

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF MINORITY GROUPS: PERSPECTIVES
OF THE GHANAIAN MUSLIM COMMUNITY**



IBRAHIM MASHKURA

MASTER OF ARTS

2023

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF MINORITY GROUPS: PERSPECTIVES
OF THE GHANAIAN MUSLIM COMMUNITY**

IBRAHIM MASHKURA

(200051741)



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

**in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Arts
(Communication and Media Studies)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

NOVEMBER, 2023

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, **Ibrahim Mashkura** hereby declare that this project Media Representation of Minority Groups; Perspectives of the Ghanaian Muslims community is my original work, done by me under the supervision of Dr. Gifty Appiah-Adjei (Phd) of School of Communication and Media Studies. University of Education, Winneba.

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

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Gifty Appiah-Adjei (Phd)

Signature:.....

Date:.....

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated first to the "Almighty Allah" for His extensive mercy and the strength He bestowed on me to complete this work.

I also dedicate this work to my daughter Istighfar Abdul Rashid and my husband Alhaji Abdul Rashid for their support throughout this project.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My uttermost gratitude goes to the Almighty Allah, the sole provider of wisdom and knowledge, the merciful for His guidance and love throughout this program.

My appreciation also goes to the Head of Department of Strategic Communication Dr. Mavis Amo- Mensah (Phd) and Head of Department of the Journalism and Media Studies department Dr. Gifty Appiah-Adjei (Phd) and all other lecturers and faculty members of the school of Communication and Media Studies who in diverse ways contributed to my successful of this program.

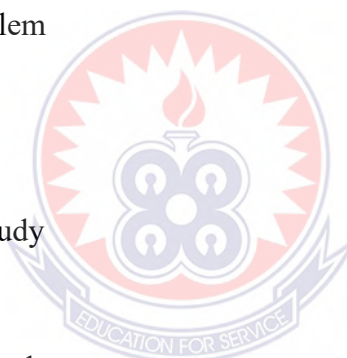
I am indebted to Professor Andy Ofori Birikorang for motivating me to endure and to pursue my dream of becoming a communication expert.

Another appreciation goes to my husband for his financial support, patience and prayers throughout this program and to my parents Hajia Karima Ibrahim and the late Alhaji Ibrahim Kayaaya, my siblings and friends for their absolute love, moral and financial support during this program. May Allah reward them.

My final gratitude goes to my supervisor Mr. Rainbow Sackey for his endurance, guidance and corrections that led me through the various stages of this project. May Allah bless you abundantly.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

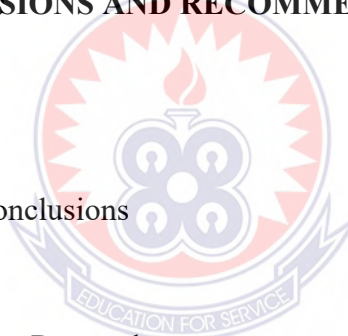
Contents	Page
DECLARATION	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
ABSTRACT	
Error! Bookmark not defined.	
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Background	1
1.1 Statement of the Problem	7
1.2 Research Objectives	10
1.3 Research Questions	11
1.4 Significance of the Study	11
1.5 Delimitation	13
1.6 Organisation of the Study	14
CHAPTER TWO	15
LITERATURE REVIEW	15
2.0 Introduction	15
2.1 Media Representation	15
2.2 The Portrayals of Minority Groups In Media	20
2.3 Media Effects of the Portrayals of Minority Groups	24
2.4 Desired Portrayal of Minority Groups in the Media	30
2.5 Theoretical Framework	35
2.5.1 Participatory Communication Theory	35
2.5.2 Application of the Participatory Communication Theory to the Study	39



2.6 Chapter Summary	41
CHAPTER THREE	42
METHODOLOGY	42
3.0 Introduction	42
3.1 Research Approach	42
3.2 Research Design	43
3.2.1 Case study	44
3.3 Sampling Technique	46
3.4 Sample Size	48
3.5 Data Collection Methods	49
3.5.1 In-depth interviews (IDI)	49
3.5.2 Focus Group Discussions	50
3.6 Data Collection Process	52
3.6.1 In-Depth-Interviews (IDI)	52
3.6.2 Focus Group Discussions	53
3.7 Method of Data Analysis	55
3.8 Ethical Issues	58
3.9 Trustworthiness	59
3.10 Chapter Summary	61
CHAPTER FOUR	62
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS	62
4.0 Introduction	62
4.1 RQ1. What are the perspectives of the Muslim community in Ghana on the portrayal of Muslims in the Ghanaian media?	62
4.1.1 Underrepresentation	62
4.1.2 Negative Stereotyping of Muslims	66
4.1.3 Promoting Interfaith Misunderstanding	70



4.2 RQ2. How does the media portrayal of Muslims shape the perceived identity of the Muslim community in Ghana?	76
4.2.1 Bias in How Muslims are Depicted	77
4.2.2 Lack of Diverse Representations of Muslims	80
4.2.3 Influence of Social Cohesion	83
4.3 RQ3. How would the Muslim community in Ghana like to see their community portrayed in the Ghanaian media?	88
4.3.1 Cultural Diversity and Integration	89
4.3.2 Religious Understanding and Tolerance	93
4.3.3 Positive Contributions and Achievements	96
CHAPTER FIVE	101
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	101
5.0 Introduction	101
5.1 Summary	101
5.2 Main Findings and Conclusions	102
5.3 Limitations	104
5.4 Suggestions for Further Research	106
5.5 Recommendations	106
REFERENCES	108
APPENDIX	117



ABSTRACT

This study explored the perspectives of Ghana's Muslim community regarding their portrayal in the country's media landscape. Through in-depth interviews and focus groups with 24 participants in Accra, the research sought to understand how Muslims perceive their representation in domestic news and programming. It also examined how these depictions influence their social identity and aspirations for future coverage. The findings revealed that Muslims feel underrepresented and negatively stereotyped in Ghanaian media. Coverage often promotes misunderstanding between religious groups by emphasizing simplistic attributes. Participants believed this biased portrayal shapes how they are viewed socially and discourages participation in mainstream discussions for fear of association with stereotypes. They felt this hinders social integration and cohesion. In line with participatory communication theory, participants called for more inclusive and diverse representations of Muslims in various professional and social roles. They wanted stories that showcase the richness of Muslim life and dismantle stereotypes. Participants felt the media could play an important role in reshaping public perceptions and fostering religious understanding by featuring Muslims in different contexts beyond simplistic portrayals. The research recommended that inclusive dialogue and shared narratives are needed to build solidarity between religious communities.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background

Media portrayals have far-reaching effects on society, especially for religious and ethnic minority communities (Powell, 2011). The images and representations circulated through various media platforms shape public perceptions and understandings in powerful ways (Farkas & Schou, 2019). Repeated or overly simplistic portrayals can promote stereotypes that are difficult to overcome (Allen, 2017). For minority groups facing discrimination and marginalization, negative media portrayals can significantly exacerbate their struggles and undermine efforts for social inclusion and justice (Farkas & Schou, 2019).

One area of concern is the underrepresentation or tokenism inclusion of religious and ethnic minorities in mainstream media (Powell, 2011). When minorities are included, they are often depicted through a narrow lens that emphasizes perceived differences rather than complex humanity (Farkas & Schou, 2019; Powell, 2011). For example, Muslims in the United States are frequently shown as potential terrorists rather than as ordinary citizens (Powell, 2011; Shaheen, 2009). Such one-dimensional portrayals promote an "us vs. them" mentality and make assimilation into the cultural mainstream more challenging (Shaheen, 2009, p 11). They also give minority communities less opportunity to control their own narratives and challenge misconceptions (Farkas & Schou, 2019).

The proliferation of social media in recent decades has added new dimensions to these issues. While platforms like YouTube and Facebook have empowered marginalized voices, they have also amplified hate speech and fake news targeting minorities (Bruns et al.,

2018). Exposure to online abuse and misinformation takes psychological and emotional tolls (Bruns et al., 2018). It also influences real-world behaviors, as evidenced by increased incidents of discrimination and even violence against targeted groups in some contexts (Farkas & Schou, 2019). Combating the spread of toxic content requires concerted efforts from technology companies, policymakers, educators and community leaders (Allen, 2017).

The portrayals of minority groups in media have profound impacts on how members of those communities see and define themselves (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Stereotypical portrayals that emphasize negative traits or oversimplify complex identities can seriously undermine minority groups' self-esteem and sense of belonging (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015). When minorities are constantly shown through a narrow lens of criminality, foreignness or other perceived deficiencies, it becomes all too easy for them to internalize those limited perspectives as accurate representations (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Tukachinsky et al., 2015).

On the other hand, counter-stereotypical media portrayals that present minorities in a diverse range of complex, multidimensional roles can help empower members of those communities and foster healthier self-perceptions (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015). For example, Asian American teenagers who were exposed to media featuring Asian characters in prominent leadership roles reported stronger feelings of pride in their ethnic identity and confidence in achieving leadership aspirations themselves (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Similarly, Latinx youth demonstrated improved academic performance after viewing role models of successful Latinx professionals (Behm-Morawitz & Ortiz, 2013).

Such findings indicate identity is not fixed but malleable, especially for developing youth (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Positive media representations allow minority groups to see themselves as fully human beyond narrow stereotypes (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015). They open up possibilities for self-definition that align more closely with individuals' multiple and evolving identities (Behm-Morawitz & Ortiz, 2013). In contrast, stereotypical media leave less room for complexity and agency in how minorities understand who they are (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Tukachinsky et al., 2015).

Members of religious and ethnic minority communities often express frustration with the limited and stereotypical ways they are portrayed in mainstream media (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). For many, the tropes and archetypes used fail to capture the diversity and complexity of their lived experiences (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Tukachinsky et al., 2015). They feel their humanity is reduced for the sake of oversimplified storytelling or to appeal to perceived audience preferences (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015).

Numerous grievances have been articulated regarding the disproportionate portrayal of minority groups in media, often confined to roles that accentuate foreignness, criminality, or subjugation, while opportunities for depicting leadership, accomplishments, or everyday pursuits remain scant (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). For instance, Muslims in the United States frequently express their weariness at being exclusively featured in news narratives related to terrorism or geopolitical conflicts in Western Asia (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Shaheen, 2009). This limited coverage overlooks the positive contributions made by Muslims in the United States, spanning their professional endeavors, civic engagement,

and cultural activities, thereby neglecting a comprehensive representation of their multifaceted contributions (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Powell, 2011).

Minority community members also point to a lack of meaningful representation behind the camera (Behm-Morawitz & Ortiz, 2013). The dearth of meaningful involvement from diverse perspectives behind the camera perpetuates a cycle wherein the same limited viewpoints and prejudices shape both the content and the processes of media creation (Powell, 2011). This homogeneity poses a formidable obstacle to the emergence of varied narratives and distinctive storytelling styles (Behm-Morawitz & Ortiz, 2013; Powell, 2011).

To address this challenge, there is a pressing need for increased inclusion of minorities in key creative roles such as content creators, writers, directors, and executives (Behm-Morawitz & Ortiz, 2013; Powell, 2011). By fostering greater diversity in these pivotal positions, there is a prospect for the development of portrayals that authentically resonate with the multifaceted realities of lived experiences (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015). Such a shift towards inclusivity not only broadens the scope of perspectives but also enhances the richness and authenticity of the stories being told in the media landscape (Behm-Morawitz & Ortiz, 2013; Powell, 2011).

At the same time, some acknowledge media representations alone will not overcome deeply entrenched social inequities and power imbalances (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Prejudice stems from complex psychological and societal factors beyond any single influence (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Tukachinsky et al., 2015). However, minorities still see value in progressive changes to media as one part of broader efforts for social

justice and inclusion (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). More nuanced and empowering portrayals open up cultural and political spaces where their humanity can be recognized on its own terms rather than only in relation to dominant narratives (Behm-Morawitz & Ortiz, 2013). With open dialogue and cooperation across different stakeholders, media can become a tool for greater understanding rather than division or marginalization of religious and ethnic communities (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Tukachinsky et al., 2015).

Scholars have found that while media representations alone cannot undo deep-rooted social inequities, it is important to consider their impact on minority communities' wellness and social identities (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Research shows that exposure to negative or stereotypical portrayals of one's group can trigger a phenomenon called social identity threat (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Social identity threat refers to the disconcerting feeling of facing unfair treatment simply due to one's group membership (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). For minorities, seeing distorted or one-dimensional images of their communities in mainstream media activates underlying worries about validating negative stereotypes (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015). The media is not the sole cause of prejudice, but its role in influencing perceptions of social identity threat is notable (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Prolonged experiences of social identity threat take both psychological and sociocultural tolls (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). At the individual level, it increases stress, anxiety and negative emotions that harm mental health and achievement (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015).

It also shapes societal dynamics by fostering distrust in institutions and societies that do not recognize minorities' humanity on their own terms (Mahoney, 2020). Minority groups feel pressured to conform to dominant narratives or risk further marginalization,

compromising their authentic cultural identity and agency (Mahoney, 2020; Powell, 2011). For religious minorities, problematic portrayals exacerbate feelings of being "othered," conflicting with needs for belonging, meaning and purpose (Tukachinsky et al., 2015, p.12). Narratives depicting their faiths as foreign, extreme or threatening undermine feelings of safety, value and integration (Tukachinsky et al., 2015).

This socio-cultural disconnect and identity insecurity, if prolonged, can negatively influence real-world behaviors and intergroup relations (Mahoney, 2020; Powell, 2011). However, empowering representations open spaces where minorities feel recognized for who they are rather than in opposition to others (Allen, 2017). Portrayals highlighting their diverse humanity and contributions help strengthen rather than threaten social identities (Allen, 2017; Tukachinsky et al., 2015). With meaningful inclusion and collaboration, media can build understanding across differences instead of causing division or harm (Allen, 2017; Powell, 2011). Progressive changes in portraying religious and ethnic minorities through various channels form an important part of broader efforts for social justice, inclusion and well-being (Behm-Morawitz & Ortiz, 2013).

Ultimately, the profound impact of media portrayals on society, particularly concerning religious and ethnic minority communities, cannot be overstated (Farkas & Schou, 2019). As discussed, the images and narratives disseminated through various media platforms wield considerable influence over public perceptions, shaping understandings in potent ways (Allen, 2017; Powell, 2011). The consequences of repeated, overly simplistic, or negative portrayals are far-reaching, exacerbating struggles for marginalized groups and hindering efforts toward social inclusion and justice (Allen, 2017; Powell, 2011). Addressing this challenge requires a varied approach (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015;

Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Meaningful representation behind the camera is crucial, breaking the cycle of limited perspectives shaping both content and creative processes (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). The call for increased inclusion of minorities in key creative roles, such as content creators, writers, directors, and executives, is a pivotal step toward authentic portrayals that resonate with lived experiences (Mahoney, 2020).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Media portrayals of religious and ethnic minority groups have real-life consequences (Kearns et al., 2019). Research shows negative depictions can promote prejudice and discrimination (Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001). Global Scholars have conducted extensive empirical research examining media portrayals of minority groups and their effects (Smith, 2009; Thomas & Campos, 2013). A wealth of studies from various nations point to concerning trends in problematic representations and their real-world consequences (Thomas & Campos, 2013).

Early investigations tended to focus on media contents, analyzing television, film, news, and other outlets for biased or stereotypical depictions of minorities (Smith, 2009). Content analyses in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Canada revealed patterns of underrepresentation, overrepresentation in minor or criminals roles and lack of diversity among content creators (Jones et al., 2010; Thomas & Campos, 2013).

As research accumulated, the scope expanded beyond solely examining media texts (Martinez et al., 2017). Researchers in the United States and Europe began exploring psychological and sociological impacts of problematic portrayals (Ford et al., 2008; Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Experimental research in North America demonstrated exposure

to stereotypical media can activate implicit biases in audiences (Ford et al., 2008). Longitudinal cohort studies in the United States linked heavy consumption of certain media to worsened intergroup attitudes over time (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Qualitative interviews in Western nations illuminated lived experiences of marginalization exacerbated by dominant negative media narratives (Martinez et al., 2017). Combined, these studies suggested media portrayals could negatively shape societal perceptions and treatment of minorities in both subtle and tangible ways (Ford et al., 2008; Martinez et al., 2017; Tukachinsky et al., 2015).

More recently, scholars in North America and Europe have brought production aspects into the purview of empirical scrutiny (Byerly, 2020). Content analyses of behind-the-scenes diversity in the United States and United Kingdom found minority groups remain underrepresented among content creators and gatekeepers (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019). Interviews and surveys of media professionals in Western nations illuminated systemic barriers like lack of opportunities, discrimination, and absence of minority perspectives in decision-making (Byerly, 2020).

Empirical studies on media portrayals and its effects on minority communities have been an area of interest in Ghana and other African contexts (Agyemang et al., 2015; Asante, 2019). Researchers have examined how local media represent and frame issues concerning ethnic and religious minority groups (Agyemang et al., 2015; Asante, 2019). For instance, Agyemang et al. (2015) analyzed news coverage of the Ewes, a linguistic minority in Ghana, across two decades (1990-2010) in both state-owned and private newspapers. They found that the Ewes were generally underrepresented and their issues marginalized (Agyemang et al., 2015). Where they were featured, the framing tended to be negative and

emphasized conflict (Agyemang et al., 2015). This type of biased or one-sided portrayal can promote stereotyping and undermine social cohesion (Agyemang et al., 2015).

Similarly, in a content analysis of newspaper coverage, Asante (2019) observed that Muslims in Ghana received disproportionately less newspaper coverage compared to their population size on two major newspapers: Daily Guide and Daily Graphic (Asante, 2019). The few instances of Muslim representation also tended to focus on extremism or tensions with other faiths (Asante, 2019). This kind of invisibility or skewed visibility in the media can diminish the sense of inclusion and acceptance for religious minorities (Asante, 2019).

More recently, Olorunnisola and Tolulope (2022) conducted a framing analysis of newspaper coverage of Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria between 2010-2020. They found the Fulani community was predominantly portrayed through a security frame that linked them to violence and criminality (Olorunnisola & Tolulope, 2022). This reinforced negative stereotypes against the group (Olorunnisola & Tolulope, 2022).

Across Africa, the thrust of empirical research has been consistent with international studies, examining the nature, frequency and framing of minority depictions in the mass media (Asante, 2019; Agyemang, Bimi & Damptey, 2015; Olorunnisola & Tolulope, 2022). However, the specific contexts and groups studied vary according to the local demographics and sociopolitical dynamics of each country (Olorunnisola & Tolulope, 2022). Regardless of location, the overriding focus has remained on critiquing media content and production processes that undermine fair and accurate representation of minorities (Asante, 2019; Agyemang, Bimi & Damptey, 2015).

Moving forward, scholars have emphasized the need to center the voices and perspectives of minority communities in empirical research on media portrayals examples (Byerly, 2020; Olorunnisola & Tolulope, 2022). Byerly (2020), for example, asserts that future studies would benefit from directly engaging ethnic and religious minority groups regarding their perspectives and desired representations in mass media. Qualitative approaches that facilitate open-ended discussion, such as focus groups and interviews, are well-suited for this task (Byerly, 2020). Olorunnisola and Tolulope (2022) echo this call, arguing that the Fulani herders in Nigeria are a prime example of a minority group whose voices have long been absent from both news coverage and academic analyses of that coverage. Involving minority groups in future studies on their media portrayals could help counteract decades of one-sided narratives that predominantly linked them to security issues (Olorunnisola & Tolulope, 2022).

The current study, therefore, seeks to examine the Ghanaian Muslim community's views on their portrayal in domestic media outlets, explore how such depictions shape their perceived social identity, and uncover their aspirations for more inclusive and authentic representation.

1.2 Research Objectives

The current study is guided by the following research objectives:

1. To explore the perspectives of selected members of the Muslim community in Ghana on the portrayal of Muslims in the Ghanaian media.
2. To assess how the media portrayal of Muslims shapes the perceived identity of the Muslim community in Ghana.

3. To explore how Muslim community in Ghana would like to see their community portrayed in the Ghanaian media.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the perspectives of the selected members of Muslim community in Ghana on the portrayal of Muslims in the Ghanaian media?
2. How does the media portrayal of Muslims shape the perceived identity of the selected members of the Muslim community in Ghana?
3. How would the selected members of the Muslim community in Ghana like to see their community portrayed in the Ghanaian media?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The current research which focuses on the portrayal of Muslims in the Ghanaian media and its influence on the Muslim community's perceived identity holds important significance for various key stakeholders in Ghanaian.

For academia, this research has the potential to contribute new knowledge and insights to the growing body of literature at the intersection of media representation, religious identity, and inter-group relations. As Ghana continues strengthening its democratic institutions and respect for diversity, nuanced understanding of minority experiences can help address societal divisions. The findings may also pave the way for further research in the area as well as inform curriculum development in journalism and communication programs to foster more inclusive and responsible media practices.

From an industry perspective, the media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and social cohesion. This study offers an opportunity for print and broadcast outlets to obtain first-hand perspectives from the Muslim community on how they are portrayed and would prefer to be represented. The results can encourage self-reflection within newsrooms to evaluate implicit biases and reform reporting guidelines in a way that is respectful of religious diversity (Owusu-Ansah & Nyarko, 2014). Promoting a more balanced and empathetic portrayal of minority groups is also important to maintain credibility with audiences from all backgrounds.

For the government and policymaking institutions, understanding inter-group dynamics from the viewpoints of marginalized populations allows for crafting inclusive policies. The study's findings may illuminate issues requiring attention, such as the need for media literacy programs, anti-discrimination regulations, or initiatives to foster interfaith understanding (Agyemang et al., 2022). A cohesive multicultural society respects the dignity and rights of all citizens.

Lastly, this research is highly significant for Ghana's Muslim minority communities. It offers a platform for their authentic voices and experiences to be brought to the forefront. The Muslim participants can share candid perspectives on the real-world impacts of media misrepresentations, such as othering, stereotyping, or being overlooked in portrayals of national identity. The study provides an opportunity for their concerns, aspirations, and recommendations for an improved community image to be heard and addressed. An accurate and balanced media portrayal is important for any minority group's sense of belonging and empowerment in society.

1.5 Delimitation

This study will focus on exploring the perspectives of the Muslim community in Ghana on how their religious group is portrayed in various media platforms within the country. Specifically, it will seek to understand how Muslims view their representation in the media. The geographical scope will be limited to the capital city of Accra. In terms of participants, the research will involve interviewing 20 Muslims from different socio-economic backgrounds and age groups. This will allow for a diversity of views to be captured while still maintaining a manageable sample size.

The study will not examine portrayals of Muslims in art, magazines, radio, online news sites or historical texts. International media coverage of Ghanaian Muslims will also be outside the delimitation. Specifically, it will seek to understand how Muslims view their representation in television, films and the newspapers. The decision to limit the study to the examination of Muslims' representation exclusively in television, films, and newspapers is grounded in a deliberate and well-considered rationale. By focusing on these specific media channels, the research aims to provide a targeted and in-depth exploration of the most influential and widely consumed platforms within the Ghanaian media landscape (Asante, 2019).

The time frame will be limited to analyzing representations within six months, from January 2023 to June, 2023. Comparisons to portrayals of other religious groups in Ghana will also not be undertaken, as the focus is specifically on understanding the Muslim community's perspective.

1.6 Organisation of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one comprises the background of the study; the objectives of the study; research questions; the significance of the study; delimitations; and the organization of the study. The second chapter reviews related literature and discusses the theories necessary to situate the research within its context. Chapter three discusses the methods and procedures for data collection and analysis. Here, the research approach, research design, sample and sampling technique, data collection methods, data collection procedure, and method of data analysis are discussed. The fourth chapter is dedicated to the findings and discussions of the study. Chapter five summarizes the findings arising out of the study, draws conclusions, and makes recommendations for further studies.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This literature review aims to delve into the complex dynamics of media representation, particularly focusing on the portrayal of minority groups in media. It examines existing research on media effects, and the desired portrayal of minority groups in the media. By synthesizing and analyzing relevant literature, this review seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted relationship between media and minority group representation, with a specific focus on the Muslim community. Additionally, the review discussed the application of participatory communication theory as the theoretical framework for the study.



2.1 Media Representation

Media representation, a concept central to the study of mass communication, refers to the portrayal of individuals, groups, and events in the media (Li & Greenhow, 2022). At its core, media representation involves deliberate and subtle decisions about how certain groups are portrayed in mass media platforms like television, films, news, and social media (Baker-Bell, 2020). Recent scholarly perspectives have delved into the complexities of media representation, shedding light on its complex nature and far-reaching implications (Baker-Bell, 2020; Li & Greenhow, 2022).

One seminal perspective, articulated by Hall (1973), emphasizes that media representations are not passive reflections of reality but are actively constructed through processes of encoding and decoding. This view underscores the influential role of media in shaping cultural meanings and identities, highlighting the power of media to influence public perceptions and construct social realities (Hall, 1973 as cited in Li & Greenhow, 2022).

Moreover, recent studies by Van Dijk (2016) have underscored the role of media representation in perpetuating social inequalities and power dynamics. Through critical discourse analysis, Van Dijk (2016) reveals how media texts can reinforce dominant ideologies and marginalize certain groups, thereby influencing public attitudes and behaviors (Van Dijk, 2016).

In the context of minority communities, Ahmed (2017) has explored the impact of media representation on identity formation. Ahmed's work underscores the significance of positive and authentic portrayals in challenging stereotypes and empowering marginalized groups (Ahmed, 2017). This perspective emphasizes the need for inclusive and diverse representations in the media to foster social cohesion and equity (Ahmed, 2017).

Furthermore, the advent of digital media has brought new dimensions to the discourse on media representation (Ahmed, 2017; Li & Greenhow, 2022). Recent research by Li and Greenhow (2022) has examined the role of social media in shaping representations and amplifying diverse voices. Their work underscores the potential of digital platforms in challenging traditional media narratives and providing alternative spaces for representation and expression (Li & Greenhow, 2022).

The scholarly perspectives on media representation, as highlighted by Li and Greenhow (2022), Ahmed (2017), Hall (1973), and Van Dijk (2016), collectively emphasize the active construction of media representations, their influence on cultural meanings and identities, perpetuation of social inequalities, and the potential for digital media to challenge traditional narratives and amplify diverse voices. Media representation however, does not occur within a vacuum; rather, it is the product of myriad contextual factors (Baker-Bell, 2020).

Socially, prevailing attitudes within a given population or era can significantly impact what groups are depicted, and in what light (Smith, 2022). During periods of heightened social tensions, for example, minority communities may be presented more negatively as outsider threats to social cohesion and stability (Ahmed, 2017; Smith, 2022). Culturally, media creators' lived experiences and cultural viewpoints shape the lens through which they filter and present reality (Lee et al., 2019). Portrayals, thus, tend to align more closely with dominant cultural narratives and power structures within a society (Johnson, 2021). For immigrant or marginalized cultural groups, this can lead to oversimplified or stereotypical representations that do not fully capture the diversity and complexity of their communities (Lee et al., 2019).

Politically, representation is likewise influenced by the prevailing ideological climate and distribution of power (Hall, 2013; Williams, 2023). According to Hall (2013), media representation is often influenced by the dominant ideologies and power structures within a society. Hall (2013) argues that media portrayal is not ideologically neutral, but rather is influenced by the dominant ideologies and power structures within a given society. According to Hall (2013), these dominant ideologies represent the interests of those in

power and serve to maintain the status quo. Thus, governments or other influential political actors may directly pressure media to portray their opponents in an unfavorable light or glorify their own policies and priorities (Williams, 2023). Alternatively, they may seek to glorify their own policies and priorities (Hall, 2013; Williams, 2023). Minority groups lacking political influence have less ability to shape dominant narratives about themselves (Napoli, 2019). These cultural, social, and political influences interact in complex ways (Shaheen, 2009). For instance, during times of economic uncertainty, populist politicians may stoke social divisions and scapegoat minority groups to consolidate power (Byerly, 2020; Shaheen, 2009). The resulting "us vs. them" rhetoric can then permeate media coverage and normalize prejudiced portrayals (Shaheen, 2009, p. 11). Even subtle biases in language choice or story framing can significantly shape public perceptions and policy debates over marginalized populations (Tukachinsky et al., 2015).

Media representation is also shaped by various external forces, including advertisers and institutional gatekeepers (Williams & Lee, 2021; Tukachinsky, 2020). Advertisers play a significant role in media industries as major sources of revenue. According to recent research by Williams and Lee (2021), advertisers can pressure media organizations to avoid content that may alienate potential customer demographics. This creates incentives to portray minority groups in stereotypical or non-threatening ways that do not challenge dominant social norms (Williams & Lee, 2021). Similarly, Napoli and NR Sydell (2019) found that media outlets are less likely to produce stories focusing on discrimination or inequality that may anger conservative audiences and advertisers.

Beyond advertisers, internal gatekeeping processes within media organizations also shape representation (Byerly, 2020; Tukachinsky, 2020). A study by Freelon et al. (2022)

analyzing newsroom hiring practices found that the lack of diversity behind the scenes leads to an overreliance on dominant cultural viewpoints in story selection and framing. This finding aligns with previous research highlighting how the social backgrounds and implicit biases of gatekeepers influence which voices and perspectives are deemed newsworthy (Tukachinsky, 2020). According to Tukachinsky (2020), gatekeeping norms that privilege elite, mainstream sources marginalize coverage of minority issues.

In response to these top-down pressures, some scholars argue for the importance of counter narratives and grassroots media examples (Ahmed & Smith, 2020; Baker-Bell, 2020). Baker-Bell (2020) discusses how marginalized communities use digital platforms and independent media to insert diverse perspectives and reshape dominant discourses. Similarly, Ahmed and Smith NR (2020) emphasize the potential of community and activist media to amplify unheard voices and challenge prejudiced portrayals. However, the reach and influence of these alternatives remains limited compared to mainstream outlets (Ahmed and Smith, 2020).

In sum, the examination of media representation involves understanding how individuals, groups, and events are portrayed in mass media. Key perspectives from scholars emphasize that media representations are actively constructed, influencing cultural meanings and societal identities. The impact on minority communities, especially in identity formation, underscores the need for positive and authentic portrayals to challenge stereotypes and empower marginalized groups.

2.2 The Portrayals of Minority Groups in Media

Media representation of minority groups has evolved significantly over the decades but still has progress to be made (Shimizu, 2007). Early media often portrayed minority groups in stereotypical or tokenizing ways that reinforced social hierarchies (Johnson, 2019). For example, African Americans were frequently depicted as servants or entertainers in movies and television shows from the 1920s through the 1950s, rarely in leading or multidimensional roles (Bristor et al., 1995). Similarly, Asian Americans were often relegated to minor sidekick roles that emphasized exotic or foreign stereotypes rather than as fully developed characters (Shimizu, 2007).

Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, the civil rights movement brought increased awareness of issues of representation and diversity (Gray, 1995). While progress was made in showing more diversity on screen, minority characters still tended to be marginal or defined by their race or ethnicity rather than as complete human beings (Gray, 1995). It was not until the 1980s and 1990s that minority groups began to see more nuanced and central portrayals that moved beyond stereotypes, though full inclusion and equality of representation remained elusive (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019).

In the new millennium, the media landscape has continued diversifying, with more minority creators and characters across film, television, and other media (Johnson, 2019). For example, Asian American roles have expanded beyond the model minority stereotype to include more complex and culturally authentic portrayals (Shimizu, 2007). However, full parity and the eradication of implicit biases have not been achieved. Minority groups

remain underrepresented in media ownership and leadership roles (Bristor et al., 1995; Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019).

Recent research also indicates that while the number of minority characters and stories has increased, the quality and depth of those portrayals is still lacking at times (Johnson, 2019; Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019). For example, Latinx characters are more prevalent but often fall into familiar stereotypical tropes (Johnson, 2019). Implicit bias also persists in the types of stories told and roles available, with minority characters still less likely to be portrayed as multidimensional or in positions of power and authority (Gray, 1995; Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019).

Portrayals of minority groups in media have long been studied to understand the impact of representation on societal attitudes (Smith et al., 2012). Existing research has found both positive and negative depictions across various media platforms and over time (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Smith et al., 2012).

Early content analyses found stereotypical and underrepresented portrayals of racial and ethnic minorities in television and film (Allen & Hatchett, 1986 as cited in Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). For example, African American characters were often depicted as criminals or in low socioeconomic statuses compared to their actual demographics (Allen & Hatchett, 1986 as cited in Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). Similarly, Asian Americans and Latinos tended to be minor or background characters that reinforced limited roles (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). More recent studies have found some improvement but portrayals still tend to be less nuanced than those of White characters (Smith et al., 2012; Taylor & Stern, 1997).

Experimental research has linked such one-dimensional media portrayals to the development and reinforcement of prejudice in viewers (Fujioka, 1999; Ramasubramanian, 2011). For example, Fujioka (1999) found that exposure to stereotypical portrayals of Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos increased negative attitudes in White undergraduate students. Similarly, exposure to criminal or threatening depictions of Black men increased fear and anxiety in White viewers (Dixon, 2008). However, counter stereotypical portrayals showing minority professionals and leaders have been shown to decrease prejudice (Fujioka, 2005; Ramasubramanian, 2011).

Content analyses of news media have found underrepresentation and skewed portrayals of minorities as well (Dixon, 2017; Smith et al., 2012). For example, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans tend to be significantly underrepresented in local television news compared to their actual population percentages in the studied markets (Smith et al., 2012). When portrayed, they are also more likely to be shown as lawbreakers rather than in professional roles (Dixon, 2017). However, some studies found portrayals are improving over time, with more complex representations of minority experiences (Taylor & Stern, 1997).

Minority groups have long faced misrepresentation and stereotyping in mainstream media (Johnson et al., 2014). A wealth of research has sought to identify and analyze the common themes and tropes used in these portrayals (Johnson et al., 2014; Mora, 2014). One frequent stereotype is the over sexualization of minority women. A content analysis by Johnson et al. (2014) of 300 television shows found that Black women were more likely to be shown in sexually revealing clothing or portrayed as hyper-sexual compared to White women. Similarly, Mora (2014) examined 100 movies from 2007-2012 and found that Latina

characters were disproportionately depicted as sexually available. These limited and sexualized portrayals reduce minority women to sexual objects rather than complex, multidimensional individuals (Johnson et al., 2014; Mora, 2014).

Minority men also commonly face narrow portrayals as criminals or threats (Entman & Rojecki, 2000). Entman and Rojecki's (2000) analysis of local news coverage found that Black men were significantly overrepresented as perpetrators of crime compared to their actual involvement in criminal activity. More recently, Dixon and Azocar (2007) analyzed 100 crime dramas on major networks and found that perpetrators were disproportionately portrayed as people of color, especially if the victim was White. Such depictions promote implicit associations of certain minorities, especially Black men, with criminality and danger (Dixon & Azocar, 2007; Entman & Rojecki, 2000).

In addition, minority characters are often relegated to the periphery with few substantive storylines or character development (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019). Mastro and Behm-Morawitz (2019) examined 100 popular primetime television shows and found that minority characters received significantly less screen time and had fewer speaking roles compared to White characters (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019). They were also less central to plot development and more likely to play minor, stereotypical roles (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019). This lack of meaningful representation and opportunity for nuanced portrayals further marginalized minorities (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019).

Other studies have also highlighted how the media continues to underrepresent or ignore the diversity within minority groups (Shimizu, 2018; Smith et al., 2018). For example, in their content analysis of 100 top-grossing films from 2007-2018, Smith et al. (2018) found

that only 3.1% of speaking characters were from the LGBTQ+ community. Similarly, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are often grouped together despite their many distinct ethnicities and cultures (Shimizu, 2018). Such broad brushstrokes fail to capture the rich diversity that exists within minority populations in the real world (Shimizu, 2018; Smith et al., 2018).

In summary, media representation of minority groups has come a long way but still has progress to make. Early media often relied on harmful stereotypes that marginalized and disrespected people. While representation has increased over the decades, research continues finding issues like underrepresentation, one-dimensional portrayals, and implicit biases. Fully inclusive and equitable portrayal across all groups has not been achieved. It is important that the media reflect the true diversity and experiences of society in authentic and nuanced ways. Only by addressing the biases and shortcomings uncovered can the media fulfill its potential to bring people together and foster understanding between all communities. The work of promoting fair and accurate representation for all deserves continued attention and improvement.

2.3 Media Effects of the Portrayals of Minority Groups

Media portrayal has long been studied for its potential effects on how minority communities are perceived (Martinez et al., 2017). Early research found that stereotypical portrayals of minorities in news and entertainment media can negatively shape public perceptions (Dixon, 2008). More studies have expanded our understanding of these dynamics (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019; Ramasubramanian, 2010; Thomas & Campos, 2013).

A common theme is that imbalanced or one-dimensional representations in media can promote overgeneralized or distorted views of minority identities (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019; Thomas & Campos, 2013). For example, Mastro and Behm-Morawitz (2019) analyzed over 100 prime-time television programs and found that Latinos were significantly underrepresented and more likely to be depicted through criminality or low-status jobs compared to Whites. They argue this skewed exposure influences non-Latino audiences to form incomplete or prejudiced impressions (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019). Similarly, Ramasubramanian (2010) conducted an experiment showing that exposure to stereotypical Native American mascots increased implicit bias in participants compared to a control condition.

However, the relationship is complex, as positive portrayals do not always translate to more positive perceptions (Banerjee & Greene, 2012; Thomas & Campos, 2013). For instance, Banerjee and Greene (2012) surveyed viewers after a television drama episode featuring a sympathetic Muslim-American character. While the character was well-received, attitudes towards Muslims overall did not significantly improve (Banerjee & Greene, 2012). This suggests mediated contact alone may not overcome entrenched biases. More holistic approaches are needed (Banerjee & Greene, 2012).

New media like social networks also shape identity perceptions (Bruns et al., 2018; Farkas & Schou, 2019). In a recent study, Weeks et al. (2017) analyzed over 1,000 tweets mentioning Black Lives Matter and found that while support expressed solidarity, oppositional tweets often demeaned or criminalized participants. They argue this "digital divide" mirrors and potentially exacerbates real-world tensions (Weeks et al., 2017, p. 12). Similarly, Brock et al. (2017) conducted an experiment exposing participants to either

supportive or critical tweets about transgender rights issues. Exposure to negativity increased trans-prejudice, an effect partially mediated by anger and disgust (Brock et al., 2017). These findings indicate online discourse influences societal views (Brock et al., 2017).

Several other studies have explored the effects of media representations on the identities of minorities in Africa and Ghana (Adeyanju, 2021; Amoo & Asubonteng, 2018; Osei, 2016). Adeyanju (2021) analyzed newspaper articles and found that minority ethnic groups in Nigeria were often depicted through negative stereotypes that reinforced perceptions of them as inferior or problematic. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that media narratives can influence how minorities view themselves and are viewed by the dominant social groups (Amoo & Asubonteng, 2018; Osei, 2016).

In Ghana, media portrayals of the ethnic Akan majority and northern ethnic minorities also influence perceived group identities (Amoo & Asubonteng, 2018; Osei, 2016). A study by Osei (2016) examined television programs, films, and advertisements and found they predominantly featured the Akan culture and language while neglecting or stereotyping northern groups. Through this skewed representation, the media promoted an Akan-centered national identity at the expense of recognizing Ghana's cultural diversity (Osei, 2016). Similarly, Amoo and Asubonteng (2018) analyzed news articles and discovered that northern Ghanaians were often depicted as foreigners, terrorists, or uncivilized compared to the standard of the Akan identity. These negative and exclusionary portrayals can damage the self-esteem and social standing of minority communities (Amoo & Asubonteng, 2018).

The underrepresentation and misrepresentation of minorities in the media also impacts their sense of belonging and participation in the public sphere (Amoo & Asubonteng, 2018; Osei, 2016). For example, Osei (2016) emphasized that television programs, films, and advertisements rarely included characters from northern ethnic groups or addressed issues relevant to their lives (Osei, 2016). This lack of representation signals to minorities that they are outside of the national community and their concerns are unimportant (Osei, 2016). As a result, minorities may feel discouraged from engaging in public debates and decisions that shape policies affecting their lives and communities (Amoo & Asubonteng, 2018; Osei, 2016).

For Muslims, media portrayals have significantly impacted how they are viewed in Western societies and shaped their own identities. Several studies have explored specific examples of this phenomenon (Saeed, 2007; Shaheen, 2009). A quantitative content analysis by Shaheen (2009) of over 900 films found that Muslims were often depicted as villains, terrorists, or oil sheikhs. Such one-dimensional and negative portrayals promote an "us vs. them" narrative that positions Muslims as the antagonists (Shaheen, 2009, p. 11). This has real-world consequences, as Muslims living in Western countries must constantly navigate and resist such stereotypes imposed upon their identity (Saeed, 2007; Shaheen, 2009).

A qualitative study by Poole (2002) interviewed 20 Muslim university students in the United States about their experiences. Participants reported feeling pressure to distance themselves from their faith or modify religious practices due to fears of being seen as extremists (Poole, 2002). They felt the need to constantly prove their "moderation" and loyalty in response to the post-9/11 media climate that equated all Muslims with terrorism

(Poole, 2002, p. 23). This shapes how young Muslims negotiate and perform their identity in public spaces (Poole, 2002).

In the UK context, participants in Richardson's (2004) focus groups discussed feeling that negative media portrayals gave non-Muslims permission to discriminate against or harass them. For example, one participant recounted being physically assaulted on the street shortly after a major terrorist attack was covered extensively in the news (Richardson, 2004). Such experiences pressure Muslims into altering behaviors for safety reasons and make claims to a civic identity more challenging (Richardson, 2004).

A mixed-methods study by Abu-Lughod (2002) analyzed cable news coverage of the second Palestinian intifada as well as conducting interviews in Egyptian and Palestinian communities. Findings showed that repetitive broadcasting of images of Muslim-appearing people protesting or engaging in violence, without proper context or balance, promoted fear and hostility towards Muslims abroad (Abu-Lughod, 2002). Locally, this coverage was a source of shame, defensiveness and anxiety for participants as they felt their communities were being misrepresented and maligned on a global stage (Abu-Lughod, 2002).

Examining media portrayal in various contexts, Asante (2019) conducted a content analysis of newspaper coverage and revealed notable disparities in the representation of Muslims in Ghana. Despite their proportionate population size, Muslims received conspicuously less attention in two major newspapers, Daily Guide and Daily Graphic (Asante, 2019). Instances of Muslim representation, when present, predominantly revolved around topics such as extremism or tensions with other faiths (Asante, 2019). This form of media

visibility, or rather invisibility, has the potential to significantly impact the identity of religious minorities, potentially diminishing their sense of inclusion and acceptance (Asante, 2019).

The above studies collectively emphasize the pervasive nature of one-dimensional and often negative representations, which contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes and the reinforcement of biased perceptions. The imbalanced depictions of minorities, as exemplified in studies from Western societies, Africa, and Ghana, underscore the universality of the issue (Asante, 2019; Smith et al., 2018). Whether through traditional media channels or emerging platforms like social networks, the media plays a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions (Thomas & Campos, 2013). The recurring theme of underrepresentation, misrepresentation, and the promotion of negative stereotypes indicates a pressing need for a more nuanced and inclusive portrayal of diverse identities (Smith et al., 2018; Thomas & Campos, 2013).

While the impact of media is undeniable, the relationship between media portrayal and public attitudes is complex (Banerjee & Greene, 2012; Thomas & Campos, 2013). Positive portrayals do not necessarily lead to improved perceptions, as demonstrated by instances where sympathetic representations failed to translate into broader shifts in societal attitudes ((Banerjee & Greene, 2012). This nuance suggests that addressing biased portrayals requires a varied approach beyond mere exposure, as attested by studies advocating for more holistic strategies (Banerjee & Greene, 2012).

2.4 Desired Portrayal of Minority Groups in the Media

The quest for equitable and accurate representation of minority communities in the media has been a longstanding concern (Allen, 2017). Research underscores the profound impact of media portrayals on societal perceptions and treatment of minority groups (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019; Ramasubramanian, 2010; Thomas & Campos, 2013). The consequences of misrepresentation or underrepresentation can extend beyond mere imagery, fostering harmful stereotypes that have detrimental impact the social standing and well-being of these communities (Thomas & Campos, 2013). Conversely, positive and genuine portrayals in the media have been identified as catalysts for improved intergroup relations and the cultivation of a more just society (Ramasubramanian, 2011).

Scholarly investigations have delved extensively into the preferences of various minority communities regarding their portrayal in the media. For instance, within the African American community, there exists a preference for depictions that capture the diversity inherent in their community, steering clear of monolithic stereotypes (Allen, 2017; Mastro, 2009). The desire is for portrayals that emphasize the humanity, accomplishments, and lived experiences of African Americans, transcending the sole focus on struggles with racism and poverty (Allen, 2017). Similarly, the Latinx community advocates for the representation of a spectrum of Latin American cultures rather than a singular, homogenized Latinx identity (Mastro, 2009). Additionally, there is a call for narratives that transcend stereotypical roles, moving beyond limited portrayals as maids, gardeners, or gang members (Mastro, 2009).

In addition to the aforementioned considerations, Asian American communities also call for narratives that break free from the constraints of the model minority myth and perpetual foreigner stereotype (Mastro, 2009; Ramasubramanian, 2011). Authentic stories capturing the intricate intersections of culture and experiences are sought after, reflecting the rich diversity within Asian American identities (Ramasubramanian, 2011).

Similarly, Native American communities aspire to reshape historical narratives and see their contemporary realities, traditions, and political issues accurately reflected in media (Baldwin et al., 2018). Their objective is to convey the lived impacts of colonization on their communities, fostering a deeper understanding among non-Native audiences (Baldwin et al., 2018).

LGBTQ+ communities advocate for authentic and nuanced representations that transcend one-dimensional stock characters (Bond, 2018; Smith et al., 2018). The focus is on narratives that capture the full spectrum of LGBTQ+ identities and lives, moving beyond mere exploration of sexuality or gender identity (Bond, 2018; Smith et al., 2018). Importantly, there is a preference for portrayals created by and for LGBTQ+ individuals themselves, underscoring the importance of authentic representation from within the community (Bond, 2018; Smith et al., 2018).

In Africa, echoing sentiments found in Western countries, minority communities have long sought fair and accurate representation in media platforms with broad reach (Mthembu & Ojo, 2017; Ojo, 2019). Notably, the LGBTQ+ community in South Africa has experienced increased media coverage over time; however, these portrayals often reinforce stereotypes or focus on controversy rather than the lived experiences of individuals within the

community (Mthembu & Ojo, 2017). In response, minority groups have initiated their own media projects to authentically represent their communities.

Nigeria, specifically, has witnessed underrepresentation and misrepresentation of religious minorities in television and film (Ojo, 2019). Christians are frequently depicted as corrupt or hypocritical, while Muslims are portrayed as pious and moral (Ojo, 2019). To counteract these narrow representations, minority faith groups in Nigeria are actively involved in producing their own films, documentaries, and programs. These initiatives serve to showcase the diversity of their beliefs, values, and practices, fostering a more accurate understanding among the wider audience (Ojo, 2019).

Indigenous communities in Africa have confronted persistent challenges in attaining equitable media representation that accurately reflects their cultures, languages, and political concerns (Mazrui, 2017; Ndima, 2019). Mazrui's (2017) investigation discovered that the coverage of indigenous groups in Kenyan media often perpetuated stereotypes of primitiveness or failed to amplify their perspectives on critical issues such as land rights and education policy. In response, certain indigenous communities in Kenya have taken matters into their own hands by establishing community radio stations and newspapers in local languages, aiming to shape narratives from within (Mazrui, 2017).

Examining the situation in South Africa, a study focusing on Xhosa print media revealed that coverage of the Xhosa minority increased post-apartheid (Ndima, 2019). Nevertheless, portrayals continued to emphasize cultural traditions over contemporary issues and viewpoints (Ndima, 2019). Ndima (2019) highlighted the efforts of Xhosa journalists and

media creators striving to move beyond folkloric representations, aiming to present the complete realities of Xhosa urban life, politics, business, and more.

The above studies underscore an interconnectedness that emphasizes the paramount importance of media representation for minority communities (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019; Ramasubramanian, 2010; Thomas & Campos, 2013). Whether in Western nations or Africa, the impact of media portrayals on perceptions, stereotypes, and community well-being remains a shared concern, prompting a collective call for more authentic and diverse representation. Throughout the above discussions, minority communities have consistently expressed their preferences and recommendations regarding their portrayal across various media platforms, including television, films, news, and social media (Research consistently underscores the significance of accurate and thoughtful representation in fostering understanding and inclusion (Clark, 2019; Smith, 2022). Conversely, negative or stereotypical portrayals have been demonstrated to detrimentally impact the self-esteem and self-worth of minority groups (Clark, 2019). Thus, the collective pursuit for more genuine and diverse representation is grounded in the recognition of its pivotal role in shaping perceptions and promoting the well-being of minority communities.

Several studies have explored the views of various minority communities on their media portrayal (Clark, 2019; Smith, 2022). African Americans have emphasized the need for complex, multidimensional characters that go beyond superficial stereotypes (Smith, 2022). They prefer seeing characters they can relate to and that realistically represent the diversity of experiences within the Black community in America (Clark, 2019; Smith, 2022). Native American tribes have also called for thoughtful, culturally sensitive

portrayals that avoid outdated tropes and respect tribal sovereignty and traditions (Yellow Horse Brave Heart et al., 2022).

Hispanic and Latino communities want to see stories that capture the richness of Latino cultures rather than portraying all Latinos as immigrants or people struggling with poverty and crime (Ramirez Berg, 2002). They seek representations that move beyond singular narratives and depict the community's contributions to American society (Ramirez Berg, 2002). The Asian American community recommends avoiding the perpetual foreigner stereotype and one-dimensional portrayals of Asians as model minorities or martial artists (Shimizu, 2007). They advocate showing the community's diversity and the complex experiences of being Asian in America (Ramirez Berg, 2002; Shimizu, 2007).

The LGBTQ+ community prefers nuanced portrayals of queer identities and relationships that go beyond stories of trauma to also show the ordinary lives and relationships of LGBTQ+ people (Bond, 2018). They recommend thoughtful, informed representations that avoid sensationalism. Minority religious groups have also expressed a desire to see their beliefs and practices portrayed with cultural understanding, accuracy and respect (Cragun & Sumerau, 2015).

Overall, minority communities emphasize the power of media in shaping public perceptions and the importance of fair, complex and culturally sensitive portrayals (Clark, 2019; Smith, 2022). More accurate representations can help promote inclusion and understanding between communities (Clark, 2019; Smith, 2022). However, achieving this requires ongoing consultation with minority groups regarding their specific preferences and recommendations (Clark, 2019). Media organizations should make meaningful efforts

to incorporate diverse voices and perspectives both behind and in front of the camera (Clark, 2019; Smith, 2022).

In conclusion, thoughtful portrayal of minority communities in media is important for fostering an inclusive society. While progress has been made, continued research and open dialogue are needed to better understand diverse preferences and ensure minority groups have a meaningful voice in their representation.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

2.5.1 Participatory Communication Theory

Participatory communication theory focuses on communication processes that are inclusive and involve collaboration in communication (Minkler, 2005). The theory posits that communication should empower participants and promote social change through dialogue (Melkote & Steeves, 2015). At its core, participatory communication aims to give marginalized groups a voice and facilitate their active engagement in decision-making (Melkote & Steeves, 2015).

The theory was pioneered in the 1970s by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, who emphasized the importance of dialogue in empowering oppressed communities (Freire, 1970 as cited in Wallerstein & Duran, 2017). Freire argued that a "banking model" of education, where knowledge is deposited into passive learners, only serves to perpetuate inequality (Wallerstein & Duran, 2017). Instead, he advocated for "problem-posing education" through which learners and educators engage in critical reflection to transform their social reality (Wallerstein & Duran, 2017). Freire's work laid the philosophical foundations for

participatory communication by stressing people's capacity to be active subjects rather than passive objects (Melkote & Steeves, 2015).

Building on Freire's ideas, subsequent scholars refined participatory communication theory (Minkler, 2005). One of the most influential was Everett Rogers, who developed a framework for participatory development communication (Rogers, 1976 as cited in Melkote & Steeves, 2015). Rogers emphasized that development projects should involve local communities from the planning stage through implementation and evaluation (Melkote & Steeves, 2015). This helps ensure their needs, knowledge, and priorities are incorporated into programs designed to benefit them (Melkote & Steeves, 2015; Minkler, 2005). Other notable contributors include William Servaes, who applied participatory principles to media and information (Servaes, 1999), and James Gumucio Dagron, who developed methods for participatory media production (Gumucio Dagron, 2001).

Participatory communication theory is grounded in some fundamental assumptions about the nature of communication and social change (Minkler, 2005). It assumes that knowledge is not static, but rather is co-created through dialogue between interested parties (Dutta, 2008). No single person or group has a monopoly on the truth (Minkler, 2005). Different lived experiences and ways of knowing must be respected (Dutta, 2008; Minkler, 2005). It also assumes that social problems are best understood and addressed at the community level, by those most directly impacted (Dutta, 2008; Minkler, 2005). Top-down, expert-driven approaches are less effective because they fail to incorporate local knowledge and priorities (Minkler, 2005).

Furthermore, participatory communication theory assumes that people should not be treated as passive recipients of information but rather as active agents capable of critical thinking and self-determination (McQuail, 2010). When given opportunities to meaningfully engage and have their voices heard, marginalized communities can organize to advocate for their needs and rights (Wallerstein & Duran, 2017). The theory also assumes communication is value-laden and never neutral (Minkler, 2005; Wallerstein & Duran, 2017). The theory argues that communication either serves the interests of the powerful over the powerless or facilitates grassroots empowerment (Minkler, 2005; Wallerstein & Duran, 2017). If designed and implemented through collaborative processes, communication can help address social inequities by redistributing access to decision-making power (McQuail, 2010).

Participatory communication theory has been applied in several studies examining minority representation in mass media (Kim & Wang, 2020; Ortiz & Harwood, 2007). One of the earliest applications was a content analysis by Ortiz and Harwood (2007) that analyzed primetime television programs from 2002-2003 for their portrayal of Latinos. The study found that Latinos were significantly underrepresented and often depicted through stereotypical roles (Ortiz & Harwood, 2007). This lack of participation and ownership over their media portrayals, the researchers argued, undermined the community's ability to see themselves complexly and have a voice in the national dialogue (Ortiz & Harwood, 2007).

A similar content analysis was conducted on Asian portrayals in top-grossing films from 2007-2018 (Kim & Wang, 2020). While representation had increased quantitatively over time, the roles Asian characters occupied remained limited and one-dimensional (Kim & Wang, 2020). Qualitative analysis revealed Asian characters rarely drove the plot and

instead served primarily as sidekicks or props to advance white protagonists' stories (Kim & Wang, 2020). The researchers concluded this lack of meaningful participation and agency over the narratives that reached the widest audiences perpetuated marginalization (Kim & Wang, 2020).

Some studies have explored how increased participation and ownership could lead to more positive and nuanced representations (Martinez, 2019). A survey of Latinos who had worked as writers, producers or directors on television shows found they felt empowered to shape portrayals that resonated with their communities and identities (Martinez, 2019). However, they noted the barriers of underrepresentation in leadership roles that determine what stories get told (Martinez, 2019).

A case study examined the participatory process of co-creating a documentary about the Somali immigrant experience with members of the local Somali community (Abdi, 2015). Through workshops where community members helped determine the framing, questions and storytelling, the film centered Somali voices and perspectives in an authentic way (Abdi, 2015). Screenings for the Somali community generated positive feedback about feeling represented with dignity and complexity (Abdi, 2015).

Some scholars argue this theory does not always achieve equitable minority representation (Rodriguez, 2001). While participatory approaches intend to empower minorities, the mass media system may still perpetuate the dominant group's perspectives and priorities (Rodriguez, 2001). Minority groups seeking representation through participatory channels still must navigate mainstream media structures largely controlled by those in power (Couldry, 2010). Even grassroots or community media initiatives can become co-opted to

reinforce, rather than challenge, the status quo (Atton, 2002). Some research finds participatory projects may unintentionally reinforce stereotypes if not carefully facilitated to prioritize marginalized voices (Couldry et al., 2013).

Representation of minorities in mass media remains problematic, with studies finding they are often underrepresented or portrayed through narrow, stereotypical lenses (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019). While participatory approaches aim to address this, true empowerment requires dismantling the systemic power imbalances that marginalize certain identities in the first place (Fraser, 1990). Some argue for moving beyond representation to advocating for structural changes like media ownership reform and the development of independent, community-controlled media spaces (Rodriguez, 2011). While the participatory communication theory has received some valid criticism regarding its ability to achieve fully equitable minority representation, it does provide an important framework for empowering marginalized groups and promoting inclusion (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019).

2.5.2 Application of the Participatory Communication Theory to the Study

The current study delves into the perspectives of the Ghanaian Muslim community regarding how they are portrayed in local media. The primary objective is to explore the influence of these depictions on their perceived social identity. Additionally, the research aims to uncover the community's desires for more inclusive and authentic representation in media narratives.

The first objective of exploring the perspectives of the Muslim community in Ghana on the portrayal of Muslims in the media relates directly to participatory communication theory.

This theory emphasizes including the voices of communities in discussions that affect them. To understand how Muslims view their portrayal, researchers must engage participatory methods that give Muslims a platform to openly and freely express their own perspectives. This could involve focus group discussions or interviews where Muslims can candidly share their opinions on how they are shown in the media without outside influence. The goal would be to facilitate genuine participation by the Muslim community to learn from their direct experiences and viewpoints.

The second objective of assessing how media portrayal shapes the perceived identity of Muslims in Ghana also aligns well with participatory communication. If the aim is to evaluate the impact of the media on Muslims' sense of identity, it is important to incorporate Muslims' participation to get their perspectives on this issue. The researchers could organize participatory activities where Muslims discuss and reflect on whether and how the way their faith and practices are depicted in the media has shaped how they see themselves and how others see them. This participatory process will provide valuable insights into Muslims' perceptions of the relationship between media portrayal and religious/social identity.

The third objective of exploring how Muslims would like to see their community portrayed connects directly to participatory communication's emphasis on incorporating community voices. To understand Muslims' preferences, the most effective approach outlined by this theory is to actively engage Muslims in sharing how they wish to be represented. The researchers could hold participatory workshops where Muslims brainstorm and share ideas for alternative, positive and accurate portrayals of their community that respect their beliefs and realities. Muslims could also evaluate current media coverage and recommend

improvements. This participatory process will allow Muslims to play an active role in envisioning future portrayals and shaping media narratives about their faith from within.

All three research objectives of this study are well-suited to a participatory communication approach. By facilitating Muslims' genuine involvement through focus groups, interviews and participatory activities, researchers can incorporate community perspectives, experiences and voices to better understand issues relating to their media portrayal and identity. This participatory process aligns with the theory's emphasis on including affected populations and is most likely to provide valuable insights to address the study's aims.

2.6 Chapter Summary

Media representation, a central concept in mass communication, involves deliberate decisions shaping how individuals and groups are portrayed in various platforms. Scholars emphasize that media constructs rather than reflects reality, influencing cultural meanings and perpetuating social inequalities. Historical trends show early media often stereotyped minority groups, with progress in nuanced portrayals starting in the 1980s. However, imbalanced representations continue to impact perceptions, fostering implicit biases. The quest for equitable representation is crucial, as misrepresentation can harm societal perceptions and well-being. Positive portrayals are seen as fostering improved intergroup relations. Minority communities advocate for diverse, authentic depictions, challenging stereotypes. The participatory communication theory, rooted in Freire's work, underlines inclusive communication empowering marginalized groups through dialogue and critical reflection, aiming for transformative social change.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used to collect and analyze data for this study. It explores the research approach and design employed, including the sampling technique. Details are provided on the steps taken to gather and subsequently analyze the data obtained. Furthermore, this chapter addresses the important ethical considerations involved in conducting this research. The goal is to shed light on the process in a clear manner so the methods can be easily followed and comprehended. Transparency regarding both the process and ethical standards observed is prioritized for the benefit of the reader.

3.1 Research Approach

A research approach refers to the systematic plan or strategy that researchers adopt to conduct their investigations, gather data, analyze information, and draw conclusions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A research approach provides a framework for organizing the entire research process and guides the researcher's decisions regarding the methods, tools, and techniques to be used (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Some common research approaches include qualitative research, quantitative research and mixed methods (Allan, 2020). The present study used a qualitative research approach for several reasons.

Qualitative research is a systematic approach aimed at understanding qualities, or the essential nature, of a phenomenon within a particular context (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It provides insights into people's attitudes, behaviors, value systems, concerns, motivations,

aspirations, culture or lifestyles (Allan, 2020). Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors and social contexts of particular populations (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Due to these advantages, the present study adopted a qualitative research approach to gain meaningful insights and an in-depth understanding of the research problem.

A qualitative approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the perspectives of Ghanaian Muslims on how their community is portrayed by the media. It provides insights into their attitudes, beliefs, concerns and lived experiences pertaining to the media representation of Islam in Ghana. This helps meet the first research objective. Similarly, qualitative research helps assess how the portrayed identity in the media shapes the perceived identity within the Muslim community in Ghana, as it provides an understanding of people's value systems, motivations and aspirations from their own point of view. This addresses the second research objective. Lastly, a qualitative design is effective in exploring how the Ghanaian Muslim population would prefer their community to be depicted, as it offers culturally specific information about their opinions, preferences and desired social contexts based on their own accounts, views and narratives. This fulfills the third research objective.

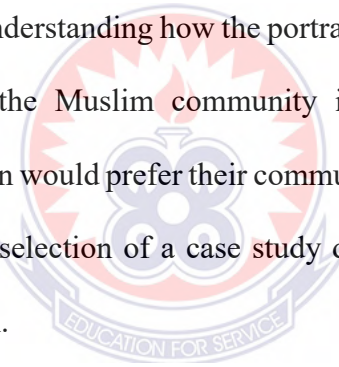
In summary, the advantages of qualitative research in obtaining an in-depth and contextual understanding of populations' perspectives align well with the objectives of exploring the Ghanaian Muslim experience of media portrayal.

3.2 Research Design

A research design serves as a comprehensive strategy for conducting scientific research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). According to Yin (2018), various types of research designs,

such as phenomenology, ethnography, case study research, and narrative research, exist. The selection of an appropriate research design depends on factors such as the study's characteristics, research problem, the researcher's background, and the intended readership of the study (Yin, 2018).

In the current study, a case study research design was employed. This choice was informed by insights from Wimmer and Dominick (2011), who suggest that case studies are particularly suitable for researchers seeking to comprehend or elucidate a specific phenomenon. In the context of this investigation, the researcher aimed to gain insight into the perspectives of Ghanaian Muslims regarding how their community is portrayed in the media. This encompasses understanding how the portrayed identity in the media shapes the perceived identity within the Muslim community in Ghana and exploring how the Ghanaian Muslim population would prefer their community to be depicted. The subsequent subsection details how the selection of a case study design facilitated the acquisition of data for the current research.



3.2.1 Case study

A case study is a practical investigation that explores a phenomenon within its real-world context and timeframe (Yin, 2018). This design is particularly useful when a deep understanding of the background of the events is essential, and the researcher has limited control over the unfolding circumstances (Yin, 2018). The case study approach was chosen for this study to better grasp the perspectives of Ghanaian Muslims on how their community is portrayed in the media. This choice is rooted in the actual context of the

Ghana Muslim community, where the researcher lacks the ability to exert influence or manipulate study conditions, making the case study design highly relevant (Yin, 2018).

The significance of the researcher's lack of control over the study location and conditions cannot be overstated (Yin, 2018). It ensures that the examination remains authentic and unbiased, providing a genuine representation of the perspectives of Ghanaian Muslims on how their community is portrayed by the media (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011; Yin, 2018). By refraining from influencing the environment or conditions, the researcher maintains the integrity of the study and safeguards against potential manipulation, ultimately yielding more reliable and insightful results (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

Ridder (2017) underscores the importance of considering contextual specificity when delving into case studies. Contextual specificity, as defined by Ridder, involves the unique attributes and circumstances inherent to the subject under investigation (Ridder, 2017). These encompass a broad spectrum, including social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental influences (Ridder, 2017). Recognizing contextual specificity is pivotal in case studies due to its potential impact on interpreting findings and the generalizability of results (Ridder, 2017).

For example, a case study examining the perspectives of Ghanaian Muslims on how their community is portrayed by the media within one geographical region may yield different outcomes compared to a similar study in another area. These differences may arise from variations in political landscapes, economic conditions, and cultural norms (Ridder, 2017).

Therefore, the current study focuses on the perspectives of Ghanaian Muslims within Accra, capitalizing on the advantage of contextual specificity. This approach allows for a deeper exploration and understanding of the unique attributes and circumstances specific to this particular case. The study on the perspectives of Ghanaian Muslims in Accra constitutes a defined context, involving its set of challenges and opportunities. By exclusively concentrating on this case, the researcher gains enhanced insight into the context-driven variables influencing the reintegration process within this unique environment.

3.3 Sampling Technique

A sampling technique serves as the method by which a researcher opts for a subset of a population for study (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Lindlof and Taylor (2018) emphasize the significance of employing a suitable sampling technique to establish a systematic connection with communicative phenomena, while also minimizing time wastage. Hence, the selection of a sampling technique holds paramount importance across all research endeavors, ensuring efficient data collection (Lindlof & Taylor, 2018).

The current study adopted a purposive sampling technique. Lindlof and Taylor (2018) define purposive sampling as a non-probability method wherein specific sites and cases are deliberately chosen based on the belief that they offer crucial insights into a particular process or concept. The utilization of purposive sampling in the current study was a conscious decision, allowing the researcher to select specific site and participants according to specific criteria relevant to the research question (Lindlof & Taylor, 2018).

The Muslim community in the Accra Metropolitan Area was chosen as the suitable research site. The selection of the Muslim community in the Accra Metropolitan Area as the focal point for this study is appropriate for several compelling reasons. Firstly, the Accra Metropolitan Area, being the capital city of Ghana, represents a significant and dynamic urban center, offering a nuanced perspective on the portrayal of the Muslim community in a diverse and cosmopolitan setting (Agyemang et al., 2015). This urban context allows for a comprehensive exploration of the various ways in which media narratives may impact and shape the perspectives of Ghanaian Muslims (Agyemang et al., 2015). Furthermore, Accra's status as the economic, political, and cultural hub of Ghana adds a layer of significance to the study's findings, as media portrayals may carry heightened implications in such influential urban centers (Agyemang et al., 2015). This urban prominence underscores the relevance and potential societal impact of examining the perspectives of Ghanaian Muslims on the media portrayal of their community in Accra (Agyemang et al., 2015).

The participant selection criteria was also carefully structured to ensure a comprehensive representation. The approach involved geographic diversity by including Muslims from all 11 districts in Accra, capturing varied perspectives. Accra Metropolitan Area is divided into several administrative districts for local governance and statistical purposes (Agyemang et al., 2015). The districts include Ablekuma North, Ablekuma Central, Ablekuma South, Ayawaso East, Ayawaso West, Korle Klottey, Okaikoi North, Okaikoi South, Adentan, Ashiedu Keteke, and La Dade Kotopon (Agyemang et al., 2015). The inclusion of the Imam of the Central Mosque as well as a Muslim community leader, representing one of the 11 districts in Accra, were done to incorporate insights from

leaderships of the Muslim community in Accra. The overall strategy aimed to encompass a broad spectrum of stakeholders, ranging from individual community members to religious and community leaders, providing a nuanced understanding of how the community perceives its depiction in the media.

3.4 Sample Size

Bryman (2012) posits that qualitative research typically involves a thorough examination of smaller sample units. In a similar vein, Lindlof and Taylor (2018) contend that the primary aim of qualitative research is to obtain meaningful insights into a specific investigative topic. Consequently, the qualitative research objective does not center on generalizing findings to the entire population (Lindlof & Taylor, 2018). Consequently, qualitative inquiries commonly concentrate on collecting significant information related to a specific issue, often entailing smaller sample sizes (Bryman, 2012; Lindlof & Taylor, 2018).

The current study utilized a purposive sampling technique to select a suitable research site, which is the Accra Metropolitan Area. 24 participants from the Ghanaian Muslim community in Accra were also sampled. The sample size of 24 participants allowed the current study to achieve data saturation while maintaining feasibility (Marshall, 2016; Mason, 2020). Data saturation is achieved when additional data collection ceases to provide further insights relevant to answering the research questions (Guest et al., 2016). By sampling 24 participants, the researcher was able to thoroughly explore the perspectives and gain an in-depth understanding of the topic of interest without compromising the manageability of the research project.

The participants encompassed various key stakeholders within the Ghanaian Muslim community in Accra, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives on media portrayal. Specifically, the participant composition consisted of a Muslim individual representing one of the 11 districts in Accra. Additionally, the Imam of the Central Mosque in Accra, a representative from the National Council of Muslim Chiefs, and a Muslim community leader, representing one of the 11 districts in Accra were included. By ensuring representation from different segments of the Muslim population in Accra, from individuals to religious and community leaders, the study gathered a nuanced understanding of how Ghanaian Muslims in the capital perceive their portrayal in the country's media.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Qualitative researchers commonly use four fundamental methods to gather data: conducting in-depth interviews, facilitating group discussions, employing observational techniques, and analyzing documents and material culture (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Spencer & Snape, 2003). Although there are additional secondary and specialized data collection methods that can complement these primary approaches, these foundational four methods remain essential in qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In this study, the researcher collected data through the use of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

3.5.1 In-depth interviews (IDI)

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), the use of in-depth interviews provides a thorough exploration of participants' responses, revealing the underlying factors that

influence their specific answers. By conducting in-depth interviews, researchers can collect comprehensive and detailed data about participants' perspectives, principles, motivations, experiences, and feelings (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

In this current research, in-depth interviews were carried out with two distinct individuals: the Imam of the Central Mosque in Accra and a representative from the National Council of Muslim Chiefs. As highlighted by Lindlof and Taylor (2018), qualitative interviews serve as a valuable platform for individuals to openly share their perspectives and experiences. The utilization of in-depth interviews provided an opportunity for the aforementioned participants to articulate their thoughts in their own words. This approach granted the researcher access to information that might have remained undisclosed through alternative data collection methods such as observation (Lindlof & Taylor, 2018).

Via in-depth interviews, participants offered valuable insights into their experiences and perspectives, enhancing our comprehension of the intricate nuances surrounding the portrayal of the Ghanaian Muslim community in domestic media outlets. To uphold the privacy and confidentiality of the interviewees, the researcher implemented measures to ensure their anonymity. This was achieved by assigning each participant a distinctive coded identifier, thus from P1 (Participant 1) to P2 (Participant 2). These identifiers not only facilitated organization but also served as a protective shield, safeguarding the identities of the participants.

3.5.2 Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a qualitative research method used to gather insights, perceptions, and opinions from a group of participants about a specific topic or issue

(Morgan, 2018). It involves conducting a structured and interactive group conversation where participants openly discuss their thoughts and experiences related to the subject of interest (Liamputtong, 2019). FGDs are typically led by a facilitator who guides the discussion, encourages participants to share their views, and ensures that the conversation stays focused on the research topic (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

In this current study, the researcher organized two sets of FGDs, with each session involving distinct groups of participants. The initial FGD comprised 11 Muslim individuals, with representation from each of the 11 districts within the Accra Metropolitan Area. The subsequent FGD enlisted a Muslim community leader, representing each of the 11 districts in Accra. The rationale behind conducting two separate rounds of FGDs, each with unique participant cohorts, emanated from the overarching objective to obtain a comprehensive and nuanced comprehension of the research topic. Recognizing that each participant group harbors distinctive perspectives, the dual FGD approach was adopted to harness varied insights that collectively enrich the study.

The utilization of FGDs with specific participant groups, as delineated in the study, is not only suitable but also essential due to the distinctive shared characteristics inherent in each group. Morgan (2018) contends that FGDs are particularly well-suited to contexts where participants possess common characteristics, as they facilitate the emergence of collective viewpoints and allow for the exploration of shared experiences. Furthermore, Morgan (2018) advocates for FGDs to encompass a range of six to twelve members sharing similar traits, underscoring the appropriateness of the study's choice to conduct three rounds of FGDs, each involving distinct participant groups. Due to the distinctive shared characteristics inherent in each group, the FGDs facilitated an organic exchange of ideas

and experiences related to prisoner integration (Liamputtong, 2019). It enabled the researcher to gather multifaceted insights and opinions directly from the selected participant groups, thus enriching the study's findings (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

3.6 Data Collection Process

The process of gathering data entails outlining the methods, procedures, and techniques employed by the researcher to collect data for the study (Lindlof & Taylor, 2018). The subsequent sections elaborate on the procedures followed to gather data for this current research:

3.6.1 In-Depth-Interviews (IDI)

A primary approach for gathering data in this current study involved conducting face-to-face interview sessions. To structure the interviews, a semi-structured interview guide was developed. To ensure its effectiveness, the guide was pre-tested with one of the participants, leading to refinements (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012). Detailed information regarding the interview guide is available in the Appendix.

Upon arranging interviews at the participants' convenience, meetings were conducted in their respective offices. The participants included the Imam of the Central Mosque in Accra and a representative from the National Council of Muslim Chiefs. In order to ensure punctuality, the researcher arrived 10 minutes prior to the scheduled interview time for each session. The duration of each interview session was approximately 25 minutes. To maintain accuracy during transcription and analysis, the researcher used her mobile phone to record the interviews. The recording was complemented by handwritten notes.

The interview setting was thoughtfully set up to encourage open communication. To achieve this, the researcher worked to establish a sense of connection and trust. The researcher outlined the purpose of the study, the research methods, potential benefits, and the participants' right to withdraw voluntarily even before the interviews commenced. Participants were also assured of the confidentiality of their contributions and were actively encouraged to seek clarifications regarding the study. This approach aimed to foster honest and transparent responses, thus allowing the researcher to gain a deeper insight into the participants' perspectives.

Exact transcriptions of the recorded interviews were carried out to ensure the accurate representation of participants' spoken words. During this transcription process, all two interviews were transcribed word-for word, without any alterations or omissions. Subsequently, the researcher carefully integrated the transcriptions with the field notes taken during the interviews. The combination of materials facilitated a comprehensive and holistic overview of the gathered data. Through the merging process, a more profound understanding of the participants' viewpoints was achieved.

3.6.2 Focus Group Discussions

As part of the current study, the researcher conducted two sets of FGDs. Each FGD comprised 11 participants. The data collection process for the FGDs followed a well-defined protocol. The initial step involved the researcher identifying and recruiting participants who fulfilled specific criteria: individuals adhering to the Muslim faith, with representation from each of the 11 districts within the Accra Metropolitan Area. Additionally, a Muslim community leader, representing one of the 11 districts in Accra,

was included. A pivotal criterion for participant selection was their willingness to actively engage in open discussions and contribute meaningfully to the study.

After a careful selection process, the researcher extended invitations to the identified participants. These invitations explicitly outlined the study's objectives, the purpose of the FGDs, and the potential benefits of their participation. Upon confirmation of their commitment, arrangements were made for scheduling, taking into consideration participants' convenience. To ensure unambiguous communication, explicit details regarding the date, time, and location of each FGD were provided.

The designated venue for all FGDs was the Nima Community Center. The selection of this venue emerged from a collaborative decision-making process, wherein the participants collectively acknowledged the suitability of the Nima Community Center for hosting both sets of FGDs. The choice of the venue was informed by its central location within the Accra Metropolitan Area which ensured accessibility for representatives from each of the 11 districts.

Each FGD began with an introductory session led by the researcher. The purpose and objectives of the study were reiterated, with emphasis on the value of participants' contributions. Ethical considerations around confidentiality and the right to withdraw were also highlighted to protect participants' rights and welfare. While some participants were comfortable interacting in English, others preferred Hausa, a widely spoken language in Ghana's Muslim communities. The researcher employed the services of a Hausa interpreter to help facilitate discussions. The interpreter is an avid communicator in Hausa and holds a master's degree in Ghanaian Language Studies from the University of Education,

Winneba. Throughout the discussions, the researcher guided conversations and encouraged participants to share insights and personal experiences regarding prisoner reintegration processes in Ghana. While the researcher could fluently understand the English discussions, the interpreter assisted with the Hausa discussions by interpreting between Hausa and English.

The duration of each FGD ranged from 20 to 30 minutes. With consent, the researcher recorded sessions on a mobile phone while taking supplementary handwritten notes. This dual documentation approach comprehensively captured spoken contributions, non-verbal cues, and group dynamics to support accurate transcription and enhance understanding during analysis.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis involves the comprehensive synthesis of all the data gathered by a researcher during fieldwork (Lindlof & Taylor, 2018). The primary objective is to establish logical connections within the data that align with the researcher's initial research questions (Lindlof & Taylor, 2018). This process includes the meticulous breakdown and categorization of raw data, enabling their reconstruction into identifiable patterns, themes, concepts, and propositions (Lindlof & Taylor, 2018).

For this current study, thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the data. Thematic analysis is an interpretive methodology that systematically examines the data to reveal underlying patterns (Smith & Firth, 2011). The aim is to develop an insightful narrative of the phenomenon under investigation (Smith & Firth, 2011). This approach indicates that the

researcher identified recurring patterns, codes, or themes through thematic analysis and subsequently provided a comprehensive depiction of these themes (Smith & Firth, 2011).

Initially, the collected data were carefully reviewed multiple times to gain a thorough understanding of their content. The immersion allowed the researcher to become familiar with the nuances and intricacies present in the raw data. Following the initial review, relevant segments of text were identified in relation to the research questions. These segments, known as "units of analysis," were selected based on their potential to contribute to the research objectives (Lindlof & Taylor, 2018, p. 23). "Units of analysis" refer to discrete portions or sections of data that contain pertinent information or insights for qualitative research (Lindlof & Taylor, 2018, p. 23). The units of analysis could be a few words, a sentence, or even a paragraph from the transcripts of interviews and focus group discussions (Lindlof & Taylor, 2018).

Subsequently, an open coding process was initiated, involving the systematic labeling and categorization of units of analysis (Smith & Firth, 2011). Each unit was assigned a descriptive code capturing its essence, thereby creating a preliminary set of codes that encompassed the diversity of content within the data (Smith & Firth, 2011).

As open coding progressed, similar codes were grouped together to form broader categories (Lindlof & Taylor, 2018; Smith & Firth, 2011). These categories began to unveil emerging patterns and connections within the data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2018; Smith & Firth, 2011). The researcher maintained a reflexive approach, ensuring that interpretations remained aligned with the data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2018; Smith & Firth, 2011).

Through iterative cycles of comparison and review, the researcher refined and defined the categories, ensuring they accurately represented the complexity of the data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2018; Smith & Firth, 2011). This process involved constant back-and-forth between the coded data, emerging categories, and the original text (Lindlof & Taylor, 2018; Smith & Firth, 2011). The final step involved selecting and naming overarching themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). These themes were comprehensive patterns encapsulating key insights and findings from the data (Smith & Firth, 2011). Each theme was supported by multiple instances from the interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), reinforcing its significance (Smith & Firth, 2011).

Throughout the analysis, the researcher maintained detailed notes, documenting decisions, reflections, and potential biases (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This audit trail enhanced the study's rigor and allowed for transparent documentation of the analytical journey (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). For the first research question (RQ1), the main themes that emerged from the data were underrepresentation of Muslims in media, negative stereotyping of Muslims, and promotion of interfaith misunderstanding. For the second research question (RQ2), the key themes were bias in how Muslims are depicted in media, lack of diverse representations of Muslims, and influence of portrayals on social cohesion. For the third research question (RQ3), the predominant themes were cultural diversity and integration, religious understanding and tolerance, and highlighting positive Muslim contributions and achievements.

3.8 Ethical Issues

Ethical considerations in research are crucial for safeguarding the well-being, rights, and dignity of participants, as well as upholding the integrity and credibility of the research process (Eastwood, 2015). The current study addressed several ethical issues.

Firstly, the researcher ensured that participants provided informed and voluntary consent before their involvement in the study (Eastwood, 2015). Clear explanations of the research purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, and the option to withdraw without consequences were provided (Greenwood, 2016).

Secondly, maintaining the confidentiality of participants' personal details and respecting their right to privacy is essential (Greenwood, 2016). To achieve this, measures were implemented to securely store and anonymize data as necessary (Greenwood, 2016). The study took diligent steps to safeguard the confidentiality of participants by assigning each a distinct coded identifier (e.g., P1), ensuring privacy and anonymity during interviews.

Thirdly, preserving the integrity and honesty of research is a pivotal concern in scholarly investigations (Eastwood, 2015; Greenwood, 2016). Researchers must communicate their findings and methodologies faithfully, avoiding practices such as falsification, fabrication, or plagiarism (Eastwood, 2015; Greenwood, 2016). Transparent reporting is crucial for maintaining the legitimacy and trustworthiness of research (Eastwood, 2015; Greenwood, 2016). In the present study, stringent measures were in place to adhere to these ethical imperatives. Each research phase was carefully documented, from formulating questions to data collection and analysis. This comprehensive record aimed to demonstrate honesty and integrity. Additionally, the study followed rigorous referencing and citation protocols,

acknowledging prior scholars' contributions and preventing inadvertent plagiarism. Upholding the study's integrity and honesty reflects the researcher's commitment to the highest ethical standards in the pursuit of knowledge.

3.9 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is important in qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It shows how credible and reliable a study's conclusions are (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Establishing trustworthiness helps readers, researchers, and others have more confidence in the results (Grimes et al., 2017). There are criteria to make sure the research process and findings are accurate (Grimes et al., 2017). In the context of a qualitative study, trustworthiness involves several key aspects:

Credibility stands as a cornerstone, necessitating that the findings accurately mirror the participants' experiences and viewpoints (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It demands researchers to deeply engage with the collected data, capturing intricate details and maintaining a steadfast connection to the participants' narratives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Transferability holds significance in ensuring that the findings possess relevance beyond the immediate context (Grimes et al., 2017). To attain this, researchers should provide comprehensive descriptions of the research environment, participants, and methodologies, enabling readers to gauge the applicability of the findings in diverse scenarios (Grimes et al., 2017).

Dependability concerns the consistency and stability of the research outcomes, both across time and different researchers (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Grimes et al., 2017). To

enhance dependability, researchers must meticulously document their research journey, including methodological decisions and any modifications made during the course of the study. This practice facilitates auditability (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Grimes et al., 2017).

Confirmability addresses the neutrality and objectivity of the findings. Researchers should diligently navigate their own biases and preconceived notions to prevent undue influence on the interpretations (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Grimes et al., 2017). This can be achieved through measures like maintaining a reflective journal and involving participants in the validation of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Grimes et al., 2017).

In the current study, the pursuit of trustworthiness was woven throughout the research process. A comprehensive approach was adopted to ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the findings. Credibility was nurtured through prolonged engagement with participants, granting an in-depth comprehension of their experiences and perspectives. The concept of triangulation, wherein diverse data sources and methods were employed, contributed to both transferability and confirmability (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In this study, triangulation was implemented by incorporating both in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The data collection methods complement one another, enriching the breadth and richness of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The utilization of multiple data collection methods allowed the research to leverage the unique advantages of each method, while also offsetting their individual constraints (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

To enhance dependability, a thorough documentation of the research process was carried out, highlighting the decisions made regarding methodology, and detailing any adjustments made along the way. In pursuit of a comprehensive perspective, external audits were conducted, involving independent evaluators who scrutinized the research's methodology and outcomes. Additionally, peer debriefing sessions were organized, inviting colleagues well-versed in the field to provide their insights and assessments, thus introducing an external viewpoint to the research's rigor and conclusions.

3.10 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the methodology employed to investigate the communication dynamics during the prisoner reintegration process within the Ghana Prisons Service was expounded. The research embraced a qualitative approach, adopting the framework of a case study design. The selection of this approach was substantiated by the deliberate utilization of purposive sampling, with the focal point of examination being the Nsawam Medium Security Prison. This choice was rooted in the prison's revered historical significance and distinguished standing within Ghana's correctional landscape. The data collection process for this study comprised in-depth interviews and FGDs. The study placed paramount importance on upholding ethical standards and ensuring the credibility of the data obtained.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis of the data gathered to examine the Ghanaian Muslim community's views on their portrayal in domestic media outlets, how such depictions shape their perceived social identity, and aspirations of the Ghanaian Muslim community for more inclusive and authentic representation. The chapter encompasses the presentation of the research findings and data analysis in accordance with the objectives of the study.

4.1 RQ1. What are the perspectives of the Muslim community in Ghana on the portrayal of Muslims in the Ghanaian media?

This research explores the perspectives of the Muslim community in Ghana regarding the portrayal of Muslims in the Ghanaian media. Recognizing the importance of minority group viewpoints, the study seeks to shed light on the nuanced experiences and perspectives of media representation and inclusivity in public discourse.

The selected members of the Ghanaian Muslim community appears to have three main perspectives on how Muslims are portrayed in the country's media: underrepresentation, negative stereotyping, and promoting interfaith misunderstanding.

4.1.1 Underrepresentation

Underrepresentation in the context of this study refers to the lack of adequate or proportional portrayal of Muslims and Islamic issues in the Ghanaian media landscape.

The study sought to understand how Muslims in Ghana perceive this underrepresentation, and what impact it has on their communities.

Through interviews and focus group discussions with 24 Muslims across 11 districts in the Accra Metropolitan Area, several key issues emerged that demonstrated the feeling of underrepresentation within the Muslim community. Participants reported rarely seeing stories or issues pertaining to Islam or the Muslim lifestyle featured in television, films and the newspapers. One participant noted in Hausa that:

"Sai dai idan ba a yi wani babban taron kamar Ramadan ko Idi ba, ba za ka ji labarin Musulmi ba, kamar ba mu a Ghana" (P3).

Translated as:

Unless there is a major event like Ramadan or Eid, you don't hear about Muslims. It's like we don't exist in Ghana (P3).

Another participant also emphasized that:

Ina sayen jaridu uku a kowace rana kuma da wuya na ga wani abu game da abubuwan da ke faruwa a cikin al'ummominmu. Kullum magana ce kawai game da siyasa ko aikata laifuka. Ba sa magana game da nasarorinmu ko kalubale (P7).

Translated as:

I buy three newspapers every day and very rarely do I see anything about what's happening in our communities. It's always just about politics or crime. They don't talk about our successes or challenges (P7).

This feeling of invisibility or lack of adequate representation was shared among other participants as well. In one of the FGDs, it was discussed how the media often fails to cover significant events and achievements within Muslim communities. P20 stated, for example,

that *"when our schools excel in exams, it doesn't get reported. But a small incident elsewhere gets covered for days."* This creates a perception that the accomplishments and positive contributions of Muslims are overlooked.

Participants also expressed that when Muslims are portrayed, the coverage is often negative and one-dimensional. P13 hinted that:

It is always about extremism, terrorism, or conflicts. They never show us as regular people who are part of the fabric of Ghanaian society.

Other participants equally reiterated that this type of media coverage perpetuates stereotypes and fuels Islamophobia. One participant recalled that:

In my workplace, people often make jokes and rude comments because of what they see on TV. It makes me feel uncomfortable at times practicing my faith openly (P20).

The data also showed that underrepresentation has real consequences for Muslim political participation and integration. A focus group discussed how the lack of adequate portrayal of Muslim or Islamic issues in mainstream media has led to the sidelining of Islamic concerns in national discussions and policymaking. One participant lamented that:

Yan siyasa ba sa jin bukatar magance matsalolinmu saboda suna ganin mu 'yan tsiraru ne. Amma mu sama da mutane miliyan ne a kasar nan (P15).

Translated as:

Politicians don't feel the need to address our issues because they think we are a small minority. But we are over a million people in this country (P15).

The research findings align with much of the existing scholarly literature on media portrayals of minority groups (Saeed, 2007; Shaheen, 2009). Studies have consistently shown that minorities tend to be underrepresented or misrepresented in news and entertainment media across various societies (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019; Thomas & Campos, 2013). Whether it be religious minorities, ethnic groups, or other marginalized communities, mainstream media often fails to adequately reflect their realities and experiences (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019).

For example, extensive content analysis of American media (e.g. Asante, 2019) has revealed patterns of underrepresentation of racial and religious minorities that mirror what the Ghanaian Muslim community articulated. News coverage disproportionately focuses on negative stereotypes related to crime, conflict or extremism rather than portraying as regular citizens. The consequences are public misperceptions that further marginalize these groups (Shaheen, 2009).

Similarly, the research participants' observation that their accomplishments are overlooked while small incidents elsewhere receive excessive attention, correlates with previous studies on media framing of minority issues by prioritizing sensationalism over nuanced, long-form reporting, media can unintentionally downplay the positive narratives and contributions of underrepresented populations. This distorts societal understanding of their true diversity and importance (Saeed, 2007;

Furthermore, the impact of such portrayals on minority youth acculturating into broader society, as described by some of the participants, is a recurrent theme in literature. Feelings of "othering" or being seen as a problem have significant psychological effects, especially

for developing minds (Saeed, 2007, p. 3). It can discourage open religious or cultural expression, as well as influence how minorities engage civically over time (Saeed, 2007).

4.1.2 Negative Stereotyping of Muslims

Negative stereotyping in the context of media portrayal can be understood as the overgeneralization of characteristics that present a group, such as a religious or ethnic community, in an unfair or unjust manner. Such portrayals promote an imbalance in public perception and understanding by emphasizing predominantly negative traits without proper context or representation of diversity within the group.

The data collected through interviews and focus group discussions with members of the Muslim community in Ghana demonstrated experiences of negative stereotyping in the country's media landscape. When asked about their perspectives on how Muslims are portrayed in Ghanaian news and entertainment programming, many participants expressed feelings of unfair and inaccurate representation. Several common themes emerged from the qualitative data that help illustrate this phenomenon.

One of the most prominent views shared was that Muslims are often portrayed solely in the context of acts of terrorism or extremism. As one participant stated in Hausa that:

Duk abin da kuke gani game da Musulunci a jaridu ko a Talabijin, shi ne batun tashin bama-bamai a wasu wurare da kungiyoyin 'yan ta'adda ke yi, yana nuna cewa wannan duk musulmi ne (P11).

Translated as:

All you see related to Islam in the newspapers or on TV is about bombings in other places by terrorist groups. It gives the impression that this is all Muslims are about (P11).

During one of the focus group discussions, a young professional expressed frustration with the overemphasis on terrorism in media coverage related to Islam. He stated also in Hausa that:

Dukkanin mutane da suka tava yin magana idan aka zo batun musulmi su ne tashin bama-bamai, fille kawunansu, Al-Qaeda da ISIS, kamar dai ana kallon wadannan kungiyoyin ta'addanci a matsayin fuskar addininmu alhalin ba su wakilce ni ba ko kuma mafi yawan musulmi da na sani. Muna fofari mu ci gaba da rayuwarmu da ayyukanmu kamar kowa, amma ta yaya za mu iya sa'ad da labarai da nunin mutane suna kallon kullun suna tunatar da su cewa 'Musulmi daidai da 'yan ta'adda'? (P24).

Translated as:

All people ever seem to talk about when it comes to Muslims is bombings, beheadings, Al-Qaeda and ISIS. It's like those terrorist groups are seen as the face of our religion when they don't represent me or most Muslims that I know. We're trying to get on with our lives and jobs just like everyone else. But how can we when the news and shows people watch everyday are constantly reminding them that 'Muslims equal terrorists'? (P24).

This type of singular association was a frequent complaint, as participants felt it promoted an image of their faith being synonymous with violence and fear. Relatedly, many felt the media failed to provide necessary context when reporting on international incidents involving Muslim extremists. One of the focus group discussions elaborated that:

There is no attempt to make clear that these terrorist groups do not represent mainstream Islamic beliefs or the vast majority of peaceful Muslims. Without that context, some Ghanaians think we support these kinds of actions just because of our religion (P18).

The data indicated this lack of differentiation and perspective reinforced negative generalizations about the faith. Additionally, participants believed Muslims in Ghana were rarely, if ever, featured in media outside the context of religious events and practices. As one participant put it:

We are only shown at Eid celebrations or the mosque. It's as if that's the only role we have in society, as religious people. We are doctors, teachers, business owners too but you'd never know from what's on TV...(P1).

A final prominent category was the perception that when negative incidents did occur involving local Muslims, the media was quick to associate and generalize it to the whole community. A focus group participant shared in Hausa that:

Idan da a ce an samu rikicin kasa inda musulmi daya ya shiga, da za a sanya labarin a matsayin 'ci karo da al'ummar musulmi' ko da kuwa wani lamari ne da ya kebanta da shi, tuffa guda daya na lalata da 'yan jarida (P5).

Translated as:

If there was a land dispute where one Muslim was involved, the story would be framed as a 'clash with the Muslim community' even if it was an isolated case. One bad apple spoils the bunch as far as the reporters are concerned (P5).

Such blanket associations, respondents argued, promoted negative stereotypes of intolerance and conflict. The experiences shared by Ghana's Muslim community in how they are portrayed by the country's media are reflective of broader trends seen in research on minority group representation. As documented in seminal works by Poole (2002), media often rely on overgeneralized stereotypes and singular narratives when depicting religious or ethnic minorities. This promotes an imbalance in public perceptions that can have real social consequences (Poole, 2002).

The qualitative data from this study demonstrated Muslims in Ghana feel strongly that they are disproportionately associated with acts of terrorism or portrayed solely through a religious lens. Participants lamented the lack of nuance and context in relating international terrorist incidents to their faith. This echoes Poole's observation that media routinely emphasize the most extreme or sensational aspects of minorities without acknowledging the diversity within (Poole, 2002).

Additionally, the findings align with literature noting the tendency of media to represent minorities only in the context of cultural practices rather than as fully rounded citizens (Fujioka, 2005; Ramasubramanian, 2011). As one participant pointed out, Ghanaian media are remiss in showing Muslims engaged in a variety of roles from doctors to business owners rather than exclusively as religious figures. This perpetuates the sense that minorities have no place in society beyond their outward identities (Fujioka, 2005; Ramasubramanian, 2011).

Perhaps most relevant were complaints from participants that negative actions by individual Muslims would be generalized or framed as indicative of the whole community (Fujioka, 2005; Thomas & Campos, 2013). This issue of disproportionate association is a recurring theme in literature on media and minorities. According to Thomas and Campos (2013) media have a pattern of over-ascribing singular incidents to entire minority populations in ways that do not occur for mainstream groups. The anecdote from a focus group member clearly demonstrated experiencing this phenomenon firsthand (Thomas & Campos, 2013).

4.1.3 Promoting Interfaith Misunderstanding

Promoting interfaith misunderstanding refers to the way in which the Ghanaian media's portrayal of Muslims and Islam can foster negative perceptions and a lack of understanding between religious groups in Ghana. The data collected from interviews and focus group discussions with members of the Muslim community in Ghana demonstrated that the community widely believes the media's coverage promotes interfaith misunderstanding in several key ways.

First, participants felt the media often portrays Muslims and Islamic practices in an overly simplistic and one-dimensional manner. In the words of one participant that:

Kafofin yada labarai na nuna musulmi a matsayin addu'o'i da ayyukan addini kawai, ba sa nuna musulman suna rayuwa kamar kowa (P4).

Translated as:

The media shows Muslims as just praying and doing religious things. They don't show Muslims living normal lives like everyone else (P4).

Another participant stated that:

Duk abin da suke nunawa musulmi ne a masallaci a ranar Juma'a ko kuma a lokacin azumin Ramadan, ba sa nuna cewa musulmin al'umma ne masu himma a cikin wannan al'umma da suka wuce addu'a kawai, muna aiki, muna zuwa makarantu da jami'o'i, muna da iyalai. da abokai - amma mutane suna ganin sallah kawai (P5).

Translated as:

All they ever show is Muslims at the mosque on Fridays or during Ramadan. They don't show that Muslims are active members of this society who do much more than

just pray. We work, we go to schools and universities, we have families and friends - but people only see the prayers (P5).

These excerpts demonstrate the feeling that media coverage reduces Muslims to only their religious activities and fails to present the fullness of Muslim identity and participation in society. This type of simplistic portrayal was seen as failing to present the complex reality of Muslims as ordinary Ghanaians who balance their faith with everyday activities like work, family life, and hobbies. By only focusing on the religious aspects of Islam and Muslim identity, participants felt the media fosters the idea that this is all that defines Muslims.

Second, Many respondents felt the Ghanaian media disproportionately focuses its coverage of Muslims around negative or controversial topics like terrorism, conflicts in other countries, and more extreme interpretations of Islamic law. As one focus group participant put it:

Abin da muke gani muna gani game da Musulmai a talabijin da jaridu shine al-Shabaab wannan, ISIS cewa. Yana sa mutane suyɪ tunanin mu duka game da tashin hankali da tsattsauran ra'ayi (P10).

Translated as:

All we seem to see about Muslims on TV and in the newspapers is al-Shabaab this, ISIS that. It makes people think we are all about violence and extremism (P10).

Participants believed this disproportionate focus on negative topics gives non-Muslims the false impression that these controversial issues are far more central to Islam and the lives of Ghanaian Muslims than they truly are.

Third, interviews and focus groups highlighted that participants felt the media often fails to seek out the perspectives of the Muslim community on topics related to Islam. As P2 explained, *"When something happens involving Muslims somewhere in the world, they will talk to anyone except Muslims here in Ghana. We are never asked for our views."* This one-sided coverage was seen as promoting misunderstanding by not allowing Ghanaian Muslims the opportunity to provide context and nuance to stories from their own religious perspective. A key response from the participants on this issue came from a focus group discussion. One of the participants noted that:

A makon da ya gabata ne aka samu labarin wata doka da ake nazari a wata kasa ta hana Burkini, dan jaridar ya yi hira da 'yan siyasa da masu fafutuka amma babu wani daga cikin al'ummar Musulmi, mu ma a nan ma muna sanye da hijabi amma ko kadan ba a samu wakilcin ra'ayinmu ba. akan wannan lamari da ya shafi addininmu (P21).

Translate as:

Just last week, there was a story about a law being considered in another country to ban the burkini. The reporter interviewed politicians and activists but no one from the Muslim community. We wear the hijab here too but our views were not represented at all on this issue affecting our religion (P21).

Another excerpt from the focus group discussions that expresses a similar sentiment was by P22. He noted that:

Na tuna a 'yan watannin da suka gabata an yi wani babban labari a jaridu game da harin ta'addanci da wata kungiya mai tsatsauran ra'ayi ta kai a Somaliya. Dukkanin kwararrun da suka zanta da su sun yi magana kan abin da hakan ke nufi na kokarin yaki da ta'addanci da zaman lafiyar yankin. Amma babu wanda ya yi tunanin hakan. Tambayi menene ma'anar irin waɗannan hare-hare ga Musulmai

na yau da kullun kawai kokarin rayuwarsu. Muna da al'ummar Somaliya a nan Ghana ma kuma yana shafar yadda mutane suke ganinsu (P22).

Translated as:

I remember a few months ago there was a big story in the newspapers about a terrorist attack carried out by a radical group in Somalia. All the experts they interviewed talked about what this meant for counterterrorism efforts and regional stability. But no one thought to ask what such attacks mean for regular Muslims just trying to live their lives. We have a Somali community here in Ghana too and it affects how people see them. But our perspective was completely left out of the reporting (P22).

The above excerpts clearly illustrated how the lack of Muslim voices in media coverage of Islamic issues can foster misunderstanding between religious groups. The research findings from Ghana echo a common critique found in literature examining media portrayals of minority religious and ethnic groups. Mainstream media coverage often reduces complex communities down to simplistic stereotypes that do little justice to the multidimensional realities and lived experiences of people (Ramasubramanian, 2011).

By focusing solely on the religious practices of Muslims without portraying them as full human beings with diverse lives and interests, the Ghanaian media falls into the familiar trap of one-dimensional representation (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019). Presenting minorities as defined only by their outward signs of identity is a superficial approach that fails to acknowledge the inner complexity we all share (Thomas & Campos, 2013). When a group's humanity is obscured in this way, misunderstanding is sure to follow (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019; Thomas & Campos, 2013).

Similarly, an over-emphasis on negative or sensational topics related to minorities is a recurrent issue raised in studies from various cultural contexts (Johnson, 2019). By disproportionately associating Muslims with violence and extremism, Ghanaian coverage risks shaping public perceptions in a biased manner. As the research participants noted, the exaggerated attention given to issues like terrorism misleads audiences into thinking such topics are more emblematic of Islam than they truly are (Johnson, 2019). While media is a business that thrives on what sells, prioritizing rare but emotive stories risks distorting the reality of ordinary lives (Johnson, 2019).

Perhaps most troubling is the lack of minority voices in stories directly pertinent to their identities and experiences (Kim & Wang, 2020). As the literature frequently documents, a lack of representation serves to alienate (Wallerstein & Duran, 2017; Saeed, 2007). When minority perspectives are not included to provide nuance and context, the narrative is being framed according to external assumptions rather than internal understandings (Wallerstein & Duran, 2017; Saeed, 2007). The research found Ghanaian Muslims felt acutely invisible and powerless to challenge misrepresentations. Without inclusion, there is little hope for mutual understanding to develop.

In all these ways, the research echoes familiar critiques of how mainstream media can inadvertently promote intergroup tensions through imbalanced portrayals (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019; Thomas & Campos, 2013). By presenting minorities as the exotic other, emphasizing their differences over commonalities, and failing to give a platform to their self-representations, the potential to understand is undermined (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019; Thomas & Campos, 2013). If the media aims to bring communities together rather than drive them apart, more work is still needed to move beyond simplistic

stereotypes towards portrayals embracing our shared humanity (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2019; Thomas & Campos, 2013).

The research findings highlight a significant issue of underrepresentation, negative stereotyping, and the promotion of interfaith misunderstanding faced by the Muslim community in Ghana within the country's media landscape. These challenges align with the principles of participatory communication theory, emphasizing the need for inclusive and diverse voices in shaping media narratives.

The study reveals how Muslims in Ghana feel largely invisible in the media, with their stories, achievements, and challenges seldom featured. This lack of visibility not only affects how Muslims perceive themselves but also has real consequences for their political participation and integration. The participatory communication theory emphasizes the importance of including all voices in the communication process, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives that accurately represent the richness of society (McQuail, 2010).

The research participants expressed frustration over the media's tendency to portray Muslims through a narrow and negative lens, focusing predominantly on terrorism and extremism. This aligns with the participatory communication theory's emphasis on challenging stereotypes and promoting nuanced, authentic representations (Wallerstein & Duran, 2017). The theory advocates for the active participation of marginalized groups in shaping their own narratives, countering harmful stereotypes perpetuated by mainstream media (Minkler, 2005).

The study illustrates how media coverage contributes to misunderstandings between religious groups by oversimplifying and sensationalizing issues related to Islam. The

participatory communication theory underscores the importance of fostering dialogue and understanding among diverse communities (McQuail, 2010; Minkler, 2005). In this context, it emphasizes the need for inclusive representation and the incorporation of minority perspectives to create a more accurate and comprehensive portrayal (McQuail, 2010; Minkler, 2005).

In essence, the participatory communication theory aligns with the research findings by advocating for media that actively involves and reflects the voices of all community members. It underscores the importance of moving beyond simplistic stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive and nuanced representation of diverse identities. By doing so, the media can play a vital role in promoting understanding, bridging gaps, and creating a more cohesive and harmonious society.

4.2 RQ2. How does the media portrayal of Muslims shape the perceived identity of the Muslim community in Ghana?

The media plays an important role in shaping public perspectives and understandings of various social and religious groups. In the context of Ghana, a nation characterized by its cultural diversity and religious pluralism, the portrayal of various communities, particularly that of Muslims, holds significant implications for social cohesion and integration. This research delves into the intricate relationship between media representations and the perceived identity of the Muslim community in Ghana.

The analysis of the media's portrayal of Muslims in Ghana and its influence on how that religious community is perceived revealed three key factors: bias in how Muslims are depicted, lack of diverse representations of Muslims and influence of social cohesion.

4.2.1 Bias in How Muslims are Depicted

The media portrayal of Muslims in Ghana has been found to shape the perceived identity of the Muslim community in biased ways. Through interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders in the Muslim community, several instances of bias in how Muslims are depicted were uncovered.

One participant noted that:

The media often portrays Muslims in a one-dimensional way, focusing only on the most extreme or controversial aspects of the religion while ignoring the diversity that exists within the community. They reduce us to headlines about terrorism or radicalism without showing the moderate everyday practices of most Muslims (P1).

This biased focus on the most negative or sensationalized aspects of Islam promotes an incomplete and skewed understanding of the religion and its adherents. In a focus group discussion with community leaders from various districts in Accra, one participant commented that:

Idan musulmi ya aikata wani abu mai kyau, yawanci ba a ambaci addininsa ko asalinsa ba, amma idan wani abu mara kyau ya faru wanda ya shafi musulmi, addininsu shi ne gaba da tsakiya a cikin rahoton, wannan yana ba da ra'ayi cewa shi musulmi yana kan munanan abubuwa ne kawai (P16).

Translated as:

When a Muslim does something good, their religion or identity is usually not mentioned. But when something bad happens that involves a Muslim, their religion is front and center in the reporting. This gives the impression that being Muslim is only about the bad things (P16).

The emphasis on religion only in negative contexts was seen as contributing to the perception that Islam and extremism are intrinsically linked. Another participant expressed a similar view:

Bayanan da aka boye ya haifar da labarin 'mu da su' wanda ke kwatanta Musulmai a matsayin 'sauran.' Ya kasa gane 'yan Adam da muke da shi kuma yana inganta ra'ayin cewa ya zama dan Ghana na gaskiya, wanda ba zai iya zama musulmi ba. Irin wannan 'sauran' ' yana da ainihin sakamakon zamantakewa kamar nuna bambanci (P19).

Translated as:

The lopsided coverage creates an 'us vs. them' narrative that portrays Muslims as the 'other.' It fails to recognize our shared humanity and promotes the idea that to be authentically Ghanaian, one cannot also be Muslim. This type of 'othering' has real social consequences like discrimination (P19).

By consistently framing Muslims as outsiders through imbalanced reporting, the media was found to undermine social cohesion and inclusion. In the interviews, a community leader from one of the districts in Accra recounted an instance. He noted that:

Labarin wani taron bayar da agaji da wani masallacin yankin ya shirya domin taimakawa masu karamin karfi 'yan jarida sun yi watsi da su, amma da aka yi ta yada jita-jita na cewa an yi amfani da kudaden ba bisa ka'ida ba, lamarin ya dauki hankulan jama'a duk da cewa ba a tabbatar da wannan zargi ba, illar da aka yi mana. An riga an yi (P12).

Translated as:

A story about a charity event organized by a local mosque to help the less fortunate was ignored by journalists. But when rumors later emerged claiming the funds were

misused, it made national headlines even though the allegations were never substantiated. The damage to our reputation was already done (P12).

Such a rush to publicize unverified negative claims without verifying facts or providing context reinforced prejudices against Muslims. The data presented provides valuable insights into how Muslims in Ghana perceive their portrayal in the media. A vast body of research has documented the power of media framing in shaping public perceptions of minority communities. When certain attributes or behaviors are consistently emphasized over others through imbalanced news coverage, it promotes an incomplete and often prejudiced understanding of that group (Martinez et al., 2017).

Studies have shown that media portrayals that focus disproportionately on the most extreme or controversial aspects of a minority religion while ignoring diversity within the community can foster the idea that the entire group is intrinsically linked to those negative attributes (Dixon, 2008). This type of "othering" coverage establishes an "us vs. them" narrative that portrays the minority as outsiders rather than recognizing our shared humanity (Saeed, 2007, p. 3). As the participants noted, it promotes the perception that to be authentically part of the dominant culture, one cannot also be a member of the minority group.

Furthermore, the literature finds that when religion or ethnicity is only mentioned in the context of wrongdoing, it reinforces prejudiced associations between the minority identity and negative behaviors or threats (Ramasubramanian, 2010; Thomas & Campos, 2013). The data presented here echoes such findings. Participants expressed that lopsided coverage portrayal of Muslims primarily in relation to terrorism undermines social inclusion and cohesion. It fails to recognize Muslims as ordinary citizens and neighbors.

Additionally, research has shown biased media coverage can have real social consequences like discrimination (Banerjee & Greene, 2012). As one participant recounted, unverified negative claims about Muslims were rushed into headlines without context, which damaged community reputation and trust despite never being substantiated. Such irresponsible reporting that amplifies rumors reinforces prejudices and divisions in society rather than bringing people together.

4.2.2 Lack of Diverse Representations of Muslims

Lack of diverse representations of Muslims refers to the narrow and limited ways in which Muslims are depicted in the Ghanaian media. When Muslims are portrayed in the media, they are often shown practicing only certain cultural or religious aspects that do not fully capture the diversity within the Muslim community. This leads the general public to form perceptions of Muslims that are incomplete or even stereotypical.

During the interviews and focus group discussions with the key stakeholders, several participants expressed that the media lacks diversity in how it represents Muslims. A participant stated that:

When you turn on the television or read the newspaper, you usually only see stories about Muslims related to certain cultural practices or events at the mosque. You don't see stories that show the many different ways of life that Muslims have (P2).

He went on to give examples of how Muslims have various professions and participate in many aspects of Ghanaian society just like other religious groups, but these representations are rarely seen in the media. A Muslim community leader representing one of the districts in Accra shared a similar view. He mentioned that:

Ya kamata kafafen yada labarai su wuce nuna mana addu'o'i ko bukukuwan bukukuwan addini, su rika ba da labarai game da musulmi malamai, likitoci, 'yan kasuwa, masu fasaha da dai sauransu domin su taimaka wa wasu su fahimci cewa ba mu da bambanci da kowa (P23).

Translated as:

The media needs to go beyond just showing us praying or celebrating religious holidays. They should feature stories about Muslims who are teachers, doctors, business owners, artists, etc. to help others understand that we are not much different from everyone else (P23).

Participant 23 felt that more diverse portrayals of Muslims engaged in different careers and everyday activities would help reshape how they are perceived by the wider community.

During the focus group discussion with representatives from the National Council of Muslim Chiefs, one participant said that:

Lokacin da ya zo ga labarai game da Musulmai, yawanci game da wasu rigima ne ko kuma wani lamari mara kyau. Ba sa haskaka yawancin gudunmawar da muke bayarwa (P17).

Translated as:

When it comes to news about Muslims, it is usually about some controversy or negative event. They don't highlight the many positive contributions we make (P17).

They cited examples such as charitable donations from Muslim organizations or interfaith harmony events that receive little or no media coverage. This type of one-sided reporting, according to the participants, has contributed to stereotypical views that Muslims are mostly associated with conflicts or problems. The Muslim individual representing one of the districts in Accra shared a personal experience. He said that:

A matsayina na malami, ina jin dalibai na da iyayensu suna ganina a matsayin musulmi kawai a gaban malami. Wani lokaci sukan yi mamaki idan suka gane ni musulmi ne saboda tunanin malamin musulmi bai saba musu ba. Domin ba a cika nuna malamai ko kwararru a matsayin musulmi a kafafen watsa labarai ba (P8).

Translated as:

As a teacher, I feel my students and their parents see me only as a Muslim first before a teacher. They are sometimes surprised when they find out I am Muslim because the idea of a Muslim teacher is unfamiliar to them. This is because teachers or professionals are rarely shown as Muslims in the media (P8).

Stories that provide diverse and accurate representations of Muslims, according to this participant, could help address such misconceptions. The data collected from interviews and focus groups in Ghana sheds light on an important issue - the lack of diverse representations of Muslims in the media and the negative impacts that stem from this. Research has consistently shown that narrow or one-dimensional portrayals of minority groups in news and entertainment media can promote stereotypes and undermine social cohesion (Farkas & Schou, 2019).

When media depictions of minorities only focus on the most controversial or sensationalized aspects of their identity, it promotes an "us vs. them" narrative that others the group (Tukachinsky et al., 2015, p.12). As the literature outlines, this type of othering has real social consequences like increased discrimination and prejudice (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). The participants' experiences echo these findings - several felt the imbalanced coverage positioned Muslims as outsiders in Ghanaian society. By rarely showing Muslims engaged in mainstream professions or everyday activities, the media fails to highlight

shared humanity and reinforces the idea that being authentically Ghanaian and Muslim are mutually exclusive identities (Tukachinsky et al., 2015).

Studies also show that lack of representation and emphasis only on negative portrayals can negatively shape how minorities view themselves (Farkas & Schou, 2019). The teacher who felt his students saw him primarily as a Muslim rather than a professional demonstrates this internalization of stereotypes. When groups are rarely depicted in diverse, multidimensional ways through a wide range of stories and characters, it limits public understanding of their true diversity (Farkas & Schou, 2019). As one participant pointed out, this leads the general population to form an incomplete perception that Muslims are only associated with certain religious practices or conflicts.

The data presented provides real-world examples of the documented effects of imbalanced media representations. By consistently providing a narrow scope of stories that center Muslims in controversies or isolate aspects of cultural practices, the Ghanaian media undermines social inclusion and promotes prejudices. However, featuring members of minority groups engaged in various careers and community initiatives, as participants advocated, can help reshape stereotypical views and instead foster intergroup understanding (Farkas & Schou, 2019). The experiences shared highlight the importance of diverse and accurate portrayals for both media effects on public perceptions and self-perceptions within minority communities.

4.2.3 Affect Social Cohesion

Social cohesion refers to the sense of solidarity and togetherness within a community or social group. In the context of this research question, it relates to how the media portrayal

of Muslims in Ghana influences social bonds and relationships within the Muslim community.

During the interviews and focus group discussions, several participants spoke about how negative media portrayals have impacted social cohesion among Muslims. P1 noted that:

The stereotypical images we often see associated with terrorism and extremism in the news and on TV shows have bred fear and suspicion among some Ghanaians towards Muslims. This has made community members more withdrawn and less trusting of those outside our faith (P1).

A community leader echoed similar sentiments. He said that:

Lokacin da ake nuna musulmi akai-akai a matsayin barazana, hakan yana haifar da tunanin 'mu da su' wanda ke lalata dangantaka ko da a cikin al'ummar musulmi. Wasu kuma suna zama masu kallon cikin gida da kebe kansu daga wasu kungiyoyi don tsoron yadda za a gane su (P9).

Translated as:

When Muslims are constantly shown as threats, it creates an 'us vs. them' mentality that damages relations even within the Muslim community. Some become more inward-looking and isolate themselves from other groups for fear of how they may be perceived (P9).

P9 gave the example of Muslim youth being reluctant to take on leadership roles in interfaith initiatives and engage with other faith communities as actively as before. P2 also shared observations from discussions with Muslim chiefs across the country. He said that:

In several regions, the chiefs reported cases of distrust and tension emerging between Muslim and Christian villages following certain negative portrayals of Islam after terror attacks abroad. While the situations have not escalated, it shows

how the media is weakening bonds of coexistence that communities have nurtured for generations (P2).

During the focus group discussion with representatives from the 11 districts, most agreed that stereotypical media framing has made Muslims more cautious about fully integrating and participating in national issues and debates. A discussant from one of the districts said that:

Lokacin da ake yawan tambayar addininku ko kuma hade da hadari, za ku fara janyewa daga tattaunawar da aka saba yi domin tsoron yadda za a iya fassara ko amfani da gudunmawar ku. Wannan yana lalata hadin kan al'umma ba kawai a tsakanin al'ummar musulmi ba har ma tsakanin musulmi da sauran 'yan Ghana (P14).

Translated as:

When your faith is constantly questioned or associated with danger, you begin to withdraw from mainstream discussions for fear of how your contributions may be interpreted or used. This damages social cohesion not just within the Muslim community but between Muslims and other Ghanaians as well (P14).

The data collected from interviews and focus group discussions shed light on an important issue, the role of media in shaping inter-group relations and social cohesion. Scholars have long studied how media representations of minority communities can influence perceptions and interactions between groups (Abdi, 2015). When coverage is imbalanced or relies on negative stereotypes, it can promote an "us vs. them" narrative that undermines inclusion (Saeed, 2007, p. 3).

The participants' observations echo such findings. They note that constant portrayals of Muslims in association with terrorism or extremism have bred fear and distrust among some Ghanaians towards the community. This withdrawn and less trusting behavior within the Muslim group itself is a demonstration of how negative framing impacts social bonds. As literature shows, stereotypical media images lead to social distancing as minority groups feel the need to distance themselves from the perceived stereotype (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015).

Community leaders gave examples of emerging tensions between Muslim and Christian villages and greater inwardness among Muslim youth following certain events. This correlates with research showing that biased media coverage weakens social cohesion over time by exacerbating divisions and stoking tensions between groups (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Tukachinsky et al., 2015). According to Tukachinsky et al. (2015) balanced and diverse representations in media help foster more positive intergroup attitudes by humanizing different communities.

The discussants' views that stereotypical coverage makes Muslims cautious about participation in national issues also aligns with literature. Scholars have found that minorities subjected to negative framing feel a threat to their social identity and esteem, leading to disengagement and silencing of voices (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Tukachinsky et al., 2015). As one participant noted, this damages inclusion not just within the Muslim community but between Muslims and other Ghanaians. The data thus confirms how biased media portrayals undermine the very social bonds that communities have painstakingly built (Tukachinsky et al., 2015).

In media portrayal in Ghana, a significant concern emerges as Muslims find themselves subject to biased depictions that impact their perceived identity. The participatory communication theory offers a lens through which to understand the intricate dynamics at play. The research uncovers a troubling trend where media tends to focus on extreme or controversial aspects of Islam, relegating the diverse everyday practices of the Muslim community to the shadows. Participants lament the one-dimensional representation that, intentionally or not, associates Muslims primarily with negative occurrences. This biased framing creates an 'us vs. them' narrative, painting Muslims as outsiders in their own society (Saeed, 2007, p. 3).

The lack of diverse representations further exacerbates the issue. Muslims are often portrayed through a narrow lens, emphasizing cultural or religious practices without showcasing the myriad ways they contribute to Ghanaian society. The media's failure to highlight the diversity within the Muslim community reinforces stereotypes, contributing to a skewed public perception (Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Tukachinsky et al., 2015).

As the research illustrates, these biased depictions have tangible social consequences. Muslims face increased discrimination, and their sense of social cohesion is eroded. The 'othering' effect, where media consistently emphasizes negative attributes, not only distances Muslims within their community but also fosters suspicion and tension between different religious groups (Farkas & Schou, 2019).

The detrimental impact extends to Muslims' participation in national discourse and community initiatives. Fear of misinterpretation or association with negative stereotypes leads to a withdrawal from mainstream discussions, hindering social integration (Farkas &

Schou, 2019). This aligns with the participatory communication theory, which emphasizes the importance of inclusive dialogue and shared narratives in fostering social cohesion (McQuail, 2010).

The findings resonate with participatory communication principles, highlighting the need for a more inclusive and participatory media landscape (Minkler, 2005). By featuring diverse stories that showcase Muslims in various roles and contexts, media can play a crucial role in reshaping public perceptions and fostering understanding (McQuail, 2010; Minkler, 2005). The power of participatory communication lies in its ability to amplify diverse voices, break down stereotypes, and build bridges of understanding within a society (McQuail, 2010; Minkler, 2005).

Thus, the research participants' observations corroborate extensive scholarly work demonstrating the media's role in shaping inter-group dynamics and cohesion. Negative or imbalanced coverage promotes social distancing, tensions and disengagement among minority groups by threatening their social identity and esteem. Diverse and unbiased representations, on the other hand, help foster inclusion and strengthen the fabric of a cohesive society.

4.3 RQ3. How would the Muslim community in Ghana like to see their community portrayed in the Ghanaian media?

The portrayal of minority communities in media plays a pivotal role in shaping societal perceptions. Understanding the perspectives and preferences of the Muslim community

regarding their portrayal in the media is essential for fostering inclusivity, promoting cultural understanding, and challenging stereotypes.

Thus, after delving into how the Muslim community in Ghana would like to see their community portrayed in the Ghanaian media, it became evident that their responses can be categorized into three main facets: cultural diversity and integration; religious understanding and tolerance; and positive contributions and achievements.

4.3.1 A United community

Cultural diversity and integration refers to the existence of different cultural and religious groups within a society and the level at which these groups interact and connect with one another. In the context of this research question, it examines how the Muslim community in Ghana maintains its cultural and religious identity while also integrating into broader Ghanaian society.

The interviews and focus group discussions with the various participants provided insights into the cultural diversity and integration of Muslims in Ghana. One participant described the Muslim community as *"diverse yet integrated."* He explained that:

While Muslims in Ghana come from different ethnic and national backgrounds, bringing diverse cultural practices and traditions, we see ourselves first and foremost as Ghanaians. Our religion teaches us to respect the laws and customs of the lands where we live. So while we maintain aspects of our various cultures, we have also integrated well into Ghanaian society over generations (P1).

Another participant echoed similar perspective, saying in a focus group discussion that:

Al'ummar Musulmi kamar bakan gizo suke - muna da launuka masu yawa amma muna da hadin kai a karkashin imaninmu daya. Bambance-bambancen da muke da

shi na daga cikin karfi da kyawun mu. Haka kuma, mun samo hanyoyin hada al'adunmu tare da cudanya da juna. Babban masana'anta na Ghana. Muna magana da harsunan gida, muna shiga cikin bukukuwan kasa, kuma muna ganin wannan kasa a matsayin gidanmu (P7).

Translated as:

The Muslim community is like a rainbow - we have many colors but we are united under our shared faith. Our diversity is part of our strength and beauty. At the same time, we have found ways to blend our cultures together and also blend into the broader Ghanaian fabric. We speak the local languages, participate in national celebrations, and see this country as our home (P7).

However, not all participants viewed the level of integration and diversity in the same positive light. A Muslim community leader representing one of the districts of Accra expressed concerns about the effects of media portrayal. He noted that:

Lokacin da kafafen yada labarai ke nuna musulmi kawai a matsayin baki ko kuma jaddada bambance-bambance a kan abin da ya shafi gama gari, hakan ya sa wasu 'yan Ghana su rika kallon mu a matsayin 'wasu' maimakon makwabtansu. Wannan yana kalubalantar hadewar mu kuma ya sanya wasu matasa suna tambayar ko da gaske suke a nan. bambance-bambancen albarka ne, kafofin watsa labarai suna bukatar nuna yadda su ma suke hada mu a matsayin al'umma daya da kuma hada mu da sauran 'yan Ghana (P16).

Translated as:

When the media only shows Muslims as foreigners or emphasizes differences over commonalities, it leads some Ghanaians to see us as 'the other' rather than as their neighbors. This challenges our integration and makes some youth question whether they really belong here. While our diversity is a blessing, the media needs to show how it also brings us together as one community and connects us to other Ghanaians (P16).

A participant representing another district provided a concrete example. He stated that:

A lokacin bukukuwan Idi, za ka ga mutane daban-daban suna haduwa suna murna tare. Amma kafafen yada labarai ba kasafai suke yada wadannan abubuwan ba, sun gwammace su rika nuna wa Musulmai addu'a da Larabci tare da yin watsi da cewa mu ma muna yin addu'o'in cikin harsunan Twi, Ga da sauran yarukan cikin gida. gaskiya, suna ciyar da rashin fahimta kuma ba sa taimakawa hadin kai (P22).

Translated as:

During Eid celebrations, you see people of all backgrounds mixing and celebrating together. But the media rarely covers these events. They prefer showing Muslims praying in Arabic while ignoring that we also pray in Twi, Ga and other local languages. By not reflecting our reality, they feed misconceptions and do not help integration (P22).

Scholars of media and cultural studies have long highlighted the importance of fair and balanced portrayals of minority groups in shaping societal attitudes (Allen, 2017). When minority communities are consistently framed through a narrow lens that emphasizes differences over shared identities, it can breed "othering" and undermine social cohesion (Tukachinsky et al., 2015, p.12). The literature suggests the media has a responsibility to showcase the diversity within minority groups and their different contributions to society (Ramasubramanian, 2011).

The data collected from Muslim community leaders and members in Ghana sheds light on how their realities diverge from common media narratives. Time and again, participants expressed that news coverage focuses disproportionately on negative events or controversies rather than portraying the full spectrum of Muslim identities and lives. By

only associating Islam with acts of terror or extremism, it feeds the misconception that these are intrinsic parts of the faith (Tukachinsky et al., 2015). However, as the interviews highlighted, Ghanaian Muslims come from varied backgrounds and participate in all walks of life as professionals, community members, and citizens.

When the media ignores the cultural integration and diversity within the Muslim population, it challenges their sense of belonging in Ghanaian society. Stories of charitable donations or interfaith celebrations that bring communities together rarely receive coverage. This one-dimensional framing can breed suspicion among some Ghanaians towards their Muslim neighbors and weaken social bonds (Mastro, 2009). As the literature also notes, balanced and inclusive media portrayals are crucial for social cohesion, especially in an increasingly multicultural world (Allen, 2017; Mastro, 2009).

The participants provided insightful recommendations on how to foster understanding and integration through improved media narratives. Highlighting Muslims' linguistic, cultural, and regional diversity as well as their shared national identity could help address misconceptions (Allen, 2017). By reflecting the reality of Muslims blending traditions and participating fully in Ghanaian civic life, the media has the power to ease tensions and reaffirm minority communities' place in the social fabric (Mastro, 2009). In all, the data underscores the need for media to move beyond simplistic "us vs. them" binaries and embrace the complexity and shared humanity of diverse populations (Tukachinsky et al., 2015, p.12).

4.3.2 Understanding and Tolerance

Understanding and tolerance in this study refers to the acceptance of religious diversity and the ability to coexist peacefully despite differences in religious beliefs and practices. In the context of this research question, It examines how the media portrayal of Muslims in Ghana shapes inter religious relations and the level of understanding between Muslims and other religious groups in the country.

Through interviews and focus group discussions with various stakeholders in the Ghanaian Muslim community, several perspectives on religious understanding and tolerance emerged. One participant noted that:

While the media often portrays Muslims in a negative light by focusing on extremism in other parts of the world, Ghanaians of other faiths have been very understanding. They recognize that the actions of a few do not represent the whole Muslim community. This level of understanding promotes religious harmony in Ghana (P2).

A Muslim representative from one of the districts in Accra shared a similar view. He noted that:

Mutane daga wasu addinai har yanzu suna kallon musulmi a matsayin makwabtansu da abokansu, ba a matsayin barazana ba, sun san koyarwar addinin Islama tana karfafa zaman lafiya, idan suka ga munanan labarai game da musulmi a kasashen waje, ba sa bayyana shi ga kowa da kowa. mu fahimci mahangar mu ma. Wannan hakuri yana da mahimmanci ga zaman tare (P24).

Translated as:

People from other religions still see Muslims as their neighbors and friends, not as threats. They know the teachings of Islam promote peace. When they see negative

news about Muslims abroad, they don't generalize it to all of us. They try to understand our perspective too. This tolerance is important for our coexistence (P24).

Another participant also acknowledged that:

Most Ghanaians, including Christians and traditional believers, do not let the foreign media narratives influence how they interact with local Muslims. They have learned to look past stereotypes. This bodes well for maintaining religious tolerance (P2).

However, some concerns were raised. A Muslim community leader said that:

Yayin da rashin hakuri kai tsaye ba kasafai ba ne, wasu munanan ra'ayi na iya tasowa a tsawon lokaci saboda munanan kungiyoyi a cikin labarai. Wasu zance na sirri na nuna cewa wadanda ba musulmi ba sannu a hankali sun fara kallon al'ummarmu da zato da rashin amincewa. Idan har wannan yanayin ya ci gaba." zai iya lalata dangantakar da ke tsakanin addinai (P21).

Translated as:

While direct intolerance is rare, some subtle biases may be developing over time due to repeated negative associations in the news. Some private conversations suggest non-Muslims are slowly starting to view our community with more suspicion and less trust. If this trend continues, it could damage interfaith relations (P21).

During a focus group discussion, some participants expressed similar worries that:

Bayyana mara kyau na yau da kullun a cikin kafofin watsa labaru za su kasance da hankali a hankali su daidaita tunanin jama'a, koda kuwa mutane sun fara fahimta. Ra'ayoyin na iya zama sannu a hankali idan ba a yi wani abu don magance manyan labarun ba. Wannan na iya lalata juriya na addini a cikin dogon lokaci (P10).

Translated as:

Constant negative portrayals in the media will gradually shape public perceptions, even if people are initially understanding. The stereotypes may slowly become normalized if nothing is done to counter the dominant narratives. This could undermine religious tolerance in the long run (P10).

Based on the data provided, it is evident that the portrayal of Muslims in Ghana's media both positively and negatively impacts inter religious relations. While direct intolerance is rare according to community leaders, some worry repeated negative associations could breed subtle biases over time and damage trust between faiths.

Scholars of media and minority groups would say this aligns with much of the existing research. Frequent negative or stereotypical depictions of a religious population in media coverage can gradually shape public perceptions in unintended ways (Ojo, 2019). Even if consumers are initially understanding, as Ghanaians seem to be, normalized stereotypes may take hold if alternative narratives are lacking (Mthembu & Ojo, 2017). This confirms what literature on this topic has found that the media plays a powerful role in either promoting tolerance or sowing division depending on how minority groups are represented (Smith et al., 2018).

The perspectives shared by interview participants also validate another key point made in academic writings. Specifically, local communities tend to have more nuanced understandings of their fellow faith neighbors than outsiders may. Ghanaians from different religions recognize negative foreign portrayals of Muslims do not reflect the reality in their own country, where people of all backgrounds cooperate peacefully. This ability to separate international issues from domestic interfaith relations is vital for

maintaining religious harmony, as the community leader noted (Mthembu & Ojo, 2017; Smith et al., 2018).

4.3.3 Contributors to National Development

Positive contributions and achievements refer to the constructive ways in which the Muslim community in Ghana actively participates and enriches society. To understand this aspect of their identity, participants in the study provided examples from their experiences of Muslim contributions in Ghana.

One of the participants explained:

Muslims in Ghana are peace-loving and law-abiding citizens who strive to be productive members of their communities. We promote education, provide social services, and engage in interfaith dialogue to foster understanding between religious groups (P1).

A community leader representing one of the 11 districts said in a focus group discussion that:

An kafa makarantu da jami'o'in musulmi da dama a fadin kasar domin samar da ingantaccen ilimi ga musulmi da ma sauran addinai, wadannan cibiyoyi suna daukaka al'ummarmu ta hanyar ilimi da kuma shirya shugabannin zamani na gaba (P17).

Translated as:

Many Muslim schools and universities have been established across the country to provide quality education to both Muslims and people of other faiths. These institutions uplift our communities through knowledge and prepare the next generation of leaders (P17).

In an interview, the Muslim individual noted that:

Musulmi suna da hannu sosai a ayyukan agaji daban-daban da kuma ayyukan agaji. A lokutan rikici kamar ambaliyar ruwa ko gobara, muna ba da agajin gaggawa, matsuguni, abinci da ruwa ba tare da nuna bambanci ba. Imaninmu ya kira mu mu yi hidima ga duk mabukata (P15).

Translated as:

Muslims are actively involved in various charitable works and humanitarian relief efforts. During times of crisis like floods or fires, we provide emergency aid, shelter, food and water without discrimination. Our faith calls us to serve all people in need (P15).

The data presented provides valuable insights into the positive contributions and achievements of the Muslim community in Ghana that help enrich society. The examples given by participants of Muslim promotion of education, social services, and interfaith dialogue align with what scholars argue should be the ideal portrayal of minority groups in the media.

Existing literature on media representation of minorities stresses the importance of highlighting their constructive engagement and meaningful participation within their communities and country (Smith et al., 2018). Usually, minority groups are reduced to narrow stereotypes that ignore their diversity and humanity (Mthembu & Ojo, 2017; Smith et al., 2018). By focusing only on perceived differences, the media risks fostering intolerance rather than understanding between cultural and religious identities (Mthembu & Ojo, 2017).

However, the data presented moves the portrayal of Muslims in Ghana beyond simplistic labels and instead provides a nuanced perspective into how they actively work to uplift their communities through establishing schools and universities. This emphasis on education aligns with research that finds when minority groups are shown promoting social goods like learning that majority audiences are more receptive towards recognizing their shared humanity (Mthembu & Ojo, 2017; Smith et al., 2018).

Similarly, the examples of Muslim involvement in charitable works, humanitarian relief, and serving all people in need during times of crisis helps combat prejudices by illustrating their civic commitment and compassion for others irrespective of faith. Scholars argue such portrayals that emphasize minorities' moral and ethical principles can aid in building bridges of intercultural respect and cooperation within a diverse society (Mthembu & Ojo, 2017; Smith et al., 2018).

By giving voice to Muslims themselves through participant interviews and discussions, the study also allows for an "inside view" that challenges stereotypical media representations created solely from an external majority lens. Self-representation is considered important by media scholars for helping minority communities control their own narratives and shape how they want to be perceived by others (Ojo, 2019, p 23).

From the data presented above, a significant concern emerges as Muslims find themselves subject to biased depictions that impact their perceived identity. The participatory communication theory offers a lens through which to understand the intricate dynamics at play. The bias in media depiction, as highlighted in the study, echoes the theory's emphasis on the need for diverse voices in shaping narratives (McQuail, 2010). The tendency to

showcase Muslims primarily in negative contexts perpetuates a skewed understanding, creating an "us vs. them" narrative (Saeed, 2007, p. 3). In the spirit of participation, the media ought to represent the richness and diversity within the Muslim community, allowing them to share their everyday experiences, contributions, and challenges (Minkler, 2005).

The study's exploration of the lack of diverse representations aligns with the participatory approach, emphasizing the importance of varied voices in media discourse. The call for stories depicting Muslims in various professions and roles echoes the theory's assertion that true participation involves the active engagement of all members of society (Melkote & Steeves, 2015). By showcasing the different aspects of Muslim life, the media can contribute to a more inclusive narrative, dismantling stereotypes and fostering understanding (Melkote & Steeves, 2015).

The impact on social cohesion, a central tenet of participatory communication theory, becomes evident in the study's findings. Negative portrayals not only affect how Muslims perceive themselves but also erode bonds within their community and strain relationships with other groups (Smith et al., 2018). The theory underscores the role of communication in building solidarity, and in this context, biased media coverage emerges as a divisive force that hinders the participatory and cohesive fabric of society (Dutta, 2008).

Furthermore, the study's depiction of the media as a powerful actor shaping public perceptions resonates with participatory communication theory's recognition of the influence wielded by various stakeholders (Minkler, 2005). The media's responsibility, according to the theory, is to be a platform for dialogue and understanding, not a source of

division (Melkote & Steeves, 2015; Minkler, 2005). The rush to sensationalize unverified negative claims without providing context reflects a departure from the participatory ideals, as responsible communication involves transparency and accountability (Minkler, 2005).



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This concluding chapter synthesizes the main findings of the study. It draws conclusions about Ghanaian Muslims' perspectives on how their community is portrayed in domestic media and how these depictions influence their social identity. Recommendations are presented for more inclusive and accurate representation of Ghanaian Muslims in the future. The chapter also discusses limitations of the research and suggests topics for additional future study.

5.1 Summary

This research aimed to assess the views of Ghana's Muslim community regarding their portrayal in the nation's media. The study sought to gain insight into how Muslims perceive their representation in local news and programming, as well as how these depictions influence their social identity. Additionally, the research explored the aspirations of Ghanaian Muslims with respect to future coverage that could provide a more complete and authentic reflection of who they are and what they stand for. The research equally outlined the significance of the study.

The review of existing literature played a crucial role in setting the groundwork for exploring various key concepts in our study. These concepts included media representation, portrayals of minority groups in media, media effects and the desired portrayal of minority

groups in the media. In addition to this, the chapter discussed the participatory communication theory as theoretical lenses for the study.

The research approach was qualitative in nature, following Lindlof and Taylor's (2018) guidelines. In terms of the research design, the study employed case study design as outlined by Yin (2011). The methodological choices allowed the researcher to comprehensively understand, analyze, and interpret the perspectives of Ghana's Muslim community regarding their portrayal in the nation's media. For the sample selection, the researcher used purposive sampling techniques, as described by Daymon and Holloway (2001). This method helped the researcher carefully select 24 participants within the Accra Metropolitan Area, each chosen for their unique roles and perspectives within the research scope.

The data collection method involved in-depth interviews and focus group discussion. The data collection methods afforded the researcher the opportunity to access intricate and detailed data concerning participants' viewpoints and sentiments. Lastly, to organize and present the data in a meaningful and detailed manner, the study applied thematic analysis techniques, drawing from the Patton (1999) framework. This approach allowed the researcher to identify and highlight key themes within the data, contributing to a richer understanding of the research topic.

5.2 Main Findings and Conclusions

Upon analyzing the data, the key findings unearthed several conclusive insights. The first research question, which aimed to assess the perspectives of the Muslim community in

Ghana on the portrayal of Muslims in the Ghanaian media, revealed distinct themes: underrepresentation, negative stereotyping, and promoting interfaith misunderstanding. In accordance with the participatory communication theory, which emphasizes the importance of including all voices in the communication process, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives that accurately represent the richness of society, it was ascertained that ensuring a diverse range of perspectives that accurately represent the richness of society. Additionally, participatory communication theory underscores the importance of moving beyond simplistic stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive and nuanced representation of diverse identities. By doing so, the media can play a vital role in promoting understanding, bridging gaps, and creating a more cohesive and harmonious society.

The second research question delved into how does the media portrayal of Muslims shape the perceived identity of the Muslim community in Ghana? In response to this question, three themes emerged: bias in how Muslims are depicted, lack of diverse representations of Muslims and influence of social cohesion. The findings of this research question underscored the fact that the detrimental impact of the media consistently emphasizing negative attributes of Muslims extends to Muslims' participation in national discourse and community initiatives. That is because fear of misinterpretation or association with negative stereotypes leads to a withdrawal from mainstream discussions, hindering social integration. Similarly, the use of the participatory communication theory emphasizes the importance of inclusive dialogue and shared narratives in fostering social cohesion. The findings resonate with participatory communication principles, highlighting the need for a more inclusive and participatory media landscape. By featuring diverse stories that

showcase Muslims in various roles and contexts, media can play a crucial role in reshaping public perceptions and fostering understanding.

The findings pertaining to the third research question which aimed to assess how the Muslim community in Ghana would like to see their community portrayed in the Ghanaian media unveiled themes revolving around cultural diversity and integration; religious understanding and tolerance; and positive contributions and achievements. In light of the participatory communication theory, it becomes apparent that the call for stories depicting Muslims in various professions and roles echoes the theory's assertion that true participation involves the active engagement of all members of society. The theory emphasizes that by showcasing the different aspects of Muslim life, the media can contribute to a more inclusive narrative, dismantling stereotypes and fostering understanding. Furthermore, the theory underscores the role of communication in building solidarity, and in this context, biased media coverage emerges as a divisive force that hinders the participatory and cohesive fabric of society.

5.3 Limitations

The study, despite its comprehensive approach, is not without limitations. Firstly, the sample size of 24 participants from the Accra Metropolitan Area may not be representative of the views of Ghana's Muslim community as a whole, which exists across the country. Using a larger and more geographically diverse sample could provide more generalizable insights.

Secondly, by conducting research exclusively in the capital city of Accra, the study may have overlooked important regional differences in experiences and priorities. The views of urban Muslims in Accra could differ meaningfully from those of rural Muslim communities in other parts of Ghana that were not included. Incorporating more geographically diverse locations would have provided a more holistic picture.

An additional constraint was the sole reliance on qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups. While invaluable for gaining rich insights, these approaches alone did not enable quantifying attitudes or measuring change over time. The inclusion of quantitative tools like surveys may have complemented the qualitative data by allowing comparisons and statistical analysis.

Fourthly, as the research depended on self-reported perceptions, there existed the possibility of subjective biases influencing responses. Cross-checking the self-reported views with objective content analysis of actual media portrayals could have offered a more balanced perspective.

Lastly, practical challenges such as cultural and language barriers during data collection may have unintentionally shaped some of the results. Conducting interviews predominantly in English or local languages like Twi and Ga using translators introduces the risk of lost nuance or unintended influence on responses. The findings also reflected a moment in time and did not account for evolving societal dynamics and changes to media landscapes over longer periods.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

One potential area of exploration is conducting a comparative study of how Muslims are portrayed in the media in other countries with significant Muslim populations, such as Nigeria or Senegal. This could provide useful insights into whether Ghana's media is unique in its depictions or faces similar challenges to other West African nations. It would also allow researchers to identify best practices and lessons that could be applied across multiple contexts.

Another idea is to conduct an experimental study that exposes participants to different types of media portrayals of Muslims, such as neutral, positive, or negative depictions. Researchers could then assess how these varying portrayals influence attitudes towards Muslims and Islam. This could help establish causal relationships between media representations and social outcomes. It may also provide evidence to support advocacy efforts aimed at promoting more balanced and accurate coverage.

Future research could also expand the sample size and diversify participant demographics. For example, interviews or surveys with non-Muslim Ghanaians would be insightful to understand how broader societal perceptions are shaped by current media narratives. Including the perspectives of women, youth, and other sub-groups could give deeper insight into any differences in lived experiences or viewpoints.

5.5 Recommendations

The Ghanaian media should strive for more inclusive and diverse representation of the Muslim community. Rather than relying on negative stereotypes, they should showcase

Muslims in all their richness and complexity - in various professions, social roles, and as integral parts of the fabric of Ghanaian society. In-depth, nuanced stories that highlight cultural diversity and contributions can help reshape public perceptions and promote religious understanding.

Media organizations should consult with Muslim community leaders and organizations to better understand their perspectives and ensure their voices are included in the reporting. Applying a participatory model of communication that actively engages all members of society, including religious minorities, aligns with the principles of participatory communication theory. It can dismantle biases and foster a more cohesive national narrative and identity.

Training and sensitization programs for journalists could help address issues of bias, lack of awareness, and reliance on simplistic tropes when covering the Muslim community. Emphasizing the media's role in building solidarity and bridging divisions between religious groups could encourage more responsible reporting.

Community outreach initiatives bringing together Muslims and people of other faiths could help promote interfaith harmony. When supported and covered positively by the media, this can contribute to changing negative public stereotypes. The study highlights how inclusive dialogue and shared narratives are important for social cohesion.

REFERENCES

- Abdi, C. M. (2015). Appropriating the lens: Somali refugees, identity, and experiences of mediated marginalization. *Global Media Journal*, 13(24), 1-16.
- Abu-Lughod, L. (2002). Do Muslim women really need saving? Anthropological reflections on cultural relativism and its others. *American anthropologist*, 104(3), 783-790. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2002.104.3.783>
- Agyemang, K. J., Bimi, L., & Dampety, K. E. (2015). Representation of ethnic minorities in Ghanaian print media: A content analysis of newspaper coverage of Ewes, 1990–2010. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 50(5), 542–557. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909614547503>
- Ahmed, S. (2017). *Living a feminist life*. Duke University Press.
- Allan, G. (2020). Qualitative research. In *Handbook for research students in the social sciences* (pp. 177-189). Routledge.
- Allen, D. S. (2017). Countering stereotypes: Examining diversity in children's books and libraries. *Library Trends*, 66(1), 84-106. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2017.0027>
- Asante, M. K. B. (2019). Representation of Muslims in Ghanaian newspapers. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 11(3), 261–277. https://doi.org/10.1386/jams.11.3.261_1
- Atton, C. (2002). *Alternative media*. London: Sage.
- Baldwin, J., Faulkner, S. L., Hecht, M. L., & Lindsley, S. L. (Eds.). (2018). *Redefining cultural narratives in peacetime: Critical essays on cultural resistance and cultural resilience*. Lexington Books.
- Baker-Bell, A. (2020). *Linguistic justice: Black language, literacy, identity, and pedagogy*. Routledge.
- Banerjee, S. C., & Greene, K. (2012). Internalization of Anna by Muslim Americans. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 23(1), 46–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2012.641874>
- Behm-Morawitz, E., & Ortiz, M. (2013). Latinos' perceptions of intergroup relations: The influence of English-and Spanish-language cable TV news. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 24(3), 229-250. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2013.805736>
- Bond, B. J. (2018). Portrayals of sexual and gender minorities in prime-time fictional entertainment. *Mass Communication and Society*, 21(1), 94-115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2017.1389046>

- Brennen, B. (2017). *Qualitative Research Methods for Media Studies*. Routledge.
- Bristor, J. M., Lee, R. G., & Hunt, M. R. (1995). Race and ideology: African-American images in television advertising. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 14(1), 48–59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/074391569501400105>
- Brock, A., Carlson, E., & Llewellyn, M. (2017). Understanding the role of anger in reactions to transgender inclusion. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 64(11), 1521–1538. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2017.1295300>
- Bruns, A., Harrington, S., & Hurcombe, E. (2018). 'Fake news': The discursive construction of a social problem. *Australian Journalism Review*, 40(1), 19-36. https://doi.org/10.1386/ajr.40.1.19_1
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods*. Oxford University Press.
- Byerly, C. M. (2020). Diversity in Hollywood: A longitudinal analysis of representation in film. *Socius*, 6, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023120905436>
- Charmaz, K., & Belgrave, L. (2012). The power of the interview. In *J. F. Gubrium, J. A. Holstein, A. B. Marvasti, & K. D. McKinney (Eds.), The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft* (2nd ed., pp. 207-226). Sage.
- Clark, K. B. (2019). Dark ghetto: Dilemmas of social power. *Journal of Political Power*, 12(1), 154–156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2018.1564050>
- Couldry, N. (2010). *Why voice matters: Culture and politics after neoliberalism*. London: Sage.
- Couldry, N., Livingstone, S., & Markham, T. (2013). *Media consumption and public engagement: Beyond the presumption of attention*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.
- Dasgupta, N., & Greenwald, A. G. (2001). On the malleability of automatic attitudes: Combating automatic prejudice with images of admired and disliked individuals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81(5), 800–814. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.81.5.800>
- Daymon, C., & Holloway, I. (2011). *Qualitative research methods in public relations and marketing communications* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage Publications.

- Dixon, T. L. (2008). Crime news and racialized beliefs: Understanding the relationship between local news viewing and perceptions of African Americans and crime. *Journal of Communication*, 58(1), 106–125. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2007.00376.x>
- Dixon, T. L., & Azocar, C. L. (2007). Priming crime and activating blackness: Understanding the psychological impact of the overrepresentation of blacks as lawbreakers on television news. *Journal of Communication*, 57(2), 229–253. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2007.00341.x>
- Dixon, T. L. (2017). Good guys are still always in white? Positive change and continued misrepresentation of race and crime on local television news. *Communication Research*, 44(6), 775–792. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650215605990>
- Dutta, M. J. (2008). *Communicating health: A culture-centered approach*. Polity.
- Eastwood, G. (2015). Ethical issues in gastroenterology research. *Journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology*, 30. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jgh.12755>.
- Entman, R. M., & Rojecki, A. (2000). *The black image in the white mind: Media and race in America*. University of Chicago Press.
- Farkas, J., & Schou, J. (2019). Fake news as a floating signifier: Hegemony, antagonism and the politics of falsehood. *Javnost - The Public*, 26(3), 298-314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2019.1634899>
- Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. *Social Text*, 25/26, 56-80. <https://doi.org/10.2307/466240>
- Freelon, D., Starbird, K., & Wells, C. (2022). Disinformation as political warfare: The 2016 US presidential election and lessons for computational social science. *Computational Social Science*, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781316418353.003>
- Ford, T. E., Boxer, C. F., Armstrong, J., & Edel, J. R. (2008). More than "just a joke": The prejudice-releasing function of sexist humor. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34(2), 159–170. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167207310022>
- Fujioka, Y. (1999). Television portrayals and African American stereotypes: Examination of television effects when direct contact is lacking. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 76(1), 52–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769909907600105>
- Gray, H. (1995). *Watching race: Television and the struggle for "Blackness."* University of Minnesota Press.

- Greenwood, M. (2016). Approving or Improving Research Ethics in Management Journals. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 137, 507-520. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S10551-015-2564-X>.
- Grimes, D., Bauch, C., & Ioannidis, J. (2017). Modelling science trustworthiness under publish or perish pressure. *Royal Society Open Science*, 5. <https://doi.org/10.1101/139063>.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2016). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>.
- Gumucio Dagron, A. (2001). *Making waves: Stories of participatory communication for social change*. Rockefeller Foundation.
- Hall, S. (1973). *Encoding and decoding in the television discourse*. Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies.
- Hall, S. (2013). Encoding/Decoding. In M. G. Durham & D. M. Kellner (Eds.), *Media and cultural studies: Keywords (Revised edition)*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Johnson, J. D. (2021). Cultivation theory. In R. L. Nabi & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of media processes and effects* (pp. 113-126). SAGE Publications.
- Johnson, J. D. (2019). *Diversity in media representation*. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.863>.
- Johnson, D., Adams, M., Hall, W., & Ashburn, L. (2014). Race, media, and mass incarceration: Critical race theory and structural racism. In H. Shapiro (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of language and culture* (pp. 430–444). Routledge.
- Jones, T., Niu, L., & Chik, A. (2010). Minority representation in business and the media: A longitudinal analysis. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 21(3), 215–231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2010.496675>.
- Kearns, E. M., Betus, A. E., & Lemieux, A. F. (2019). Why do some terrorist attacks receive more media attention than others? *Justice Quarterly*, 36(6), 985-1022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2019.1614828>.
- Kim, J., & Wang, Y. (2020). Representation of Asian Americans in top-grossing American films (2007–2018). *Howard Journal of Communications*, 31(3), 243-259. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2019.1677757>.
- Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research (5th ed.)*. SAGE Publications.

- Kummitha, R. (2017). Institutionalising design thinking in social entrepreneurship: A contextual analysis into social and organizational processes. *Social Enterprise Journal*, 14, 00-00. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SEJ-12-2016-0059>.
- Lee, J., Bichard, S. L., Ireby, M. S., Walt, H. M., & Carlson, A. J. (2009). Television viewing and ethnic stereotypes: Do college students form stereotypical perceptions of ethnic groups as a result of heavy television consumption? *Howard Journal of Communications*, 20(1), 95-110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646170802665208>.
- Li, Y., & Greenhow, C. (2022). Social media and digital representation: Amplifying diverse voices. *Information, Communication & Society*, 25(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2021.1969731>.
- Liamputtong, P. (2019). *Handbook of research methods in health social sciences*. Springer.
- Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2018). *Qualitative Communication Research Methods* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Mahoney, A. (2020). Portrayals of Muslims in North American news media: Framing, priming and agenda setting. *Religions*, 11(3), Article 138. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11030138>.
- Martinez, L. (2019). “We get to tell our own stories”: Latinx media makers’ perspectives on inclusive television representation. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 36(4), 335-351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2019.1619333>.
- Martinez, D. E., McClure, H. H., Eddy, J. M., & Wilson, D. M. (2017). Microaggressions and problematic alcohol use among Latina/o college students. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 23(1), 72–82. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000086>.
- Marshall, M. N. (2016). Sampling for qualitative research. *Family Practice*, 13(6), 522–526. <https://doi.org/10.1093/fampra/13.6.522>.
- Mason, M. (2020). Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-11.3.1428>.
- Mastro, D. E., & Behm-Morawitz, E. (2019). Latino representation on primetime television. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82(1), 110–130. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900508200108>.
- Mazrui, A. (2017). Indigenous voices and the Kenyan media. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 29(1), 54-68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2016.1274236>.

- Melkote, S. R., & Steeves, H. L. (2015). *Communication for development: Theory and practice for empowerment and social justice* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Mendible, M. (2020). From margins to mainstream? The politics of representation and the representation of politics on US television. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 23(1), 3-19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877918796091>.
- McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory* (6th ed.). Sage.
- Minkler, M. (2005). Community-based research partnerships: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Urban Health*, 82(2), ii3–ii12. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jurban/jti034>.
- Morgan, D. L. (2018). *Focus groups as qualitative research* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications
- Mora, J. K. (2014). The social construction of Latinas as sexual objects in contemporary U.S. films. *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 39(1), 107–130.
- Mthembu, E., & Ojo, T. (2017). Changing representations of LGBT identities in South African print media (2010–2015). *Journal of Homosexuality*, 64(11), 1527-1549. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2017.1293402>.
- Napoli, P. M. (2019). *Social media and the public interest: Media regulation in the disinformation age*. Columbia University Press.
- Ndima, D. (2019). Xhosa representation in post-apartheid South African print media. *Communicatio*, 45(1), 62-78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02500167.2019.1574208>.
- Ojo, T. (2019). Representation of religious minorities in Nigerian television and film. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 11(1), 41-58. https://doi.org/10.1386/jams.11.1.41_1.
- Ortiz, M., & Behm-Morawitz, E. (2015). Latinos' perceptions of intergroup relations in the United States: The cultivation of group-based attitudes and beliefs from English- and Spanish-language television. *Journal of Social Issues*, 71(1), 90-105. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12099>.
- Ortiz, M., & Harwood, J. (2007). A social cognitive theory approach to the effects of mediated intergroup contact on intergroup attitudes. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 51(4), 615-631. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838150701626487>.
- Patton, M. Q., & Cochran, M. (2002). *A Guide to Using Qualitative Research Methodology*. Médecins Sans Frontières.
- Poole, E. (2002). *Reporting Islam: Media representations of British Muslims*. I.B.Tauris

- Powell, K. A. (2011). Framing Islam: An analysis of U.S. media coverage of terrorism since 9/11. *Communication Studies*, 62(1), 90-112. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10510974.2011.533599>.
- Ramasubramanian, S. (2010). Television viewing, racial attitudes, and policy preferences: Exploring the role of social identity and intergroup emotions in influencing support for affirmative action. *Communication Research*, 38(2), 199–223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650210362682>.
- Ramirez Berg, C. (2002). *Latino images in film: Stereotypes, subversion, and resistance*. University of Texas Press.
- Richardson, J. E. (2004). *(Mis) representing Islam: The racism and rhetoric of British broadsheet newspapers*. John Benjamins Publishing.
- Ridder, H. (2017). The theory contribution of case study research designs. *Business Research*, 10, 281-305. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S40685-017-0045-Z>.
- Rodriguez, C. (2001). *Fissures in the mediascape: An international study of citizens' media*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Rodriguez, C. (2011). *Citizens' media against armed conflict: Disrupting violence in Colombia*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. <https://doi.org/10.5749/Minnesota/9780816676074.001.0001>.
- Saeed, A. (2007). Media, racism and Islamophobia: The representation of Islam and Muslims in the media. *Sociology Compass*, 1(2), 443-462. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00039.x>.
- Servaes, J. (1999). *Communication for development: One world, multiple cultures*. Hampton Press.
- Shaheen, J. G. (2009). Reel bad Arabs: How Hollywood vilifies a people. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 624(1), 171–193. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716209338791>
- Shimizu, C. P. (2007). *The hypersexuality of race: Performing Asian/American women on screen and scene*. Duke University Press.
- Shimizu, C. P. (2018). #NotYourModelMinority: Asian Americans in community and on screen. *Asian American Policy Review*, 28, 5–15.
- Smith, J. (2022). Media effects on social cohesion. *Communication Research*, 49(2), 201-223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650220970842>.

- Smith, S. L. (2009). The impact of prime time television portrayals of African Americans on opinions about affirmative action. *Journal of Black Studies*, 40(2), 268–285. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934707307851>.
- Smith, S. L., Choueiti, M., & Pieper, K. (2018). Inequality in 1,100 popular films: Examining portrayals of gender, race/ethnicity, LGBTQ & disability from 2007 to 2018. [https://annenberg.usc.edu/sites/default/files/Dr Stacy L Smith-Inequality_in_1100_Popular_Films.pdf](https://annenberg.usc.edu/sites/default/files/Dr_Stacy_L_Smith-Inequality_in_1100_Popular_Films.pdf).
- Taylor, C. R., & Stern, B. B. (1997). Asian-Americans: Television advertising and the "model minority" stereotype. *Journal of Advertising*, 26(2), 47–61. [https://doi.org/10.1080/26\(2\),47-61](https://doi.org/10.1080/1080/26(2),47-61). <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1997.10673522>.
- Thomas, A. J., & Campos, P. E. (2013). Black-White differences in health and health behaviors: The role of color-blind racial attitudes and modern racist beliefs. *American Journal of Public Health*, 103(2), 112–118. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2012.300741>.
- Tukachinsky, R., Mastro, D., & Yarchi, M. (2015). Documenting portrayals of race/ethnicity on primetime television over a 20-year span and their association with national-level racial/ethnic attitudes. *Journal of Social Issues*, 71(1), 17-38. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12094>.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2016). *Discourse and power*. Routledge.
- Wallerstein, N., & Duran, B. (2017). CBPR: A strategy for advancing social and health equity. In B. A. Israel, E. Eng, A. J. Schulz, & E. A. Parker (Eds.), *Methods for community-based participatory research for health* (3rd ed., pp. 33–50). Jossey-Bass. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119281936.ch3>.
- Weeks, B. E., Ardèvol-Abreu, A., & Gil de Zúñiga, H. (2017). Online influence? Social media use, opinion leadership, and political persuasion. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 29(2), 214–239. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edw001>.
- Williams, R. (2023). Ideology and cultural production. In D. Hesmondhalgh & J. Toynebee (Eds.), *The media and social theory* (pp. 31-46). Routledge.
- Williams, R., & Lee, J. (2021). Advertising influence on media content and the implications for representation. *Mass Communication and Society*, 24(5), 659-678. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2021.1877368>.
- Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2011). *Mass media research: An introduction* (9th ed.). Cengage Learning.

- Witteman, H. O., & Hendricks, M. (2019). Participatory video as a tool for climate change communication: A systematic review of the literature. *Environmental Communication*, 13(5), 627–641. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2019.1598928>
- Yellow Horse Brave Heart, M., Grayshield, L., & De Bruyn, L. M. (2022). The historical trauma response among natives and its relationship with substance abuse: A Lakota illustration. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, 28(1), 7-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02791072.1996.10471682>.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. Sage Publications.



APPENDIX

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

Good day, my name is.....and I am a Master of Arts student from the School of Communication and Media Studies, University of Education, Winneba. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview.

Purpose

The purpose of this interview is to understand the perspectives of Ghana's Muslim community on their portrayal in the country's media and how it shapes their perceived identity. The study also aims to explore how Muslims in Ghana would like to see their community represented.

Importance of Participation

Your views and experiences are important for getting an in-depth understanding of these issues. The findings will help improve media representation of Muslims in Ghana. Your participation is voluntary and you can choose to stop the interview at any time.

Participant Consent

Do I have your consent to proceed as well as record the interview? The recording is purely academic purposes and under no circumstance will it be altered, shared or distributed. Your responses will be kept confidential. You are free to skip any questions you do not feel comfortable answering.

Objective 1: To explore perspectives on portrayal of Muslims in Ghanaian media

1. How would you describe the typical portrayal of Muslims in Ghanaian media?
2. What are your thoughts on this portrayal?
3. In what ways does this portrayal match or differ from your experiences as a Muslim in Ghana?

Objective 2: To assess how media portrayal shapes perceived Muslim identity

1. How do you think this media portrayal influences what non-Muslims in Ghana think of the Muslim community?
2. In your view, how much does the media portrayal reflect the actual Muslim identity?

Objective 3: To explore preferred portrayal of the Muslim community

1. How would you like to see Muslims portrayed in Ghanaian media?
2. What specific aspects of the Muslim community in Ghana would you like highlighted?

Wrap-up

Thank you for your time and for sharing your experiences and perspectives. Your contribution to this study is greatly appreciated. Do you have any other comments or questions before we conclude the interview?