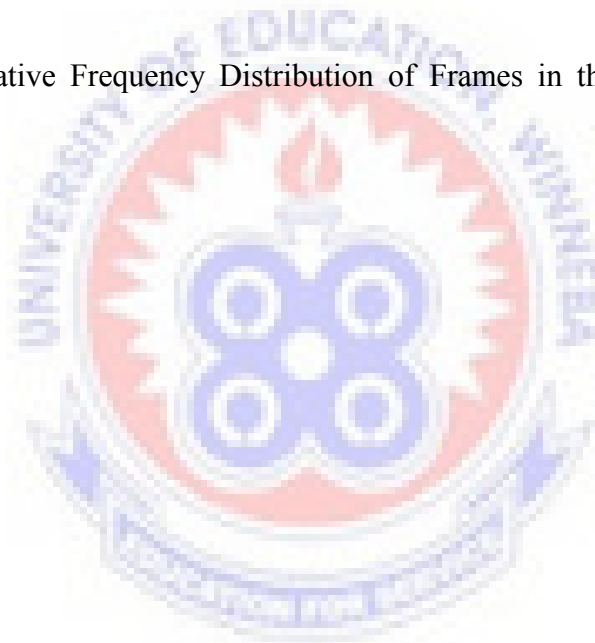
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AU	African Union
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CDD	Centre for Democratic Development
CODEO	Coalition of Domestic Elections Observers
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EC	Electoral Commission
EMBs	Election Management Bodies
GBC	Ghana Broadcasting Corporation
GJA	Ghana Journalists Association
GNA	Ghana News Agency
INEC	Interim National Electoral Commission
IPAC	Inter-Party Advisory Committee
MUSIGA	Musicians Union of Ghana
NCA	National Communications Authority
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NMC	National Media Commission

NPP National Patriotic Party

PNDC Provisional National Defense Council

TUC Trade Union Congress



ABSTRACT

This study examined how the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* framed the coverage of the electoral processes leading to the 2012 general elections in Ghana. The communication theories of agenda setting and framing were used to conduct the study. Media coverage of the electoral processes leading to elections are of critical relevance in determining the outcome and acceptance of election results and that is why this research seeks to analyze how the media covered the framing of the electoral processes of training of election officials, voter education, demarcation, registration, exhibition, transfer of votes and filing of nominations in Ghana during the period leading to the 2012 elections. A total of 3,559 paragraphs was analyzed in both newspapers for this study. Through content analysis, the study showed that registration was the electoral process that received the most coverage in both newspapers. The study also found out that nine frames were used by both the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* to frame the electoral processes and out of these nine frames, seven frames were used to frame the registration process alone. The study also revealed that both newspapers focused much of their attention on the registration process to the neglect of the other processes hereby setting the agenda for the public to see registration as the most important of all the processes. Again, the study revealed that while the *Daily Graphic* took an informative stance most of the times in its coverage of the electoral processes, the *Daily Guide* tend to sensationalize its coverage of these electoral processes. Finally, the study showed that both newspapers did not only tell the electorate the electoral processes that are important but also subtly influenced the general public's perception of the electoral processes by the use of frames.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Democracy, according to Diamond and Plattner, (1999) is a political system of governance in which rulers are either elected or replaced by the people and that is why in democracies, free and fair elections form the basis for electing leaders into political office and that is why in democratic societies, elections are mostly the typical means of voting some citizens to positions of leadership in the state. According to Lindberg, (2006) Presidential campaigns and elections are vital as they determine who is elected as the head of state and to whom the majority of people would entrust with their sovereignty.

Elections according to Ninsin, (2006) is one of the requirements of liberal democracy as it provides the platform for exercising the core rights associated with democracy, which comprise freedom of speech, association, choice and movement. Elections are also an expression of the right of participation in the political process. For majority of the people, elections give them the opportunity to make the political leaders whom they have elected to power accountable for their stewardship during the time they were in power.

This is why Ninsin, (2006) is of the opinion that, to the political class, elections offer them the opportunity to ask the electorate for another opportunity in order for them to renew their mandate to exercise legitimate power over them. In this sense, elections serve as a crucial bridge linking the electorate to the political class.

In modern democratic societies, and in every representative government, the media plays a very critical role of ensuring that information that is vital to the survival and development of such societies are made available to them in a timely, fair and balanced

manner. Thus, during elections, when the electorate must elect their representatives, it becomes very important that the media makes available to the electorate information concerning all the electoral processes leading to elections as well as all the information necessary for them to make informed choices about whom to elect (Curran, 2002).

McQuail, (2005) contend that the media are seen as a window through which events and experiences are seen thus, the media can also act as either a filter, gatekeeper, a forum or platform for the presentation of information ideas whilst Ansah, (1991) is of the view that the media are critical to the realization of the ideals of Ghana's democracy because they monitor the extent to which people's rights to free speech, free expression, free movement, free association, and equal opportunities in employment and education, among others, are respected.

This is why this research seeks to find out how the media framed the coverage of the electoral processes as well as the electoral process that received the most coverage during Ghana's 2012 general elections.

1.1 Background of the Study

According to Gutman, (2000) an election is the process by which citizens elect the people they want to run their government at all levels. Akintayo, (2010) lays emphasis on fact that the role of voter education in any electoral process cannot be under estimated and this is why conducting successful elections goes beyond the conduct of the Election Management Bodies (EMBs) to include the effort of all stakeholders. In modern democratic societies, the media play a very essential role of ensuring that information that

is vital to the survival and development of such societies are availed to them in a timely, fair and balanced manner.

During elections, as the electorate seeks to elect their representatives, it is imperative that the media present information necessary for informed decision making with regard to which candidate is preferred and which is not, in order to enable them decide who to entrust with their sovereignty (Amadi, 2013). This positions the media as a crucial player and a fundamental part of any democratic system (Curran, 2002).

Media coverage is no doubt a relevant part of the election process. Although Ghana continues to enjoy a relatively stable democracy because it has had five successive elections, the role of the media in this success story is mixed (Amponsah, 2012). The African Union Elections observation mission report credited the Ghanaian media for its crucial role in the coverage of the electoral processes, especially the announcement of election results. According to the report, the fashion in which the media covered the elections significantly contributed to the peaceful nature and calm witnessed on the day of election and the immediate post-election period (African Union Observer Report, 2012).

Free, Fair and equal access to the media for all political parties and their candidates according to Agyeman-Duah, (2005) are important elements for leveling the political playing field and this argument is equally supported by Ayee, (2002) who avers that the media have been instrumental in safeguarding Ghana's democratic principles and this is why most voters prefer to receive many of the messages about the electoral processes and candidates not directly from the candidates but from the news media.

Ridout and Mellen, (2007) concur that newspapers are an important source where researchers can find reports of presidential campaigns and any information relating to elections and Benoit, (2007) confirms this assertion by saying that newspapers serve as a key source of knowledge for voters in presidential campaigns.

According to Hollihan, (2001) newspapers perform more successfully at informing voters than television news, candidate advertising or radio and this is because for national political news coverage, the most thorough and comprehensive source of information regarding the electoral process, political issues, and public policies can be only be found in newspapers.

The media, in its role of informing the electorate can also frame the media content and present them in such a way as to guide its interpretations along certain forced lines. Whiles the news may not always determine what people should be thinking about, the news might suggest which issues are salient and subtly inform people that such issues are something they should be thinking about (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). In their studies regarding agenda setting theory, Weaver, McCombs, and Shaw, (2004) as well as Allen and Casey, (2007) found a connection between media agendas and public agendas and to them what this means is that the news can both inform the public and influence public perceptions of which issues are most important.

Even though Ghanaians appear to be generally conversant with their civic responsibilities and are highly committed to democracy, deepening citizens' understanding of the electoral system and management and educating them on their civic responsibilities is a challenge as can be seen from the pre and post-election tension that engulfs the country in every election year (Frempong, 2012).

This is why the 1992 Constitution of Ghana mandates the Electoral Commission to educate the electorate on the electoral processes which are, demarcation of the electoral boundaries, compilation of the register of voters, exhibition of the voter's register, nomination of candidates, transfer of voters, education, printing of notices of poll and ballot papers and voting (Chapter 12, Article 45 and 47 1992 Constitution of Ghana).

Kwansah-Aidoo, (2005) observes that both the state-owned and private-owned media have contributed to the general elections of Ghana's Fourth Republic. For this purpose, one may consider it worthwhile to analyze the content of the *Daily Graphic* which is the best-selling national newspaper in Ghana and the *Daily Guide* which is a private newspaper of high repute according to Temin and Smith, (2002) and examine how these newspapers covered the electoral processes of the 2012 general elections in Ghana as according to Amadi, (2013) the manner in which the mass media cover electoral processes in Africa is very important as it determines the quality of leaders that these electoral processes recruit.

Irrespective of Ghana's electoral successes at the polls and the contribution of the Electoral Commission to the peace that the country is currently enjoying, it is not enough grounds for complacency because even in established democracies, elections have been fraught with challenges and uncertainty. Hidden systemic and administrative weaknesses still emerge during the election periods and often, these lapses can stretch a nation's structure to breaking point, and if the situation is not managed properly, the worse could happen (Mapuva, 2013).

The media in its surveillance role plays a major function in sustaining democracy and this can be fulfilled through credible election coverage. Hollihan, (2001) found out that newspapers perform more successfully at informing voters than television news while Allan and Casey, (2007) Kwansah-Aidoo, (2005) as well as Weaver, McCombs and Shaw, (2004) found out that news can both inform the public and influence public perceptions of which issues are most important. This indicates how important media coverage of the electoral processes can contribute to the success of elections in every democratic state. Equally important is the manner and form of media coverage and how the media sets the agenda as well as frame issues that has to do with elections in the media. This is because the framing of issues and agenda setting also affects how news is perceived, understood and acted upon by the electorate.

According to the report of the Common Wealth Observer group, (2012) newspapers committed considerable space to the coverage of the 2012 election process. The report also highlighted both political party activities, and activities of the Electoral Commission. The *Daily Graphic*, *Ghanaian Times*, the *Chronicle*, *Daily Guide* and *Crusading Guide* were cited as having offered more in-depth reporting on the elections than other newspapers.

Amponsah, (2012) states that the amount of space and tone of coverage of election activities are important influences for any action a voter might take during the voting process because many people are not usually present at political rallies or civic education forums and this makes the news media, a crucial source of information on electoral processes and elections. Moreover, the sheer volume of news during any election period

in every state and how this news is framed impacts the perception of the election processes.

In election coverage, a principal way media outlets sell their stories is through the use of frames that sensationalize issues (Saunders, 2006). However, media framing of elections may be explained by the type of media and the context and irrespective of this, media framing is capable of affecting political attitude and political behavior (Schuck et al. 2013).

While a lot of research has been conducted on the media's coverage of elections in Ghana and elsewhere, no studies have looked at the electoral processes leading to the conduct of elections in Ghana. This study therefore seeks to find out how the media in Ghana framed the coverage of the electoral processes leading to Ghana's elections.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

A free and fair election is not only about the freedom to vote and the knowledge of how to cast a vote but also about a participatory process where voters engage in the electoral process in order to make informed choices. Using Nigeria as a setting, as well as textual and the triangulation method, Amadi, (2013) examined the role of the media and the effort of the ruling class to use the electoral process to maintain and reproduce itself and concluded that the media are focalized, indulging in inaccuracies and contradictions that help the African political class unjustifiably perpetuate itself.

Amponsah, (2012) in his study on the coverage of presidential campaigns in Ghana used content analysis and concluded that advocacy is the most common topic of the campaigns coverage. Also Temin and Smith, (2002) used public opinion survey and the historical

approach method in their study to examine the role that the state owned and private owned media played in Ghana's 2000 elections and concluded that while the media are extremely important to certain segments of the Ghanaian population, they are virtually irrelevant to others but they did not study the news content. Using content analysis method, Diedong,(2013) examined the influence of the press in the space allocated to political parties in Ghana and concluded that though the private media had more space in the front pages on political campaigns and party related issues, they failed to focus on other issues.

According to Amadi, (2013) the electoral processes leading to the conducts of elections, as well as the manner in which the mass media cover these processes in Africa are of critical relevance in determining the quality of leaders that Africa's electoral processes recruit.

Meanwhile, the success of the electoral processes in terms of voter turn up, knowledge of voting process and the conduct of the electorates also depends on the coverage of the processes leading to the elections. The framing of these processes can win public support, increase voter apathy or even reduce the confidence of the electorates in the electoral processes before the election-day. The framing and agenda setting role of the media in the coverage of the electoral processes before election-day is very crucial for the overall success of the electoral process.

Although, several studies have been conducted on the media's coverage of elections in Ghana, none has looked at the coverage of the electoral processes leading to the conduct of elections in Ghana. More attention has been given to the coverage of the voting

process, the immediate events that precede and follow often to the neglect of the electoral processes that are set in motion several months before election day.

This study will therefore use the agenda setting theory and the framing theory to analyze how the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* newspapers framed the coverage of the electoral processes leading to the conduct of the 2012 general elections in Ghana, as well as find out which electoral processes received the most coverage during Ghana's 2012 elections.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This research seeks to uncover how the media framed the electoral processes leading to Ghana's 2012 general elections, based on the following objectives:

1. To investigate which electoral processes received the most coverage during Ghana's 2012 elections.
2. To investigate the frames used by newspapers in the coverage of the electoral processes leading to the conduct of Ghana's 2012 elections.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Which electoral processes received the most coverage during Ghana's 2012 elections?
2. What are the frames used by newspapers in the coverage of the electoral processes leading to Ghana's 2012 elections?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The study will help reveal the electoral processes that received the most coverage during Ghana's 2012 general elections and it will also bring to the fore the extent to which the media contributed in ensuring successful election during this period. Findings from the study will help policy makers and stakeholders to take appropriate measures to improve the electorate's understanding and active participation in Ghana's electoral processes and would further emphasize the media's relevance in media coverage of the electoral processes as a critical influence to political behavior and attitude.

The findings of this study will help the media and the Electoral Commission as well as stakeholders to take appropriate measures to improve upon their education of the electorate on the electoral processes as this would determine the quality of leaders that our electoral processes recruit which are very critical so as to avert the pre and post-election tensions that engulf the country during every election year.

Finally, this study will add to the existing literature on media coverage of elections and the electoral processes in Ghana and contribute to the knowledge on the effective use of framing in political communication.

1.6 Scope of the Study

In order to examine how newspapers framed the electoral processes during 2012 general elections in Ghana, this study analyzed stories, features and editorials on the electoral processes. The study was carried out from February 2012 to November 2012 because this period marks the beginning and the end of the electoral processes of concern to this study as stipulated in Ghana's 1992 Constitution. This study examined how the *Daily Graphic*

which is state owned newspaper was chosen for this study because Moehler and Singh, (2011) have suggested that citizens of post- authoritarian African democracies trust the state-owned media and the choice of the *Daily Guide* was informed by the fact that it is one of the largest privately owned daily publications with national circulation in Ghana (Azanu,2012; Ofori- Birikorang, 2009 as cited in Amevor, 2014).

This study is only limited to the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* newspapers as well as the electoral processes leading to the conduct of the 2012 general elections in Ghana.

1.7 Overview of the Chapters

The study is divided into five interrelated chapters. Chapter one presents the introduction to the study, the background of the study, the problem statement, the objective of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study and the scope the research. Chapter two entails the review of relevant literature and the theoretical bases for this study: this includes the relevance of elections in a democracy, democracy and elections, electoral system in Ghana, the role of the electoral commission, basic features of Ghana's electoral process, the contribution of the media to Ghana's democracy, the media's role in election and the legal frame work within which the media undertakes its coverage of elections. The chapter also explains the media framing theory, the agenda setting theory, the importance of frames in election coverage and the effects of media framing on the electoral processes. Chapter three covers the methodology of the study which includes the study area, study design, target population, sources and types of data, sampling procedure, data collection methods, data processing and analysis, ethical issues and problems arising from the study. Chapter four presents the analysis and findings of the

data collected for the study. News articles coded will be explained and analyzed. Chapter five presents the findings for the study, recommendations and conclusions of the study. Areas for further research are also captured in this study.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter entails a review of literature related to media coverage of the electoral processes. Literature reviewed in this chapter focuses on democracy and elections in Ghana, the electoral system in Ghana, the management of electoral processes in Ghana, and a brief overview of the media landscape in Ghana, contribution of the media to democracy and media election coverage in Ghana as well as media coverage of the 2004, 2008 and 2012 General Elections in Ghana. This chapter also discusses the theories of framing and agenda-setting which serve as the theoretical framework as well as the foundation for this study.

2.1 Democracy and Elections in Ghana

“The word democracy comes from the Greek words demos, meaning people, and kratos, meaning power. Accordingly, democracy is often defined as the rule of the people. It is a system of making rules determined by the people who are to obey those rules” (Frempong, 2012). Democracy, according to Frempong, (2012) should therefore be seen as a way of government which is firmly rooted in the belief that people in any given society should be free to determine their own political, economic, social, and cultural systems. Nonetheless, “the founding pillars of any democratic political system, whether considered fragile or established, remain undoubtedly elections which can simply be seen as the most critical and visible means through which all citizens can peacefully choose or remove their leaders” (Diamond and Plattner, 1999, p. xi).

Elections, to Alexander and Tendi, (2009) have therefore become as of the many acceptable means of selecting and deselecting leaders in a democratic society as in recent times, it has become the basis of representative or liberal democracy in many countries. Mapuva, (2013) is of the opinion that in African history, elections were among the methods used in the transition from colonial rule to independence. The role of elections in sustaining democracy cannot be stated enough because for the citizenry, even though they may not immediately come to terms with all the complications and challenges that come with the running of effective modern democracies, they fully understand that elections are the only realistic way to let their desires of selecting their leaders come to light (Kuhne, 2010). In light of this, elections and the electoral processes are carefully guarded by the citizenry, political parties and the international community.

Elections help to establish connections between citizens and policymakers as it also encourages policymakers to pay attention to citizens' interest as they (citizens) can use elections to reward or punish incumbents Cho, (2010) while Ayanleye, (2013) contends that elections are the commonest feature among what is commonly perceived as democratic systems and this is because elections can be described as periodic contests which determine the next set of rulers in every nation state, thus, elections are the sustaining element that supports democratic governance.

The end of colonial rule in the late 1950s and 1960s brought hope to many political watchers because they believed that independent African countries would adopt some form of democracy whether be it liberal, democratic or socialist or better still some indigenous variant. This expectation was dashed soon as the democratically elected African leaders were either toppled in coup d'état's or sought to perpetuate their reign

beyond constitutional stipulations and this plundered many countries like Ghana, Nigeria and Mali into civil strife (Ayanleye, 2013).

However, observing this development critically, Ayanleye (2013) found out that this was because colonial administrators who were leaving African after many decades of colonization hastily instituted political arrangements that ostensibly embodies Western democratic ideals, such as systems of checks and balances, in which offices of the president, legislature, and judiciaries would balance each other's power and prevent the emergence of authoritarianism in spite of the fact that they themselves completely disregarded the promotion of democratic values during the colonial era. This coupled with the lack of requisite experience in democratic governance accounted for the early fall of democracy in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Meissner, (2010), commenting on the Ghanaian democratic society, maintain that there are indications that the Ghanaian democratic system has been so consolidated to such an extent that incumbents no longer desire to abuse power by unconstitutional means and this assertion stems from the fact that six successive elections have been held in the Fourth Republic, and on all such occasions, the official outcome was implemented, with new governments being duly formed, including two democratic changes of government.

But, this success notwithstanding, the story of elections and democratic governance in Ghana has all not been about success because there have been several challenges along the way and this is why in tracing the history of elections in Ghana as well as the historic 1992 elections, Nugent, (2001) states that prior to the elections, there were many false starts along the way since competitive elections were first introduced in 1951. For instance, after independence in 1957, the opposition had been stifled before being banned

in 1964, while the incumbent regimes of the Second and Third Republics had been ousted by the military before they were given the opportunity to seek a fresh mandate. In light of this and in spite of the doubts expressed by opposition leaders about the fairness of the electoral processes in the run-up to the 1992 poll, the very fact that the governing National Democratic Congress (NDC) was seeking any kind of electoral mandate was a very significant development in its own right.

It can be sufficiently argued that the present state of democracy that Ghana has benefited immensely from the successive elections the country has witnessed over the years. This of course goes beyond election being an expression of the right of participation in the political processes because for the masses, it presents an opportunity to hold political leaders accountable for their stewardship. Elections and democracy are therefore inseparable. Elections are a major institutional pillar of liberal democracy as averred by Frempong, (2012) because they provide the platform for exercising the core rights of freedom of speech, association, choice and movement associated with democracy.

2.2 Electoral System in Ghana

Ghana has a unicameral legislature, referred to as the Parliament and since 1992, following the end of eleven years of military rule under President John Jerry Rawlings and the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC), elections to the Parliament of Ghana are held once every four years in December. This new constitution according to Stapenhurst and Alandu, (2009), did not only establish a presidential republic, but it also borrowed several features from the U.S. system and the British model as well as several qualities from these models most notably in the context of their electoral systems such as

the need for citizens to register as voters as stipulated under Article 42 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. For election purposes, Ghana was divided into 230 constituencies prior to the 2012 General Elections. However, amid significant controversy, the decision was taken by the Electoral Commission to increase the number of constituencies in Ghana to 275 so as to account for demographic changes observed in the 2010 census (Papran, 2012). Thus, parliamentary elections are conducted under a first past the post voting system while the presidential elections are conducted under a fifty plus one voting system in which the candidate who obtains the most votes is called upon to govern the people following the elections.

One of the basic principles essential to the Ghanaian political system is universal adult suffrage and what this means is that every adult citizen has the right to participate either personally or through an elected representative in the making of the decisions that affect his/her life. In accordance with this principle, the constitution (Republic of Ghana Constitution, 1992) provides for the creation of an Electoral Commission which shall have the following responsibilities:

1. Compile the voter's register and revise it at such periods as may be determined by law.
2. Demarcate electoral boundaries of both national and local government elections
3. Conduct and supervise all public elections and referenda
4. Educate the people on the electoral process and its purpose
5. Undertake programmes for the extension of the registration of voters
6. Perform such functions as may be described by law.

Thus according to the electoral laws of Ghana, Ghana's electoral processes include, education of the electorate, demarcation of electoral boundaries, registration of voters, exhibition of the voter's register, filing of nominations, transfer of voters, recruitment and training of election officials, printing of ballot papers and election day activities.

This study focuses basically on the electoral processes leading to the 2012 General Elections and these are: education of the electorate, demarcation of electoral boundaries, registration of voters, exhibition of the voters register, filing of nominations, transfer of votes and recruitment and training of election officials.

2.2.1 Education of the Electorate.

The EC is mandated by Article 45 to educate the general public on all the electoral processes and their purposes. Voter education creates awareness and knowledge of the electoral system and the roles of the various stakeholders in the whole process. Voter education is very important because an informed electorate is an empowered electorate. Voter education entails provision of three types of information:

1. **Publicity:** This involves giving information about an impending activity e.g. registration of voters, exhibition of the voters register, where to vote, when to vote.
2. **Know-how:** This involves imparting knowledge about the electoral process e.g. what to look out for and what to do during registration, observance of the secrecy of the ballot.

3. **Value orientation:** This has to do with discussions of issues like why vote at all, the rights and responsibilities of a voter and providing general information the electorate must know about elections (Republic Of Ghana, Electoral Laws).

2.2.2 Demarcation of Electoral Boundaries

Constituencies, which return representatives to parliament, are required to have more or less equal population in order to achieve the principle of equal representation. This, however, is the ideal rather than the rule, since population is not equally distributed and the use of population alone invariably leads to the concentration of representation in densely populated areas. Population growth and movement, urban expansion, and demands for the creation of additional electoral districts are all factors that make it mandatory for electoral boundaries to be reviewed from time to time. The Representation of the peoples law (P.N.D.C. L.284) is the imperative law for demarcation of electoral boundaries and it provides in section 3(1) that: the Commission shall review the division of Ghana into Constituencies at intervals of not less than seven (7) years or within twelve (12) months after the publication of enumeration figures after the holding of a census of the population of Ghana, whichever is earlier and may, as result, alter the boundaries of the constituencies. Section 3(2) goes on further to state that where the boundaries of a constituency established under section (1) are altered as a result of a review, the alteration shall come into effect on the next dissolution of Parliament (Republic Of Ghana, Electoral Laws).

In 1992, the number of constituencies was increased from 140 to 200. In 2003, the government created new administrative districts and this increased the number of districts from 110 to 138. What this meant was an automatic increase in the number of constituencies because the boundaries of each constituency by law should not go beyond the boundaries of another district. This coupled with the release of the population figures of a census done in 2000 made it mandatory for the Electoral Commission to undertake a demarcation exercise in 2003, which brought the number of constituencies up from 200 to 230 but this exercise involved a lot of planning and consultations. Discussions were held with the government, parliament, traditional authorities, local opinion leaders, district assemblies, political parties and other stakeholders and a Constitutional Instrument (C.I. 46) was made to give the demarcation exercise a legal backing (Republic Of Ghana, Electoral Laws).

2.2.3 Registration of Voters

The Commission maintains two principles for the use of voters' registers as a management tool in the conduct of elections. These are:

1. Where you register is where you vote.
2. Your name on the register qualifies you to vote.

In 2004 when the Electoral Commission was preparing towards elections, the existing voters register had been in existence since 1995, when it was first compiled. Even though efforts had been made to review the register annually since then, alterations to the boundaries of the constituencies and the districts, as well as dislocation of the existing

polling stations compelled EC to agree with the political parties to replace the voters register.

EC took advantage of the new registration to enhance the reliability and dependability of the voters register by enhancing the voters' register from black and white to colored and then to the biometric register in 2012(Republic Of Ghana, Electoral Laws).

2.2.4 Exhibition of Voters' Register

After every registration exercise, a provisional voters registers is compiled and sent to the respective registration centers for public inspection. Exhibition is intended to achieve three main purposes:

1. To afford persons who had applied to be registered the opportunity to verify and, where necessary, to request for the correction of errors in their particulars on the register.
2. To afford persons whose names had been inadvertently omitted the opportunity to request for their names to be included in the register.
3. To afford the general public the opportunity to object to any ineligible names on the register.

After the exhibition, revising officers, who are persons of the rank of a circuit court judge or a senior magistrate, authenticate the registers. The authenticated registers formed the basis for the printing of the final voters register (Republic Of Ghana, Electoral Laws).

2.2.5 Filing of Nomination of Candidates

Under the 1992 Constitution, general elections are held in Ghana every four years. The law permits both party-sponsored and independent candidates. One president and two hundred and seventy five parliamentarians were to be elected in the 2012 general elections. To be elected, a parliamentary candidate requires only a plurality of the valid votes (first-past-the-post) while a presidential candidate requires an absolute majority and this means getting at least 50% +1 of the total votes cast (Republic Of Ghana, Electoral Laws).

Nomination forms are given free of charge. After the nominations, the Electoral Commission displays notices of pollposters throughout the country, showing the pictures of the candidates, their symbols, and the names of the parties sponsoring them or whether they were independent candidates. While a political party candidate is required to use the party symbol, an independent candidate may select from a number of symbols designed by the Electoral Commission or is given the option of designing his/her symbol. The display of the notices of poll posters helps to introduce the candidates to the general public (Republic Of Ghana, Electoral Laws).

2.2.6 Transfer of Voters

A voter registered in a constituency, but who had been a resident in another constituency for two (2) months or more before an election may apply to the returning officer of the constituency within which he/she is residing for his/her name to be entered on the transferred voters list, so that he /she could vote in his /her new constituency on polling day. In accordance with the regulations, a voter is not allowed to apply for a transfer

unless the application is submitted not less than twenty-one (21) days before the date set for the election. An application for a transfer must be made in person and no person may apply for a transfer for another. Transfer of vote can also be done for the purpose of contesting an election, where an aspiring candidate is permitted by the election regulation to transfer his/her vote to where he/she intended to contest not less twenty-one (21) days to the last day of nomination.

The transfer voters list which is supplementary to the main voters register is prepared by the returning officers under the supervision of the district electoral officers as part of the effort at maintaining the integrity of the voters register and to give all prospective voters the opportunity to participate in the voting process on the polling day (Republic Of Ghana, Electoral Laws).

2.2.7 Recruitment and Training of Election Officials

One returning officer and two deputy returning officers to a constituency are recruited by EC and these returning officers help the district electoral officer in each constituency to conduct and supervise elections. As part of their functions, they help in recruiting other temporary officials and help the DEOs in training them. All temporary officials are taken through comprehensive training schedules designed by the training department of the Electoral Commission.

This training is done at the district level and the participants for this training are presiding officers, polling assistants and party/candidate's agents. The training lays emphasis on the election procedures, completion of forms, collation of results and finally the declaration of results. In addition participants are provided with election manuals, which

they are to study and use as reference material to facilitate their work (Republic Of Ghana, Electoral Laws).

2.3 Management of the Electoral Process in Ghana

It is not enough to hold periodic elections in a democracy, the electioneering process and its outcomes must be seen as fair and reflective of the choice of the people and this makes the electoral processes and election administration very crucial in every democracy. In Ghana, the Electoral Commission evolved as part of the institutional transfer of the superstructure of British colonial rule. It began as a department under the Ministry of Local Government with the responsibility to supervise elections organized by the colonial government. After independence, successive governments shifted to the independent Sole Electoral Commissioner model and the power to manage election was transferred from the government ministry to an independent election authority. Sufficient safeguards exist in the law to secure operational, financial and institutional autonomy of the EC (Gyimah-Boadi, 2004).

However, executive controls over the Electoral Commissioner in the first Republic undermined the attainment of credible elections. In light of this, although the Sole Electoral Commissioner in the second and third Republics enjoyed a great deal of autonomy, and performed their functions impartially, the opposition parties in the second Republic were skeptical of the impartiality and neutrality of the sole commissioner (Fall, Hounkpe, Jinadu, Kambale, 2011).

The EC is a well-structured institution with hierarchy of powers and functions and it is also insulated from executive or governmental controls. The effectiveness of an election authority is largely conditioned by its autonomy and its ability to make decisions, enforce electoral laws and regulations depends on the amount of autonomy it has. Both the Constitution of 1992 and Act 451 set the EC up as an independent entity with power to manage its own affairs.

For instance, Article 46 of the Constitution is explicit on EC's autonomy: "Except as provided in this Constitution or in any other law not inconsistent with this Constitution, in the performance of its functions the EC shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority" (Republic of Ghana Constitution, 1992).

Omotola, (2009) considers the management of the electoral processes as very important because winners and losers can accept electoral processes and results as long as the elections meet some established standards, notably; participation, competition and legitimacy. However, these indicators of democratic elections are only assured provided the Election Management Bodies satisfy some necessary conditions that strengthen effective electoral administration.

These conditions have been identified by Omotola, (2009) to include the autonomy of the electoral management bodies (EMBs) and their effectiveness is measured basically in terms of their structure, motivation, transparency and general capacity. The Electoral Commission of Ghana is widely acknowledged by most players in the country's electoral process as being autonomous. This can be seen in its composition, the length of its members' mandate and their remunerations as per the Constitution of Ghana, (1992).

The EC also is free to organize itself internally which allows it to determine its own structures without undue outside interference. The Ghana Electoral Commission has a remarkably wide mandate, with powers that extend beyond the strict organization of elections, to monitoring the activities of political parties which includes party registration, policing their activities and auditing their accounts (Fall et al. 2011).

The confidence reposed in the EC continues to increase as the commission introduced new reforms that opened up the electoral processes and made it more transparent. One of these reforms has been the establishment of the Inter-party Advisory Commission (IPAC) in 1994. This was done to improve the trust, confidence and working relationships between the Commission and registered political parties and to enhance transparency in its operations IPAC has helped to provide an innovative mechanism for the Electoral Commission to meet representatives of political parties as well as donors that support the electoral process (Electoral Commission Reforms, 2012).

In addition Gyimah-Boadi (2004) avers that another dimension to the increasing trust reposed in the EC is the growing phenomenon where the private and civil society organizations seek EC's assistance to conduct elections to select their officials. This practice began in 1993 and still continues with organizations like the Trades Union Congress (TUC), students, Christian, Muslim and business organizations relying on the EC to hold their internal election to select their leaders.

The Electoral Commission is granted complete control over the entire electoral process. The electoral law gives EC almost complete responsibility for both the preparation and the practical organization and control of the electoral process. The law also grants EC the freedom to choose the way it fulfills its duties, such as the appointment of persons

necessary to manage the electoral process, the adoption of rules and regulations it deems necessary to fulfill its obligations (Fall et al. 2011).

However, civil society organizations, political parties, stakeholders, the international community and the media have also helped the Electoral Commission in the fulfillment of its mandate. The media especially are very instrumental when it comes to publicizing the electoral process and that is why the 1992 constitution in Article 162 mandates the media to hold the government accountable to the people and so they play the role of consolidating democracy in Ghana (Republic of Ghana Constitution, 1992).

2.4 The Media Landscape in Ghana

Karikari, (1994) is of the opinion that the mass media in Africa is a product of the historical and sociopolitical developments of the continent and this is why in effect, the ownership structure, character, strengths and weaknesses, and above all the outputs and impacts of the media in Africa are all the result of the society and can be understood in a much more broader historical context.

Tracing the early development of the media in Ghana, Uwom and Alao, (2013) explain that the broadcasting model used in Ghana was adapted from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) which is a pioneer in broadcasting services. At its initial stage, broadcasting in particular was designed as a public service committed to the enlightenment and instruction of the people of Ghana. Unmistakably, at the onset of media development in Ghana, communication was accepted as a way of changing society.

Owusu (2012) also emphasize the point that the coming into force of the 1992 Republican Constitution represents an era in the evolution of the Ghanaian media landscape because this was the period of definite multiparty democracy and freedom of speech and as a result, from this time, more private media outlets were established. Nevertheless, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) remained the only broadcaster until 1995 (Uwom & Alao, 2013). It was not until 2001 with the repeal of the criminal libel law that Ghana experienced a more rapid and consistent expansion of the electronic media (Owusu, 2012).

As the earliest to declare independence in Sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana has a very blossoming media landscape. The African Media Barometer reports that Ghana has a diverse media landscape demonstrating pluralism. As a result, there are many platforms for citizens and journalists to express themselves (African Media Barometer, 2011). Meanwhile, the orientation of the media during the period immediately after independence (1959-60) was one that was largely motivated by political and economic allegiances because during that time, while the government promoted its political agenda with the papers it owned, the foreign-owned press was economically driven and the private African press was also largely mainly patriotic (Sumbu, 2013).

Currently, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) runs two national radio stations with at least one station in each of the ten regions. They compete for listeners with more than 225 non-state radio stations, around 200 of them commercial and 25 community-owned (NCA, 2012). In addition to the television channels run by GBC there are over 28 television stations. There are also a number of print media operating in the country in addition to other online media. Some of the commercial media are purely business-driven

enterprises with the primary objective of profit making by delivering large audiences to advertisers (NCA, 2012). This has occasioned a trend towards sensationalism in the media (African Media Barometer, 2011).

Ghana's media landscape is considered as one of the most free in Africa (Hottor, 2010; African Media Barometer, 2011). However, the media is still guided by tenets of its operations and there are general expectations of them (Sumbu, 2013), and that is the reason why the national policy provides general guidelines for the operations of all categories of media services in the country. The national media policy supports the principles of national unity, cultural pluralism, equality and freedom of expression. The National Media Commission (NMC) regards communication as a dynamic tool which is guided by the past, responsive to the present and anticipatory of the future (National Media Policy).

Thus, the place of communication and the media in Ghana are well defined. The media is tasked by the national media policy to continue to reflect the collective aspirations of all Ghanaians ensuring equality in access and promoting unity in diversity and that is why according to Gadzekpo, (2011), the media's vigilante role has helped in strengthening Ghana's democracy.

Operating under the Ministry of communications, the National Communications Authority (NCA) regulates the licensing and granting of frequencies to radio and television stations, but the print media do not require any such licenses. The NCA also provides some form of regulation for the broadcast media in that sense. The fourth republican constitution, the GJA code of ethics and other international media laws are

also sources of media regulations which have over the years guided the operations of the media in Ghana (Ghana Broadcasting study, 2008)

Meanwhile, Chapter 12 of the fourth Republican Constitution makes detailed provisions for the freedom and independence of the media and must form the basis for any regulation of the media law in Ghana. Chapter 12 Article 162 provides, inter alia, that “freedom and independence of the media are guaranteed”, and that “subject to this Constitution and any other law not inconsistent with this Constitution, there shall be no censorship in Ghana”, and that “there shall be no impediments to the establishment of private press or media” (Republic of Ghana Constitution, 1992).

However, the NMC and NCA are the bodies established by Acts of parliament that specifically regulate the media landscape.

The national media commission’s mandate as specified in Act 449 include;

1. Maintaining its independence from political influence
2. Ensuring that the state-owned media are independent from governmental control.
3. Raising professional standards among media practitioners and ensuring fairness to the public.
4. Protecting journalists from harassment and penalties arising out of their editorial opinions and content.
5. Encouraging the media to play their role of holding people in authority accountable to the people and protecting their individual rights (NMC Ghana, 2000)
6. The National Communication Authority (NCA) also has its core mandate spelt out by the act (ACT 769) that established it. The Act mandates the NCA to;

7. Ensure that there are provided throughout Ghana as far as practicable such communication services as are reasonably necessary to satisfy demand for the services.
8. Ensure that communication systems operators achieve the highest level of efficiency in the provision of communication services and responsive to customers and community needs
9. Promote fair competition among persons engaged in the provision of communication services; to protect operators and consumers from unfair conduct to other operators with regard to quality of communications services and payment of tariffs in respect of the services.
10. Protect the interest of the consumers
11. Facilitate the availability of quality equipment to consumers and operators.
12. Research into and the development of technologies and use of new technologies by provision of communications services and to develop adequate resources in collaboration with such other government departments and agencies as the Authority considers appropriate (NCA Act, 2008).

This brief review of the evolution of the media landscape from the period immediately after independence to recent times reveals that the media Ghana have had some twists and turns along the way. These developments however continue to influence the state of the media in terms of performance and impact. This notwithstanding, the media has made many important contributions to Ghana's democracy and continue to be guided within a rich legal framework of local and international regulations.

2.5 Contribution of the Media to Democracy

The media's contribution to democratic governance has been recognized since the late 17th century, and remains a fundamental principle of modern-day democratic theory and practice (Coronel 2003). The mass media as a very important institution of society is often referred to as the fourth arm of government owing to the power they wield and the oversight function they exercise.

The Ghanaian media have contributed in many ways to the country's fledging and relatively stable democracy and that is why Temin & Smith, (2002) notes that the media provides an immense contribution to democracy through their coverage of the electoral processes. The media's coverage of elections in Ghana however continues to improve, for instance the coverage of the 1992 elections was improved in the 1996 elections and again the 2000 elections was better covered compared to the 1996 elections.

Thus, Temin & Smith, (2002) are of the opinion that this shows how committed the Ghanaian media is in adjusting itself for improved performance. It's also an indication of how much opportunity still exists for improvement in the media's performance with regard to election coverage.

The media also contributes to consolidating democracy by their representations of political life, including its rituals and symbols. The representation of the political life over time help build a political culture which when is positive benefits the democratic process according to Hassan, (2012). The media in this sense becomes an important vehicle of political socialization providing politicians and the populace information of the important political activities of the country and the events that mark the history of Ghana.

Again, the media in a democracy provides space for public debate. This is referred to by Habermas as 'public sphere'. The principles of the public sphere according to Habermas as cited in Deane, (2005) initially evolved in the 17th and 18th centuries. This entails an open discussion of all major issues of general concern, where issues relevant to the public good could be subject to informed debate and examination. The freedoms of speech and assembly, a free press, and the right to freely participate in political debate and decision-making are all embodiments of the public sphere.

Expanding on the need for the media to serve as a public sphere Frempong, (2012) laments that although the media can promote peace and social consensus which can strengthen democracy; they sometimes also worsen crises by distorting facts.

Fog, (2013) however identifies the most important contributions of the media to be the surveillance of sociopolitical developments, identifying the most important issues, providing a platform for debate across a diverse range of views, holding officials accountable for the way they exercise power, provide incentives for citizens to learn, choose, and become involved in the political process, and resist efforts of forces outside the media to subvert their independence. These roles are among the popular functions of the media originally identified by (Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990). These are rather extensive roles as it captures many of the primary functions of the media.

Furthermore, the media also assists in setting an agenda of priorities in the social, cultural, political and economic development of the nation. This role of the media helps in the articulation and pursuit of the national interest. When the agenda setting role of the media is executed effectively, it helps strengthen the economic, social and political fabric of the nation. It is however important that the issues and topics that the media

raises to be discussed are of relevance to society (Africa Leadership Forum, 1997) and this is where the media in some instances falls short. This is because so many ‘burning issues’ are competing for the media’s attention and economic considerations also come into play and so the media sometimes fails to report on relevant issues which would benefit society but rather choose to concentrate on issues which are not relevant.

Another very important contribution of the media is their role in building peace and social consensus, without which democracy is, threatened (Coronel, 2004). This is not always a defensive role but sometimes the media is proactive in sensing danger and using the airwaves to defuse tensions. The media thus can provide warring groups mechanisms for mediation, representation and an opportunity to settle their differences peacefully. Nevertheless, the media have sometimes fanned the flames of discord by taking sides, reinforcing prejudices, muddling the facts and peddling half-truths. Coronel, (2004) further explains that In the light of this, civil society organizations now promote what is called “Peace journalism”. Peace journalism promotes reconciliation through careful reportage that offers a listening opportunity to all sides of a conflict and resists explanation for violence in terms of innate entities.

One other significant contribution of the media that is often taken for granted is how it conveys information from the populace to policy makers and political office holders. They are able to figure out those problems confronting society in order to serve as a way of communicating within a society to foster deliberation. Coronel, (2004).The media offers the otherwise marginalized populace an opportunity to send their messages to the decision makers. For some electorates in emerging democracies, there would be little

hope of communication with their members of parliament or other political office holders if it had not been for the media.

In spite of the known contributions of the media to democracy, critics argue that the media are growing more sophisticated but playing less and less of its role for the consolidation of democracy and the benefit of society. According to Fog, (2013) the recent developments in the media landscape are characterized by convergence, concentration, globalization, commercialization and trivialization. These features all have economic undertones, depicting the commitment of the media to profiteering rather than serving the general public good.

2.6 The Media and Election Coverage

The media plays an indispensable role in the proper functioning of a democracy according to Frempong, (2012) and that is why discussions of the media's contribution to elections usually focus on their watchdog role. The media by discussing the successes and failures of government can inform the public of how effectively its representatives have performed and help to hold them accountable. Yet the media can also play a more specific role in enabling full public participation in elections, not only by reporting on the performance of government, but also in a number of other ways (ACE Encyclopedia, 2009).

These contributions include educating the voters on how to exercise their democratic rights, reporting on the development of the election campaign, providing a platform for the political parties to communicate their message to the electorate, allowing the parties

to debate with each other, reporting results and monitoring vote counting, scrutinizing the electoral processes itself in order to evaluate its fairness, effectiveness, and integrity.

Hollihan, (2001) contends that the print media, for that matter, perform a more crucial role in informing the electorate into making informed choices than other media because “for national political news coverage, the most thorough, comprehensive, and substantive information regarding political campaigns, political issues, and public policies is available to readers of comprehensive large city daily papers.

The contribution of the electronic media in monitoring elections has been unique and innovative. Private FM stations position their reporters countrywide to give live reports of events at the polling stations and at collating centers. Throughout Election Day, stations are filled with reports of the unfolding balloting process. They inform electoral officials on where to send additional voting materials to alleviate a shortage; the police are notified of potential and actual flash points; suspicious characters and vehicles at polling stations are reported on air including their number plates; and ordinary citizens' call to report whatever seems to be irregular at the polling stations (Frempong, 2007). According to Frempong, (2006) consensus is reached when an EMB incorporates at least some of the opinions or ideologies of its stakeholders. When stakeholders get agitated the whole electoral process could be interrupted or stopped. For example, the electorates are important stakeholders in any electoral process, if they are not given enough education on the electoral processes or when they are prevented from exercising their franchise, there will be violence.

Notwithstanding the praise for the media as a very important institution for democratic governance and the honor bestowed on them as the fourth estate, Frempong, (2012)

argues that the media should rather be judged on merit. Thus the media has to be assessed specifically based on how they have contributed to democratic principles. The participation of citizens is an important prerequisite for sustaining democracy. For instance, the media is expected to keep citizens engaged in the business of governance by informing, educating and mobilizing the public. In several growing democracies, radio in particular has become the medium of choice, as it is less expensive and more accessible. FM and community radio have been effective instruments for promoting grassroots democracy by airing local issues (Coronel, 2004). The media thus has to be assessed on how it has served the democratic interest of the people with the means at its disposal.

Recognizing the important role of the media in elections, the NMC in 1996 published a document to guide political coverage by media practitioners. This guide was supposed to be the yardstick for the coverage of all Electoral activities which also includes elections. This document was revised in 1999 following the need to update the guideline to reflect current media practices and to circumvent the implementation challenges of the version earlier published in 1993 (NMC Media Guideline for Political Coverage, 2000).

The media guideline for political coverage seeks to ensure that:

1. Coverage of political activities include the aim of collecting and disseminating truthful, unbiased information on political parties and their activities to the public;
2. Practitioners seek to provide the public with information that would enable the electorate to make intelligent choices during elections and
3. Coverage is comprehensive and fair to all and the information gathered is presented as objectively and impartially as possible.

Evaluating the role of the media in Ghana's 2000 elections, Temin & Smith, (2002) concede that although media experts would not give high ratings to the media in a country which has high illiteracy rates, insufficient communication network, weak legal protections on free speech and living conditions that may not adequately support private media, the performance of the Ghanaian media during the 2000 election was commendable. Media coverage of elections has been an issue of interest to researchers. Hottor, (2010) observes that Media coverage of elections in Ghana especially post-election coverage is politically skewed at the expense of development. As a result, the media has lately received a lot of flak for reneging on its watchdog role and rather focusing on the two main political parties in the country; National Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC).

In an investigation of the *Daily Graphic's* coverage of the elections, Amponsah, (2012) reports that advocacy was the preponderant form of coverage the daily graphic provided at the time. However, the types of advocacy concentrated on rallies and candidates standing in polls. The participation of candidates in debates and policy dialogue were however not giving much emphasis. Amponsah, (2012) posits that the emphasis on rallies and not political debate and policy dialogue could create public suspicion of candidate's motives as questioning why they would prefer mammoth party rallies to debates and policy dialogues.

According to Saunders, (2006) even prior to elections, the media sets up what may be called 'imaginary primaries'. The imaginary primaries are fed by speculations in the media and the effect of this is that already popular candidates get more attention than the 'new kids on the block'. Imaginary primaries focus on the celebrity aspect of possible

candidates, campaign strategies, and public opinion poll results as a means of reporting on the upcoming presidential election even when there is no hard news.

Schuck, Vliegenthart, Boomgaarden, Elenbaas, Azrout, Spanje and Vreese, (2010) add that conflict framing is the most utilized news frame together with the strategy frame with regard to media coverage of elections. Conflict frames point to political differences and disagreement as inherent to a political campaign whilst strategy frame focuses on how strategically aspirants are conducting their campaigns. Meanwhile, the frames employed by the media depend on the medium, the audience and the time (Banducci & Stevens, 2013). That is to say, the media may decide to cover elections and the electoral processes in a certain manner, highlighting issues they consider as important. However, media coverage of electoral processes may increase tension and incite electorates in a way that can lead to violence or unite the country.

In a 2011 International Peace Institute (ITI) discussion paper, it was noted with concern that although the media play a key role in generating and disseminating information and overseeing the electoral process, they at times also provoke violence. This has been the case in many African countries where elections have resulted in violence. In the light of this, the Praia Declaration, pursuing media accountability recommends codes of conduct for state owned and private owned media houses as well as legislation against discrimination and incitement to violence (ITI report, 2011). These codes of conduct are binding on all ECOWAS member countries.

2.7 Media Coverage of the General Elections in the Fourth Republic of Ghana

Both the state-owned and private-owned media have contributed to general elections in Ghana. Successive democratic elections in Ghana in 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012 resulted in peaceful transfers of power between the major political parties as well as continuing improvements in the performance of its formal institutions, notably the Electoral Commission (EC), the Judiciary and Security Forces. There was also a demonstrable increase in the oversight function of civil society organizations and the media.

The outcome of the parliamentary and presidential elections in 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012 was hailed by stakeholders, the national and international media and diplomatic missions as another step forward in consolidating multiparty democracy in Ghana and as a model for the whole of Africa (Frempong, 2012).

Not only did the news media play an obviously crucial role in Ghana's 2000 presidential and parliamentary elections, but they also contributed to the general success of the elections which replaced Jerry Rawlings' incumbent NDC with John Kufuor's NPP as opined by Temin & Smith, (2002). According to a 2012 report of the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) on media coverage of the 2008 elections, both the state-owned print and electronic media as well as the private-owned media gave disproportionate coverage and access to the incumbent NDC party. Whereas the tone of the state-owned media coverage was largely positive and neutral toward all parties, the private-owned media appeared more negative toward the incumbent party and more positive toward the opposition parties.

During the 2012 General Elections in Ghana, the media was recognized as one of the key stakeholders and according to the Coalition of Domestic Election observers (CODEO) report, the public was not happy with the conduct of some media houses in the country because of their inaccurate reportage but on the whole, according to the CODEO, the media was professional and helped in ensuring peace during the elections.

2.8 Theoretical Framework

The media framing theory and the agenda setting theory form the theoretical basis of this study. The Agenda setting theory coupled with the media framing theory which has become increasingly popular in news analysis and the effective way in which the media shape public opinion by using frame events that select aspects of perceive reality and make them more salient in communication text according to Entman, (1993) enhances understanding of media coverage of the 2012 electoral processes.

2.9 Framing Theory

Framing is based on the assumption that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences. To Gamson, (1985) framing means to lay emphasis on certain features of the new to denial of others whiles Gitlin, (1980, p.6) describes the framing process as: “Frames are principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens and what matters”.

Framing is an influential way of forming and shaping public opinion. Since its evolution, framing has been used widely in communication research of media content and also studies of the relationship between the media and public opinion (de Vreese, 2005).

According to Cissel, (2012) Goffman, (1974) was the first to give attention to framing as a form of communication. The theory was first put forth by Goffman, (1974) under the title of Frame Analysis. According to Goffman, (1974) people interpret what is going on around their world through their primary framework. This according to Botan and Hazelton, (2006) places Goffman as the founder of Frame Analysis. Goffman, (1974) underlying assumption is that individuals are capable users of these frameworks on a day to day basis, whether they are aware of them or not. Framing may be considered as a “schemata of interpretation” that enable individuals to “locate, perceive, identify and label” occurrences or life experiences (Goffman, 1974 cited in Cissel, 2008). This definition was later revised by Entman (1993, p. 51) to entail a specification of framing as a way of communicating text or message which is purposed to promote certain facets of a ‘perceived reality’ and make them more salient in such a way that endorses a specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or a treatment recommendation.

Scheufele and Tewksbury, (2007) credit Entman as offering a more detailed explanation of how media provides audiences with schemas for interpreting events.

Additionally, Entman, (1993) noted that news organizations frame reality by making judgments on inclusion, exclusion, illumination, and suppression. This explanation of framing theory suggests that the social construction of reality is predictably subjective. So Kuypers, (2006) observed that those who frame facts or events think that other people

will perceive facts or events in their intended ways. As Gross, (2006) asserted, frames will, by highlighting certain aspects of an event or policy, guide audience member's thoughts about the event or issue in predictable ways, to predictable conclusions.

Thus, framing allows for variety of positions and does not give the whole picture of an event. Tankard, (2001) hypothesize three main theoretical constructs of framing research, these are the media package, multidimensionality, and the list of frames. Framing of news stories are suggested by particular devices such as headlines and kickers, subheads, photographs, photo captions, leads, pull quotes, selection of sources or affiliations, selection of quotes, nut graphs, and logos (Severin & Tankard, 2001).

This way, according to Coronel, (2004) makes it is difficult to find a piece of journalism that offers no interpretation of the facts it contains and it is therefore tempting to say that there could be no reporting without framing of the factual description, since the stories could not be written without suggesting a storyline. As Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley,(1997) also put it, frames act like plots or story lines, lending coherence to otherwise discrete pieces of information (p. 568). Hence, framing helps journalists to organize stories and the public to understand events and issues. Framing can have powerful influences on audiences as it affects their recognition and understanding of social problems and political issues (Entman, 1993).

As a communication theory, framing implies communication with emphasis on certain parts of the issue and intentionally down playing others. This is a very relevant quality of communication because issues are often complicated, and require the processing of a great deal of information from a variety of perspectives and Entman, (1993) avers that frames provide a simplified code for understanding of a situation, by focusing only on

those features deemed important by the particular individual involved (sender of the message). Frames are therefore interpretive devices that all people use when making sense of the world around them. They aid us in undertaking the difficult task of processing complex and often cumbersome information about our social world much simpler, by focusing attention only on certain features that may be more important (Entman, 1993).

2.9.1 How the Media Framing Process Works

Framing is both a macro level and a micro level construct (Scheufele, 1999). As a macro construct, the term “framing” refers to modes of presentation that journalists and other communicators use to present information in a way that resonates with existing underlying schemas among their audience (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). This does not mean, of course, that most journalists try to spin a story or deceive their audiences. In fact, framing, for them, is a necessary tool to reduce the complexity of an issue, given the constraints of their respective media related to news holes and airtime (Gans, 1979). As a micro construct, framing describes how people use information and presentation features regarding issues to form impressions.

The framing process involves “the selection of some aspects of a perceived reality to make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem, definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation of the item described” (Entman, 1993, p52). Thus, frames typically diagnose, evaluate and prescribe a point explored. According to Chong & Druckman, (2007) framing can work on three levels; by making new beliefs available about an issue, making certain available beliefs accessible

or making beliefs applicable or “strong” in people’s evaluations. This is because the mind and communication work in such a manner that individuals draw their opinions from the set of available beliefs stored in memory. At any given moment, only a set of beliefs become assessable for opinion formation. Out of the set of accessible beliefs, only some are strong enough to be judged relevant or applicable to the subject at hand.

Scheufele and Tewksbury, (2007) aver that for a framing effect to occur, audiences may have to pay substantial attention to news messages. In this regard, the content and implications of an issue frame are likely to be most apparent to an audience member who pays attention to a news story. Framing and news coverage can be investigated from two different perspectives. These perspectives were identified by Schenk and Ahmed, (2011) as; deductive qualitative and inductive qualitative framing. Regarding the inductive approach, the researcher sets forth to identify frames or ideas that are existing in the news story or the unit of analysis without prior identification of what themes to analyze. The deductive approach however entails prior determination of themes or frames to look out for. These frames may be obtained from literature or matched against what already exists in literature.

2.9.2 Identifying Frames in the News

Tankard, (2001) gives us one of the most comprehensive approaches to framing by listing framing mechanisms for identifying and measuring news frames and these are: headlines, lead, subheads, photographs, photo captions, source selection, quotes, statistics and charts, concluding statements, quote selection, pull quotes, logos and paragraphs. To de Vreese, (2005) the inductive approach is one of the approaches in identifying frames in

news. This assertion is also supported by Gamson, (1992) who states that this approach refrains from analyzing news stories with prior defined news frames in mind.

But Cappella and Jamieson, (1997) have suggested four criteria that a news frame must meet. A news frame must have identifiable, conceptual and linguistic characteristics, secondly, it should be commonly observed in journalistic practice, thirdly, it must be possible for one to distinguish the frame reliably from other frames and lastly, a frame must have representational validity and not a fragment of the researcher's imagination.

Entman, (1993) also suggests that frames in the news can be examined and identified by "the presence or absence of certain key words, stock phrases, stereotyped images, and sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments" pg.52).

2.9.3 Effects of Media Framing

The effect of media framing is evident when, in the course of describing an issue or event in the media, a journalist' or communicator's emphasis on a subset of potentially relevant considerations causes audiences to focus on these considerations when constructing their opinions (Druckman, 2001). That is, the frame given an issue in the media becomes accepted by the audience as the meaning of the message communicated.

Framing is an unavoidable phenomenon that is invoked any time one crafts a message. Framing gives the media power. Journalists and media professionals have a choice of how to frame their messages but not whether or not to frame messages. Meanwhile, the degree of intention and consciousness attached to framing varies with individual journalists. Again, by stimulating certain ideologies, feelings and values rather than

others, then, the news can encourage particular trains of thought about certain phenomena and lead audience members to arrive at more or less predictable conclusions (Stromback & Dimitrova, 2006).

This makes framing consequential. Thus, framing works as consequence on communicators' actions. However, how individuals interpret information differs depending on how that information is contextualized or framed. The effects of framing are particularly less pronounced for ambiguous stimuli (Scheufele & Inyengar, 2010). Thus, pieces of information that are open to multiple interpretations hardly yield the desired framing effect. Effective framing must as a result be clear and not necessarily prone to too many different interpretations.

Framing is the way a communication source defines and constructs any piece of communicated information. Framing is an unavoidable part of human communication as we all bring our own frames to our communications. According to Scheufele, (1999) within the realm of political communication, framing has to be defined and operationalized on the basis of this social constructivism. Mass media actively set the frames of reference that readers or viewers use to interpret and discuss public events.

2.9.4 Limitations of the Framing Theory

Druckman, (2001) identifies one inherent limit to framing and that is perceived source credibility. Perceived source credibility appears to be a major prerequisite for successful framing. This is because framing effects may occur, not because journalists or media persons seek to manipulate audiences, but rather because media audiences look up to credible news persons and journalist for guidance in understanding major news events. In

so doing, they choose which frames to follow in a systematic and sensible way. Far from being a sign of freewheeling manipulation, framing effects may be the evidence of media audiences' seeking guidance from credible news sources or media outlets.

2.10 Agenda Setting Theory

As a result of the substantial growth of the mass media, it was observed in the 1970's that the 'current' media content had a relationship with the 'current' public agenda and a notable theory that focuses directly on this topic is the Agenda Setting Theory by McCombs and Shaw, (1972). Agenda setting refers to the idea that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media place on certain issues (e.g., based on relative placement or amount of coverage) and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). McCombs and Shaw, (1972) introduced agenda-setting as a media function in 1972 in the Chapel Hill North Carolina study. The idea however began much earlier with Public Opinion in 1922 where Lippmann, (1922) proposed that people aren't able to deal effectively with the variety and subtlety of their environment. Lippmann, (1922) argued that, the mass media are the link between world events and the pictures of these events in people's minds (Lippmann, 1922 cited in Harris, Kolovos, and Lock, 2001).

Since the introduction of the agenda setting theory in communication and early works drawing on the theory, there is growing evidence that the way an object on the agenda is framed may have measurable behavioral consequences. In this vein, the aspects of an issue emphasized in the news may directly influence the direction of public opinion. Even the tag or name given to an issue in the media demonstrates some salience and this

influences the issue's 'ranking' on the media agenda and hence the flow of public opinion on the subject (McCombs & Shaw, 1993).

Agenda setting theory thus explains the process that can affect both what to think about and how to think about it.

Oyero, (2010) citing McQuail, (2005) describes Agenda setting as "the operation of the media which results in prioritization of the issues that arise and engage the attention of the society". He explains further by saying that issues focused upon by the media become the issues that the public accepts as important for attention and discussion. In other words, agenda setting is the process whereby the news media lead the public in assigning relative importance to various public issues. Thus to Oyero, (2010) the media influence the public agenda by giving more space and time to a particular issue without saying overtly that this issue is important.

2.10.1 Agenda Setting in the Media

The agenda setting theory refers to the idea that the news media have the power to set a nation's agenda by getting the public to focus on some few key issues to the neglect of others. This is because the public believe that they can get accurate information about public affairs from the news media so they also tend to attach some level of importance to a topic based on the level of emphasis placed on it in the news (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

McCombs, (1997) points out that agenda setting is about the transmission of salience and not the determination of opinions about a particular issue. That is why in setting the public agenda, the news media influence the salience or prominence of that small number

of issues that come to command public attention. Oyero, (2010) citing Severin and Tankard, (1997) argues that in agenda setting, the media content is capable of influencing the perception of the audience members on important issues and those that are not. The elements that the media use in agenda setting include: the frequency of the reportage, prominence given to the reporting, and the degree of the conflict generated in the reports. (Folarin, 2005, cited in Oyero, 2010).

McQuail and Windahl (1993) reiterate that the media do not reflect reality, they filter and shape it by concentrating on a few subjects and this leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues.

2.10.2 Limitations of Agenda Setting in the Media

Walgrave and Aelst, (2006) note that, not all population categories are as equally susceptible to media cues. The agenda setting function of the media is thus dependent on certain factors. These include; the caliber of consumers of media messages and the congruence in coverage of the different media. In case of public agenda setting for instance, the general audience determines whether or not media coverage affects the public's priorities. In addition, the effects of political agenda setting of the media are also limited during campaign periods.

Walgrave and Aelst, (2006) again claim that this is because electoral context radically changes the behavior of players, media and politicians. The composition of the multilayered and complex political agenda changes dramatically; central actors like government and parliament and their substantial agenda make room for political parties with their symbolic agenda. Sufficient to say, during elections campaigns and the periods leading to elections, the mainstream media is joined by other contingent news sources

such as political party periodicals, news releases and staged events to disseminate information in a manner that defeats the effects of the agenda setting function of the mainstream media.

2.10.3 Interconnection between Agenda-Setting and Framing

McCombs and Shaw, (1993) were the first to try connecting the theory of agenda-setting and framing. They assumed that news carries information about an issue – this is how agenda-setting takes place. At the same time news emphasizes or conceals some attributes of the issue – this is how the framing of the issue takes place (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). As a media effect tool, framing theory is closely related to the agenda-setting functions of media. It is argued that, the process of agenda setting has two stages: the first stage is framing and agenda setting is the second stage. The media not only provide information for the people but also try to motivate the people to consider some events as the most important issues for the day, while, at times intentionally, keeping other issues out of public attention. In doing this, the media may highlight certain issues that are relevant to their purposes and policies.

McCombs & Shaw, (1993) believe framing is similar to the second level of agenda-setting. News framing, then, refers to the way in which news media organize and present news to convey a specific story line. The media frame news by making certain aspects of an event or issue more salient than others, directing the audience to consider certain facts and ignore others, thereby affecting perceptions of the event or issue. Frames are manifest in news narratives by the use of specific words and phrases that reinforce certain ideas while other ideas are neglected. Framing from the media standpoint involves the

salience of issues – not only inclusion and omission, but also emphasis on particular aspects of the reality described at the expense of others.

McCombs, Shaw, and Weaver, (1997) as cited in Scheufele, (1999, p.103) see “framing as an extension of agenda setting” Framing is in many ways tied very closely to Agenda Setting theory. Both focus on how media draw the public’s eye to specific topics and in this way they set the agenda. But Framing takes this a step further in that, the way in which the news is presented creates a frame for that information. This is usually a conscious choice by journalists, in this case a frame refers to the way media as gatekeepers organize and present the ideas, events, and topics they cover.

The most common use of frames is in terms of the frame the news or media places on the information they get across. They are thought to influence the perception of the news by the audience, in this way it could be construed as a form of second level agenda-setting. Frames do not only tell the audience what to think about (agenda-setting), but also how to think about that issue (second level agenda setting, otherwise known as the framing theory). Thus, this research, sets out to investigate how the media set the agenda and the framed the coverage of the electoral processes during the 2012 General Elections in Ghana.

2.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter looks at the relevant literature reviewed for the research as well as the theories used in the study. The relevance of elections in a democracy, democracy and elections, electoral system in Ghana, the role of the electoral commission, basic features of Ghana's electoral process, the contribution of the media to Ghana's democracy, the media's role in election and the legal frame work within which the media undertakes its coverage of elections was also looked at as well as the media framing theory, the agenda setting theory, the importance of frames in election coverage and the effects of media framing on the electoral processes.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the various methods and procedures chosen by the researcher in order to carry out the research into how newspapers framed the coverage of the electoral processes leading to Ghana's 2012 general elections.

This study used the qualitative approach in the analysis of the data collected as well as the purposive sampling method. It describes the two methods employed in the collection of data and analysis. The main instrument used in collecting data for the research is content analysis.

This chapter also discusses the unit of analysis, rationalizes the subject of study and choice of newspapers as well as the developments of themes, categorization, coding instruments, coding scheme and important operational definitions that relate to this study.

3.1 Research Approach and Design

A qualitative approach was adopted for the study. The qualitative approach to research forms part of the three main approaches and these are Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Method approach to research (Creswell, 1998). In the qualitative approach, knowledge claims are based on constructivist perspectives or different meanings of individual experiences (Creswell, 2006). Qualitative studies interpret the qualities of social phenomena rather than predict relations between predefined variables (Lindlof & Taylor, 2012). The qualitative approach was suitable for this study because it allowed the

researcher to use content analysis research design which according to (Bobbie 2005) is well suited to the study of communications.

3.2 Period of Data Collection

This study considered the period spanning from February 2012 to November 2012. This is because the electoral processes leading to the conduct of elections in Ghana as stipulated by the 1992 constitution are undertaken within this period.

For this research, the electoral processes have been operationalized to include training of election officials, demarcation of electoral boundaries, registration of voters, exhibition of the voter's register, voter education, transfer of voters and filing of nominations.

February to November (in election years) is the period for major electioneering activities. It is around this period that the Electoral Commission of Ghana and other stakeholders in the election process undertook major activities in preparation for general elections which in this case was held on 7th December, 2012.

3.3 Population of the Study

In every research, it is always difficult to study an entire population. This is time consuming and the necessary resources might also not be available. Moreover, studying an entire population also means that the researcher would have to deal with a large number of subjects. (Kusi, 2012: May, 2001) but according to Wimmer and Dominick, (2003) the time period to be examined should also be relatively long enough so as to make sure that the phenomenon to be studied would have enough time to occur.

The *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* were the two newspapers considered for this study. The *Daily Graphic* was selected because it is distributed nationwide and receives reports from different parts of the country (Amponsah, 2012).

According to Moehler and Singh, (2011) the people of Africa democratic states tend to trust state-owned media. This makes the *DailyGraphic* suitable for this study as it is a state owned newspaper, publishes six days in a week, and is also the oldest and the most widely circulated paper in the Ghana with a daily circulation of about 200,000 which represents about 45 % of Ghana's daily newspaper market circulation (Azanu, 2012: Ofori- Birikorang, 2009). Furthermore, the *Daily Graphic*, owing to its status as a state owned paper plays a major role in the coverage of electoral processes.

Daily Guide is a privately owned Ghanaian newspaper published in Accra by Western Publications Limited. The paper began publication in 1984 under the name *Sports Guide*. During the late 1980s the paper was transformed to become a political and general newspaper and was published biweekly.

The name of the paper changed from *Sports Guide* to *The Guide* in 1986. In 1998, the paper became a daily publication and was hence christened *Daily Guide*. The paper has since become the second largest selling newspaper in Ghana after the *Daily Graphic* (Amevor 2014). The *Daily Guide* publishes six days in a week except Sundays, with about 100,000 circulations daily (Azanu, 2012: Ofori- Birikorang, 2009).

The population for this study involves all issues of the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* published from February 2012 to November 2012, a period of ten months. The population for this study is therefore made up of 261 issues from the *Daily Graphic* and 261 issues from the *Daily Guide*. Thus, the total population for this study is 522. Only

publications from Monday to Saturday were used because these two newspapers are not published on Sundays.

3.4 Sampling Technique

Sampling is an important procedure in the research process because it enhances the quality of inferences made by the researcher stemming from the underlying findings. In qualitative studies, researchers must make a decision as to the number of data to study. Sampling is the method of selecting a suitable sample, or a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population (Tuckman, 1999). According to Lindlof and Taylor, (2002) qualitative researchers adopt sampling in order to direct their choice of observations and respondents to particular characteristics to consider.

The effectiveness of a sampling strategy would be how it enables researchers to methodically collect the necessary information without wasting time and resources and it means making sure that the sampled texts are the ones that are needed in order to answer the research questions (Lindlof & Taylor, (2002).

This research makes use of purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling involves the choice of subjects who possess the information the researcher needs. The purposive sampling strategy is suitable for this study as qualitative studies are often guided by purposive sampling strategies (Lindlof & Taylor, 2012)

Through a purposive sampling technique, a total population of 522 issues of both *Daily Guide* and *Daily Graphic* were selected for this study.

Selection of *DailyGraphic* and *Daily Guide* news stories was based on news items containing the electoral processes in each issue (e.g. “Registration exercise disrupted”). The researcher had to read both the headlines and the leads in order to select the stories as sometimes the headlines did not indicate the electoral process (e.g. “Controversy over 45 Seats”).

3.5 Sample Size

In qualitative studies, researchers must make a sound decision on the number of respondents to recruit which is known as the sample size (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007). Using the theoretical sampling method, the researcher selected 112 issues comprising 1,692 paragraphs from the *Daily Guide* and 117 issues comprising 1,867 paragraphs from the *DailyGraphic*, and a sample size of 229 issues comprising 3,559 paragraphs was obtained and analyzed for the study.

The sample sizes for both newspapers are shown in the tables below:

Table1:This table shows the number of newspapers sampled for both the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*.

	<i>Daily Graphic</i>	<i>Daily Guide</i>
Month	Number Sampled	Number Sampled
February	15	12
March	21	32
April	27	15
May	5	13
June	1	6
July	2	6
August	6	1
September	32	21
October	3	5
November	5	1
Total	117	112

Table 2: This table shows the number of paragraphs analyzed in both the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*.

	<i>Daily Graphic</i>	<i>Daily Guide</i>
Month	Number of Paragraphs	Number of Paragraphs
February	245	213
March	395	471
April	352	242
May	67	155
June	20	90
July	44	80
August	70	20
September	549	313
October	31	75
November	94	33
Total	1,867	1,692

3.6 Data Collection Method

This is basically the process used to collect the information needed to answer the research questions. The main source of data collection used in this research is documents. Specifically, newspapers were used as an investigative tool to examine news stories published in these newspapers selected for the study. The researcher gathered information from the hard copies of news stories relating to the electoral processes from the Libraries of the Department of Communication and Media Studies and the University of Education, Winneba. Materials such as note pads, pens and sheets of paper were used to code and tally themes derived from the newspapers.

3.7 Data Collection Instrument

The use of content/document analysis as a research method is a systematic and objective means of describing and measuring phenomenon (Krippendorff, 1980; Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Sandelowski, 1995) and it is also used as a method for analyzing documents. Content analysis allows the researcher to test theoretical issues to enhance understanding of the data and through content analysis; it is possible to categorize words into fewer content-related categories because according to (Cavanagh, 1997) words, phrases and the like share the same meaning when classified into the same categories. The main techniques employed for data gathering was content analysis.

3.7.1 Content Analysis

According to Stemple, (1989) content analysis is a systematic procedure used to compress many words of a text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding. To Stemler, (2001) content analysis enables researchers to shift through large volumes of data with relative ease in a systematic fashion while Berelson, (1971) as cited in Johnson, (2009) describes content analysis as a research method which focuses on the real content and features within a media text and he goes on further to say that content analysis actually helps in the determination of the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters or words within a text and this helps to quantify their presence in an objective manner.

Wimmer and Dominick, (2003) citing Kerlinger, (2000) are of the opinion that content analysis' is "a method of analyzing and studying communication in an objective, quantitative and systematic manner for the purposes of measuring variables" (p.141). By Kerlinger, (2000) definition, the research design of content analysis can be broken into three stages and these are systematic, objective and quantitative. These stages are to ensure that the process of content analysis follows the same rules and procedures, thereby ensuring that the researcher deals directly with the content whilst doing away with any personal experiences.

Thus in the researcher's quest to analyze how newspapers framed the coverage of the electoral processes leading to the 2012 General Elections, there is the need to content-analyze the selected news articles. To Krippendorff, (2004) content analysis is mostly used in media studies to analyze units of news articles such as headlines and paragraphs in the context of framing theory.

This means that for the researcher to examine how frames are used there is the need to content -analyze the selected news articles by focusing on the paragraph as the unit of analysis in this study in ordered to sort out larger amount of phrases and words into fewer categories to be able to convey meaning (Cavanagh, 1997).

3.7.2 Unit of Analysis

According to Wimmer and Dominick, (2003) unit of analysis is the smallest element of content analysis and it is the basic unit of the text to be classified during content analysis. Unit of analysis refers to the basic or smallest unit which would be analyzed during content analysis as according to Weber, (1990) one of the important decisions any researcher must make is to define the coding unit. According to Tankard, (2001), the means of identifying and measuring news frames are: headlines, leads, subheads, photographs, photo captions, source selection, quotes, statistics and charts, concluding statements, quote selection, pull quotes, logos and paragraphs. It therefore means assigning a code to a text of any size, as long as that text represents a single theme or issue of relevance to the research questions.

This study used paragraphs as the principal unit of analysis in investigating how the newspapers framed the coverage of the electoral processes leading to the 2012 General Elections.

3.7.3 Coding and Categorization Procedure

Effective content analysis requires that all sampled units are placed in a category or theme. The number of themes or categories depends on the nature of the text and the judgment of coders. Thus, coders had to identify a relationship among the different elements before they are grouped under one category. Content analysis requires that the researcher breaks down the text into smaller categories or themes known as unit and then a coding scheme is derived from developing classification systems or categories into which each sampled unit must be placed for statistical purposes. This means coding or breaking down of the text into manageable categories or units for examination through theoretical analysis.

Lindlof and Taylor, (2002) are of the opinion that the first systematic effort at data analysis usually comes with the creation of categories and a coding scheme. To them, categorization is the process of classifying the meaning of a unit of data with respect to themes. Thus for this study, the news stories for this research were manually selected and hard copies obtained from the Libraries of the Department of Communication and Media Studies and the University of Education, Winneba.

Stemple, (1989) proposed that any good researcher who wishes to undertake a study using content analysis has to deal with four methodological issues: selection of units of analysis, developing categories, sampling appropriate content, and checking reliability of coding while Krippendoff, (2004) are of the opinion that categories must be mutually exclusive so that a word, a paragraph or a theme belongs in one and only one category. Also, the categories must be exhaustive so that all units examined fit in an appropriate category.

As a first step in the analysis, the researcher went through the newspapers and identified all the stories relating to the electoral processes in both newspapers. The coding process started by the designing of a coding instrument and to Lindlof and Taylor, (2002) this is very important as the creation of categories and coding schemes helps in content analysis. The columns included on the coding instrument are; name of newspaper, date of publication, issue number, electoral process, thematic categories, and title of story. This made identification easier and enhanced the tracing of the individual units as well as making sure that the total number of paragraphs in each newspaper was counted and categorized into various themes.

The coding instrument also provided space for recording direct quotes where necessary and the total number of paragraphs in each news story as well as specific themes under which the categories would be classified (see appendix 1).

The data obtained for this study were coded into nine news frames and their sub-categories. The following are the nine frames with their sub-categories that came out of the study:

Legality: *illegality, gerrymandering, unconstitutionality of the creation of new constituencies*

Technicality and Logistics: *intermittent breakdown of kits, faulty equipment, inadequate training of EC Officials, shortage of materials, inadequate logistics*

Stakeholder Participation: *public consensus needed, EC must involve political parties*

Education: *poor publicity, lack of education*

Vigilance: *public must be watchful during registration, alertness crucial for Ghanaians*

Peace and Security: *police halt macho men, IPAC, police guard biometric registration*

Violence: *bloodbath at registration centers, gunshots at centers*

Patronage: *figures not encouraging, exhibition officials sleeping, dull start of exercise*

Success: *BVR progressing steadily, political parties satisfied with biometric registration*

The nine frames that emerged from the analysis of the data were operationally defined to facilitate the coding process. The definitions are as follows:

Legality: These include news stories that are framed around the legality of the creation of new constituencies by the Electoral Commission as well as calls by several stakeholders in the electoral process questioning the wisdom in creating new constituencies. Themes and expressions that define this frame include Gerrymandering and unconstitutionality of the creation of new constituencies.

Technicality and Logistics: These include news stories that are framed around the technical and logistical challenges that were associated with the registration process as well as the lack of professionalism exhibited by EC Officials, long queues at registration centers as well as intermittent breakdown of kits. Themes and expressions that define this frame include intermittent breakdown of kits and faulty equipment.

Stakeholder Participation: These include news stories that are framed around the lack of involvement of key stakeholders during the demarcation process. Themes and expressions that define this frame include public consensus needed, EC must involve political parties.

Education: These include news stories that are framed around education of the electorate by both the Electoral Commission and various stakeholders like the media and Political

parties. Themes and expressions that define this frame include poor publicity, lack of education.

Vigilance: These include news stories that are framed around the media and the public. These stories urged both the media and the general public to serve as vigilante during the registration process to ensure that foreigners and minors do not get their names onto Ghana's electoral register. Themes and expressions that define this frame include public must be watchful during registration, alertness crucial for Ghanaians.

Peace and Security: These include news stories that are framed around the police providing security at all the registration centers and arrest of people who ferment trouble at registration centers. Themes and expressions that define this frame include police halt macho men, IPAC, police guard biometric registration.

Violence: These include news stories that are framed around gunshots and confusion during the registration process. Themes and expressions that define this frame include bloodbath at registration centers, gunshots at centers.

Patronage: These include news stories that are framed around the exhibition centers and these news stories accuse the Electoral Commission of poor publicity. Themes and expressions that define this frame include exhibition officials sleeping, dull start of exercise.

Success: These include news stories that are framed around the successful introduction of the biometric registration exercise and the large number of people who had registered. Themes and expressions that define this frame include BVR progressing steadily, political parties satisfied with biometric registration.

The researcher further recruited two graduate students of the University of Education, Winneba to serve as coders for the project. The coding was done based on the coding protocol established by the researcher (see Appendix 2). The two assistants were taken through training and piloting to ensure that they adequately understood the coding process as according to Krippendorff, (2004) training of coders is mandatory in content analysis. The coders practiced coding on ten example stories from both newspapers independent of each other. Then everyone came together to discuss each story and how they were categorized and this was extremely helpful in making sure that everyone understood the coding protocol and this also ensured that personal bias and differences in interpretation were minimized.

There is the need to test for inter coder reliability as according to Krippendorff, (2004) this enables the researcher to moderate the level of subjectivity as well as minimize errors that might occur because of the different backgrounds of the coders. Inter coder agreement is needed in content analysis because it measures only “the extent to which the different coders tend to assign exactly the same rating to each object” (Krippendorff, 2004,p. 98). For the purpose of reducing errors, the two assistants were made to operate independent of each other during the coding process for the purpose of moderating the level of subjectivity and to reduce the occurrence of errors, arising from the varied background of coders. Inter coder reliability between the two coders was 86%.

3.8 Validity and Reliability of the Study

Validity and reliability are very important issues in every qualitative research. Validity refers to the correct procedures applied to find answers to a research question as well as the quality of a measurement procedure that provides accuracy and reliability refers to the quality of a measurement procedure that provides repeatability and accuracy.

Validity of research instrument is concerned with the meaningfulness of research components. This is essential because researchers are concerned with whether they are measuring what they intended to measure (Drost, 2005). Keyton, (2001 pp. 72) states that “instead of focusing on what is found, most qualitative researchers focus on the reliability and validity of the techniques or process used in collecting and analyzing data. In qualitative research, validity is achieved when the written account or description represents accurately the features of the communication observed” but Krippendoff, 2004 is of the opinion that it is not always necessary to use all these methods in checking the validity of a study.

Creswell, (1998) has prescribed prolonged engagement and observation of the research phenomenon, triangulation, peer review and debriefing, negative case analysis, clarification of research bias, member checking, rich-thick description as well as external audits as methods of checking validity in a qualitative research but he agrees that in qualitative research, at least two of these verification procedures must be used.

This research made use of prolonged engagement and observation of the research phenomenon by making sure that the time period for the research is relatively long enough so as to make sure that the phenomenon to be studied would have enough time to

occur. (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003) This informed the choice of the time frame of February to November, 2012 for the study. Multiple theoretical methods as proposed by Cohen and Crabtree, (2006) is when multiple methods are used to enhance deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study and that is why the researcher used both the framing and agenda setting theories in order to analyze and understand all the data collected.

3.9 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the methodology employed to assess newspaper the coverage of the electoral processes in the 2012 general election. The approach to the study was qualitative and the data was obtained through semi-structured respondent interviews and content analysis. The *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* were the two selected newspapers for the study owing to their credibility and wide circulation. The unit of analysis was front page stories on electoral processes and these were collected from the period spanning February to November 2012. An effort was also made to ensure that the data obtained for the study was valid and the processes were reliable.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings and discussions of the data collected from both *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* newspapers on the electoral processes. These findings and discussions answer the research questions raised in chapter one of this study. The results are presented first through a description of the data analyzed from the newspapers. The analysis, findings and discussions in this chapter were guided by the agenda setting theory by McCombs and Shaw, (1993) and the framing theory of Entman (1993). The research seeks to find out:

1. Which electoral process received the most coverage during Ghana's 2012 elections?
2. What are the dominant frames used by newspapers in the coverage of the electoral processes leading to Ghana's 2012 elections?

4.1. RQ1: Which electoral process received the most coverage during Ghana's 2012 elections?

This research question seeks to find out which of the electoral processes that received the most coverage during Ghana's 2012 general elections.

Table 3: Media and the Coverage of the Electoral Process that received the most Coverage.

Electoral Processes	<i>Daily Graphic</i>		<i>Daily Guide</i>		Cumulative Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Training of electoral officials	18	0.9%	-	-	18	0.6%
Voter education	133	7.2%	107	6.3%	240	6.7%
Demarcation	502	26.9%	494	29.2	996	27.9%
Registration	905	48.5%	979	57.9	1,884	52.9%
Exhibition	141	7.6%	100	5.9%	241	6.8%
Transfer of votes	-	-	12	0.7%	12	0.3%
Filing of nominations	168	8.9%	-	-	168	4.8%
Total	1,867	100%	1,692	100%	3,559	100%

The total space measured in paragraph-length for the electoral process that received the most coverage in Ghana's 2012 general elections for the two newspapers analyzed was 3559 paragraphs. Out of that number, registration of eligible voters received the most coverage with 1,884 paragraphs representing 52.9%.

The demarcation of electoral boundaries placed second with 996 paragraphs representing 27.9%. The exhibition of the voters register placed third with 241 paragraphs representing 6.8%. Voter education having 240 paragraphs representing 6.7% placed

fourth, with filing of nominations by candidates having 168 paragraphs representing 4.8% in fifth place, recruitment and training of electoral officials having 18 paragraphs representing 0.6% in sixth place and transfer of votes having 12 paragraphs representing 0.3% as the process having the least coverage out of the total paragraphs analyzed.

Analyzing the data collected from the two newspapers on the electoral process, registration received the most coverage and this reinforces McCombs, (1993) opinion that the length of a story in a newspaper determines its importance and this suggests that editors and journalists set the agenda by influencing the way we think and what current issues are important. The media concentrated on the registration process more than the other processes thereby leading the public to perceive the registration process as being more important than others.

4.1.1 Recruitment and Training of Electoral Officials

From the data analyzed and from the cumulative table above, *Daily Graphic* which is state owned and therefore prides itself as having nationwide coverage and is also unbiased in its reportage did not give much space in its paper to the training and recruitment of electoral officials.

Out of a total of 1,867 paragraphs analyzed, *Daily Graphic* gave only 18 paragraphs representing 0.9% to the training of electoral officials.

These electoral officials, according to the electoral laws of Ghana are temporary staff and are employed by the Electoral Commission every election year to assist in the electoral processes by serving as registration officials, exhibition officials, registration supervisors

among other duties are very important as the success of any of the electoral processes depends largely upon them because they work at the grassroots.

The *Daily Guide* did not give any space in its paper to the training and recruitment of electoral officials in their agenda-setting thereby defeating the crucial role that newspapers play of informing and educating society. Thus from the coverage of the electoral process the *Daily*

Guide sets the agenda by not devoting any space to the training and recruitment of electoral officials and thereby telling the public that it was not an important part of the electoral process.

4.1.2 Voter Education

Both newspapers devoted a total of 240 paragraphs representing 6.7% of the total paragraphs analyzed to voter education. According to Chapter 7, Article 45, Clause (d) of the 1992 constitution of Ghana, the electoral commission shall educate the people on the electoral process and its functions. This is one of the core functions of the Electoral Commission and according to the electoral laws of Ghana; the electorate must be educated on every electoral process.

The *Daily Graphic* devoted a total of 133 paragraphs representing 6.7% of the total paragraphs of 1867 analyzed to voter education. Voter education was mainly limited to the registration process and the *Daily Guide* newspaper devoted a total of 107 paragraphs representing a percentage of 6.3 % to voter education.

Thus *Daily Graphic* devoted more space in its paper to voter education than the *Daily Guide*. To support this argument, three headlines from the *Daily Graphic* have been provided as an illustration:

Headline: Biometric voter's registration. All you need to know

(2012, March, 22) *Daily Graphic*, p.13

The headline above from the *Daily Graphic* feature article was done purposively by the paper to educate the electorate and the general public on the biometric registration. This also serves as a way of scrutinizing the registration process itself in order to evaluate its fairness, efficiency, and integrity.

Headline: It's illegal to prevent people from registering- EC

(2012, April, 04) *Daily Graphic*, p.16

This news story is about the Electoral Commission's Public Affairs Director, Mr. Owusu Parry educating the electorate on registration procedures but this was after the chaos and confusion that characterized the registration process at the various centers and due to the fact that EC did not provide enough education as can be seen from the date the news article was published. The registration process in the 2012 general elections started on the 24th of March and ended on 5th May.

This lack of effective education on the part of the Electoral Commission is contrary to its function of providing education to the electorate on the electoral processes.

Headline: Bio-registration kits do not cause cancer-Agbanu

(2012, February, 21) *Daily Graphic*, p.17

According to the *Daily Graphic* story, Ghanaians were scared that the biometric machine which the Electoral Commission proposed to use during the registration process had health implications and hence the education by the EC Officer for Awutu-Senya in the Central Region. This lack of trust by the citizens in the registration machines and process might be due to the fact that the media who are supposed to educate the citizens about the electoral processes failed to do so due to agenda setting of the media houses in their coverage of the electoral process as well as their framing of the process around. This might account for the registration process being the electoral process highlights some of the processes as more important than the rest.

The *Daily Guide* newspaper is a privately owned newspaper and has built a name for itself as being the best-selling private newspaper in Ghana. The act of deciding what electoral news story to include in the paper automatically signifies that certain kinds of political stories will be excluded since space is very limited.

The cause of the difference in news coverage could be due to the financial backing behind the state owned media and the motives that drive them whilst the private owned newspapers have to sell stories in order to make profits (Djankov, McLeish, Nenova, & Shleifer, 2003 pg. 341-381)

Analysis from the *Daily Guide* newspaper shows that the paper devoted 107 paragraphs representing 6.7% to education. Interestingly, the *Daily Guide* reported on efforts made by EC to educate diverse groups of people like MUSIGA rather than on grassroots education of the electorate thereby setting the agenda and then framing the registration process around lack of education for the electorate by EC. An illustration is provided below:

Headline: EC Meets Religious Leaders

(2012, March, 13) *Daily Guide*, p.6

Headline: EC Hosts Musiga

(2012, March, 21) *Daily Guide*, p.10

According to Atkinson-Jordan, (2008) the election management body, political parties, media and civil society organizations are four stakeholders that help in the organization of elections. Each of these four stakeholders has its own roles that it plays in the electoral process. Omotola, (2009) believes that the management of the electoral processes is very important because winners and losers can only accept the results of the electoral processes leading to elections as long as the election meet established standards like participation of all stakeholders in the electoral process.

The *Daily Guide* seems to have through the use of the frame of patronage set the agenda for the violence and confusion that characterized the registration process by implying that the Electoral Commission did not provide enough education for the electorate and stakeholders in the electoral processes. These headlines from the paper depict this:

Headline: Biometric registration- NPP wants more details

(2012, February, 24) *Daily Guide*, p.10

Headline: Atiwa MP calls for voter education

(2012, March, 12) *Daily Guide*, p.10

Headline: Step up Education on Biometric Registration

(2012, May, 02) *Daily Guide*, p.20

4.1.3 Demarcation

Article 47(1) of Ghana's constitution (1992), states that Ghana shall be divided into as many constituencies for the purpose of election of members of Parliament as the Electoral Commission may prescribe, and each constituency shall be represented by one Member of Parliament.

Demarcation is a very important part of the electoral process as it determines the number of constituencies, electoral areas and polling stations Ghana will have. Demarcation of electoral boundaries placed second in both the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*.

The *Daily Graphic* devoted a total of 502 paragraphs, representing 26.9% to the demarcation process while *Daily Guide* devoted a total of 494 paragraphs representing 29.2% to it.

During the 2012 general elections, both the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* framed the coverage of the demarcation process around confusion and controversy as can be seen by these headlines:

Headline: CONTROVERSY DEEPENS. Over new Constituencies

(2012, September, 01) *Daily Graphic*, p.1

Headline: Creation of constituencies by EC. IT'S AN ILLEGALITY-Says

Minority

(2012, September, 09) *Daily Graphic*, p.1

These stories are located on the front page of the *Daily Graphic* and the use of a large typeface than the other headlines set the agenda by telling the reader that this is the most important story of the day and then framing the story around controversy. This opinion is supported by Gross (2006) who believes that the media will frame issues by highlighting

certain aspects of an event or procedure thereby guiding the thoughts of reader's towards it.

Headline: Confusion over new districts

(2012, July, 18) *Daily Guide*, p.2

Headline: 45 New Seats hit snag

(2012, September, 17) *Daily Guide*, p.6

4.1.4 Registration

Every Citizen of Ghana of eighteen years of age, or above, and of sound mind, has the right to vote, and is entitled to be registered as a voter, for the purposes of public elections and referenda. (Republic of Ghana Constitution, 1992) In every democracy, elections are the mechanisms by which government officials are held accountable and for a citizen to be able to vote, that citizen must first be registered.

According to Squire, Wolfinger and Glass, (1987, p.47), "registration is virtually equivalent to voting". The registration process received the most coverage with 1,888 paragraphs representing 52.9% out of the total of 3559 paragraphs analyzed. This shows the importance the media attached to the registration process. In the *Daily Graphic*, the registration process had the most coverage with 905 paragraphs representing 48.5% out of the total paragraphs analyzed. The *Daily Graphic* framed the registration process around success and also provided education on the process as can be seen from the examples below:

Headline: Biometric registration: 6.5 million register

(2012, April, 04) *Daily Graphic*, p.1

Headline: Four parties satisfied with registration exercise

(2012, April, 19) *Daily Graphic*, p.17

Headline: Biometric voter's registration- All you need to know

(2012, March, 22) *Daily Graphic*, p.13

The *Daily Guide* had the registration process as the electoral process that received the most coverage with a total of 979 paragraphs representing 57.9% of all newspapers analyzed. *DailyGuide* framed the registration process around violence and sensationalism and this set the agenda for stakeholders in the electoral process to perceive the registration process as not being successful. These headlines illustrate this point:

Headline: Gunshots rock biometric

(2012, March, 26) *Daily Guide*, p.1

Headline: One killed over Biometric

(2012, March, 27) *Daily Guide*, p.6

Headline: Bloodbath mars Techiman registration

(2012, March, 28) *Daily Guide*, p.16

Analyses of these stories further confirm that the *Daily Guide* framed the registration process around sensationalism. The story about bloodbath at Techiman over registration is an example of sensationalism in news coverage as bloodbath means a massacre but the story is about one man who was shot at Techiman during the registration process.

4.1.5 Exhibition

The Electoral Commission is mandated by the constitution to display the provisional voter's register at each polling station for public inspection. This is to enable the public verify whether the details in the provisional voter's register are the same as those on their identification cards.

The *Daily Graphic* gave a total of 141 paragraphs representing 7.6% of the total paragraphs analyzed. The *Daily Graphic* framed the coverage of the exhibition process around low patronage as can be seen from these examples below:

Headline: Exhibition of voter's register begins on slow note

(2012, September, 03) *Daily Graphic*, p.1

Headline: Exhibition of voter's register.... Turnout still slow

.....No show at some exhibition centers

(2012, September, 05) *Daily Graphic*, p.7

The *Daily Guide* had 100 paragraphs representing 5.9% of the total paragraphs analyzed.

The *Daily Guide* also framed the exhibition process around low patronage as can be seen from these examples:

Headline: Low Turnout at Tema Voter's Exhibition

(2012, September, 03) *Daily Graphic*, p.10

Headline: Dull start for register- Exhibition

(2012, September, 03) *Daily Graphic*, p.10

It is interesting to note that both the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* framed the exhibition process around low patronage.

4.1.6 Transfer of Votes

This process affords a registered voter who has moved from his constituency to another constituency to transfer his vote so as not to be disenfranchised during elections. Transfer of votes emerged as the electoral process that received the least coverage during Ghana's 2012 general elections with a total of 12 paragraphs representing 0.3% out of the 3559 paragraphs analyzed.

It is also interesting to note that the *Daily Guide* was the only paper which gave space in its paper to the transfer of votes. However, it was located on page 14 of the paper and was framed around violence as the headline below illustrates:

Headline: Macho men invade Asutifi EC

(2012, October, 12) *Daily Graphic*, p.14

4.1.7 Filing of Nomination

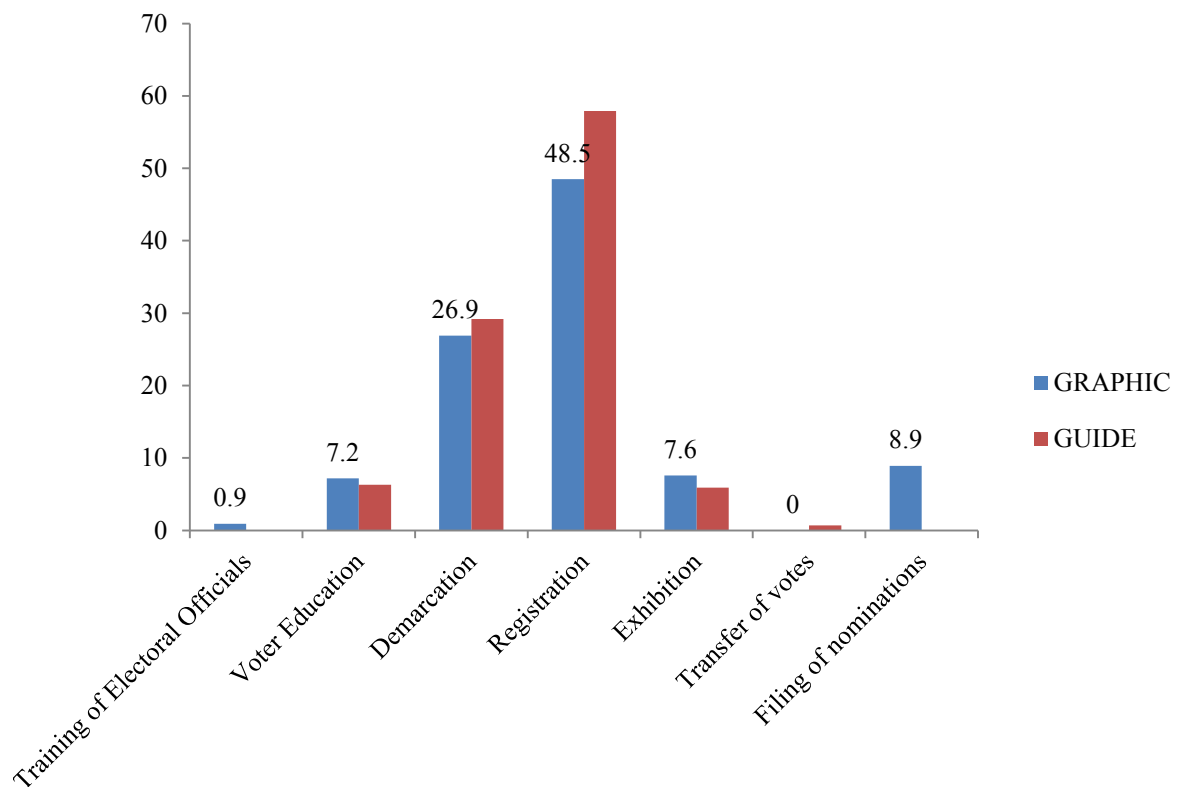
Nomination of candidates placed fifth out of the seven electoral processes having a total of 168 paragraphs representing 4.8%. *Daily Graphic* was the only paper which covered the nomination process. This finding from this research supports McQuail, (2005) who concludes in his research on the agenda setting theory that the media can establish the main issues that will be the subject of discussions by ranking and ordering them.

Thus, both the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* placed more importance on some processes to the neglect of others and that is why to Cohen, (1963) and McCombs and Shaw, (1972) once the mass media emphasize a topic, the audience or public receiving the message will consider this topic to be important.

Discussions of the electoral process that received the most coverage are summarized below:

Coverage of the electoral processes is captured graphically below:

Fig 1: Bar Graph of the Cumulative Frequency of the Coverage of the Electoral Processes.



4.2 RQ2: What are the frames used by newspapers in the coverage of the electoral processes leading to Ghana's 2012 elections?

This research question seeks to find out the frames used by the newspapers in representing the various electoral processes. The frames were developed from the

researcher's thematic coding of *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers. Nine frames emerged during the analyses.

Below are the cumulative frequency distributions of news frames in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers.

Table4: Cumulative Frequency Distribution of Frames in the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*

Frames	<i>Daily Graphic</i>	<i>Daily Guide</i>	Total
Legality	330(22.7%)	348(25.3%)	678(24.0%)
Technicality and Logistics	181(12.4%)	220(16.0%)	401(14.2%)
Stakeholder Participation	220(15.1%)	170(13.1%)	390(13.8%)
Education	198(13.6%)	190(13.8%)	388(13.7%)
Vigilance	150(10.3%)	100(7.3%)	250(8.9%)
Peace and Security	120(8.3%)	90(6.6%)	210(7.5%)
Violence	96(6.6%)	111(8.0%)	207(7.4%)
Patronage	101(6.9%)	87(6.3%)	188(6.7%)
Success	60(4.1%)	48(3.5%)	108(3.8%)
Total	1,456(100%)	1,364(100%)	2,820(100%)

4.2.1 Legality

A look at the table above clearly indicates that the frame of legality ranked the highest out of all the frames that emerged during the coding procedure. Legality had a total of 678 themes representing 24.0% of all thematic issues. *Daily Guide* newspaper had the

highest thematic issues for the frame of legality with 348 themes representing 25.3% while the *Daily Graphic* had the lowest with 330 thematic issues representing 22.7%. It is interesting to note that the frame of legality was centered on the demarcation of electoral boundaries.

Both newspapers had stories which questioned the EC's decision to create new districts and the following words such as writs, illegality, gerrymandering, take legal action and lawfulness are indicators to the frame of legality. These excerpts from both newspapers show why legality of the demarcation process became a challenge for Ghana during the electoral processes with the religious leaders stepping in before peace was restored.

The Electoral Commission's persistence in creating 45 additional constituencies practically two months before the 2012 elections bodes ill for the integrity of the polls and consequently, the peace and stability of the nation". (Dr. NyahoNyahoTamlakole, leading member of the NPP).

(2012, September, 05) *Daily Graphic*, p.16

Briefing the media just after the closed-door meeting yesterday, the convener, the most Rev Bishop Joseph Osei-Bonsu, who is also the President of the Catholic Bishops Conference, stated that all the Political Parties had agreed to contest the 45 new constituencies for the sake of rule of law.

(2012, October, 03) *Daily Graphic*, p.16

Four persons, Attah Dwomoh, Abdul-Rahman Abubakari, Margaret Senkyira and welford Quarcoo want an Accra Fast Track High Court to restrain the EC from going ahead with the creation of any illegal new districts till the final determination of the substantive case.

(2012, July, 20) *Daily Guide*, p.2

“We all agreed that the EC has the constitutional right to create the constituencies”.Rev Osei-Bonsu)

(2012, October,03) *Daily Guide*, p.6

The frame of legality was used to frame the demarcation process by the media and this might perhaps come about because of the adamant stand taken by the Chairman of the Electoral Commission towards stakeholders during this process as can be seen from the excerpt below;

“The Commission was bent on creating the new constituencies unless there was a judicial review to prevent it from doing so”. (Dr. Kwadwo Afari-Gyan)

(2012, October,03) *Daily Graphic*, p.1

Article 47(5) states that the Electoral Commission shall review the division of Ghana into constituencies at intervals of not less than seven years, or within twelve months after the publication of the enumeration figures after the holding of a census of the population of Ghana, whichever is earlier, and may as a result, alter the constituencies but findings from this study show that as the electoral process of demarcation electoral boundaries determines who gets elected to parliament in Ghana, the media through agenda setting which made the process more prominent in its coverage and by framing the demarcation process around legality influenced the public’s reaction and understanding of the demarcation process with the whole country against the creation of new districts.

4.2.2 Technicality and Logistics

This is the frame with the second highest thematic issues with a frequency of 401 representing 14.2% out of 2,820 themes with the *Daily Guide* having the highest thematic

issues. The frame of technicality and logistics has the following words as indicators, breakdown of kits, shortage of materials, training needed, hitches here and there, faulty equipment, intermittent breakdowns and crazy queues and the picture that comes immediately into the mind of the reader on seeing these words is one of despair as they imagine spending the whole day just to register in order to vote. Both newspapers employed the frame of technicality and logistics to describe the registration process as seen from the examples below:

“Malfunctioning printers and laptops and the inability of thumbprint machines to connect the machines to the computers were some of the challenges which confronted the exercise at some centers”.

(2012, March, 26) *Daily Graphic*, p.1

Some registered voters expressed reservations about the quality of the new voter’s identity cards. Some of them were not happy at the way some of the officers handled the exercise and called on the EC to give the officers more training.

(2012, March, 26) *Daily Graphic*, p.32

“The intermittent breakdown of scanners, cameras and other equipment, according to polling station officials, was among the many reasons accounting for the delay in the exercise”

(2012, March, 27) *Daily Guide*, p.16

“At some of the centers, registration officers demanded to see birth certificates of registrants before they could be registered. However, as per the rules officers do not have the right to demand for such documents”.

(2012, March, 27) *Daily Guide*, p.16

Both newspapers framed the first and second phase of the registration process as being fraught with frequent breakdown of the registration kits and printers thereby causing long queues and confusion at the registration centers.

4.2.3 Stakeholder Participation

The frame of stakeholder participation ranked third in the frames used to represent the electoral processes. Out of the total frequency of 2,820 thematic issues, the frame of stakeholder participation had 390 thematic issues representing 13.8%. Out of this number, *Daily Graphic* had the highest with 220 representing 15.1% and *Daily Guide* had the lowest with 170 representing 13.1%.

The frame of stakeholder participation centered mostly around the demarcation process and the registration process with both the media, and Ghanaians calling on the Electoral Commission to allow greater participation in the electoral processes with these key words such as: public consensus needed, collaboration necessary, participation crucial, Political parties must be involved as indicators of the themes

Stakeholders in any democracy are the Election Management Body, political parties; civil society organizations, media and the general public whose involvement in the electoral process is paramount as the outcome of any election may either be accepted or rejected depending on their contribution to the electoral process (Osman, 2009).

During the 2012 general elections, issues surrounding the frame of stakeholder participation has to do with the Electoral Commission's lack of involvement of key stakeholders in its electoral processes leading to a lot of controversy over some of the

processes as can be seen from these excerpts from both the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Graphic*:

“Religious bodies in the country have been tasked to engage officials of the EC to increase awareness of the biometric voter registration process”

(2012, March, 06) *Daily Graphic*, p.12

“Civil Society groups have cautioned that the Electoral Commission’s alleged hasty decision to increase Ghana’s constituencies from 230 to 275 can lead to chaos and conflicts during the 2012 elections”.

(2012, September, 01) *Daily Guide*, p.2.

4.2.4 Education

The frame of education emerged as the fourth highest frame among the nine frames with the *Daily Graphic* having 198 thematic issues representing 13.6% and the *Daily Guide* had 190 thematic issues representing 13.8% thematic issues making up a total of 388 representing 13.7% thematic issues. According to the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, it is the duty of the Electoral Commission to provide education to the electorate on all of the electoral processes and both newspapers using words such as EC urged to provide education, lack of education, poor publicity, more details needed, voter education necessary, intensify education and step up education as can be seen from these extract below:

“Ineffective communication of the schedules for the registration exercise added to the frustration of some applicants who visited registration centers which were not part of the first phase of the exercise”.

(2012, March, 26) *Daily Graphic*, p.32

“Exhibition officers at the known exhibition centers told the Daily Guide the exercise was not publicized adequately noting that the Electoral Commission must intensify education”.

(2012, September, 03) *Daily Guide*, p.10

Education frame placed fourth among the dominant frames and the way the media framed this process supports Akintayo (2010), findings that the election management bodies are not providing enough voter education and the importance of education in the electoral process cannot be underestimated as it determines whether stakeholders accept or reject election results.

4.2.5 Vigilance

The frame of vigilance was the fifth frame used by newspapers to represent the electoral process. The frame of vigilance was especially used to describe the registration process. This frame had a frequency of 250 themes representing 8.9% thematic issues. Out of this number, *Daily Graphic* had a frequency of 150 themes representing 10.3% thematic issues and the *Daily Guide* had a frequency of 100 themes representing 7.3% thematic issues.

Among the thematic issues both newspapers used for the frame of vigilance include: alert, watchful, attentive, let's remain vigilant. The frame of vigilance although it was the fifth frame is very important because the Electoral Commission and all stakeholders in the electoral process came together to call for vigilance during the registration process to ensure that minors and foreigners do not get their names onto Ghana's electoral register.

These excerpts below show the importance both newspapers attach to the frame of vigilance:

A member of the national communication team of NDC, Mr. Abu Kasangbata has called on chiefs, MP's and other influential people in the constituencies and districts along the country's borders to remain vigilant when the nationwide biometric registration exercise commences.

(2012, March, 03) *Daily Graphic*, p.13

Let all Ghanaians be vigilante as the EC told us because the biometric registration would not achieve its desired objective when we relax and allow desperate politicians to abuse the system through such anomalies like getting minors and foreigners to register, malfeasances which cannot be isolated by the system.

(2012, April, 25) *Daily Guide*, p.4

4.2.6 Peace and security

The frame of peace and security was the sixth frame with the *Daily Graphic* having 120 themes representing 8.3% thematic issues and the *Daily Guide* having 90 themes representing 6.9% thematic issues out of the frequency of 2,820 themes. Indicators in both newspapers that made reference to the frame of peace and security include: arrest, stealing, police halt macho men, police curb tension, stability, IPAC, prosecution and police guard biometric.

The role of the security forces in any democracy cannot be underestimated as they make sure that there is peace and security in the country and Ghana is no exception. During Ghana's 2012 general elections, the security forces made sure that the electorates were

well protected during all the electoral processes. The following excerpts from both newspapers on the frame of peace and security have been provided as illustration:

Eight macho men yesterday attempted to disrupt a collation exercise being undertaken by the Manhyia Sub-Metro biometric registration officers at Dicheonso a suburb of Kumasi, but the timely intervention of the police saved the situation.

(2012, April, 04) *Daily Graphic*, p.16

This excerpt from the Ashanti Regional Police Commander illustrates the frame of peace and security.

He explained that the occurrence of violence and tension at some centers had influenced his outfit's decision to station police personnel at the various centers, assuring that the police were on top of security in the region so nobody should be frightened.

(2012, March, 27) *Daily Guide*, p.6

4.2.7 Violence

The frame of violence was employed to cover the registration process. The constitution of Ghana, in article 42 states that every citizen of Ghana of eighteen years of age or above and of sound mind has the right to vote and is entitled to be registered as a voter for the purposes of public elections and referenda. This shows that the registration process is very important as this gives citizens the power to choose or reject leaders during elections.

During the coverage of the electoral processes in 2012, the *Daily Graphic* had the lowest thematic issues of 96 representing 6.6% and the *Daily Guide* had the highest with 111

thematic issues representing 8.0%. The frame of violence is the seventh frame and words such as: shooting, attack, gunshots, killing, blows, bloodbath, thugs, controversy, furor and confusion are indicators of this frame. Below are some examples from both newspapers that show the frame of Violence:

The EC Chairman, who was speaking to the Daily Graphic in Accra in an interview, asked the police to deal ruthlessly with people who flouted electoral regulations and took the law into their own hands at various registration centers

(2012, April, 0) *Daily Graphic*, p.6

The biometric registration at Taakofiano polling station in the Techiman Municipality in the Ashanti Region turned bloody when a group of NDC macho men armed with machetes and guns stormed the center and started shooting people who had queued to register.

(2012, March, 28) *Daily Guide*, p.16

4.2.8 Patronage

The frame of patronage ranked eighth out of the nine frames that both newspapers used in the coverage of the electoral processes during the 2012 general elections. Out of the frequency of 2,820 themes, the *Daily Graphic* had the highest with 101 thematic issues representing 6.9% while the *Daily Guide* had 87 thematic issues representing 6.3%

The frame of patronage was used mostly to cover the last phase of the registration process and the exhibition process with both newspapers using words such as: low turnout, dull start for register exhibition, sleeping exhibition officials and figures not encouraging and the examples below illustrate how the newspapers applied the frame of low patronage to the coverage of the electoral processes:

“The ten day exhibition of the biometric voters register ends today with reports of low patronage across the country”

(2012, September, 01) *Daily Graphic*, p.49

“During a visit by Daily Guide to most of the centers yesterday, the exhibition officers at the various centers were seen listening to radio and playing music on their phones”

(2012, September, 03) *Daily Guide*, p.10.

4.2.9 Success

The frame of success was the least featured of the nine frames in the news stories on the coverage of the electoral processes. It ranked 9th. Such stories focused on the registration process. Out of the frequency of 2,820 thematic issues, the Daily Graphic had 60 thematic issues representing 4.1% while the Daily Guide had 48 thematic issues representing 3.5%. This frame which is centered mostly on the registration process comprised indicators such as: registration good, registration smooth, BVR progressing steadily and satisfaction with BVR. Below are some examples of such news frame from both newspapers:

“Four major political parties have expressed satisfaction with the ongoing biometric voter’s registration exercise being undertaken by the Electoral Commission”

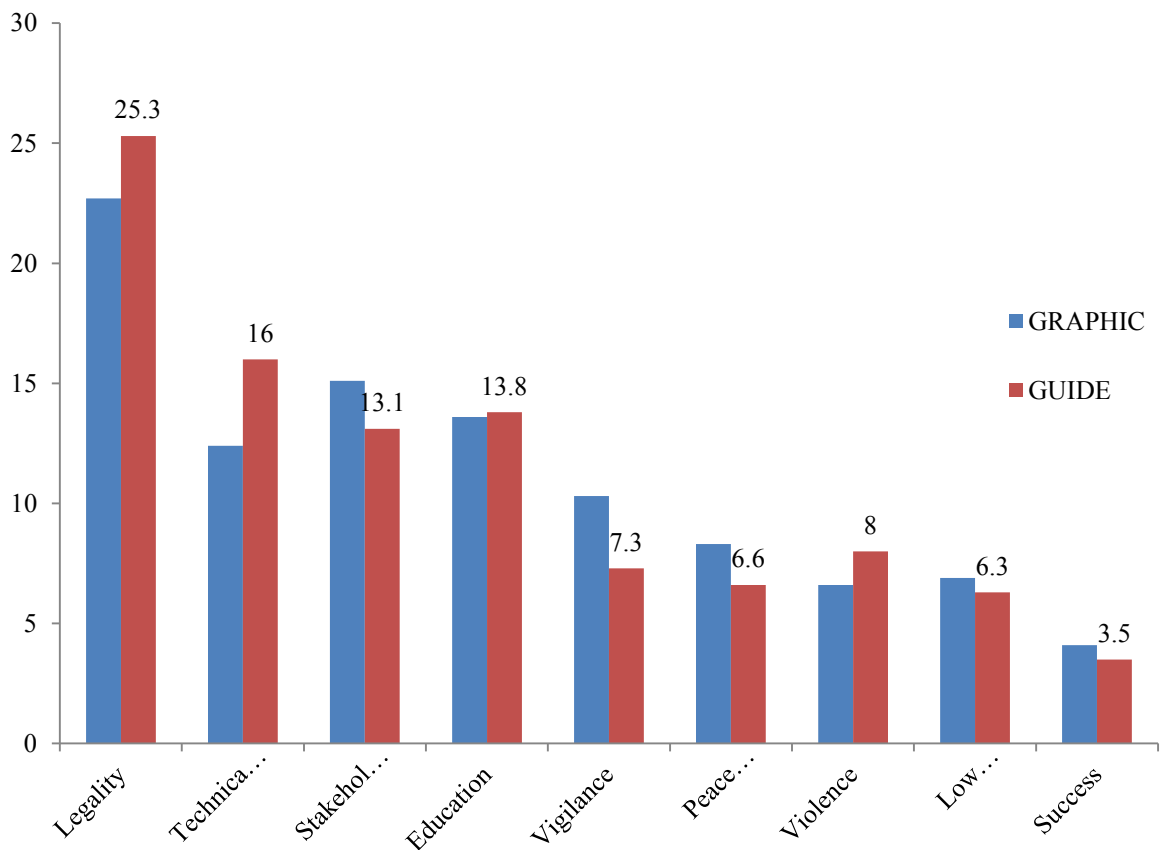
(2012, April, 19) *Daily Graphic*, p.17

“The EC Chairman expressed satisfaction with the general management of the registration exercise”

(2012, May, 07) *Daily Guide*, p.1

The discussion on the frames employed by the two newspapers is represented in the figure below:

Figure 2: **Bar graph of the Cumulative Frequency of Frames in the two Newspapers.**



This outcome of the study is in line with McQuail, (2005) conclusion which found out that the major intention of agenda-setting theory is that the media can establish the main issues that will be the subject of discussions by ranking and ordering them. The coverage of the electoral processes by the media in Ghana's 2012 general elections focused mainly on the registration and the demarcation processes.

Thus this research finding is in line with Squire, Wolfinger, and Glass, (1987) research findings which found out that the media and the electorate equate registration with voting and what this means is that once you have registered, it means you have vote. This might account for the reason why the registration process ranked as the electoral process that received the most coverage during the 2012 general elections.

This may also seem to be the reason why the media framed the demarcation process around legality because demarcation of electoral boundaries is the first step in the registration process.

Out of the nine frames employed by the media in the coverage of the electoral processes in Ghana's 2012 general elections, eight of these frames; legality, technicality, stakeholder participation, education, vigilance, peace and security, violence and success were used by the media to frame the registration and demarcation processes and the way the media focused much attention on these processes and the frames employed seem to suggest to the electorate that registration is the most important of the electoral processes and this might account for the tension, violence and confusion that characterized the registration process.

4.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter deals with the findings and discussions of the research questions which sought to find out the electoral process that received the most coverage and the frames used by newspapers to cover the various electoral processes during the 2012 general elections. The responses to these research questions were realized through content analysis of news stories in the two selected newspapers. Nine frames were used by the

Daily Graphic and the Daily Guide to cover the electoral processes and these frames show that the major intention of agenda-setting theory is that the media can establish the main issues that will be the subject of discussions by ranking and ordering them. The analyses of paragraphs of both the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* newspapers provided the basis for the development of themes based on how frequently they occurred. Nine frames were identified and these are: Legality, Technicality and Logistics, Stakeholder participation, Education, Vigilance, Peace and Security, Low patronage, Violence and Success.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter sums up the entire study on newspapers' coverage of the electoral processes in Ghana's 2012 general elections. It contains the summary of the findings of the study, conclusions from the findings, limitations of the study and suggested areas for future research as well as recommendations to various stakeholders in Ghana's electoral processes.

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study sought to find out the electoral process that received the most coverage during Ghana's 2012 elections as well the frames used by the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* in the coverage of these electoral processes.

The study incorporated the agenda setting and framing theories and came to the conclusion that both newspapers laid emphasis on some electoral processes to the neglect of others thereby encouraging public empathy towards them and therefore seeing those electoral processes as that will undermine or enhance the acceptance of election results.

5.2 The Following are the Key Findings of the Study:

The research sought to answer two questions and these are: which electoral processes received the most coverage during Ghana's 2012 elections and what are the frames used

by newspapers in the coverage of the electoral processes leading to Ghana's 2012 elections.

1. This study identified that registration of eligible voters received the most coverage with both newspapers devoting a total of 1,884 paragraphs out of a total of 3,559 paragraphs analyzed to this process alone, demarcation of electoral boundaries placed second, exhibition of the voters register placed third, education of the electorate placed fourth, nomination of candidates placed fifth, transfer of voters placed sixth while transfer of voters received the least coverage of 12 paragraphs.
2. The findings of the study also saw nine frames emerging during the coding process and these are the frame of Legality which ranked highest with 678 paragraphs total of 2,820 paragraphs coded, the frame of Technicality placed second, Stakeholder Participation placed third, Education placed fourth, Vigilance placed fifth, Peace and placed sixth, Violence placed seventh, Low patronage placed eighth and Success placed ninth.
3. The *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* both focused much of their attention on the registration process to the neglect of the other electoral processes thus setting the agenda for the public by informing them that the registration process is the most important process of all the electoral processes and this characterized the frame of violence, technicality and logistics, education, peace and security and vigilance used by both news newspapers to describe this process.
4. The frame of legality and stakeholder participation was used by both newspapers to describe the demarcation process. The demarcation process ranked 1st among

the nine frames used by both newspapers while the frame of stakeholder participation ranked 3rd among the nine frames.

5. It is interesting to note that all the political parties in Ghana, civil society organizations, political think-tanks and the clergy were against the creation of new constituencies by the Electoral Commission so close to election 2012 except the ruling NDC. This coupled with the adamant stance taken by the chairman of the Electoral Commission as well as the Commission itself in the demarcation process account for the newspapers use of the frame of legality in describing the process as the frame of legality questions the legality of the creation of the process hence the media set the agenda for the public and this resulted in a stalemate between EC and political parties which was resolved only when the clergy intervened.
6. Another interesting finding is that religion played a crucial role in the electoral processes in Ghana's 2012 elections. Religious leaders are seen as God's representation on earth and as such both newspapers devoted spaces on their front pages to the deal clinched by EC, the clergy and the political parties during the demarcation process thereby not only influencing and shaping public opinion of religious leaders as peace makers in society but also through the use of bold font sizes informed the public that this was the most important news of the day.
7. The *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* gave an almost equal number of paragraphs to the coverage of the electoral processes but while the *Daily Graphic* took an informative and educative stance most of the time, the *Daily Guide*

covered the electoral processes from a subjective political perspective and therefore tend to sensationalize the issues.

5.3 Conclusions

Although Ghanaians might appear to be generally conversant with their civic responsibilities and are highly committed to democracy, evidence from the frames employed by the journalist and the responses to these frames by the electorate during Ghana's 2012 elections indicates high levels of ignorance about the laws, procedures and processes of elections. As a result, the public perceive these electoral processes through the eyes of the media and this most often give rise to arguments, provoke conflicts and at times violence.

The electoral process in Ghana would not have certainly proceeded so smoothly during Ghana's elections in 2012 without the lively contribution of the media and but the media in setting the agenda and the use of frames it employed in the coverage of the electoral processes succeeded in both informing the public and influencing public perception of which issues are most important by the emphasis it lays on some electoral processes hereby telling them that these processes are processes they should be looking at (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Both newspapers gave almost the same level of coverage to the electoral processes but it is interesting to note that they sometimes covered these processes in a manner that highlights issues and at other times increase the tension and incites the electorate and this was especially noticeable during the registration process (Banducci and Steven, 2013).

The independent print and in this case the *Daily Guide* have also made it possible for information about the electoral processes which might not be carried by the *Daily Graphic* because it is state owned to reach the public and therefore created a balance in media coverage of the electoral processes in Ghana but at the same time it employed sensationalism which in some cases heightened tension in the country especially during the registration and demarcation processes (Gyimah-Boadi, 1999).

5.4 Limitations of the Study

The purpose of this research was to find out how framing and agenda setting theories were used by the media to cover the electoral processes leading to Ghana's 2012 elections.

One clear limitation of the study was that the researcher chose to examine only two newspapers and these are the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*. Although both newspapers are considered as credible sources of information with a county-wide circulation, their coverage of the electoral processes and subsequent frames employed might not represent the view of all the newspapers in Ghana.

Another limitation of the study has to do with the fact that the researcher could have interviewed journalists who covered the electoral processes as well as their editors in order to find out the rationale behind the frames employed by the newspapers.

This notwithstanding, findings from this study will be of enormous benefit to both the media and the electoral commission as it will help them intensify education before, during and after every electoral process to ensure peaceful and successful elections.

5.5 Areas for Future Research

Future researchers can analyze the content of more newspapers so that the frames employed in the coverage of the electoral process might be reflective of all the views of all the newspapers in Ghana

Another area for future research will be adding interviews to the content analysis of the newspapers. Interviewing the editors of both newspapers will help to understand why they employed the nine frames to the coverage of the electoral processes leading to Ghana's 2012 elections.

Further studies can be done by interviewing the Electoral Commission in order to find out if they provide education and publicity for all the electoral processes and if they do, then why did the newspapers framed most of the processes around poor publicity and lack of education.

5.6 Recommendations

1. There is the need for the Electoral commission and the media to deepen citizens' understanding of the electoral processes and educate them on their civic responsibilities. The EC should as a matter of urgency incorporate education of the electorate into its activities and ensure that it provides enough publicity and education before the commencement of any electoral process and also involve all stakeholders in these processes.
2. It is also recommended that the EC organizes sensitization workshops for journalist in order to educate them and sensitize them before the beginning of any electoral activity. This will help them have first-hand information of these processes so as to perform their

role of entertaining, educating and informing the public as there is the claim in journalism that the press helps in producing more informed electorate in the context of an emerging democratic dispensation. Media houses need to be more proactive in their reportage on election monitoring, coverage of the electoral processes and evaluation of these processes and collaborate with the Electoral Commission and other stakeholders such as the National Commission for Civic Education, the Institute of Democratic Governance and the Centre for Democratic Governance and political in order to ensure full participation the electoral processes in Ghana.

3. The Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) need to enforce its rules and guidelines vigorously when it comes to election coverage in order to do away with sensationalism in news coverage and the use of frames in election news coverage that do not reflect reality in order to ensure professionalism in election news coverage

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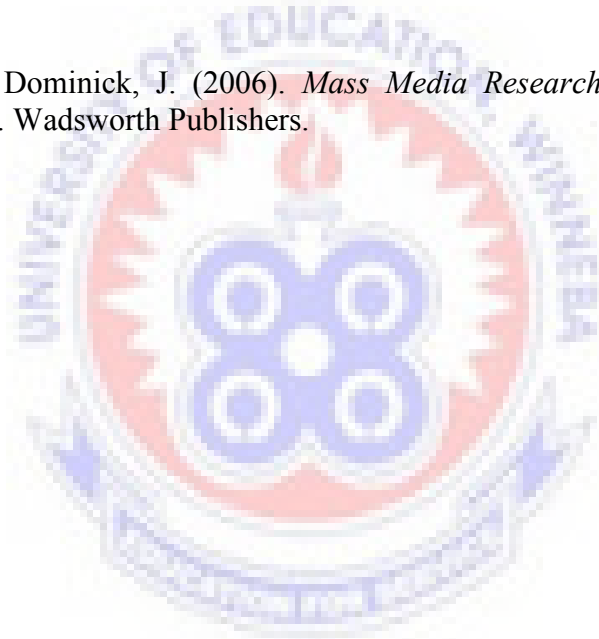
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APPENDIX 1

CODING INSTRUMENT

A. Name of Newspapers

Mark 1 for Daily Graphic and 2 for Daily Guide

B. Headline of news article.....

C. Date of article.....

D. Location of article

1= 'Front' if the article is on the front page

2= 'Middle' if the article is inside the paper

3= 'Back' if the article is at the back page

E. Total number of paragraphs in a news article
coded.....

F. Thematic
Categories.....

Please indicate using 1= Yes for agreement and 2 = No for disagreement against a news article that discusses a particular frame.

1. **Legality:** *illegality, gerrymandering, unconstitutionality of the creation of new constituencies*

2. **Technicality and Logistics:** *intermittent breakdown of kits, faulty equipment, inadequate training of EC Officials, shortage of materials, inadequate logistics*

3. Stakeholder Participation: *public consensus needed, EC must involve political parties*

4. Education: *poor publicity, lack of education*

5. Vigilance: *public must be watchful during registration, alertness crucial for Ghanaians*

6. Peace and Security: *police halt macho men, IPAC, police guard biometric registration*

7. Violence: *bloodbath at registration centers, gunshots at centers*

8. Patronage: *figures not encouraging, exhibition officials sleeping, dull start of exercise*

9. Success: *BVR progressing steadily, political parties satisfied with biometric registration*

E. Provide quotes that supports any of these frames

(Indicate name of newspaper, year, month, and date and page number of the article)

APPENDIX 2

CODING PROTOCOL

Below are explanations and expressions on the coding sheet. Please read the instructions carefully. There is a space provided for answers below each item on the coding sheet.

Indicate your answers in the spaces provided.

Name of newspaper: write the name of the newspaper in the spaces provided by indicating 1 for *Daily Graphic* and 2 for *Daily Guide*.

Headline of the news article: write down the headline of the news article being coded in full.

Date of publication: this should be indicated in the following order: month, followed by day and year of publication. For example: 03/05/2012.

Placement of news article: indicate where the news article being coded is located in the newspaper. 'Front' if the article is on the front page, 'Middle' if the article is inside the paper and 'Back' if the article is at the back page.

Total number of paragraphs in a news article coded: count the number of paragraphs in the news article being coded and write it down in the space provided.

Thematic Categories: these are various themes that emanate from the news stories.

Indicate 1 if the news stories discusses a particular theme and 2 if it does not. Not that there may be more than one theme in a news story.

Frames: frames are developed from the themes and so once a theme has been discovered; find the frame cluster that it falls under. For example write violence to represent multiple themes of news stories such as killing and shooting etc.

Provide quotes that support any of these frames: write down short quotes that support these frames from both newspapers and indicate name of newspaper, year, month, and date and page number of the article from which the quotation us being taken from.

