UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

COVERAGE OF CRIME NEWS IN THE MEDIA: A QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TWO SELECTED NEWSPAPERS IN GHANA

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A dissertation in the Department of Development Communication, School of Communication and Media Studies, submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for award of the

Master of Philosophy
(Development Communication)
In University of Education, Winneba.

NOVEMBER, 2022

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, **Vera Wiredu**, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works 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…………………………………………..

DATE…………………………………………………..

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/dissertation/project as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: DR. GIFTY APPIAH-ADJEI

SIGNATURE…………………………………………..

DATE…………………………………………………..

ACKOWLEDGEMENT

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I am also extremely grateful to my family especially my husband, Mr. Daniel Akoto and son Dovdik Quashie Clock for their encouragement, love, support and for urging me on.

To everyone desirous of academic pursuits, I say never give up, is quite challenging but with perseverance nothing is impossible.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to Hon. Oboshie Sai Cofie, Presidential Advisor, Media and Strategic Communications.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the prominence given to crime news stories in two of Ghana's foremost newspapers, the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide,* because literature has established dearth of studies on coverage of crime news in Ghana. Therefore with insights from the agenda setting and the gender theories, this study seeks to examine and investigate prominence given to crime stories, the types of crime and gender of perpetrators in the crime news stories covered in the selected newspapers in 2019. The study employs qualitative approach and qualitative content design to carry out content analysis of 159 crime news stories within the period study. Thematic analysis of findings reveals that the *Daily Guide* gave more prominence to crime news stories than the *Daily Graphic.* Again, the study established that violent crimes were the dominant nature of crimes covered by the newspapers, whereas political crimes were the least covered within the study period. The study further discloses a variance in the gender patterns of perpetrators of crime news stories that presents males as being more prone to crimes in general, and violent crimes in particular, than females. The study recommends that newspapers should aim at fair representation of crime news as against other news items covered in their editions. The fairness should manifest in the frequency of reportage, as well as the prominence in the placement of crime news stories in editions of the newspapers.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

Media is said to be a reflection of the society, it plays an intermediary role through which government policies get to the public, and compliment efforts for societal change and national development through various communication outlets. It is used to educate, store data, and deliver information. Media refers to the channels of general communication and information in a society, such as newspapers, radio, television and their various online portals (Ofori-Birikorang (2009), citing Collins et al. (2003).

Singh (2017) and Strömbäck (2005) acknowledges that the media play significant roles by ensuring the supply of information in society, serving as a platform for public discourse and playing an effective watchdog overseeing activities making the role of the media very critical in national development.

The impact of the media on the lives of individuals is enormous and cannot be underestimated considering that the media is seen as the fourth estate of the realm; the watchdog that seeks to gather information about wrongdoings of people and deliver it to the public so the public can understand what happens in society and stop the wrongdoings, it is thus, inescapable from our daily lives (Bingham & O'Leary, 2008).

McQuail (1994) posited that the watchdog metaphor imbues the press with the role of being a forum for discussion, investigators of impropriety, and an adversary to a monopoly over power and knowledge and the defenders of truth, freedom and democracy. This is so because, the media serves as a vehicle for molding public opinion and determining people's perception of social reality (Couldry, 2005).

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The media further chronicle events, inform, educate, as well as serve as a transformative space and a tool for changing society. The media have the capacity to make very positive contributions toward social change. Ofori-Birikorang (2009), citing Collins et al. (2003), is of the view that media plays a core intermediary through which government policies enter the public domain, hence a tool to change society (Ofori-Birikorang, 2009).

Ghana is a democratic nation with one of the most polarised media on the African continent (Berger, 2007; Freedom House, 2012) but when it comes to one of the prevalent subjects, which is crime, it is said to be covered disproportionately than other social problems (Darko, 2020; Gans, 2016; Leishman & Mason 2003; Nyarko, 2016). Crime is on the surge and this greatly undermines security, productivity and development in its entirety in any society (Darko, 2020). Therefore, more academic study in that area is needed to help safeguard the phenomena. Development is compromised when a crime is on the surge. Thus, crime affects the development of every country and needs to be curbed with a holistic approach including the crucial role of the media (Forman, 2021).

The media, in a democratic nation like Ghana, are expected to play a role that will enhance the development of the country by paying attention to issues that impede development (Berger, 2007).

However, when it comes to the most prevalent subject in our society, which is a crime, it is said to be covered disproportionately than other social problems affecting developmental balance (Darko, 2020; Gans, 2004; Leishman & Mason, 2003 Owusu-Addo, 2018). Crime news generally helps to form a societal perception of crime because what people see, hear and read often helps shape their thoughts.

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Consequently the frequency of crime news in the media space contributes significantly to individuals' crime awareness, safety and dovetails into development (Boateng, 2015; Ennin, 2015).

Although, there is an upsurge in crime, public knowledge of criminal justice is not largely known in the media space to help inform, deter criminals, or help to examine the impact of media consumption on fear of crime (Gerbner et al., 1977; Shi et al., 2019). This is because the more crime-related issues are published, the more it imbues fear of the act into people and deters people from the act. Though it is established that the news media help with information dissemination, biased coverage defrays the confidence and response of the populace in some of their reportage, especially on their crime stories (Holbert, 2005) Therefore, there is a need for the media to position itself for people to gain confidence and pay serious attention to the crime stories they publish (Guess et al, 2018).

According to Ghana's National Communication Authority (2021) and Geopoll (2019), there are 147 registered television stations, 247 radio stations given the license to operate and 43 newspapers in the nation's capital in addition to countless online stations. Most television and radio stations daily run newspaper review segments after their early morning news, relying on newspapers for content and thus pointing to the significant role of news coverage in the newspapers in Ghana and its contribution to the development of Ghana. Gans's (2004) study in the United States suggests that journalists and editors do not acknowledge the significant importance crime news plays in society. It is therefore not surprising that most discussion segments in the media space center on political news published in the newspaper (Gans, 2004).

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The responsibility of pushing available crime stories to be published rests more on the shoulders of editors and the editorial board (Piteira et al, 2018). Although news seeks to offer information, the interest of the greater community is supreme, therefore, the concentration of monetization through captivating stories alone will not help build a decent and safe society. Jawkes (2015) posits that the rise in crime is directly linked to insufficient media coverage is dwindling rapid development. Okoro (2020) throws more emphasis on this assertion by arguing for a connection between security and development. Hence the need for the media to pay attention to crime news reporting. This ties into Bagson's (2016) assertion that unsuccessful crime control is partly due to poor media role because one of their roles is to communicate successful crime control techniques to the public.

Scholars assert that, the relationship between gender, perpetrators and crime is deep. There is a universal crime distinction between female and male in terms of rate and patterns, it is imperative to examine how gender interplays with types of crime (Reed, 2018). Notwithstanding, Ghana is part of a global village and thus, the media's responsibility to the populace in helping to curb crime and help with the development of Ghana through their timely crime stories cannot be underestimated (Dziwornu, 2021).

Darko (2020) asserts that the media helps in the development of Ghana by balancing public safety and interest through investigative journalism and media coverage of crime. Additionally, Ravid (2021) posits that the knowledge of crime and harshness in the sentencing of offenders through the media helps to influence society and helps to curb crime. The thrust of this study is, therefore, to draw attention to the prominence given to crime news, analyse the gender of perpetrators and examine the

types of crimes covered within the Ghanaian context, to help with the effective and efficient communication of crime stories to foster the general developmental agenda of Ghana.

1.1 Newspapers

A newspaper is mainly a publication that has a certain frequency and contains information relevant to a particular group of people, making it one of the important mediums of communication (Atkinson, 2020), it is further explained as a periodical publication containing written information about current events and often typed in black ink with a white or gray background.

Newspapers in recent times are becoming like news magazines, giving broader analysis of evolving events of happenings and featuring newsworthy issues, corporate, religious, and social trends, and at the same time displays layouts that heightens photographs. Even in the phase of online news and new media, newspapers still strive to retain its traditional identity (Atkinson, 2020). Bagson (2016), on the other hand explains a newspaper as an accurate, unbiased account of the significant facts of timely happenings that are of interest to its readers. Again, newspapers are not only significant and relevant source of information and data for researchers for their study, but it is also used by scholars as a medium to publish their work (King, 2005). According to Hassan et al (2012), newspapers are historical documents with primary and secondary sources of information, commentaries, or retrospective articles, and serve as valuable research tools.

According to (Jones-Quartey, 1974; Owusu, 2011; Serwornoo, 2019) the first African-produced paper in West Africa was *Charles Bannerman's Accra Herald,*

produced in 1857 in the Gold Coast (modern Ghana). Having survived for 16years, Bannerman's paper inspired a proliferation of African-owned newspapers in the late nineteenth century, among them the *Gold Coast Times, Western Echo, Gold Coast Gazette, Gold Coast News, and Gold Coast Express.* Newspapers in the 1980s were small, politically oriented, and low-circulation with minute material of authority because of their dependency on government and patronage (Reiner, 2003). Enormous partisanship in the ownership and patronage of newspapers continue to thrive in Ghana, although there is some level of profit and sale quest directing some newspapers to publish seemingly politically neutral approaches. Newspaper ownership has significant bearing on the nature of focus or coverage (Serwornoo, 2019; Surette, 1993).

Hendricks (2022) assisted by Wilson (1995) gives a broader perspective on the categorization and types of newspapers. The types of newspapers according to him are mainly characterized by the size of sheets (broadsheet, narrow web broadsheet, tabloid, king tab), and frequency of publication such as; daily, weekly, semiweekly, biweekly, three times a week or other combination that serves the needs of particular audiences. Beside the aforementioned area of newspaper coverage, it also carries relevant international and national events, some have a special focus on regional and local news. Also, general interest and special interest newspapers fall under the categorization by Wilson (1995), the revenue stream of newspapers also forms another category, although online news has drawn a heavy toll on newspaper revenue.

1.1.1 Daily Guide Newspaper

Daily Guide is a privately-owned daily newspaper owned by the Blay Family (modernghana.com. 2004). It is published in Accra, Ghana. The predominant language used in publishing its news is the English language. The paper was started in 1984 (Kidon Media Link. 2013). This daily newspaper is published six times per week and is regarded as the most circulated independent paper in Ghana with a readership of about 50,000 copies a day (Agyei-Mensah et al, 2022; Amadu, 2018). The editor of the newspaper is Samuel Amponsah Boadi, with Fortune Alimi as Executive Editor (dailyguidenetwork.com, 2021).

The *Daily Guide* newspaper is one of Ghana's leading private newspapers. According to Geopoll's audience research (dated Jan – March 2017), it enjoys the second-largest readership of 1,191,000, constituting 18.9% of the total audience share. The contents of the newspaper cover issues of business, politics, education, entertainment and sports. Its readership profile, like most newspapers include, politicians, policymakers, academics, students and researchers. The *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* has established itself as the best brand in the public and private press, according to The Centre for Brand Analysis Ghana, a market research agency adjudged the newspapers as a 'Top Quality Brand' from 2017 to 2022 (Agyei-Mensah et al, 2022). The *Daily Guide* newspaper is run by Western Publications Limited in which the Blay family – Frederick Blay, Gina Blay, and Kwame Blay – hold all the shares. Frederick Blay, who is the former Chairman of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) is the majority shareholder of the company with 66.1% shares. Gina Blay, the wife of Frederick Blay and Ghana's Ambassador to Germany, is the second majority shareholder in the company with 18.9% shares. Kwame Blay, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Blay owns the remaining 15% shares in the company and currently occupies the position of Chief

Executive Officer of the organisation. (Media Ownership Monitor, 2020: Gadzekpo, 2008).

Little is known of the early beginnings of the newspaper except for the fact that it started as a sports paper in Accra. Sir Charles McCarthy Royal God Coast Gazette of 1822 is said to be the first newspaper to be produced in the Gold Coast, which later became known as Ghana, literature postulate that little is known about the exact beginning of it. Based on market demands, the paper metamorphosed into politics churning out more of political news stories to meet the needs of its customers. (Media Ownership Monitor, 2020).

1.1.2 Daily Graphic Newspaper

The *Daily Graphic* is a Ghanaian state-owned daily newspaper published in Accra, Ghana. It was founded and published its first newspaper on October 2nd, 1950. The language that it uses in publishing its news is the English language. The Graphic Communications Group Ltd (GCGL) was established in 1950 in the then Gold Coast as a private business known as the West Africa Graphic Company Limited. It was a subsidiary of the Daily Mirror Group of the United Kingdom. The Founder and Chief Executive Officer was Mr. Cecil King Jnr., who appointed Martin Therson-Cofie, a Ghanaian, as the first Editor of the *Daily Graphic*. After the Gold Coast gained independence and changed its name to Ghana, the company became known as the Ghana Graphic Company Ltd. The government had, in 1962, acquired the company from The Mirror Group of London. Then, by a legislative instrument, Graphic Corporation Instrument 1971, L.I. 709, 1971, it was renamed the Graphic Corporation, which enabled its incorporation as a statutory corporation. Its incorporation was, therefore, in compliance with the Statutory Corporation Act, 1964

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(Act 232). The company bore the name Ghana Graphic Company Ltd until 1999 when it was converted into a limited liability company through the Statutory Corporations (Conversion to Company) Act, 1993 (Act 461) and assumed its current name, the Graphic Communications Group Ltd. The Graphic Communications Group Limited has introduced a number of brands since the first and flagship brand, the *Daily Graphic*, was born on October 2, 1950. It has the largest readership among all the newspapers in the country and controls over 60 percent of the newspaper market (Asmah, 2022; Elliot, 2018). The readership includes politicians, technocrats, civil and public servants, students, chief executive officers, diplomats, researchers, academicians, traditional leaders, traders and drivers. Kobby Asmah is the current Editor of the *Daily Graphic* (www. graphic.com.gh, 2019)

The company also prints two weekly entertainment newspapers, namely *The Mirror* and *Graphic Showbiz*. *Graphic Sports*, the most read sports newspaper in Ghana, is also a product of the company. The company also publishes the *Junior Graphic*, aimed at a younger audience, and the *Graphic Business*, a business and financial paper.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Exposure to crime and crime-related incidents in the media may be an important crime-prevention technique as well as a valuable tool for sensitizing and informing the public about underappreciated or ignored social issues (Diarmaid, 2018) such as crimes.

Hence, Lee and Cho (2018) posit that media play the role of disseminating public information on self-defense and crime-prevention strategies. Karikari (2012) indicates

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that there has been a decrease in crime coverage by the media. This may account for the increase in cases of crime in Ghana and justifies the need for Ghanaian media to give more coverage to crime stories. This is because crime fight is very crucial to the development of every country.

In Ghana, the increasing levels of crime are quite worrying (Avuyi, 2017). This is also affirmed by the Ghana Police report on crime statistics (2021) as well as a World Bank report on Crime rate statistics (2022). Also, the connection between security and development has been established (Okoro, 2020), hence, the need for researchers to give attention to crime and its related issues in developing countries like Ghana.

A review of the literature has indicated that empirical studies on coverage of crime abound in other jurisdictions (Mastrorocco & Ornaghi, 2021; Nasi et al., 2020; O'Hear, 2020; Rios & Furguson, 2018). For instance, in the United States of America, O'Hear, (2020) examined how newspaper coverage of violent crime offenders are portrayed which heightens public fear and anger due to distortion. Nasi et al (2020) and Reiner et al (2003) also worked on how the consumption of violence through media reportage affects the behavior of individuals in the United Kingdom. In Sweden and Finland, Pollack (2001) researched on the increasing trend of crime coverage in tabloids and evening news. Rios and Ferguson (2018) however studied the coverage of violent drug crimes in Mexico and postulated that media coverage of violent crimes influences other criminals to use similar methods or techniques employed by the offenders as reported in the media to commit their crimes impeding the fight against crime and development.

Moreso, within the Ghanaian context, few scholarly works exist on the coverage of crime (Abdulai, 2021; Kubrin, 2007; Owusu-Addo; 2018; Tanko, 2020). These

studies focused on media reportage of suicide (Abdulai, 202; Tanko, 2020), the portrayal of crime offenders and victims by the media (Kubrin, 2007), and the coverage of violence against women and girls (Owusu-Addo, 2018).

These studies show that there have been empirical investigations on media coverage of crime in literature from different perspectives. However, there appears to be a knowledge gap in literature in other areas on this phenomenon: studies have not looked at the level of prominence given to crime stories, gender of perpetrators and the types of crimes as covered by newspapers. These areas are important for media researchers within the Ghanaian context because they will give scholars evidence on how crime news is covered by newspapers and ascertain whether the victims or perpetrators of crime in media reports are dominated by a particular gender and the types of crimes reported by newspapers in the Ghanaian context. Consequently, this study seek to fill this gap in literature by examining newspaper coverage of crime stories in Ghana, with specific emphasis on the level of prominence given to crime news, the gender of perpetrators and types of crimes in the news reports.

1.3 Objectives of Study

The study seeks to achieve the following research objectives:

1) To examine the level of prominence given to crime news by the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers

2) To examine the crime types of crimes reported by the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers.

3) To analyse the gender of perpetrators in the crime news stories by the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers.

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1.4 Research Questions

To attain the aforementioned objectives, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1) What is the level of prominence given to crime news by the selected Ghanaian newspapers?

   2) What are the types of crimes reported by the selected Ghanaian newspapers?

   3) What are the gender of perpetrators in the crime news reported by the selected Ghanaian newspapers?

1.5 Significance of the Study

With the recent surge in crime and the need for publications on them to inform and educate the citizenry, it is of prime importance that crime coverage in the media, and for that matter newspapers, are studied. This is because the knowledge of crime and justice is mainly obtained from the media.

The study will therefore contribute to the literature on the prominence given to crime news, the gender patterns of perpetrators and types of crimes; it will also provide a basis for policy and serves as useful guide for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as well as Civil Society Groups to grasp the gender dynamics of crime news.

Finally, it will also provide feedback to media owners and journalists on the impact of crime news in their day-to-day operations and serve as a guide for managers and editors of media houses to give more prominence to crime news.

1.6 Scope/Delimitation of the Study

This study examines the coverage of crime stories in the Ghanaian media and focuses on how crime stories are covered, the crime issues covered in the selected newspapers and the gender patterns of perpetrators of crime. This study employed qualitative content analysis of only crime news stories. News stories that were selected are crime news stories that fall between January 1, 2019, and December 31, 2019.

The study centered on only two newspapers in Ghana (namely, *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers) although there are several state-owned and privately owned newspapers in the country, hence the findings of this study do not represent what pertains in the entire media landscape in Ghana.

1.7 Organisation of Study

The entire study has been categorized into five chapters. Chapter one provides a preamble to the study with an introduction to the background issues that form the scope of the work. It introduces the study from a contextual perspective with a review of the relevance of print media to the coverage of crime. This chapter also contains the objectives of the study as well as the justification of the study which examined how the media carve the image of crime to Ghanaians. It further poses questions that are crucial to this study, and further contribute to academic research.

Chapter Two is a review of related literature to establish the status of the topic. It discusses the need to give prominence to the surge in crime and the need for more attention to newspaper coverage. It further reviewed scholarly works on the coverage of crime in Ghanaian newspapers. The second chapter also touches on two theoretical frameworks, agenda setting theory and gender strain theory to connect this study to existing knowledge, give the study support, validation and relevance.

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Chapter Three discussed the methods employed to obtain and analyse the data for the research. The study adopted a document analysis method to collect data, used a qualitative approach, and purposive sampling technique used to sample data, the unit of analysis that was subjected to the investigation was a story, and the period of study was twelve months to take advantage of when a crime is on the increase, qualitative content analysis was used to analysed the data, constructed week sampling technique was purposively used to manage 159 sample size of crime stories. Prior exploration of the two selected newspapers affirmed that crime news was published daily, with the quantum of stories deduced it was more appropriate to use constructed week sampling to stratified the stories by the days of the week and pick newspapers by days of the week alternatively to obtain an entire week in the final data (Amoako et al, 2021; Luke et al, 2011).

Chapter Four presents the findings and analysis from the qualitative content analysis conducted on the media coverage of crimes in Ghana from the research questions outlined in chapter three.

Chapter Five is a discussion of the overview of the media as a powerful element in the creation of images and how it impacts the communication of crime stories and development, the limitation of the study, and recommendations.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter describes the overall introduction of the study. The chapter started with a description of the background of the study, and a discussion of the statement of the problem. The various research objectives were drawn up with the corresponding research questions. The significance and delimitation of the study were clearly

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outlined, then finally the organization of the study. The next chapter will review concepts, and empirical studies on the phenomenon under study as well as discuss the various theories that underpin the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
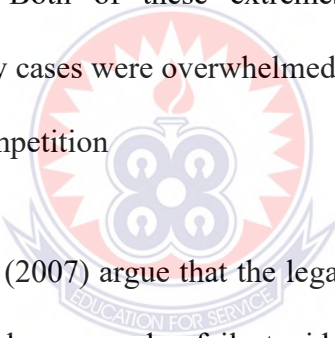
2.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the review of literature related to the study. The chapter discusses all relevant literature that is of concern to the research problem. It further illustrates the connection between existing knowledge and the phenomenon under investigation. Also, the theories that underpin the study are discussed as theories that are crucial in understanding the phenomenon and provide predictive relevance

to the entire research work.

2.1 Crime

Crime is an essentially contested concept, and as such has no universally agreed definition. It is very difficult to ascribe one definition to it. Legally a crime is an act made punishable by law (Taft & Ralph, 2020). A criminal is one who has committed such a legally forbidden act (Taft & Ralph, 2020). The definitions that have been ascribed to crime seem to change with the variations in social conditions in the evolutionary stages of human society. One can term the act of disobedience or breaking civil laws as a crime. Walklate (2017) asserts that crime refers to an act, offense, or defaulter which is punishable by law. This definition, therefore, implies that unless an act is declared punishable by the legislature, one cannot term it a crime. Additionally, before any act is considered a crime, that act must be found in the statute books as a prohibition, and the statutes must have provided remedies for such act. Public wrongs and violation of the rights of others are conceded same. Crime can,

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therefore, be said to be situated in law with well spelt-out remedies. In tandem with this, the Criminal Code (Amendment) Act 2003 (Act 646) of the Republic of Ghana defines crime as any "act punishable by death or imprisonment or fine". Although serious crime in general will attract substantial press coverage, the level of coverage will vary widely from case to case. This is in part determined by events outside the offence such as media 'themes', similarity to other recent offences, and the absence or presence of competing news items. The specific characteristics of the offence, the location₅ and the victim's background will also influence the degree of press interest. While the majority of serious cases may generate high levels of press coverage, particularly in the initial few days of an enquiry, some serious offences are not considered newsworthy. Both of these extremes can cause problems for the investigation. Newsworthy cases were overwhelmed by press interest and requests for information, while the competition

Agnew (1997) and Siegel (2007) argue that the legal definition of crime as being the violation of the criminal law or codes fails to identify the core characteristics of crime, which are, the blameworthy harms, condemned by the public, and sanctioned by the state. Siegel (2007) adds that all three characteristics must not be found in an act to qualify it as a crime, but if it possesses one or more of the several core characteristics, it qualifies as a crime.

In the context of morality, crime is explained as an immoral and harmful act that is regarded as criminal by public opinion because it is an injury to so much of the moral sense as is possessed by a community (Garofalo, 2020). Again, whiles Cross and Jones (2016) posit that crime is a legal wrongdoing, the remedy for which is the punishment of the offender at the instance of the state, Gillin (2014) declares crime to

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be an act that has been shown to be actually harmful to the society, or that is believed to be socially harmful by a group of people, that has the power to enforce its beliefs and that places such as upon the ban of positive penalties.

There is false impression that, newspaper reportage on crime undermines confidence in the criminal justice system and promote demand for new, tougher responses to crime. Additionally, it has been suggested that various characteristics of crime reporting may tend to deflect public attention away from the root causes of crime and to reinforce the view that police, prosecutors, and prisons are the only valid societal response to the threat of crime. Although serious crime *in general* will attract substantial press coverage, the level of coverage will vary widely from case to case. This is in part determined by events outside the offence such as media 'themes', similarity to other recent offences, and the absence or presence of competing news items. The specific characteristics of the offence, the location[5] and the victim's background will also influence the degree of press interest. The research confirmed the view that, while the majority of serious cases may generate high levels of press coverage, particularly in the initial few days of an enquiry, some serious offences are not considered newsworthy. Both of these extremes can cause problems for the investigation. Newsworthy cases were overwhelmed by press interest and requests for information, while the competition

Based on the foregoing discourse, the concept of crime can be considered as a broad and relative classification, and defined according to specific contexts. All societies do not see a crime in the same vein. There is no one rigid or absolute criterion to explain crime. Nevertheless, one's religious orientation, geographical location, legal background, political orientation, and educational level among others may determine

the depth of the concept of crime and its broad spectrum. In summary, the concept of crime borders on having the intention or motive for wrongdoing or an offense to oneself, others, or society, enshrined in criminal statutes that demand punishment or forgiveness and retribution by law or society.

Hinging on Agnew's (1997), Gillin's (2014), and Siegel's (2007) postulations on crime, this current study operationalises crime to be any act that is believed to be socially harmful by a group of people, and thus condemned by the group and sanctioned by the state. Thus, crime, per this study, includes kidnapping, murder, robbery, child molestation, child abuse, sodomy, rape, treason, and sedition, among others. (Mahessar et al., 2021).

According to Silva and Capellan (2019), crime is understood as a permanent and recurrent phenomenon and reported in a similar manner across continents and countries regardless of the differences among societies.
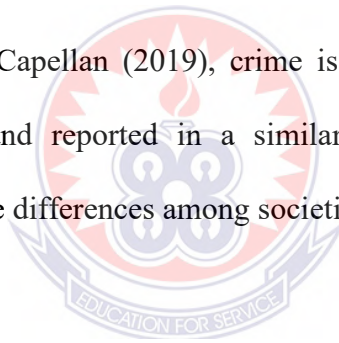
2.2 News

News refers to any true, concise and accurate report on current events which are of value to a group of people (Branch, 2019). Chanley and Harcup (2017) posit that news is any timely information that interests several people; the best news is that which has the greatest interest for the greatest number of people. The nature of news is such that it acts as a window whose frame limits the perception of reality by focusing on a specific piece or part of the information (Gillin, 2014). As such, the content of news varies from time to time, and from society to society. Thus, that which may be considered newsworthy at a particular time by a particular society is likely to differ at another time or among another society. Notwithstanding this

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variance, the news media play a crucial role in reporting newsworthy content for the consumption of the public. The news media's selection and coverage of current topics and events, apart from informing the public, also helps in shaping public opinion about the events covered (Lipani, 2020; Sánchez, 2016).

News coverage refers to the extent or degree to which a piece of information is observed, analysed, and reported in a given context (Gillin, 2014), and news content usually borders on any topic deemed relevant to a group of people at a particular time (Chanley & Harcup, 2017). According to Gillin (2014), for any piece of information to qualify as news, it must meet the criteria of being; (i) new, (ii) unusual, (iii) interesting or significant, and (iv) about people. These criteria place appropriate weight on any piece of information and make it worthy of being given attention by the public, as against other pieces of information. As such, news content may cover health, education, economics, agriculture, politics, international relations, security, entertainment, sports or recreation, as well as crime.
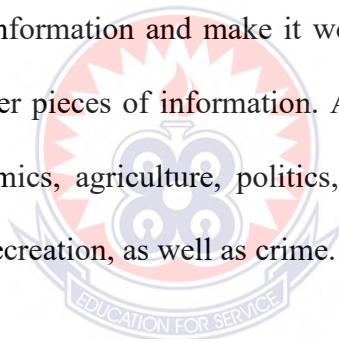
2.3   Crime News

Crime news borders on coverage or reportage on acts that have a socially harmful impact on a group of people, and are thus condemned by the public and sanctioned by the state (Gillin, 2014; Proll & Magin, 2022). There is a superfluity of acts considered crimes in different societies. Such acts include theft, murder, rape, battery, mob justice, suicide, homicide and femicide, among others (Proll & Magin, 2022). The amorphous nature of crime results in it being committed on a local scale (on a low profile within communities) as well as on a national or international scale (Matthes, 2014). Often, in order to report on crime, news media rely on law enforcers who feed

the media with details of the crime; its nature, persons involved, and appropriate investigative or punitive measures taken so far. At other times, news media rely on journalists or citizens who visit the grounds and report from crime scenes or settings. In the case of the latter, eye witnesses are relied on for details on the crime. The news that eventually reaches the public stems from information gathered on the crime, and is packaged with the appropriate media styles or ethics (Quarshie et al., 2015).

Crossman (2021) and Gillin (2014) proffer that crime can be classified into four broad spectrums including economic crimes, sexual crimes, the crime of violence and political crimes. Firstly, economic crimes are crimes that include unlawful activities in which the primary objective of the offenders appears to gain financially (Gillin, 2014). According to Gillin (2014), economic crimes are said to occur due to economic factors such as poverty, and economic needs that motivate people to acquire certain things such as vagrancy, theft, professional criminality, robbery, and fraud. Secondly, sexual crimes are crimes that include an attack on sexual contacts such as prostitution, indecent assault, forcible sex offenses, statutory rape, and sexual abuse of a minor (Gillin, 2014). With sexual crimes, the offender must have committed a sexual act against a person or caused another to do so under duress, detention, psychological pressure, or other forms of abuse of power, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment or a person's inability to give genuine consent (Gillin, 2014). Sexual crimes include both physical and non-physical acts that have a sexual component. Thirdly, crimes of violence are said to result from physical injuries to one person such as assault (Gillin, 2014). Crime of violence includes any of the following offenses that are prohibited by federal, state, or local law: murder, manslaughter, kidnapping, aggravated assault, robbery, arson, extortion, extortionate credit extension, burglary of a dwelling, or any other offense that is prohibited by the

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federal state. Finally, political crimes include any crime determined to have been done with the intent to undermine the state, the state's government, or the state's political system (Gillin, 2014). This indicates that although political crimes may involve violence, they may also be non-violent in nature. Common types of political crimes are bribery, treason, sedition, espionage and theft (Gillin, 2014).

Scott (2021) on the other hand profess three types of crimes, critiquing the four types spelt out by Gillin (2014). The three types of crimes aver by Scott, (2021) are, property crimes, which he explains as crimes which involves interference with the property of another, the second type of crime is statutory crimes which are crimes proscribed by statute and interpersonal crimes which are crimes that results in physical or mental harm to another. Similarly, Kuo and Putra (2021) categorised crimes into three broad spectrums. Outdoor crimes, indoor crimes and cybercrimes.

The foregoing literature review sets forth what qualifies an act to be described as a crime in society. With the current study, the literature reviewed in this section will help to properly identify crime news, as reported in the selected newspapers. Moreover, the literature will help the researcher to adequately categorise the various crime news featured in the newspapers into the categories of crime that exist in literature.

Crime and violence has significant toll on all economies, it has political, social, and even spiritual consequences. Crime and violence are so palpable, so pervasive and so devastating on any country (Nwosu, 2003). Even religious places of worship are not spared. The threat to lives posed by crime is unmeasurable and therefore, very imperative for the media to give it more credence (Nwosu, 2003).

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In Ghana, today, many buildings are heavily fortified with concrete and steel walls which, in some cases, are higher than the houses they enclose, or even higher than prison walls. Traveling by road in the day time, but particularly by night, has become increasingly hazardous, as passengers may be violently dispossessed of their personal effects and are at times massacred in the process. Stevens (1998) has painted a gloomy picture of the dire consequences of crime and violence.

Each incident reverberates through the families of perpetrator and victim, with long-term economic consequences (loss of job, loss of home, loss of income, medical bills, attorney bills) and psychological consequences (sense of loss, fear, alienation, trial, welfare, reduction in property values, business flight and long-term psychological consequences (feelings of fear for personal safety, mistrust of members of community).

So, when crime and violence afflict our society, they leave a tale of woe and anguish in their wake. They are an ill-wind which blows nobody any good, as both perpetrator and victim suffer severe consequences.

2.4 Media, Crime and Violence

It is intriguing to note that crime and violence stories are attractive not only to media operators and the media, but also to consumers of media products, though for different reasons. Media operators, and by extension the media especially television, by reason of its visual appeal, generate revenue from coverage of savour and feed on crime and violence. As Dorfman and Thorson (1998) have observed, reporting on crime and violence has been a staple in newspaper diet since before the penny press. Crime and violence make and sell headlines and news programmes. Crime and

violence make news reports juicy; they are sensational, dramatic and sometimes, colourful. Since media owners are in business to make profit, and since crime and violence sell newspapers and programmes, causing circulation figures and programme ratings to soar, no media operators are likely to spew out a juicy rape, commando-like bank robbery, murder, high-profile assassination or a monumental fraud. To that extent, crime and violence are not only attractive, but they are also tempting to media operators.

According to Dorfman and Thorson (1998), although some people might get information about violence from personal experience as victims or mistresses, most do not experience crime and violence personally. Instead much of their information or perceptions about crime come from the news. Though newspaper coverage contributes to distortion in crime news, it helps to bring out crime stories that ordinarily would have been shelved. This goes a long way to help law enforcement agents and has influence in outcomes.

One factor that is particularly important is how people shape crime news based on what they read. The relationship between newspaper coverage of crime stories and the reality is sometimes complex, varying between contentious and symbiotic. While reporters sometimes criticize law enforcement, they must rely on them as sources for crime news.

Additionally, while police officers often distrust media and withhold some information, they need media to inform the public of crime. In addition to using media as a conduit to disseminate crime information, law enforcement executives may use crime news as a tool for self-promotion, improving public relations or boosting their public image (Leisman & Mason, 2003). Often while reporters are

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doing their best to critically assess stories, law enforcement agents are doing their best to ensure crime news will portray them in a positive light. Law enforcement executives are becoming increasingly aware of the extent to which their public image is shaped by news coverage (Leishman & Mason, 2003). Furthermore, law enforcement agencies are increasingly using complex and specialized tactics to manage their image in the press. Trained media spokespersons, often referred to as public information officers, constitute one major way law enforcement agencies are increasingly managing their public image.

The coverage of crime stories and its impact on law enforcement, its agents, the general public and general perception is enormous. The complex but necessary law enforcement and crime stories carried by the media, especially newspapers, leads to successfully catching of criminals (Leishman & Mason, 2003).

News coverage of crime stories may tend to simplify or ignore crime stories that may be perceived as lesser crimes or ambiguous forms of behavior by the media (Reiner et al, 2003). Important to note, as Leishman and Mason (2003) do, is that this overly positive portrayal is detrimental to crime control by law enforcement agents. While it is important to analyze how news personal participate in creating distorted crime coverage, the maneuvering of news sources like law enforcement must also be taken into account.

2.5   Problems with Media Representations of Crime

Whether it be because of agents involved in creating news or despite their efforts, media depiction of crime are often distorted. In fact, crime reporting sometimes displays or convey the opposite of the objective reality of crime (Surette, 2003). For

example, in media representation of crime, violent crime is more prominent than property crime and stranger crimes are more common than crimes in which victims know each other. Both of these are directly opposite actual conditions. Crime news also tend to portray risks of victimization as higher than they actually are (Reiner et al, 2003). Furthermore, though distortion have always been present in crime news, studies suggest that these distortions have been increasing since World War II. Recent trends in news coverage of crime have indicated some specific shifts in coverage also. Since the 1960s, coverage of property and non-violent crimes have decreased in media reportage while economic and violent crimes have become increasingly prominent in the news.

Crime reporting often cites spurious statistical evidence that exaggerates crime problems both in severity and breadth (Thompson et al, 2000). Media outlets frequently ignore the fact that statistics are social products, affected and sometimes distorted by the processes involved in their creation (Best, 1990). Journalistic ethical standards hold that media practitioners attribute information to sources. However, journalists tend to focus on the truth of the attribution, not the truth of the actual evidence. Consequently, information coming from official sources is seldom subject to independent verification. Media practitioners must rely heavily on official sources for crime representations (Best, 1990), perpetuating the aforementioned effects. Also, after reporting supposed spikes in certain crimes, news outlets often ignore or downplay further research or stories that dispute previous claims due to waning public interest gaining a life of its own. Many sources will cite each other or previous stories (Robert & Indermaur, 2005).

Crime and violence enjoy lavish space and time for some other reason: they are ridiculously easy to cover (Sandman et al, 1976). An unadventurous reporter may choose to sit at a police desk, monitor police radio, or liaise with a court clerk or registrar, while occasionally telephoning smaller police stations and courts in the community to check for new developments. At the approach of the deadline, the reporter calls the newsroom to dictate any newsworthy occurrence for the day.

According to Sandman et al, (1976: 412), almost invariably favours the official viewpoint. "Since the reporter is unlikely to meet face-to-face with the accused, the suspect's protestations of innocence or accusation of police brutality often go unreported". The reporter is also denied the knowledge of underlying causes of crime or the motives for a particular crime. This may likely impede the critically examination of facts by reporters and affects quality of crime stories by the media.

2.6 Media Coverage of Crime

The ubiquity of crime has made it a subject worth researching, and reporting on. As such, crime stories occupy a considerable fraction of news reported on several media platforms especially in newspapers. Moreover, the prevalence of crime in society has given traction to its coverage in media, particularly newspapers, which are endogenous in nature. Consequently, some scholars have devoted inquest into how crime is covered in newspapers, from different perspectives. Media operators, and by extension the media especially television, by reason of its visual appeal, and generate revenue from coverage of them. Crime and violence make news reports juicy; they are sensational, dramatic and sometimes, colourful. Since media owners are in business to make profit, and since crime and violence sell newspapers and programmes, causing circulation figures and programme ratings to soar, no media operators are likely to

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spew out a juicy rape, commando-like bank robbery, murder, high-profile assassination or a monumental fraud. To that extent, crime and violence are not only attractive, but they are also tempting to media operators.

According to Dorfman and Thorson (1998), although some people might get information about violence from personal experience as victims or mistresses, most do not experience crime and violence personally. Instead much of their information or perceptions about crime come from the news.

Tiscareno-Garcia's (2020) qualitative analysis of femicide reports published in four Mexican daily newspapers revealed that though the media covers crimes, the coverage often excuses the behaviour of perpetrators by rather pointing to economic hardships and other trivial factors as underlying reasons for the crime. According to Tiscareno-Garcia (2020), the nature of media coverage shifts attention from the weight of the crime and its perpetrators to rather justifying the conditions under which the crime was committed. In effect, opinionated news articles seem to water down the gravity of the crime. Taylor (2009) and Sutherland et al. (2019) in turn assert that most times, media coverage ends up portraying both victim and perpetrator as jointly responsible for the crime, thus normalising crime and defeating victims' quest to report crime and seek justice.

On their part, Rios and Ferguson's (2018) study on the coverage of violent drug crimes in news media led to the conclusion that the nature of coverage, especially the overemphasis on details regarding the implementation tactics of the perpetrators, influences other criminals to take up similar methods or techniques. Left to Rios and Ferguson (2018) alone, news coverage on crime should only focus on the nature of the crime committed, the identity of perpetrators, and the punishment meted out to

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such. Details regarding the masterminding and implementation of crimes should be the preserve of law enforcers whose responsibility it is to carry out investigations and bring offenders to book. Rios and Ferguson's (2018) stance is affirmed by Nasi et al. (2020) who aver that consumption of violence through media reportage negatively affects the behaviour of individuals. Nasi et al. (2020) maintain that individuals easily copy negative precedence and tend to reproduce such in their immediate environments. This corollary impedes the fight against crime and results in an almost never-ending circus of the perpetration of crime. In tandem with the postulations, Dela-Dem (2018) asserts that negative press coverage of any news-worthy event results in the formation of unfavourable impressions in the minds of readers about the said event.

O'Hear's (2020) study on the nature of crime news coverage in the media clinches that the vivid and descriptive language adopted by writers of crime news results in heightened fear and panic among the public. O'Hear (2020) asserts that the language used to report a crime in the media often sacrifices the main goal of reportage, which is to bring crime news to the fore of public information, with a focus on the nature of the crime, its perpetrators, and sanctions meted out so far. Over-emotive language structures will thus generate undue fear, panic and anger among the public.

Quarshie et al. (2015) studied the pattern of news coverage regarding the phenomenon of suicide among Ghanaian adolescents and affirms that crime news, particularly suicide news, in the media "can be described as sensational, explicit, and overly simplistic" (p.4). Quarshie et al. (2015) affirm Rios and Ferguson's (2018) and Nasi et al.'s (2020) stance by indicating that detailed explicit descriptions of violent crimes increase the probability of recurrence of the crime among individuals.

Moreover, the content of crime news often lacks expert opinion which can deter potential perpetrators from committing the same subsequently. However, Reuben (2010) argues that, the dramatization that characterises crime news, coupled with sensationalism, helps the general public to comprehend the content and context. Reuben (2010) further admits that media coverage can lead to outcomes that are either constructive or destructive, and crime news is used to maximize newspaper audience. He adds that when attention is being sought for a particular phenomenon, media coverage is mostly employed to draw the desired attention.

Cucolo and Perlin (2013) in turn postulate that how the media has represented crime over time has led to inaccurate public perception which in turn has driven poorly thought-out laws and policies. The overemphasis on violent crime has left the public thinking that all there is to crime is violence. This perception thus relegates other 'less-heinous' crimes to the background and consequently warrants their recurrence. Harper and Hogue (2016) extend this conclusion by admitting that though crime news has had considerable coverage in the media, the media's focus has been more on unusual and violent crimes at the expense of other crimes like pilfering, rape, money laundering, bribery, among others that are also of adverse effects on society.

Adding another perspective to the stance taken by scholars like Rios and Ferguson (2018), Nasi et al. (2020), Cucolo and Perlin (2013), and Harper and Hogue (2016) on crime news coverage in the media, Drake and Henly (2014) argue that though the media covers crime stories extensively, it mainly focuses on individuals instead of the social context that contributes to criminal actions. Stories published in the newspapers often quote the police and victims or their families, but rarely include opinions or discussions from people with expertise in the relevant areas. The focus has always

been over-concentration on emotions, with little attention to the real level of risk to the public. As a result, public attitudes to crime are influenced by emotion rather than by reason or knowledge.

On his part, Dubois (2019) observes that the criminal events that the media decide to report on are not necessarily news by themselves, but in fact, those are the things that help to inform both the public and police on the scope and impact of crime and what is needed to counter them. As such, the focus of crime news stories is to bring to the fore what kinds of crimes are being committed by persons in society, and what punitive measures are being meted out to such offenders. Lipani (2020) reaffirms Dubois' (2019) postulations by indicating that the media plays a pivotal role in bringing crime to the fore of audiences through crime stories in blog articles, video or print content. Again, Lipani (2020) asserts that when a diverse array of media technologies is used to reach out to a large audience via mass communication, media coverage becomes the central piece. As such, the media's involvement in crime reportage gives the phenomenon a considerable attention in the midst of other news content.

The literature reviewed and discussed in this section presents a picture of how crime news has been covered in the media stemming from a plethora of analyses by different scholars and the resulting postulations from such scholars. The review helps the researcher to position the current study in light of what has been done. Owing to what has been done by way of prior research, the current study focuses on examining how crime news is covered in two of Ghana's popular newspapers, as well as the forms of crime committed and gender patterns of perpetrators in the crime news stories captured in the selected newspapers.

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2.7   Effects of Newspaper coverage of crimes

The question of whether media coverage of crimes may have effects on crime rates or on styles remains highly controversial (Furguson, 2018).

Prolonged exposure to media reportage on crime can fundamentally alter a person's personality, causing them to become callous and volatile. Individuals with a preexisting history of delinquency of crime are sometimes considered particularly at risk for crime by the consumption of crime news (Pollack, 2001). Certainly individuals involved in criminal enterprises are not passive viewers and media viewing can be expected to interact and serve as motivation for criminal acts. However, given claims that significant proportions of crime could be specifically attributed to crime news in the media (Mastrorocco & Ornaghi, 2021). Notwithstanding, many studies have shown a lack of correlation, or lack of causality, between media coverage of crimes, the act of crime Surette (2014).
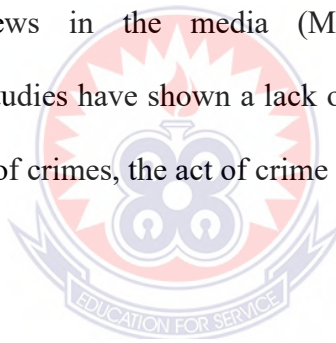
2.8   Types of Crime

As averred by Gillin (2014), crime news borders largely on economic, sexual, violent and political crimes. Consequently, studies abound that have inquired into patterns that characterise crime coverage in the news media.

Media consumers do not embrace a broader range of opinions when given access to the wealth of human knowledge. Nor do they become more educated about issues that they and society face. In fact, many social scientists have documented an effect where individuals seek out news sources that support and confirm their previously held beliefs, while rejecting those that challenge their beliefs. The channels of information are more open, this has sustained traditional news media. Homogenization of newspaper coverage has largely not changed in structure.

With a focus on media reports on adolescent suicide in Ghana, Quarshie et al. (2015) sought to ascertain the pattern of news coverage regarding the phenomenon of suicide. Using qualitative content analysis, the study considered forty-four media reports and concluded that the most dominant method used in Ghanaian adolescent suicide cases was hanging. The patterns further showed that culprits (the deceased) usually commit this crime within or near their home environments, and attribute the act to precursors (either family members or people at school) familiar to the deceased. Of the total cases considered by Quarshie et al. (2015), 90.9% were complete suicides, whiles 9.1% were attempted suicides. In a related study, Jawke's (2015) study on police-recorded data points out that though there is a paucity of statistics regarding suicide rates among adolescents in Ghana, 9.1% of all fatal and non-fatal suicides recorded between 2006 and 2008 involved individuals between the ages of 10 and 19 years. This is affirmed by Kokutse's (2012) study which further revealed that 531 individuals between 9 to 19 years commit suicide annually in Ghana.

On his part, Abdulai (2019) sought to ascertain the trend of online news media reporting suicides in Ghana. Drawing data from a total of one hundred and forty-two online news media reports, the study revealed that between 1997 and 2019, victims of suicide in Ghana were between the ages of 15 to 34 years, with hanging being the most common method used. Abdulai (2019) adds that there has been a surge in media reportage on suicides in Ghana, with marital, relationship or family problems being the biggest cause of suicides. Olibamoyo et al.'s (2021) qualitative content analysis on the trends and patterns of suicidal behaviour in Nigeria corroborates Abdulai's (2019) findings by indicating that hanging was the most common method used by victims.

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The nature of crime coverage by the media is said to mostly mislead ideas about how much crime, and what kinds of crime are actually taking place (Drake & Henly, 2014). In a 2021 quantitative content analysis on crime news coverage, Mahessar et al.'s study of 75 news articles in *The Nation* newspaper in Pakistan revealed the patterns of crime news to be dominated by murder cases, a conclusion that affirms Cucolo and Perlin's (2013) study, in which they maintain that murder crime accounted for more media stories than any other kind of crime news. The study further indicates that most crimes were committed in the urban areas, as against rural areas, due to the spate and accompanying exigencies that characterise urbanisation. Again, the study revealed that most perpetrators were between the age brackets of 21 to 30 years; most of the crime news articles withheld the identities of perpetrators; most of the crimes were committed domestically, and related to family issues. The researchers further argue that crimes like murder and robbery, which are more easily understood and relatable to readers are more likely to be covered in news media than those not easily understood or relatable to readers, like stock market manipulation.

A study by Yeboah (2008) revealed that among a list of eight categories of issues namely: politics, economics, science, legal issues, crime issues, social issues, health, and celebrity news mostly covered in Ghanaian newspapers, crime stories were found to be among the top four issues. However, the content of the crime stories bordered on more violent crimes like murder and armed robbery, among others. In contrast to Yeboah's (2008) conclusions, Oduro-Frimpong (2009) maintains that media coverage of crime in Ghana, compared to other news stories, is quite minimal, probably because the media relies more on the security agencies for statistics on crime rates and patterns instead of first-hand information from other sources 'on the ground'. Oduro-Frimpong (2009) maintains that consequently, the frequencies of crime

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incidents reported by the media do not usually correspond to police records and thus hinder public trust in either the media or law enforcers.

The literature reviewed and presented in this section set forth different patterns of crime that scholars have identified to have been covered in various media the world over. With a focus on how much crime and the varying patterns in the crimes covered in the media, the literature provides the grounding for the current study to ascertain the situation that persists in the Ghanaian media space as far as patterns in crime news coverage are concerned, using two of the nation's most popular newspapers. Could the crime news pattern in the selected newspapers follow the trajectory established in the literature, or show a peculiar situation?

2.9 Crime News and Gender patterns

The crimes reported in news media highlight perpetrators as well as victims of the crime. Both males and females are captured as either perpetrators or victims at different times, and with regard to different crimes. An examination of gender patterns in crime news reveals that there are both similarities and differences in female and male patterns in crime news.

In Quarshie et al.'s (2015) study on patterns of news coverage regarding the phenomenon of suicide among Ghanaian adolescents, the study revealed that more boys (54.5%) than girls (31.8%) attempted and completed suicidal acts, with 13.7% of the cases not reporting the genders. Furthermore, the study showed that there were no significant differences in the methods used by both boys and girls; for both genders, hanging was first, followed by poisoning, then slitting. In a related study that sought to quantitatively analyse crime news coverage in a Pakistani national

newspaper, Mahessar et al. (2021) established that over 90% of the crimes reported in the newspaper were compassed by males who were involved in more violent crimes like murder and armed robbery. In Mahessar et al.'s (2021) study, females were found to have been involved in fewer crimes than males. Moreover, in the few instances in which females are mentioned to have committed crimes, their crimes bordered on less violent crimes like stealing. In a precursory study whose conclusions are affirmed by Mahessar et al. (2021), Abdulai's (2019) research on the trend of online news media reporting of suicides in Ghana indicated that, from a total of one hundred and forty-two online news media reports, male victims of suicide dominated (85.92%) the news between 1997 and 2019.

Grabe et al.'s (2006) study on the difference or similarities in the treatment and reportage of male and female crimes in a local U.S. newspaper established that though women are also reported in the news to be perpetrators of crime, women are more commonly depicted as victims of crime rather than offenders. As such, much of the reportage has focussed on the victimisation of women. Grabe et al. (2006) thus aver that crime news coverage in, particularly, newspapers exaggerate female victimhood. Often, the crimes reported in news media credit more males with the most violent crimes than women. Consequently, crime news coverage in newspapers contributes to the construction of gender stereotypes that portray males as aggressive and females as meek (Armstrong & Nelson, 2015; Grabe et al., 2006). Furthermore, Grabe et al. (2006) conclude that female criminality undermines patriarchal ideology, but female victimization reinforces images of women as weak and defenseless.

Ferraro's (2015) case study on crime and victimisation corroborates Grabe et al. (2006) in indicating that female criminals who do unfeminine activities face far worse

punishment than women whose illicit behaviour adheres to standards of womanhood. As a result, petty offenses committed by women are frequently overlooked, whereas in that of violent crimes, women are harshly punished and publicly stigmatised to serve as a warning to other women about the dangers of violence.

Easteal et al. (2015) extend Ferraro's (2015) postulation by concluding that newspapers were chivalrous toward female criminals when they committed offenses as a result of circumstantial factors beyond individual control, including being the pawns of male criminals. Furthermore, Easteal et al. (2015) indicate that the portrayal of violent female criminals as witches or demons often emerges in periods of patriarchal fear, when the desire to control and discipline women is paramount.

In a bid to examine the extent to which the gender of offenders or victims impacts portrayals of crime, Collins (2016) conducted content and discourse analyses on four Canadian city newspapers over a period of thirty years. The study's findings revealed that female offenders were generally portrayed as lower-risk offenders, in that they were often found to have been involved in less violent crimes. Again, the study revealed that women offenders were framed as 'black widow archetypes' whom the public had to beware of. Since women were less likely to be suspected of a crime (Grabe et al., 2006), the mere instance of their involvement in any such acts renders them a threat to society, especially in cases that border on violent crimes (Collins, 2016). In what appears to be a deviation from Grabe et al.'s conclusion, Collins (2016) reveals that female victims were not always considered weak and vulnerable. In some cases, the female victims were portrayed as 'bad victims' who deserved the crime they had suffered due to their own faults or misgivings.

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In what appears to be a contravention of the norm (Collins, 2016), Estrada et al.'s (2019) study on how women's crime has been reflected in crime statistics and media reporting by the Swedish press between 1905 and 2015 reported that there has been a considerable decline in the gender gap in convictions for theft and violent crimes. Estrada et al. (2019) aver that what used to be the preserve of male offenders has become common among female offenders, with more records of the latter being caught and reported in violent crimes in the news. Again, the study revealed that, when women are the offenders, the crime news content focuses more on the reasons behind the crime; what warranted the crime. Cavender and Fishman (2018) contest this by suggesting the need for a better understanding of the exact actions taken by both women and men in certain crimes: the characteristics of their criminal roles, the situations that led to their involvement, the reasons for which they committed the crimes, and the lingo they employed to defend their crimes. Additionally, Miller and Mullins (2017) indicate that the encompassing structure and repeated process of gender as it influences the criminal involvements of both men and women is something that requires further inquest. Estrada et al. (2019) conclude that the similarity in the rates of crime among men and women across time, race, class, and geographic boundaries suggests that both males and females are responding to the same social influences. Moreover, nonviolent economic crimes like fraud and forgery have seen the highest increases in female arrests relative to male arrests. The nature of societal crime changes is likely to be more influential in determining patterns of female offending and variations in the gender gap than changes in female motivation or their social or economic standing (Estrada et al., 2019).

Walker et al.'s (2016) study on criminal behaviour patterns opines that opportunities for crime come in numerous forms, and they differ greatly depending on gender.

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Walker et al. (2016) aver that, due to their limited access to white-collar or more organised work, professional crime is much more outlandish to women. On the contrary, the abundant opportunities available to men make them susceptible to professional crimes.

The literature discussed in the foregoing section highlights gender patterns that exist in crime news coverage in various media. The literature shows that specific gender patterns in crime news coverage have been identified by scholars studying different media. Such literature presents the current study with the impetus to examine what gender patterns exist with regard to crime news coverage in the selected popular Ghanaian newspapers.

2.10 Theoretical Framework

According to Blumer (2017), the theory is a collection of interconnected claims or propositions that offer explanations for why certain events take place the way they do. In effect, theories help to promote a better understanding and help to explain and predict phenomena. The study of communication and crime has led to an enormous formulation of theories. For the purpose of this study, two theories were employed namely Agenda Setting Theory and the Gender Theory. The two theories will help the study to draw conclusions on the level of prominence given to crime stories, gender of perpetrators and types of crime as published by the selected Ghanaian newspapers. Scholars of newspapers and crime such as Liska and Baccaglini (1990) argue that beliefs about crime are shaped more by newspaper coverage of crime than the raw crime count itself. Various kinds of literature have established that one of the most prevalent subjects of media discourse is a crime (Estrada et al.'s, 2019; Liska & Baccaglini, 1990; Mason, 2006; Rawlinson, 2016; Surette, 2003). Crime is

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represented in many different media categories from entertainment to news and intermediate forms such as infotainment (Mason, 2006; Surette, 2003). Crime is a newsworthy and lucrative topic for the media as they are one of the most popular topics of media attention (Rawlinson, 2016).

2.5.1.1 Agenda Setting Theory (AST)

The beginning of agenda setting theory dates back to Walter Lippmann's work in 1922 (Lippmann, 1922) on the critical role that mass media play, especially in influencing the setting of particular images in the public's mind. Lippmann (1922) makes a point about how the media promotes a specific agenda, hence shape public opinion. Although he never uses the term "agenda setting theory" in his writings, he did provide the foundation for the agenda setting concept. The phrase "agenda setting theory" has attracted attention in the years after Lippmann's time. The term "agenda setting theory" was first used by McCombs and Shaw (1972).

The research by McCombs and Shaw (1972) is one of the most important studies that support the notion that the mass media plays a critical role in promoting a specific agenda and shaping public opinion. They study the influence that the media had on voters' perceptions of the 1968 presidential campaign. According to their research, McCombs and Shaw (1972) discovered that members of the public frequently referred to information as coming from the media. Such a percentage is higher for individuals who are motivated and passionate about following up with information from the presidential campaign. According to Matsaganis and Payne (2005), agenda setting theory has seen extensive development since McCombs and Shaw's findings in 1972 because many studies have been conducted which support their findings. The writings of Lippmann (1922); Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948); Lazarsfeld

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and Merton (1964); Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954); Cohen (1963); McCombs and Shaw (1972); Funkhouser (1973); and Cobb and Elder (1983) are amongst the few papers.

The agenda setting theory explores how the mass media influences the public to prioritize a particular topic as their priority. This theory describes the connections between the emphasis that the mass media places on a problem and the media audiences' or the public's response to that problem (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Thus, the idea that the mass media sets the agenda for what people should worry about gave birth to the agenda-setting theory. Thus, when a story affects people, whether it is the President making a statement or a major storm wreaking havoc on a region, the news media is on high alert to cover it and give viewers the information they need to comprehend what is occurring. However, when a single event is repeatedly and prominently the subject of so much media attention and examination, it might appear as though other crucial topics are being overlooked or even completely ignored by the media. This is the core of the agenda-setting idea. This idea talks about how the news coverage by the media affects which topics get people's attention. The agenda setting theory begins as an explanation of how the mass media affect voters to change the pattern in political behaviour during elections (Cohen,1963). Subsequently, the theory has inspired and developed hundreds of later explorations on how the mass media primes and frames issues for their audiences. Not only limited to such, but the discussion also covers how the mass media colours a particular event for their media audiences (Matsaganis & Payne, 2005). Therefore, the mass media can be considered responsible for influencing and shaping public opinion and agenda. Such influence of mass media on the public agenda or opinion can happen intentionally or unintentionally (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

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The agenda setting theory stands as an important theory not only in mass communication but extends to other related social science studies such as political communication (Reese, 1991). Under the agenda setting theory, the mass media are believed to possess the ability to set the public agenda, especially in matters of opinions or attitudes (Cohen, 1963). In effect, the mass media has particular access to contributing to or influencing the audience's perceptions, values, focus, and priorities. With such influence from the mass media, the media audiences tend to form their own opinion or focus on those issues that are considered worthy of inclusion in their mental agendas (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

Agenda setting theory is categorized into three major types including public, media and policy agenda settings. Within the public agenda setting, the public sets the agenda for which news items are prioritized. The media decides which stories to cover and which ones are essential under the media agenda setting. Finally, policy agenda setting is when the public and media agendas have an impact on decision-makers in government.

2.8.2   Assumptions of Agenda Setting Theory

The first assumption relates to the fact that the media filters and shapes what people see rather than merely relaying stories to the audience (Matsaganis & Payne, 2005; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). An illustration of this is when sensational or controversial news appears at the top of a broadcast rather than one that occurred more recently or has a larger audience, such as an impending storm or legislative tax reform.

The second assumption is that the public will be more inclined to view a topic as important if the media covers it more extensively (Matsaganis & Payne, 2005;

McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Another way to look at it is that mass media organizations present audiences with particular topics or situations that people should think more deeply about rather than telling them what to think or how they should feel about the topics or situations. The agenda-setting theory has support from both psychology and science. People are more likely to remember a topic when asked to recollect it, even if it doesn't directly concern them or stand out as an essential issue but has received a lot of media coverage.

2.8.3 Critique of Agenda Setting Theory

The agenda setting theory has some drawbacks, one of which is that it is difficult to measure (Haarsager, 2009). Moreover, the theory also fails to account for people who have already made up their minds (Feezell, 2017). For instance, someone can think that their elected person was the best choice for the job despite the mass media's abundance of persuasive information to the contrary.

2.8.4   Relevance to the study

The agenda-setting theory helps the researcher to establish how news media can shape and direct public conversation concerning crime cases in society. Thus, the public agenda or discourse is set by the media which prioritizes or primes a set of crime news for public attention. This is in line with the first objective of the study. To increase the significance of the crime issues to the audience, crime news stories are reported frequently and placed strategically within the media space. The policy agenda setting will consequently be employed to influence legislative laws concerning gender-driven crimes with support from the last research objective.

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2.9.   Gender Theory

Another theory employed in this study is Gender Theory propounded by Money (1955). The theory argues that there are categorisation of social expectations, roles, characteristic and behaviours due to biological and social construction between males and females. Society is said to be patriarchal with inherent physical differences between men and women and this has led to division of labour by gender drives. Eagly and Wood (1999) further aver that hormones such as testosterone and oxytocin are activated during the performance of certain activities which are associated with femininity and masculinity.

Parsons (1937) postulate that, females generally carry out 'expressive roles' in the family and grow up to internalise such values as caring and empathy, both of which reduce the likelihood of someone committing crime or likely to harm others.Traditional gender theories typically explain male and female behavior, roles and values. With the universal recognition of the crime-gender gap, it is important to determine and examine crime disparity based on gender.

The gap is said to emanate because the roles and anger women experience is different from that experienced by men in that the anger of women is typically accompanied by emotions such as fear, anxiety, guilt and shame, whereas the anger of men is characterized by moral outrage (Hay, 2003; Jang & Johnson, 2005). Women are said to be more influenced by aspects of the environment than men, and more ecologically vulnerable whereas men personalize vulnerability (Sparks, 1982).

Heidonshem and Silvestri (1995) posit that the subject of female criminality was a neglected phenomenon during the early 18th century; no attention was paid to it. However, in the contemporary age, female criminality is growing because of the

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marginal nature of women, discrimination in family life, workplace environment, decline in traditional roles and complex lifestyles, (Banarjee, Islam & Khatun, 2014) and the impact of the media (Siegel, 2007).

Steffensmeier (1993) advances that, there is a narrowing of the gender gap in crimes, indicating an increase in female crimes due to the financial hardship of women. Broidy and Agnew (1997) aver that women tend to internalize their anger, unlike men who tend to externalize anger, partly due to the nature of the socialization of women to turn their anger inward and blame themselves for adversity, whereas men are socialized to outwardly express anger. Additionally, Smart (1976) emphatically agrees with the assertion that females commit much less crime than males. This is so because studies on gender dynamics in crime have over the years received very scanty attention but with the inception of feminist critiques, much attention has been directed to the issues of female crime and offenders. Ellison and Taylor (1996) agree with Broidy and Agnew (1997) and add that, women are more religiously and deeply embedded in religious networks of social support than men and so likely to commit less deviance or crime. Braithwaite (1989:23) clearly stated that crime is "committed disproportionately by males."

2.9.1 Assumptions of Gender Theory

The theory assumes that females are mainly socialised into expressive role and are expected to internalise their anger, be gentle and nurturing, qualities usually not associated with crime, while their male counterparts on the other hand are socialised for instrumental roles and mainly expected to be tough and sometimes aggressive (Parson, 1955; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Walklate, 2003). An illustration of this is

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when an individual is provoked, the female is likely to use verbal expression while the male counterpart may get physical or use weapon to harm.

2.9.2   Critique of Gender Theory

The gender theory has obtained some level of advancement and criticism. Edwards (1983) and other major critiques (Ayisi, 2022; Jackson, 2011; Roberto et al, 2019; Thompson, 2018) are of the view that the assumption of the gender theory, which postulates that crime is perpetrated by people based on their gender orientation, has unexplained gaps because the theory fails to explain natural human behaviour, outside the orientation of the immediate environment. Another criticism is that the theory fails to explain crimes based on contemporary situations where traditional roles and values are declining, and the change in social structures and enfolded occupation, likewise the inter-and intra-personal aspect of crime (Bernard, 1984).

2.9.3   Relevance of the theory to the study

As regards the current study, the theory will aid in examining the gender differences in the perpetration of crime in society, as reported in the selected newspapers (O'Grady, 2007). The gender theory will prove useful in evaluating which gender is more prone to crime, as reported in the news. Moreover, the theory will be useful in examining the types or nature of crimes perpetrated by both genders. Hinging on the gender theory and conclusions established in the relevant reviewed literature, inferences can be drawn in the current study, as to the gender of perpetrators of data collected.

2.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter sets out to review related works on newspaper coverage of crime, with literature from Ghana and outside Ghana. From the available literature, it appears that crime news in the newspapers has relevance in the daily communication, activity, and development of society. The theories that underpin this study, agenda setting and gender theory were elaborated, and their relevance to the study was also brought to bear. However, the next chapter will throw more light on whether newspapers give more prominence to crime news, and highlight the gender of perpetrators of crimes as reported in the selected newspapers and the types of crimes in the data collected.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0   Introduction

This chapter presents the methods and procedures employed in carrying out the study. Research methodology entails the detailed system or procedures underlying the conduct of a study, and against which claims for knowledge are evaluated (Creswell, 2014). The chapter discusses the research approach, research design, sample size and sampling technique, data collection methods and procedure, method of data analysis, ethical issues, and the trustworthiness of the data.

3.1 Research Approach

This study employed the qualitative research approach. According to Kreuger and Neuman (2006), qualitative research is useful for exploring data in the form of text, written words, phrases, or symbols describing or representing people's actions and events in social life. Lindlof and Taylor (2017) add that the raw materials analysed in qualitative research include text of any kind (written, images, actual talk, gestures etc.). Since the raw material involved in the current study was text drawn from selected newspapers, the qualitative approach proved appropriate for the study. The qualitative approach was applied in this regard to obtain data, describe and analyse the data because the data for the study were in the form of text, written words, phrases or symbols describing or representing people's actions, and events in social life (Kreuger & Neuman, 2006).

Moreover, the qualitative research approach involves an interpretive, naturalistic way of studying the world or its subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007). The qualitative research approach describes phenomena as they appear naturally with no effort to influence the situation under study (Salvador, 2016). The qualitative approach affords researchers the opportunity to study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the same vein, data from the newspapers in this study was derived and studied in their natural state for interpretations, without any attempt to influence or manipulate the data. The researcher set out to make interpretations and inferences from data on crime as recorded in the dailies.

Again, qualitative research does not restrain itself to mere mathematical or other arduous transformations of data but rather concerns itself with the subjective interpretations that can be drawn from studying various phenomena (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research, according to Creswell (2014), is social research that employs an empirical method and empirical statement about what is the case in the real world rather than what is out to be the case. Qualitative research is described by (Shank 2002) as a systematic, empirical inquiry into meanings. This means that the qualitative method allows for description of an experience and is convenient for intangible factors such as behaviour, norms among many others to be delved into. In line with these, the current study employed the qualitative research approach to make subjective interpretations of the crime news stories reported in selected newspapers. The study only made sparse use of descriptive statistics in the form of charts and tables to present graphical representations of the data gathered.

Quite a significant number of studies have been done on newspaper coverage of

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crime news and other phenomena using a qualitative approach. This is hinged on the fact that qualitative research helps to effectively and efficiently assess the true picture behind newspaper coverage of social issues in the setting of every society. The qualitative approach was thus used because this research intended to establish the facts about events (and in this case crime) that had happened in the past (Denzin, 2000).

3.2   Research Design

A research design is the detailed methodology of sourcing data scientifically (Creswell, 2014). The research design employed for this study is qualitative content analysis. Flick and Shreier (2014) describe qualitative content analysis as a research technique or method for making replicable and valid references from a set of data to their context. Palmquist et al., (2005) maintain that qualitative content analysis is a means of objectively examining the presence of certain words, phrases, characters, themes, concepts or any communicative language in a body of text. Consequently, the qualitative content analysis design was applied in this study in order to explore the crime news stories reported in the selected newspapers and draw valid references that give an understanding of how crime news coverage reflects crime patterns as well as gender patterns. Moreover, the qualitative content analysis design proved useful in objectively examining and presenting findings from the crime news stories examined in the study.

Furthermore, Hsieh and Shannon (2005) aver that qualitative content analysis involves the subjection of text to systematic processes of coding and thematising in order to make subjective interpretations of the content of the text. The design involves the reduction of text by identifying core consistencies or patterns in order to

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categorise them and make sense of them (Patton, 2002). In tandem with this, data on crime news stories collected from the selected newspapers were subjected to iterative close reading and thematising along the lines of common patterns or categories. The themes identified from the analysis helped the researcher in making subjective interpretations of the data in relation to the prominence given to crime news stories in the dailies, as well as the crime and gender patterns reflected in the reportage. Again, the content analysis was done to analyse meanings, patterns and themes that were apparent in the sampled news stories (Wildemuth & Zhang, 2009).

Again, the qualitative content analysis design was employed for the current study because, according to Mayring (2015), though qualitative content analysis follows analytical rules and step-by-step models to study the content of texts, it does not aim at producing counts or statistical significance. The qualitative content analysis design concerns itself with unearthing patterns or categories in the text that are relevant to social reality (Wildermuth & Zhang, 2014). Consequently, the current study restricted itself to the confines of making subjective interpretations of the data gathered on crime news from the selected newspapers. The study only made use of simple frequency tables and charts to give an overview of the prominence of crime news reported in the dailies, as well as the crime and gender patterns in the stories.

3.3 Sampling Technique

The sampling technique or strategy guides the researcher as to the choices of what to observe or analyse in a given study (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). A purposive sampling technique was used for this study. In purposive sampling, subjects or participants are selected because of specific characteristics or properties that they possess which

makes them very relevant to the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In the purposive sampling technique, researchers select particular subjects or participants based on the judgment that they are in a better position to provide the researcher with the needed information to achieve the objectives of the study (Etikann et al, 2017). Moreover, the samples purposively selected are to possess characteristics that will enable the researcher to make a detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes being studied (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017).

Consequently, two Ghanaian newspapers (*The Daily Graphic* and *The Daily Guide*) were purposively selected for this study. The *Daily Graphic* newspaper is the leading state-owned newspaper in Ghana. Founded in the year 1950 and owned by the Ghanaian State, the paper is published in Accra – Ghana six times per week. The *Daily Graphic* newspaper is regarded as the most circulated state-owned newspaper with an approximate daily readership of 100,000 (Geopoll, 2019). The *Daily Guide* newspaper is the leading private-owned newspaper in Ghana. Started in 1984 and owned by the Blay family, the *Daily Guide* newspaper is published in Accra – Ghana six times per week. The *Daily Guide* is regarded as the most circulated independent newspaper in Ghana, with a daily readership of about 50,000. The newspaper can boast of being the private-owned newspaper with the widest coverage, largest readership, and most accessibility in Ghana (Geopoll, 2019).

Additionally, in selecting the editions of the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers for the study, the constructed week sampling technique was used (Luke et al., 2011). The constructed week sampling is a type of stratified random sampling technique in which sample dates are stratified by day of the week with one picked alternatively each week (Luke et al., 2011). This type of sampling technique is

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popular in media studies in which the final sample represents all the seven days of the week (Jones & Carter, 1959; Luke et al., 2011; Stempel, 1952) to account for cycle variation of news content in a daily newspaper study (Riffe et al, 1993). This technique was employed to approximate content for the larger population of textual data in content analysis and allow for reliable estimated content for the population of twelve newspaper editions for this study. Luke et al. (2011) maintain that the constructed week sampling method is robust enough in guaranteeing a true representation of any given phenomenon being studied in newspapers.

The newspaper stories selected covered 12 months starting from January 1, 2019-month to December 31, 2019. This period was selected because according to the Crime Index Report from 2014 to 2022, the year 2019 had the highest crime index (Sasu, 2021). This is also affirmed by the Ghana Police report on crime statistics (2021) as well the 2022 World Bank Report on Crime Rate statistics.
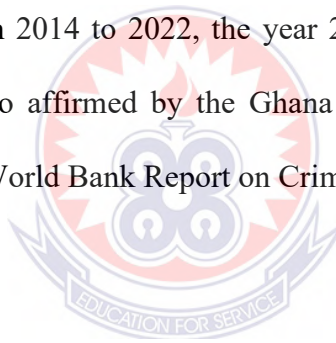
3.3.1   Sample Size

Sample size refers to the detached fraction of the entire population relevant to the study of a phenomenon (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). The sample for any study refers to the units (individuals, artifacts, events, or organisations) from which data can be drawn for a study (Adebiyi & Abayomi, 2016). The sample for the current study was the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* newspapers.

Creswell (2014) posits that smaller sample sizes can be selected purposively in qualitative studies. However, it is advised that the sample size should be mostly dependent on the type of design employed by the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, Lindlof and Taylor (2017) posit that qualitative research tends to consider

smaller sample sizes in greater depth in order to draw rich thick interpretations of the phenomenon under study. Again, the sample size for qualitative research is usually small, but relevant to realising the set objectives, because the process of reading and coding text in such studies is so time-consuming and in-depth (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). In terms of sample size, the constructed week sampling was used to sample fifty-five (55) editions each from the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* newspapers, as it is not easy and prudent to study all available issues of the two selected newspapers from its inception till date (Luke et al., 2011). Thus, there were one hundred and ten (110) editions, in all, sampled for the study. This follows from the fact that qualitative studies focus on the social practices in a specific historical or cultural setting and that the question of whether they are normally distributed in a population is immaterial. Nonetheless, the sample size was enough. This was to allow for data adequacy and thick analysis, a position supported by Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007).

The current study considered a single news story as its unit of analysis. All crime stories in the 55 editions of each newspaper were selected for analysis. According to Droessiger (2017), a unit of analysis is the basic element or indicator of a phenomenon of interest in a content analysis. The unit may be a word, sentence, image, scene, entire news story, or document, depending on the phenomenon being studied. In all, the study recorded a total of one hundred and fifty-nine (159) crime news stories; fifty-two (52) crime news stories from the *Daily Graphic* and One Hundred and Seven (107) crime news stories from the *Daily Guide* newspaper in the 55 editions selected from each newspaper.

3.4   Data Collection Method

Data is defined as raw and unprocessed facts that when processed become information (Aina, 2004). According to Malhotra and Birks (2006), data can be categorized into two. These are primary and secondary data. The authors define primary data as information that are original and collected first-hand by the researcher from the field to address a particular issue. On the other hand, secondary data is information that is sourced second-hand to original data collected by the researcher from the field. Secondary data are usually found pre-existing in books, articles, websites, etc. containing records of researchers' findings gathered from the field. This study employed document analysis as the data collection method for the research. This is because newspapers are documentary in nature and as such the use of documentary review as a data collection method for the analysis of crime stories from the selected newspapers is appropriate for this study.
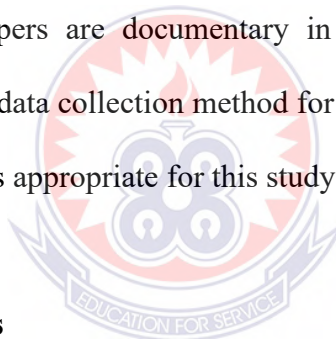
3.4.1 Document Analysis

Bowen (2009) articulates that document analysis is a method for collecting data for qualitative research in which the contents of pre-existing documents are interpreted by the researcher to construct meaning. In document analysis, there is a systematic procedure through which documents (either printed or electronic i.e. computer-based and internet-transmitted) are reviewed or evaluated with the aim of gaining an understanding of a phenomenon and developing empirical knowledge of the identified phenomenon (Bowen, 2009). The resultant effect of document analysis is the reduction of large data sets into clusters of major themes and sub-themes that unearth a phenomenon. In addition to the above, since the document analysis method

of data collection is also unobtrusive and non-reactive in nature, the current study found it suitable for analysing the coverage of crime news stories in the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* newspapers.

Consequently, crime news stories in the selected newspapers within the period of study were analysed by the researcher as documents. Documents, according to Prior (2003), are seen as a production within a social setting hence should be regarded as a collective product. This provides a justification for the selection of stories from each newspaper since they are collective documents produced by the news agencies. Moreover, the careful analysis of crime news stories from the two selected newspapers within the selected period of study enabled the researcher to establish the prominence that was given to the crime news stories by both the leading state-owned newspaper and the leading private-owned newspaper within a period that saw crime rate soar in the country.
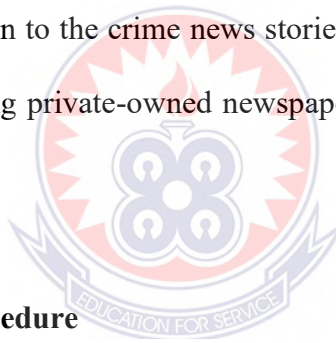
3.5 Data Collection Procedure

According to O'Leary (2014), researchers employing document analysis to collect data can apply two techniques. On one hand, the researcher regards the document as a respondent or an informant that gives the researcher the needed information. On the other hand, the researcher notes occurrences within a given text. Thus, the researcher inductively analyses the text drawing from particular to general, core occurrences within the text (O'Leary, 2014). In this study, the researcher employed the second technique to analyse data from both the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* Newspapers.

In order for the researcher to have access to the 2019 editions of the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* newspapers, an introductory letter was sent to the offices of these

media organisations to grant the researcher access to their library. The content of the letter included the phenomenon under study as well as what the research sought to investigate. The data collection process started on June 25[th,] 2022, and the researcher together with her two research assistants arrived at the premises of the Graphic Communications Group, the publishers of the *Daily Graphic* newspaper on the Graphic Road in Accra. Upon arrival, we introduced ourselves to the security personnel at the entrance of the compound. He sought the assistance of a factory worker who chanced by and urged him to take us to the library in order for us to be able to carry out our task. Upon entry, we were given tags and asked by the receptionist to write our names, time of arrival, the department we wished to visit, and what we sought to do in that department. We did so duly. The factory worker led us up a flight of stairs, past some rooms, and into the library. He did us the kindness of introducing us to the librarian and letting her know why we were there, after which he took leave of us. The librarian showed us the section that harboured the 2019 editions of the *Daily Graphic* newspaper and assured us of her assistance, should we need it. From there, we began our work. We went about the task by taking a month each at a time and getting the data we needed from the editions we considered. The data collection exercise spanned approximately five hours; from 11 am to 4 pm. We took no breaks during that period since time was of the essence and the librarian had earlier informed us that she closes at 4:30 pm exactly. Each of us had a notebook and writing apparatus which we used for the work. Screenshots of the stories were also taken with a Samsung Galaxy A13 phone. Upon completion, we expressed gratitude to the librarian and took leave of her. We met the next day June 26[th,] 2022, to compare notes, go over the data, and do the monthly breakdown of the data we collected from the *Daily Graphic* newspaper using the Microsoft Word application.

This process took approximately eight hours to finish.

On June 28th, 2022, my research assistants and I arrived at the premises of the *Daily Guide* Newspaper at Nima. The time of arrival was 11 am. Upon arrival, we were greeted by the security personnel at the entrance of the compound and we made our mission known to her. She then directed us to the receptionist in the main building. After the exchange of pleasantries with the receptionist, we made our mission known to her also. She informed us that the librarian who was aware of the location of the editions we needed was not available. This was because the librarian had travelled out of the region and was expected to be back on Saturday. This made it impossible for us to have access to the editions we needed to make the task possible. We took the contact details of the receptionist with the promise to call her on the ensuing Monday morning to find out if the librarian had reported to work. We then took leave of her for our various homes.

On July 4th, 2022, I received a call from the receptionist at around 10 am informing us that the librarian had reported to work. I set off for the premises immediately after I informed my research assistants. We arrived at the premises at around 11 am. Upon arrival, we found that the librarian had already made all the editions readily available for us and after we exchanged greetings, we got to work. Making use of the notebooks and writing apparatus that we carried, we recorded all the needed information from the editions we considered as well as took screenshots of the stories with the same Samsung Galaxy A13. Due to the fact that there was not much space in the library, we had to carry out the task at the reception. However, the occasional entry and exit of visitors and staff did nothing to impede the progress of the task. The process took approximately five hours to complete; from 11:11 am to 4 pm. We took

no breaks during this activity. After the work was done, we returned the editions to their appropriate sections with the guidance of the librarian. We then expressed gratitude to her for her assistance and we took our leave. We met on July 6th at my house for the collation process. This process lasted for six and a half hours to complete.

3.6 Data Analysis

The study settled on the thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2018; Dayour et al., 2020) and reviewed the content of the two prominent newspapers in Ghana, namely, the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide,* to examine the coverage of the various newspapers on crime news in Ghana. The decision to employ the thematic analysis technique was informed by Braun and Clarke (2018) who describe thematic analysis as an analytic research device that is patently and sufficiently systematic and objective to analyse or describe the manifest content of a mass medium of communication. Thematic analysis has been defined by various authors and one of the comprehensive insights into the technique has been provided by Alhojailan and Ibrahim (2012), who define thematic analysis as a methodology by which the researcher seeks to determine the manifest content of written, spoken or published communication by systematic, objective and quantitative analysis including newspaper accounts, personal letters, suicide notes among many others. In this study, the researcher sought to examine the content of crime news stories, as reported in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers, for the purpose of identifying the frequency of such stories, as well as the crime and gender patterns revealed in the reportage.

Moreover, in the current study, Braun and Clarke's (2018) steps in conducting thematic analysis were employed. The first step of the analysis was the familiarisation of the researcher with the data. In this step, the researcher read the selected news reports on crime from the two newspapers repeatedly. Screenshots of all the news stories with the crime categories used for this study were stored in a file on the researcher's laptop. This was to enable the researcher to return to the data and go through it as and when needed. The continuous close reading of the text afforded the researcher the chance to identify recurring trends and patterns that frequently occurred in the data.

The second step was the coding of the data. At this point, the researcher engaged in what Braun and Clarke (2018) call coding and categorisation. In coding and categorisation, significant statements or phrases are extracted from the text, meanings are deduced from such statements and finally put together under befitting headings or clusters called themes (Braun & Clarke, 2018). Ideas in the stories were given labels to help the researcher come up with categories that will later be developed into themes. This step, according to Braun and Clarke (2018), is meant to help the researcher create categories that allow further interpretations and generation of theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The third step merged categories that emerged out of the codes to form themes. Words and phrases identified as relevant supporting quotes were captured. In step four, the researcher reviewed themes generated from the data for logical presentation. Here, the data gathered were put into themes. Themes were generated inductively from the data. In other words, the generated themes were data-driven.

The researcher did not try to fit the data into any pre-existing themes in the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2018). The researcher categorised themes that emerged from the two selected newspapers. The researcher finally interpreted the findings gathered from the data. These interpretations hinged the relevant theories for the study. It is important to note that the researcher does not work for any of these media organisations, and as such had no preconceived ideas that were brought to bear during the data interpretation process.

3.7 Ethical Issues

Every researcher needs to have an idea of some of the ethical issues that might affect the results of their study. This is important because it helps the researcher devise strategies to minimize the effects (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the researcher expended much effort at not falsifying evidence, actual data, findings or conclusions of the study. All pieces of evidence supporting the findings of the study were extracted from the newspapers used in the study without any manipulations whatsoever. Moreover, great care was taken to ensure that plagiarism was minimised to the best of the researcher's ability by consulting and adhering to the American Psychology Association (APA) 7th Edition standards on referencing, in line with the degree-awarding institution's preference.

Creswell (2005) advises researchers to seek permission from organisations or social groups when collecting data from them for a study. Consequent to this advice, the researcher sought consent from the two media organisations before approval was given to use their library to access their newspapers and use their news report as data for this study, although, this document is a public document.

According to Vanclay et al. (2013), a researcher must make known all methods and procedures employed in the study to afford other researchers the opportunity to replicate the study, enable peer review on how adequate and ethical the methods used were, and inspire critical self-reflection on the limitations of the methods. In consonance with these assertions, the study was conducted in an objective manner without giving any room for data manipulation. Also, the researcher provided full disclosure of the methods and processes employed in this study. This disclosure was done in a descriptive and in-depth manner. Thus, data collection methods and data analysis methods were clearly discussed. Rationales were provided for each of the methods employed in this study to aid the researcher to examine the level of attention given by the media to crime stories within the period of study as well as analyse the gender patterns in the various crime stories reported.

3.8 Trustworthiness of Data

Shenton (2004) argues that the issue of trustworthiness in empirical studies has to do with ensuring that the results of the study are not influenced by any form of researchers' biases. Creswell (2014), citing Gibbs (2007), postulates that qualitative validity is the extent to which the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings employing appropriate procedures to ensure reliability consistent with researcher's approach across different researchers and different projects as a result. Lincoln and Guba (2000) are of the view that one of the most essential ways in ensuring the trustworthiness of a study is through internal validation.

The researcher used valid sources to obtain data, ensured accuracy of results, employed several sources of empirical literature, and used appropriate research

approach. Additionally, appropriate research design, methods were used, sampling technique, authenticity and appropriate data collection duration consistent with qualitative research standards was employed.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) have proposed eight ways for qualitative researchers to follow in ensuring the trustworthiness of their studies. These strategies include prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer review and debriefing, member checking, negative case analysis, clarifying biases, providing opportunities for external auditing, and thick rich descriptions. The author, however, adds that qualitative researchers could employ a minimum of two of these strategies in a single study. Consequent to that, this study, based on its nature, employed two of these verification strategies consisting of peer review and debriefing, and a thick rich description of data.

The researcher's methods and data were peer-reviewed and debriefed by lecturers, graduate assistants, colleagues and research assistants during weekly seminar presentations and other personal discussions. Moreover, an effort was made at ensuring inter-coder reliability among the coders who aided in carrying out the coding and categorisation. Also, the analysis of the data was done in a thick rich descriptive manner and supported arguments made with extracts from the data to make engaging discussions.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed process and procedure for data collection and analysis. The qualitative study drew on a qualitative content analysis study of two selected newspapers in Ghana over a twelve months period. Data were collected

through document analysis of the crime stories in two newspapers over a period of twelve months using the constructed week sampling technique. The information collected was analyzed using thematic analysis, the unit of analysis was a story while the trustworthiness and reliability of the data collected were upheld. The chapter that follows presents an analysis of the data gathered and discusses the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0   Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the study following the specified methods in the previous chapter. A thematic analysis of data from the selected newspapers has been employed in presenting data and discussions in this chapter. Leveraging on the relevant theories and literature, the study reveals key issues regarding the coverage of crime news in the Ghanaian media with focus on the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers.

4.1   RQ1. What is the level of prominence given to crime news stories by the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers?

Hinging on Gillin's (2014) and Siegel's (2007) postulations on crime, this current study operationalises crime to be any act that is believed to be socially harmful by a group of people, and thus condemned by the group and sanctioned by the state. Thus, crime, per this study, includes kidnapping, murder, robbery, child molestation, child abuse, sodomy, rape, treason, sedition, among others (Mahessar et al., 2021). Furthermore, crime news would refer to any news story that borders on crime and is captured within the period of study in the selected newspapers. The coverage of crime news relies on the extent or degree to which crime news is observed, analysed and reported in a given context.

In covering crime news in the print media, a number of strategies are employed to give it the necessary prominence for public attention. Branch (2019) asserts that

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prominence of news stories can take the form of placement in the media, as well as the frequency of coverage. Reuben (2010) avers that when attention is being sought for a particular phenomenon, media coverage is mostly employed to draw the desired attention, and the prominence given to a news item affects how seriously the public views the item in question. As a result, research question one sought to examine the prominence given to crime news by the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers, two of the nation's most widely circulated newspapers (Geopoll, 2021).

In order to account for the cycle variation of crime news in the selected newspapers, the constructed week sampling method (Luke et al., 2011) was used to sample a total of fifty-five (55) editions each from the papers for the study. The editions were analysed for the presence of crime news stories, and the prominence given to such stories as captured in the dailies. The analysis first considered prominence on the basis of frequency, then also considered prominence on the basis of placement.

4.1.1 Prominence by Frequency of Editions and News Stories

In using frequency to give prominence to news stories in the media, deliberate attempt is made at setting the agenda by reporting on several instances of a particular issue. Branch (2019) posits that, by repeating various 'shades' of a particular issue or phenomenon, the media sets an agenda and draws the public into garnering interest in that agenda. The agenda set through repeated coverage creates a picture that highlights the spate or ascendency of an issue, and in the context of this study relating to crime. To examine prominence given to the coverage of crime issues in the newspapers, the study considered frequency of crime stories within the study period that gave coverage to crime stories as well as frequency of crime news stories in the selected newspapers.

Table 1: Prominence through frequency of crime stories

Edition	Frequency	Newspapers	
	(No%)	Graphic	*Daily Guide*
Edition with coverage	83 (75.5%)	34 (30.9%)	49 (44.5%)
Edition without Coverage	27 (24.5%)	21 (19.1%)	6 (5.5%)
Total	**110 (100%)**	**55 (50%)**	**55 (50%)**

Source: Field data, 2022

In tandem with data in Table 1above, the findings of the study revealed that one hundred and ten (110) editions consisting fifty-five (55) editions for each newspaper were examined within the period of study. Eighty-three of the editions (75.5%) covered crime stories while 27 of them (24.5%) did not. Out of the total of fifty-five (55) editions sampled for the *Daily Graphic* newspaper, thirty-four (34) of them contained news stories on crime, representing 30.9% the editions published within the period of study. Twenty-one (21) of the editions, representing 19.1%, did not publish crime news stories. With regards to the *Daily Guide* newspaper, the findings revealed that forty-nine (49) editions out of the fifty-five (55) editions covered crime news stories whereas six (6) editions did not. This figure represents 44.5%% against 5.5% of the total editions sampled for *Daily Guide*.

From the findings, it can be argued that within the study period, the newspapers gave prominence to crime news stories because the great majority of the editions (75.5%) covered crime issues. Also, the *Daily Graphic* newspaper had less editions (30.9%) with news stories bordering on crime while *Daily Guide*, on its part, had many editions (44.5%) with news stories on crime.

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Furthermore, it is worth noting that the analysis of the 83 editions revealed that a total of 159 crime news stories were published by the two newspapers within the study period. Findings also revealed that whereas the *Daily Graphic* newspaper covered a total of fifty-two (52) crime stories in the thirty-four editions, the *Daily Guide* recorded one hundred and seven (107) crime news stories in the forty-nine editions that contained crime stories. This means that, the *Daily Graphic* covered 32.7% of all crime news stories featured in the two dailies from January 1 to December 31 2019, whiles the *Daily Guide* covered 67.3% of the total number of stories. Table 2 below illustrates this data:

Table 2: Distribution of news stories

Newspaper	Frequency	Percentage
Daily Graphic	52	32.7%
Daily Guide	107	67.3%
Total	**159**	**100%**

Source: Field data, 2022

Once again, the trend of *Daily Guide* giving more attention to crime news stories is established by the data. Analysis revealed that the *Daily Guide* covered more than half of the total crime stories published by the two newspapers within the period of study. The comparative distribution of the frequencies in edition and news stories in figure 1, throws more light on this.

Figure 1: Comparative distribution of total number of crime stories in editions with crime stories for the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers
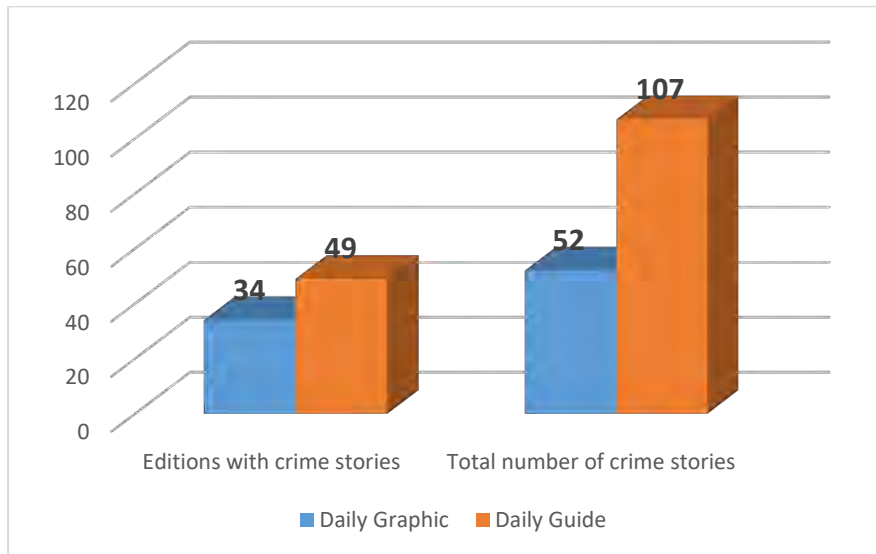
Figure 1 indicates that the privately-owned newspaper gave more prominence to crime news stories. Thus, on both ends of total editions that featured crime news stories, and total number of crime news stories covered, the privately-owned newspaper was in the lead. Even though in comparison the *Daily Graphic* is well resourced in terms of human and financial resources than *Daily Guide*, it did not give much coverage to crime issues. Baidoo (2011) and Gogovi (2017) have suggested that the primary focus of the reportage by state-owned print media in Ghana is to satisfy the political class as politics dominates what gets published. These assertions seem to align with the claim by Tiscareno-Garcia (2020) that there is usually a deliberate attempt by media owners to water down the effects that the coverage of crime news stories stands to have on the populace. Based on these assertions, it may seem like the newspaper played down on its reportage of crime. However, it is important to note that *Daily Graphic* is a state-owned newspaper and it is mandated by the 1992 Constitution and the National Media Policy to ensure content diversity

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so, in this case, the state-owned newspaper has devoted much space and attention to other issues aside from that of crime. Hence, other topics like education, politics among others are equally given attention. On the other hand, *Daily Guide* being a privately-owned paper is not under such obligation but it is rather interested in crime news due to the fact that negative (crime) news will sell newspapers. Thus, Strömbäck (2012) and Skovsgaard (2014) avow that profit is crucial in terms of what gets published in many newspapers. The findings further give evidence to the tenet of the agenda setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) that advances that the media has power to deliberately set an agenda for the populace to follow.

By repeatedly giving coverage to crime issues within the study period through the frequency of editions with coverage (83 editions) and frequency of crime news stories (159 news stories), it can be argued that the newspapers drew their readers' attention to crime issues. However, *Daily Guide* had more editions with coverage (49 out of 55 editions) and more frequency of stories (109 news stories), therefore, it drew more attention to the issue of crime than *Daily Graphic*. This implies that *Daily Guide* did set a favourable agenda for crime stories within the study period than *Daily Graphic* so far as indicators of editions with coverage and frequency of crime news stories are concerned.

Having established the prominence given to crime news stories using frequency of editions and news stories, the study considered prominence owing to placement.

4.1.2 Prominence by Placement

In using placement to give prominence to news stories in the media, deliberate attempt is made at setting the agenda by positioning particular stories on the pages

that carry most weight (are most prominent) (Boukes et al., 2022). These pages are usually the pages 1 (front page), 2, 3, or the back page (Boukes et al., 2022). Such pages are deemed to carry 'more weight' because readers are more likely to visit such pages even if they do not have time to view most or all of the pages in a newspaper. Consequently, stories that are featured on such pages assume much prominence, and attract higher cost for placement as well. The placement of stories on such important pages of newspapers set the stories up as attention-grabbers, thus, setting an agenda around them and generating public discourse. In effect, the public is led to focus on the agenda (stories) placed on the most important pages. The agenda set through placement creates a picture that such stories are worth reading and talking about (Nasi et al., 2020). If they relate to crime, they navigate public attention and discourse to that arena.

Table 3: Prominence through placement of crime news stories

Placement	Frequency (N %)	Newspapers	
		Daily Graphic	*Daily Guide*
Front page	14 (8.8%)	5 (3.1%)	9 (5.6%)
Pages 2 and 3	10 (6.3%)	4 (2.5%)	6 (3.8%)
Back pages	4 (2.5%)	2 (1.3%)	2 (1.3%)
Other page	131 (82.4%)	41(25.8%)	90 (56.6%)
Total	**159 (100%)**	**52 (32.7%)**	**107 (67.3%)**

Source: Field data, 2022

In tandem with table 3 above, the findings of the study revealed that 14 news stories had front page placement with 10 (6.3%) pages 2 and 3, and 4 (2.5%) back page

placement. One hundred and thirty-one (131) stories, representing 82.4%, were given other page placement. The *Daily Graphic* gave prominence to some crime news stories by placing them on important pages. The data shows that out of the fifty-two (52) crime news stories captured in the *Daily Graphic* newspaper within the study period, a total of eleven (11), representing 6.9% were given prominence by way of placement on either the front, second or third pages, or back page while forty nine (41), representing 25.8% had inside page prominence. Of the eleven (11) stories with high placement prominence from *Daily Graphic*, five (5) (3.1%) were placed on the front page where readers are likely to focus first. Four (4) of the crime news stories, representing 2.5%, were located on pages 2 or 3, being the next pages that readers are most likely to turn to, aside the front page. Two news stories (1.3%) were placed on the back page where readers are likely to look last before dropping a newspaper. The remaining 41 news stories, representing 25.8% had other page placement.

The findings above indicate that though the *Daily Graphic* gave some placement prominence to crime news stories, the stories were mostly placed on pages that did not project the stories as prominent enough. Thus, only 6.9% out of the 32.7% the crime stories were favourably placed while 25.8% were not. Consequently, the great majority (25.8% out of 32.7%) of the crime stories published by the newspaper were likely to be missed by readers because they had been placed on rather obscure pages of the nation's leading state-owned newspaper. Below are samples of crime news stories captured on the front page of the *Daily Graphic*:

Figure 2: Crime news stories on front pages of *Daily Graphic*

Source: *Daily Graphic*; February 11, 2019

In similar fashion, the findings further revealed that the *Daily Guide* newspaper also gave placement prominence to some crime news stories but the stories were also mostly placed on pages that did not project the stories as prominent enough. The *Daily Guide* newspaper gave high placement to 17 (10.7%) crime stories published consisting 9 front page (5.6%), 6 pages 2 and 3 (3.8%), and 2 back page (1.3%) placements. However, 90 (56.6%) of the stories had other page placement.

Consequently, few of the crime stories published by *Daily Guide* (10.7%) were readily seen by readers because they had also been placed on high prominent pages of the nation's leading private-owned newspaper. Majority of the stories were rather placed at the obscure pages of the newspaper, hence, likely to be missed by readers of the newspaper. Below are samples crime news stories captured on the front page of the *Daily Guide*:

Figure 3: Crime news stories on front pages of *Daily Guide*

Source: *Daily Guide*; March 22, 2019   Source: *Daily Guide*; February 1, 2019

Juxtaposing the placement prominence of crime news stories featured in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers (as shown in figure 4 below), the findings revealed that, though some level of urgency was attached to crime news coverage in both newspapers by way of frequency, the level of prominence given to crime news stories by way of placement in both newspapers was below average.
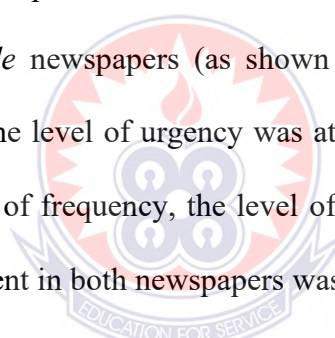
Figure 4: Comparative distribution of prominence of crime news stories by way of placement in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide*

Findings on placement of stories seem to suggest that for both newspapers, mere coverage of crime news stories was thought to suffice for setting an agenda on crime. However, if crime news stories are not placed where they are likely to be seen and discussed by readers, there will be little to no effect on public awareness and discourse. Boukes et al. (2022) aver that placing crime news stories on pages of prominence, as well as using the right language to describe such crimes (O'Hear, 2020) indicates a strong resolve to tackle the menace by driving public discourse.

Also, the comparison of the frequencies of placement of stories seem to suggest that the *Daily Guide* newspaper gave better placement (than *Daily Graphic*) but considering the total number of stories published and the number of stories with high placement prominence, it can be argued that *Daily Graphic* rather fared better than *Daily Guide* on this indicator. Thus, *Daily Guide* published twice the number of

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stories *Daily Graphic* published (107:52) yet the margin of difference between the newspapers with regards to high prominence placements (Graphic – 11 out of 52: *Daily Guide* – 17 out of 107) suggests that *Daily Guide* gave less prominence to this indicator.

In a nutshell, the findings on story placements presented above give evidence to the fact that the public's attention was not drawn to majority of the crime news stories published by the newspapers. This is because Entman (1993) posits that salience of an issue through coverage can be attained through strategic placements of stories. Strategic placement refers to the positioning of the crime stories on the pages that carry most weight (Boukes et al., 2022) and an attempt to repeatedly place the stories on such pages. High prominence placements in newspapers help to set a favourable agenda because agenda setting is successful when much prominence is given an issue in the media over time (Baran & Davis, 2012). Hence, placement of the majority of the stories on other pages is not strategic, therefore, reduces the salience that can be achieved through placement. In effect, both newspapers employed the two main ways of giving prominence to news stories in their reportage (frequency of stories and placement of stories) but did not use it repeatedly to give much prominence to crime stories published within the study period.

4.2 RQ2. What are the types of crimes reported by the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers?

The amorphous nature of crime has resulted in a superfluity of acts considered crime in different societies (Proll & Magin, 2022). Such acts include theft, murder, rape, battery, mob justice, suicide, homicide and femicide, among others. Crime news borders on coverage or reportage on such acts that have socially harmful impact on a

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group of people, and are thus condemned by the public and sanctioned by the state (Gillin, 2014; Proll & Magin, 2022). Being a permanent and recurrent phenomenon (Silva & Capellan, 2019), crime is reported in a similar manner across societies. The reportage usually covers the nature or type of crime, the perpetrators, the victims, and at times the measures taken by authorities to address or curb the said crime. This similarity in reportage, nevertheless, does not downplay peculiar patterns in the occurrence of the act. There are patterns that characterise the occurrence of crime in varying societies, as reported in the media (Quarshie et al., 2015).

Gillin (2014) posits that crime can be classified into four broad spectrums being; economic crimes, sexual crimes, crimes of violence and political crimes. On the bases of these classifications, the crime news stories gathered from the sampled editions of the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers were analysed. Findings are presented in table 4 below:

Table 4: Comparative frequency distribution of crime news stories in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide*

Nature of Crime	*Daily Graphic* Frequency (N%)	*Daily Guide* Frequency (N%)	Total (N%)
Violent crimes	31 (19.5%)	58 (36.5%)	89 (55.9%)
Economic crimes	17 (10.6%)	41 (25.8%)	58 (36.5%)
Sexual crimes	2 (1.3%)	8 (5%)	10 (6.3%)
Political crimes	2 (1.3%)	0 (0%)	2 (1.3%)
Total	**52** (32.7%)	**107** (67.3%)	**159** (100%)

Source: Field data, 2022

It was discovered from data analysis that a total of 89 stories (55.9%) were on violent crimes. This was followed by economic crimes with 58 stories (36.5%), sexual crimes with 10 stories (6.3%) and political crime with 2 stories (1.3%). Findings established that violent crimes were the dormant nature of crimes covered by the newspapers, whereas political crimes were the least covered within the study period. This discovery aligns with literature. For instance, Yeboah's (2008) study concluded that of all the categories of news (politics, economics, science, legal issues, crime issues, social issues, health, and celebrity news) covered in Ghanaian newspapers, crime news was the most featured issue in the Ghanaian newspaper space. Moreover, the most reported crime news stories bordered on violent crimes (Yeboah, 2008). In what appears to be a confirmation of Yeboah's (2008) conclusions, Harper and Hogue (2016) maintain that the most perpetrated crime reported in the media is violent crime, possibly because the 'heinous' nature of the said crime makes it overly hyped in the media, thus relegating other 'less-heinous' crimes to the background. Moreover, Mahessar et al.'s (2021) study of crime patterns in *The Nation* newspaper in Pakistan revealed the patterns of crime news to be dominated by violent crimes, particularly murder cases. Consequently, the current study's findings on the crime patterns in crime news stories reported in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers affirm existing findings.

4.2.1 Violent Crimes

Gillin (2014) avers that crimes of violence are said to have resulted from physical injuries to one person such as assault. Crimes of violence include any of the following offenses that are prohibited by federal, state, or local law: murder, manslaughter, kidnapping, aggravated assault, robbery, arson, extortion, extortionate credit

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extension, burglary of a dwelling, (Gillin, 2014).

The nature of violent crimes as reported by the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers within the study period bordered on murder, armed robbery, aggravated assault, kidnapping, suicide, trading of human parts and manslaughter. The data showed varying frequencies in the occurrence of such violent crimes, as illustrated in the table 5 below:

Table 5: Distribution of violent crime news stories in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide*

Crimes	*Daily Graphic*	*Daily Guide*	Total	Per cent
Murder	7 (4.4%)	32(20%)	39	24.4
Armed robbery/ burglary	11(6.9%)	10(6.3%)	21	13.2
Aggravated assault	7(4.4%)	9(5.6%)	16	10.0
Kidnapping	3(1.9%)	4(2.5%)	7	4.4
Suicide	2(1.3%)	0	2	1.3
Trading of human parts	0	2(1.3%)	2	1.3
Manslaughter	1(0.65%)	1(0.65%)	2	1.3
Total	31	58	89	55.9%

Source: Field data, 2022

The data shown in Table 5 above shows that the violent crime of murder was the most reported crime during the period under study, with a percentage of 24.4. The crime of murder was followed by armed robbery (13.2%) and aggravated assault (10.0%). These were the top three violent crimes reported by the newspapers from January to December 2019.

The figures below indicate some of the violent crime news stories that were reported in the selected dailies.

Figure 5: Some violent crime news stories in the Dailies

Woman inflicts knife wounds on daughter.
Source: *Daily Graphic*; April 9, 2019, page 4

Boys arrested with human skull.
Source: *Daily Guide*; August 20, 2019, page 3

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Policeman commits suicide
Source: *Daily Graphic*; January 7, 2019, page 16

Furthermore, the findings reveal that, whereas the *Daily Graphic* reported thirty (31) violent crime news stories (19.5%), the *Daily Guide* reported fifty-eight (58) stories, representing 36.5%. Findings on violent crimes align with Drake and Henly's (2014) findings which indicated that murder crimes accounted for more media stories than any other kind of crime news stories. On the whole, the findings of the current study reveal that the top three violent crimes reported in the dailies are murder (24.4%), armed robbery/burglary (13.2%) and aggravated assault (10.0%). Cucolo and Perlin (2013) maintain that violent crimes appear to be overemphasised in the media space, leaving the populace to think that all there is to crime is violence. This overemphasis turns public agenda to violent crimes at the detriment of other prevailing crimes. Confirming Cucolo and Perlin's (2013) stance, Drake and Henly (2014) explain that crimes like murder and robbery, which are more easily understood and relatable to readers are more likely to be covered in news media than those not easily understood or relatable to readers, like stock market manipulation; hence murder and robbery being in the lead even in the Ghanaian news space. Akin to the literature presented above, the current study reveals that the issue of violent crime is the most covered in the Ghanaian newspaper space. The occurrence of violent crime is projected as

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highest among the other kinds of crime news – being economic, sexual, and political (Gillin, 2004). Again, the violent crime of murder ranks first in the current study, as is the case in findings from Drake and Henly (2014).

Moreover, in setting the agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), the findings of the current study reveal that the issue of violent crime is primed in the selected dailies. It appears that a deliberate agenda is set around violent crimes to direct public discourse. The violent crime news stories are presented in a plethora that makes them difficult to be overlooked by patrons of the dailies. As readers are exposed to the several instances of violent crime being perpetrated in the Ghanaian society, public opinion and discourse is shaped to include conversations and deliberations bordering on the said crimes.

4.2.2 Economic Crimes

Gillin (2014) posits that economic crimes are crimes that relate to unlawful activities in which the primary objective of the offenders appears to be financial gain. Economic crimes are said to occur due to economic factors such as poverty, and economic needs that motivate people to acquire certain things such as vagrancy, theft, professional criminality, robbery, and fraud (Gillin, 2014).

Of all the crime news stories published within the study period, 36.5% of them were economic crimes. The nature of economic crimes, as reported by the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers bordered on white collar crimes, fraud, theft, accounting malpractice, illegal mining, illegal trade, illegal logging, human trafficking, drugs and stowaway. The data showed varying frequencies in occurrence of such economic crimes, as illustrated in the table below:

Table 6: Distribution of economic crime news stories in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide*

Economic crimes	*Daily Graphic*	*Daily Guide*	Total	Percent
Theft	2(1.7%)	20(12.2%)	22	13.9
Fraud	4(2.5%)	9(5.7%)	13	8.2
White collar crime	3(1.9%)	4(2.5%)	7	4.4
Drugs	3(1.9%)	1(0.6%)	4	2.5
Illegal mining	1(0.6%)	3(1.9%)	4	2.5
Human trafficking	2(1.3%)	1(0.6%)	3	1.9
Accounting Malpractice	1(0.65%)	1(0.65%)	2	1.3
Illegal trade	0	1(0.6%)	1	0.6
Illegal logging	1(0.6%)	0	1	0.6
Stowaway	0	1(0.6%)	1	0.6
Total	17	41	58	36.5%

Source: Field data, 2022

The data shown in Table 6 above shows that, the economic crime of theft was most covered in the selected newspapers during the period under study, with a percentage of 13.9% out of the 100% (159 crime news stories covered in both *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers). The crime of theft was followed by fraud (6.9%) and white collar crime (4.4%). The findings show that these are the top three economic crimes reported from January to December 2019. For instance, the October 25, 2019 edition of *Daily Graphic* published a story on a Ghanaian business woman who had been arraigned for allegedly defrauding twenty-two people under the pretext of

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aiding their enlistment into the various security services. Also, the December 11, 2019 edition of *Daily Guide* published a story on a 26-year-old man who had been jailed 42 months for stealing two Haojin motorbikes on different occasions, and at different places.

The figures below indicate some examples of the economic crime news stories that were reported in the selected Dailies.

Figure 6: Some economic crime news stories in the Dailies

Illegal miners arrested at Kenyasi
Source: *Daily Guide*; December 16, 2019, page 11

Woman arrested by EOCO for fraud
Source: *Daily Graphic*; October 19, 2019, page 3

Furthermore, the findings reveal that whereas the *Daily Graphic* reported seventeen (17) economic crime news stories (10.6%) in all, the *Daily Guide* reported forty-one (41) stories, representing 25.8%.

This disparity is primarily due to the fact that the private-owned newspaper reported on more crime stories in general than the state-owned newspaper. From the findings, it could be assumed that the state-owned newspaper shied away from stories that were likely to present the economy in a bad state, hence its low reportage on crime news stories. Also, while fraud, white collar crime and drugs dominated the coverage of economic crimes by *Daily Graphic*, theft, fraud and white collar jobs were the economic crimes with more coverage from *Daily Guide*. On the whole, the findings of the current study reveal that the top three economic crimes reported in the dailies are theft (13.9%), fraud (6.9%) and white collar crime (4.4). The findings seem to

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corroborate Estrada et al.'s (2019) study in which the researchers reveal the overarching prominence of the nonviolent economic crimes of fraud and forgery. Estrada et al. (2019) maintain that when it comes to economic crimes, most perpetrators find solace in committing fraud and forgery, probably because such crimes are less likely to be detected easily. Consequently, the current study's findings reveal that the economic crimes of theft, fraud and white collar crimes were more featured in the dailies than drug peddling, illegal mining or human trafficking.

Moreover, as far as the agenda setting theory is concerned, the prevalence of reportage on economic crimes seems to have set an agenda on the top three types of economic crimes being theft, fraud, and white collar crimes. The continuous reportage on the said economic crimes directs public conversation to revolve around such crimes. As such, any Ghanaian who patronises the selected dailies is likely to think and feel that theft, fraud or white collar crimes are the main economic crimes that take place in the Ghanaian society. Readers are not likely to give much attention to the crimes of accounting malpractice, illegal mining or human trafficking because the agenda has been set on theft, fraud and white collar crimes, as far as the Ghanaian dailies are concerned.

4.2.3 Sexual Crimes

Gillin (2014) avers that sexual crimes are crimes which include an attack on sexual contacts such as prostitution, indecent assault, forcible sex offenses, statutory rape, and sexual abuse of a minor. With sexual crimes, the offender must have committed a sexual act against a person or caused another to do so under duress, detention, psychological pressure, or other forms of abuse of power, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment or a person's inability to give genuine consent (Gillin, 2014).

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Sexual crimes include both physical and non-physical acts that have a sexual component.

Findings established that the nature of sexual crimes as reported by the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers bordered on forcible sex offences and sexual abuse of a minor. The data showed varying frequencies in the occurrence of such sexual crimes, as illustrated in the table below:

Table 7: Distribution of sexual crime news stories in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide*

Sexual crimes	*Daily Graphic*	*Daily Guide*	Total	Percentage
Sexual abuse of a minor	2(1.25%)	6(3.75%)	8	5.0
Forcible sex	0	2(1.3%)	2	1.3
Total	2	8	10	6.3%

Source: Field data, 2022

The data in Table 7 above shows that the sexual crime of sexual abuse of a minor was most reported during the period under study, with a percentage of 5.0 out of the 100% (159 crime news stories covered in both *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers). This was followed by forcible sex, with 1.3%.

The figures below indicate some of the sexual crime news stories that were reported in the selected dailies.

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Figure 7: Some sexual crime news stories in the Dailies
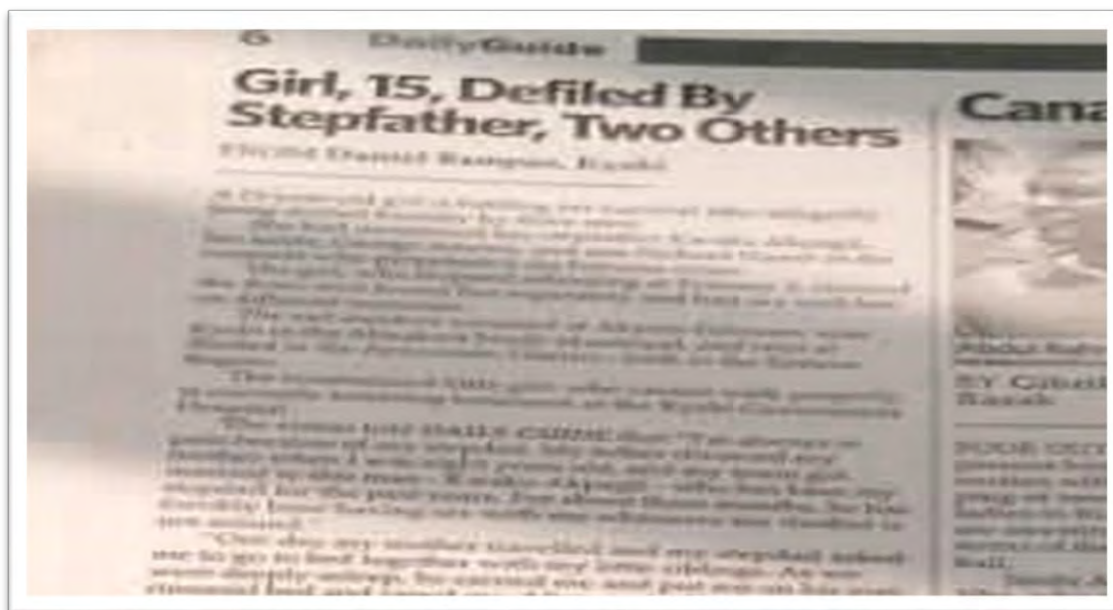
Three men defile 15-year-old girl
Source: *Daily Guide*; August 27, 2019, page 6

Two arrested for raping mentally retarded girl
Source: *Daily Guide*; November 29, 2019, page 10

Furthermore, the findings reveal that, whereas the *Daily Graphic* reported two (2) sexual crime news stories (1.3%), the *Daily Guide* reported eight (8) stories, representing 5%. The findings of the current study reveal that as far as agenda setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) is concerned, the issue of sexual crime ranks next to last among the type of crime news stories covered in the dailies. It turns out that the public discourse and opinion that the dailies sought to shape through the reportage on crime news stories during the period under review had little recourse to sexual crimes. In effect, not much is presented in the dailies on the subject of sexual crimes, thus not making it a subject of priority for public discussion. Similarly, in Estrada et al.'s (2019) study, the agenda is set more on violent crimes, with sexual crimes ranking very low in media reportage.

4.2.4 Political Crimes

Gillin (2014) avers that political crimes include any crime determined to have been done with the intent to undermine the state, the state's government, or the state's political system. This indicates that although political crimes may involve violence, they may also be non-violent in nature. Common types of political crimes are bribery, treason, sedition, and espionage (Gillin, 2014).

The nature of political crimes, as reported by the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers within the period of study bordered on secession and coup plot. The data showed varying frequencies in the occurrence of such political crimes, as illustrated in the table below:

**Table 8: Distribution of political crime news stories in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide***

Crimes	*Daily Graphic*	*Daily Guide*	Total	Percentage
Secession	1(0.67%)	0	1	0.67
Coup plot	1(0.67%)	0	1	0.67
Total	2	0	2	1.3%

Source: Field data, 2022

The data shown in Table 8 above shows that the political crimes of secession and coup plot received equal coverage during the period under study, with a percentage of 0.67 each.

The figure below indicates some of the political crime news stories that were reported in the selected Dailies:
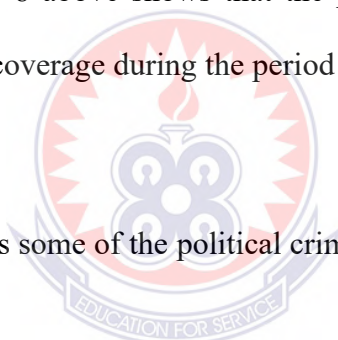
Figure 8: Some political crime news stories in the Dailies

Secessionists arrested by police
Source: *Daily Graphic*; May 8, 2019, page 4

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Findings of the current study reveal that, even though the political crimes of secession and coup plot received equal coverage during the period under study, with a percentage of 0.67 each, it turns out that, whereas the *Daily Graphic* reported two (2) political crime news stories (1.3%), the *Daily Guide* reported no (0) stories, representing 0%. This disparity is probably due to the fact that the state-owned newspaper showed much interest in the political stories that threatened the government of the day. Secession and coup attempts are stories that have a direct effect on governance, hence their coverage in the state-owned newspaper. Consequently, the state-owned newspaper set an agenda on political crime news stories bordering on secession and coup attempts (in line with McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The state-owned daily deliberately set an agenda around such political crimes to get the public talking about the said crimes, howbeit on a scale relatively lower than the other kinds of crime news stories – being violent, economic, political and sexual (Gillin, 2004).
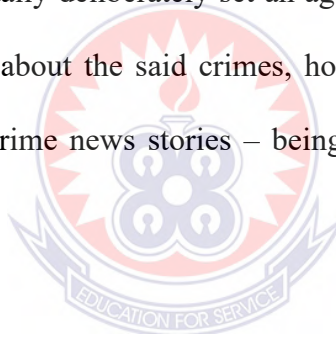
Figure 9: Comparative frequency distribution of types of crime news stories in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide*
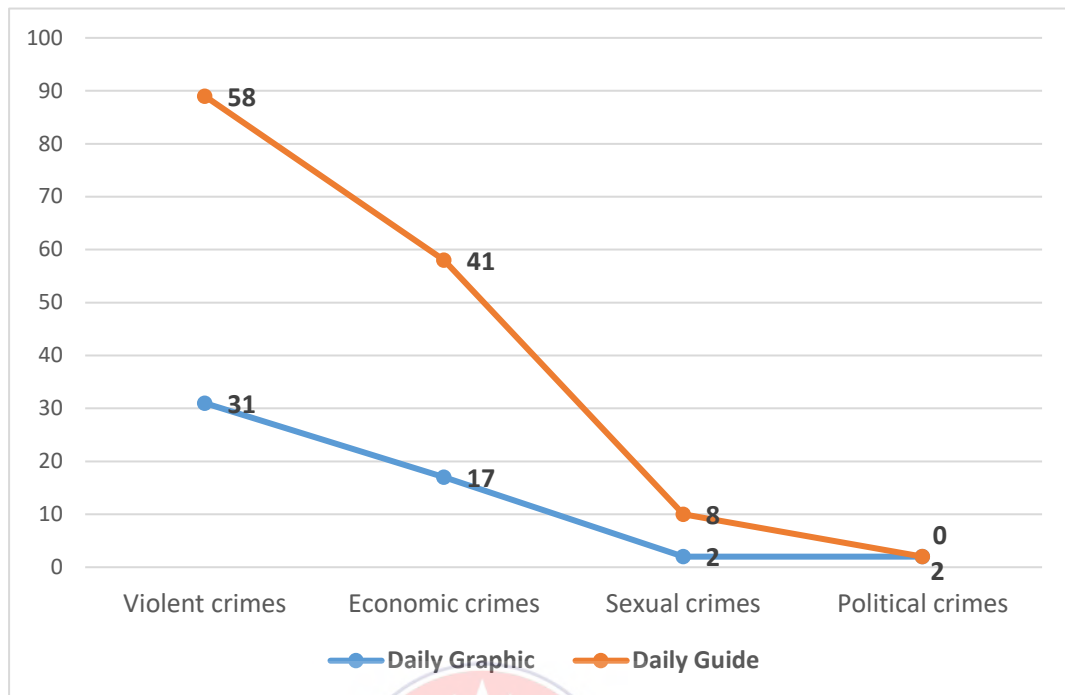
The findings presented above corroborate conclusions made by scholars like Cucolo and Perlin (2013) and Harper and Hogue (2016). In the scholars' studies, they reported that the most perpetrated crime reported in the media is violent crime. However, it is Harper and Hogue's (2016) belief that violent crime is overly hyped in the media and thus relegates other 'less-heinous' crimes to the background, consequently warranting their recurrence. Cucolo and Perlin (2013) advance that the overemphasis on violent crime has left the public thinking that all there is to crime is violence.

Moreover, the low coverage of sexual and political crimes seems to suggest that most sexual crimes usually take place under cover and hardly see the light of day in the news. Moreover, with regards to political crime, the nation has relatively been spared much of these, unlike its neighbours Burkina Faso, Cote D'Ivoire, and other African countries in the sub-region.

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Again, the findings on crime patterns in crime news stories covered in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* align with the assumptions of the agenda setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) that asserts that the media filters and shapes what we see rather than merely relaying stories to the audience; as such the public is more inclined to view a topic as important if the media covers it more extensively (Lipani, 2020). In the findings of the current study, the pattern of crime is presented as one dominated by violent and economic crimes. The data indicates that throughout the year 2019, crimes bordering on murder, armed robbery, aggravated assault, kidnapping, suicide, trading of human parts and manslaughter were set as agenda for the public to focus on just as crimes on theft, fraud, human trafficking, drugs among others. The reportage on the nature and pattern of violent and economic crimes projected these subjects as worthy of public attention. On the other hand, the pattern for sexual and political crimes recorded in the dailies set such crimes as less important, and thus not deserving as much attention from the public.

4.3 RQ3. What are the genders of perpetrators in the crime news reported by the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers?

Crime is committed by different actors in society. Whereas in some societies, the male gender is more prone to committing crime, in some other societies, the female gender is more prone to such (Mahessar et al., 2021). The coverage of crime news stories in the media often highlights the gender of the perpetrators. The gender pattern of crime news stories is the information on what gender the perpetrators belong to.

Using the indicators of names as well as images and explicit mention of genders in the news stories, the findings of the study show a gender pattern of perpetrators in the crime news stories reported by the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers over

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the period under study. The table below shows this data:

Table 9: Distribution of the gender of perpetrators in crime news stories in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide*

Perpetrators	*Daily Graphic*	*Daily Guide*	Total	Percentage
Males	39(24.5%)	87(54.7%)	126	79.2
Females	6(3.8%)	7(4.4%)	13	8.2
Both sexes	7(4.4%)	13(8.2%)	20	12.6
Total	52	107	159	100

Source: Field data, 2022

The findings show that of the one hundred and fifty-nine (159) crime news stories reported by the daily newspapers, males were reported as perpetrating one hundred and twenty-six (126) representing 79.2% of the stories. Female perpetrators accounted for thirteen (13) of the crimes, representing 8.2%. Meanwhile, twenty (20) of the crime news stories were attributed to both males and females as having jointly executed the crime. This figure represents 12.6%. This information is graphically illustrated in the chart below:

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Figure 10: Distribution of the gender of perpetrators in crime news stories in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide*
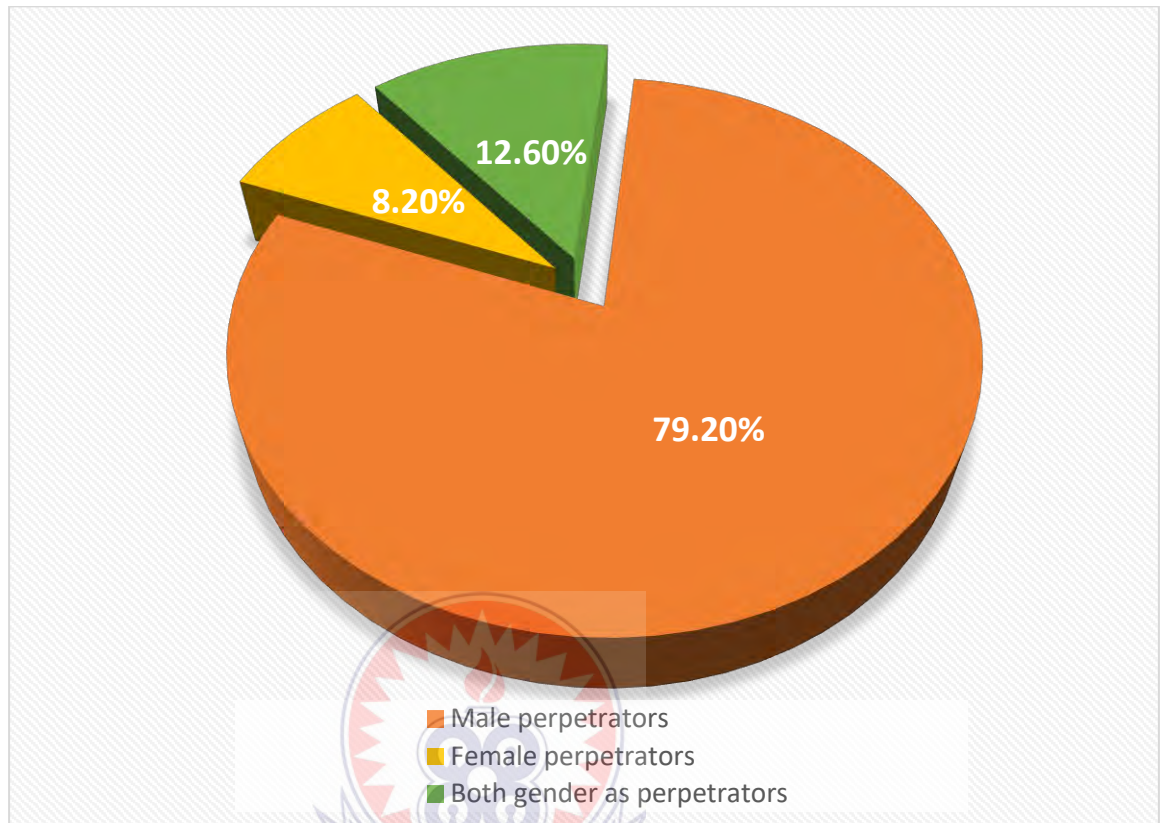
Ascertaining the gender patterns of perpetrators with regards to the pattern of crimes identified with research question two, the findings of the current study indicate that males are more prone to crimes in general, and violent crimes in particular. This finding is presented in the tables that follow:

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Table 10: Gender patterns of perpetrators in violent crime news stories in the

Daily Graphic **and** *Daily Guide*

Violent Crimes	*Daily Graphic*			*Daily Guide*			Total		
	M	F	Both	M	F	Both	M	F	Both
Murder	**6**	**0**	**1**	**25**	**3**	**4**	**31**	**3**	**5**
(%)	3.78	0	0.63	15.75	1.89	2.52	19.5	1.9	3.1
Armed robbery/ burglary	**5**	**3**	**3**	**8**	**2**	**0**	**13**	**5**	**3**
(%)	3.15	1.89	1.89	5.04	1.26	0	8.1	3.2	1.9
Aggravated assault	**2**	**5**	**0**	**7**	**2**	**0**	**9**	**7**	**0**
(%)	1.26	3.15	0	4.41	1.26	0	5.6	4.4	0
Kidnapping	**0**	**0**	**3**	**1**	**0**	**3**	**1**	**0**	**6**
(%)	0	0	1.89	0.63	0	1.89	0.6	0	3.8
Suicide	**1**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**1**	**0**
(%)	0.63	0.63	0	0	0	0	0.63	0.63	0
Trading of human parts	**0**	**0**	**0**	**2**	**0**	**0**	**2**	**0**	**0**
(%)	0	0	0	1.26	0	0	1.26	0	0
Manslaughter	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**2**	**0**	**0**
(%)	0.63	0	0	0.63	0	0	1.26	0	0
Total	**15**	**9**	**7**	**44**	**7**	**7**	**59**	**16**	**14**
(%)	9.45	5.67	4.41	27.72	4.41	4.41	37.0	10.1	8.8

Source: Field data, 2022

The table above indicates that for the violent crime of murder, thirty-one (31) males

were involved, as against three (3) females and five (5) stories in which both males

and females were involved. For armed robbery/burglary, thirteen (13) males were

involved as against five (5) females and three (3) stories in which both genders were

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reported as culprits. For the violent crime of aggravated assault, nine (9) males and

seven (7) females were reported as perpetrators.

Table 11: Gender patterns of perpetrators in economic crime news stories in the

      Daily Graphic **and** *Daily Guide*

Economic Crimes	*Daily Graphic*			*Daily Guide*			Total		
	M	F	Both	M	F	Both	M	F	Both
Theft	2	0	0	12	5	3	14	5	3
(%)	1.7	0	0	7.32	3.05	1.83	9.02	3.05	1.83
Fraud	4	0	0	7	0	2	11	0	2
(%)	2.5	0	0	4.41	0	1.26	6.9	0	1.3
White collar crime	3	0	0	4	0	0	7	0	0
(%)	1.9	0	0	2.5	0	0	4.4	0	0
Drugs	2	1	0	1	0	0	3	1	0
(%)	1.26	0.63	0	0.63	0	0	1.9	0.6	0
Illegal mining	1	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	2
(%)	0.63	0	0	0.63	0	1.26	1.25	0	1.25
Human trafficking	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	2
(%)	0	0	1.3	0.63	0	0	0.63	0	1.3
Accounting Malpractice	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
(%)	0.65	0	0	0	0.65	0	0.65	0.65	0
Illegal trade	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
(%)	0	0	0	0.6	0	0	0.6	0	0
Illegal logging	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
(%)	0.6	0	0	0	0	0	0.6	0	0
Stowaway	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
(%)	0	0	0	0.6	0	0	0.6	0	0
Total	14	1	2	28	6	7	42	7	9
(%)	8.4	0.63	1.3	17.64	3.78	4.41	26.1	4.41	6.0

Source: Field data, 2022

The table above indicates that for the economic crime of theft, fourteen (14) males were involved, as against five (5) females and three (3) stories in which both males and females were involved. For fraud, nine (11) males were involved as against zero (0) females and two (2) stories in which both genders were reported as culprits. For the white collar crime, seven (7) males and zero (0) females were reported as perpetrators.

Table 12: Gender patterns of perpetrators in sexual crime news stories in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide*

Sexual Crimes	*Daily Graphic*			*Daily Guide*			Total		
	M	**F**	**Both**	**M**	**F**	**Both**	**M**	**F**	**Both**
Sexual abuse of a minor	**2**	**0**	**0**	**6**	**0**	**0**	**8**	**0**	**0**
(%)	1.25	0	0	3.75	0	0	5.0	0	0
Forcible sex	**0**	**0**	**0**	**2**	**0**	**0**	**2**	**0**	**0**
(%)	0	0	0	1.3	0	0	1.3	0	0
Total	**2**	**0**	**0**	**8**	**0**	**0**	**10**	**0**	**0**
(%)	1.3	0	0	5.0	0	0	6.3	0	0

Source: Field data, 2022

The table above indicates that for the sexual crime of abuse of a minor, eight (8) males were involved, as against zero (0) females. For forcible sex, two (2) males were involved as against zero (0) females.

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Table 13: Gender patterns of perpetrators in political crime news stories in the

Daily Graphic **and** *Daily Guide*

Political Crimes	*Daily Graphic*			*Daily Guide*			Total		
	M	F	Both	M	F	Both	M	F	Both
Secession	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**
(%)	0.67	0	0	0	0	0	0.67	0	0
Coup plot	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**
(%)	0.67	0	0	0	0	0	0.67	0	0
Total	**2**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**2**	**0**	**0**
(%)	1.3	0	0	0	0	0	1.3	0	0

Source: Field data, 2022

The table above indicates that for the political crime of secession, one (1) male was involved, as against zero (0) females. For coup plot, one (1) male was involved, as against zero (0) females.

The figures below represent some of the crime news stories indicating the gender of perpetrators:

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Figure 11: Some crime news stories in the Dailies indicating gender of perpetrators

Pastor arrested for power theft

Source: Daily Graphic; December 21, 2019, page 8

Girl buries baby live
Source: *Daily Guide*; July 16, 2019, page 10

The findings on gender patterns of perpetrators in crime news stories covered in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* seem to align with the assumptions of the Gender Strain Theory, in which Broidy and Agnew (1997) advance that the differences in negative life events (strains) between males and females, as well as the differences in how each gender experiences negative emotions, eventually result in distinct pathways to criminal offending by people of both genders.

Though most females lack opportunities to legitimately pursue their goals in society (Moon, 2017), their efforts at restraining themselves from exhibiting behaviour that is abhorred by society results in the less crime rates among females, as shown by the findings of the current study. In effect, though the female gender is marginalised and

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under-resourced in most cases (Trent, 2019), they hardly resort to crime as a means to meet their needs, hence the low crime rates reported for them in the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* during the year 2019.

Moreover, the findings on gender patterns of perpetrators in the current study corroborate similar findings by Mahessar et al. (2021) who concluded that over 90% of the crimes reported in the print media were compassed of males who were involved in more violent crimes like murder and armed robbery. The findings also echo Abdulai's (2019) conclusion that males are more prone to committing crimes reported in the media than females. Armstrong and Nelson (2015) argue that this turn of events is as a result of the existing stereotypes that present males as aggressive and females as meek.

Perhaps Ferraro's (2015) conclusion could also give an explanation to the current study's findings, in that petty offenses committed by females are often overlooked and hardly find space in the ever-widening media coverage of crime news. Walker et al.'s (2016) postulation that males have more opportunities to commit crime than females, due to the former's exposure to more lucrative and daring situations could also account for the low records of crime among females. The current study's findings, however, stand in aberrance to Estrada et al.'s (2019) conclusion that females have become more aggressive, hence a rise in crimes perpetrated by females in his study.

In summary, the findings of the current study, in relation to the gender patterns in crime news stories reported in the Dailies indicates that both genders are perpetrators of a myriad of crimes in Ghana. However, the variance is in the fact that more males were culprits than females.

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4.4   Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the findings of the study in light of the relevant literature and theoretical underpinnings. It used thematic analysis to present findings that arose out of the qualitative content analysis on the selected editions of the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers. The findings were presented as answers to three research questions that helped to address the objectives of the study in ascertaining the prominence as well as crime and gender patterns in crime news stories reported in the Dailies.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This study focuses on examining the prominence given to crime news, as well as the forms of crime and gender patterns of the perpetrators of crime in news stories reported by the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide newspapers*. This chapter presents a summary of the main issues arising from the study, draws apt conclusions, and makes relevant recommendations in the area of crime news coverage in the dailies. The chapter also highlights the limitations of the study, and advances suggestions for future research.

5.1 Summary

The Ghana Police report on crime statistics (2021) as well as a World Bank report on Crime rate statistics (2022) show that crime rate in Ghana is on the rise. This is a worrying situation because Okoro (2020) has established that there is a connection between security of a country and the rate of development. Hence, the need for researchers to give attention to crime and its related issues in developing countries like Ghana. However, there appears to be a gap in the literature in other areas on this phenomenon: studies have not looked at how crime news is covered as well as how gender dynamics play out in the perpetration of crime as covered by newspapers. These areas are important for media researchers within the Ghanaian context because they will give scholars evidence on how crime news is covered by newspapers and ascertain whether the victims or perpetrators of crime in media reports are dominated by a particular gender. Consequently, this study fills this gap in the literature by

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examining newspaper coverage of crime stories in Ghana, with specific emphasis on the level of attention and the gender of perpetrators in the news reports.

Also, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to serve as the foundations upon which the findings of the research were critically analysed. The literature review was organised under concepts such as crime and crime news, media coverage of crime, crime patterns in news coverage, and crime news and gender patterns. These reviews aided the researcher to situate the focus of current study within literature. More so, theories such as the agenda setting theory and gender strain theory were employed in the study to enable the researcher to explain better the findings of this study.

In furtherance, the study was situated within the qualitative research approach (Creswell, 2014) and qualitative content analysis (Yin 2014). These helped the researcher to study the phenomenon by having a deeper of the issues as played out in the news reports on crime. The constructed week sampling method (Luke et al., 2011) was used to sample a total of fifty-five (55) editions each from the newspapers for the study. Hinging on the tenets of the agenda setting and the gender strain theories, the study employed thematic analyses of data from the selected newspapers. A summary of the main findings are as follows:

3.1.1 Main Findings

The first objective of the study was to examine the prominence given to crime news by the Daily Graphic and the Daily Guide newspapers. A number of strategies are employed in covering crime news in the print media, as well as giving the necessary prominence to such news items (Branch, 2019). Reuben (2010) asserts that when attention is being sought for a particular phenomenon, media coverage is mostly

employed to draw the desired attention, and the prominence given to a news item affects how seriously the public views the item in question. In congruence with Branch (2019) and Reuben (2010), the current study reveals that the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* employ specific strategies in giving prominence to the coverage of crime news stories in the newspapers. The two main strategies used by the newspapers in giving prominence to crime news were identified to be through frequency and placement. On the one hand, in using frequency to give prominence to crime news stories in the media, the newspapers make the deliberate attempt at setting the agenda by reporting on several instances of crime. The newspapers' priming of crime news by deliberate repetition creates a picture that highlights the spate or ascendency of crime, thus setting an agenda and garnering public interest in crime news stories. On the other hand, in using placement to give prominence to crime news stories, the newspapers make the deliberate attempt at setting the agenda by positioning crime news stories on the pages that carry most weight (are most prominent). The newspapers' placement of crime news stories on pages of importance or prominence, presents the stories as worth reading and relevant in generating public discourse.

Comparatively, the findings of the study reveal that, out of the total of fifty-five (55) editions sampled for the Daily Graphic newspaper, a total of thirty-four (34) editions contained stories on crime, representing 30.9%, whiles the Daily Guide newspaper featured crime news stories in forty-nine (49) editions out of the fifty-five (55), representing 44.5% of the total editions (110) sampled from the two newspapers. Consequently, the findings indicated that the Daily Graphic newspaper had fewer editions with crime news stories as compared to the Daily Guide newspaper. Furthermore, the findings reveal that, whereas the Daily Graphic newspaper covered

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a total of fifty-two (52) crime stories in the thirty-four editions that contained such stories, the Daily Guide recorded one hundred and seven (107) crime news stories in the forty-nine editions that contained crime stories. This means that, the Daily Graphic covered 32.7% of all crime news stories featured in the two Dailies from January 1 to December 31 2019, whiles the Daily Guide covered 67.3% of the total number of stories.

With regards to the prominence given to crime news stories by way of placement in the newspapers, the findings of the study reveal that, out of the fifty-two (52) crime news stories captured in the Daily Graphic newspaper, a total of eleven (11) were given prominence by way of placement on either the front, second or third pages, or back page. This figure represents 6.9%. Moreover, of the eleven (11) stories, five (5) (3.1%) were placed on the front page where readers are likely to focus first. Four (4) of the crime news stories, representing 2.5%, were located on pages 2 or 3, being the next pages that readers are most likely to turn to, aside the front page. 1.3% (two in number) of the stories were placed on the back page, where readers are likely to look last before dropping a newspaper. This finding is evidence that indicates that, though the Daily Graphic gave some prominence to crime news stories by way of frequency, the stories were mostly placed on pages that did not project the stories as prominent enough. Consequently, 25.8% of the stories were likely to be missed by readers because they had been placed on rather obscure pages of the nation's leading state-owned newspaper. In the case of the Daily Guide newspaper, the findings of the study reveal that, only seventeen (17) of the one hundred and seven (107) crime news stories captured in its forty-nine (49) editions were placed on pages of prominence. This figure also represents 10.7%. Of the seventeen (17) stories, nine (9) (5.6%) were placed on the front page where readers are likely to focus first. Six (6) of the crime

news stories, representing 3.8%, were located on pages 2 or 3, being the next pages that readers are most likely to turn to, aside the front page. 1.3% (two in number) of the stories were placed on the back page, where readers are likely to look last before dropping a newspaper. This finding is also evidence that indicates that, though the Daily Guide also gave some prominence to crime news stories by way of frequency, the stories were also mostly placed on pages that did not project the stories as prominent enough. Consequently, 56.6% of the stories were likely to be missed by readers because they had also been placed on rather obscure pages of the nation's leading private-owned newspaper. Findings for the first objective reveal that, though some level of urgency was attached to crime news coverage in both newspapers by way of frequency, the level of prominence given to crime news stories by way of placement in both newspapers was below average. It seems to suggest that, for both newspapers, mere coverage of crime news stories was thought to suffice for setting an agenda on crime.

The second objective of the study was to identify the crime patterns in crime news stories reported in the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* newspapers. Leveraging on Gillin's (2014) classification of crime, the current study analysed data from the selected editions of the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers. The findings reveal that the newspapers reported on all four spectrums or classes of crime (Gillin, 2014), i.e. economic, sexual, violent and political crimes, even though there were varying frequencies of crimes captured in the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide*. In summary, the findings indicate that, the most reported crime news stories were related to violent crimes, representing 55.9%, followed by economic crimes (36.5%), sexual crimes (6.3%), and political crimes (1.3%). The findings for the second objective corroborate conclusions made by scholars like Cucolo and Perlin (2013) and Harper

and Hogue (2016) whose studies also indicated that the most perpetrated crime reported in the media is violent crime. However, it is Harper and Hogue's (2016) belief that violent crime is overly hyped in the media and thus relegates other 'less-heinous' crimes to the background, consequently warranting their recurrence. Cucolo and Perlin (2013) advance that the overemphasis on violent crime has left the public thinking that all there is to crime is violence. On the other hand, the pattern for political crimes recorded in the Dailies set such crimes as less important, and thus not deserving as much attention from the public.

The third objective of the study was to analyse the gender patterns of perpetrators in the crime news stories reported in the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* newspapers. The gender pattern perpetrators of crime news stories is the information on what gender the perpetrators belong to. The findings of the study reveal a gender pattern in the crime news stories reported in the newspapers: of the one hundred and fifty-nine (159) crime news stories reported by both Daily newspapers, males were responsible for one hundred and twenty-six (126) representing 79.2% of the stories. Female perpetrators account for thirteen (13) of the crimes, representing 8.2%. Meanwhile, twenty (20) of the crime news stories were attributed to both males and females as having jointly executed the crime. Meanwhile, females garnered forty-three (43), representing 13.6%. This shows that crime perpetration of males was higher than females during the year under review – 2019. More so, the findings reveal that (59) male perpetrators were involved in violent crimes whiles only (16) female perpetrators were involved in violent crimes. In the same light male perpetrators dominated in crimes such as economic (42), sexual (10) and political (2).

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes as follows:

The agenda set on crime news by the newspapers paints a picture of the security situation in a country. Readers are likely to view the government of the day as living up to their mandate in ensuring the safety of citizens or not, based on the evidence presented through the reportage of crime news stories in the dailies. The study therefore concludes that the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* newspaper did not give much prominence to crime news stories in the year 2019, although the privately owned newspaper (*Daily Guide*) did better than the state-owned newspaper (*Daily Graphic*).

In addition, the study concludes that the pattern of crime news is inundated with reportage on violent crimes as against other crimes. This is most likely because the violent crimes are considered to be more harmful than other crimes like rape and corruption. The overemphasis on violent crimes in the print media seems to enact the never-ending relegation of other crimes to the background. The fact that violent crimes are most reported in the dailies does not mean that other crimes are non-existent.

Finally, the study concludes that, though both male and female genders are involved in the crime news stories captured by the dailies, a greater percentage of the crime news items are attributed to the male gender. It appears that though the female gender is marginalised and under-resourced in most cases (Trent, 2019), they hardly resort to crime as a means to meet their needs.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

The study was faced by the limitations of data size and time constraints. The arduous task of having to comb through volumes of editions from both the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers posed a strain on the researcher, considering the limited time within which the study had to be undertaken. That notwithstanding, the researcher devoted much time and attention to gathering the data and analysing it in time for the submission of the thesis.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the findings and conclusions of the current study, the researcher makes the following suggestions for further studies:

First, the period of data collection could be expanded beyond one year. This is likely to afford researchers the opportunity to comparatively interrogate crime news coverage in the print media during different years and ascertain a bigger, more detailed picture of the phenomenon. Again, future researches can consider studying samples beyond two newspapers. Findings from the analysis of multiple newspapers will expand the discourse and better inform industry players. Finally, in the wake of digitised content, future researches can consider gathering interactive data bordering on crime news stories from online portals of news agencies. In this case, the big data on reader-responses to crime news stories online can be interrogated as well.

5.5 Recommendations

Drawing from the conclusions of the study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

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1. The newspapers should aim at fair representation of crime news as against other news items covered in their editions. The fairness should manifest in the frequency of reportage, as well as the prominence in the placement of crime news stories in editions of the newspapers. Adequate focus must be given to crime news because they affect the nation too.

2. In the reportage of crime news, other 'less violent' crimes like theft, child trafficking, fraud, and impersonation, among others, should also be given adequate attention. The agenda set around such less-covered crimes will expose readers to the nature and occurrence of the crimes, and generate public discourse as well.

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