



UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**ONLINE NEWS COVERAGE OF A UNIVERSITY IN CRISIS: A CASE
STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

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**of the requirements for the award of the degree of
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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

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

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: GIFTY APPIAH-ADJEI (PHD)

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

DEDICATION

Special dedication to my wife, mother and sisters who made my dream a reality.



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ABSTRACT

The study examined the issues discussed by Ghanaian news sites in their coverage of the UEW crisis. The study also investigated the tones used in the coverage of the UEW crisis and the perspectives of both UEW staff and students on the coverage of the crisis by news sites. Using framing theory, the study employed document analysis and interviews to gather data from purposely selected online publications from citifmonline.com and myjoyonline.com and 10 participants respectively. Content analysis of 1,220 paragraphs revealed that the news sites used Entman's (1991) five frames to frame issues about the conflict around the following themes: power struggle between parties in the university's stakeholders; poor administrative procedures and victimisation by university's management; actions that protracted the crisis; and resolution of the crisis as the responsibility of the university's stakeholders. Also, the conflict, morality and consequence frames had negative tones while the responsibility frame had a positive tone. The staff and students of the university perceived coverage of issues about the crisis as a power struggle between stakeholders of the university, mismanagement and favouritism by management and created a negative image for the university. The study recommends that the university's stakeholders should adopt constructive and creative ways of resolving conflicts by extensively engaging all conflicting parties together in communication processes that seek to resolve the crisis.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

There is an implicit assumption embedded in studies on organisational behaviour that highlights that organisations exist. By implication, the assumption is that the term ‘organisation’ provides three different denotations: (1) the process of combining resources to achieve a desired outcome; (2) the condition or manner within which these processes of combining resources takes place; (3) the administrative and functional structure, or the personnel structure (Ojeleye & Okoro, 2016; Rafeal, 1996). These multiple meanings capture the wealth of ways the concept of an organisation can be determined. However, according to Ojeleye (2017) in any organisation tasks are performed with the help of resources: material, machine, money and most importantly employees. All other resources except for employees are non-living. Employees make use of these resources to generate output. Without them, other resources will be useless, dormant and will not yield productivity. Therefore, human resource is the greatest asset any organisation can have and should be given the highest priority (Ojeleye, 2017).

Organisations are living systems consisting of interacting units performing a task in a mutually dependent manner within a structure of scarce resources (Axley, 1996). It is commonplace to suggest that conflicts would be present in such a setting. The parties in an organisation may have a conflict about the distribution of resources, or they may have a more fundamental conflict about the very structure of their organisation and the basic nature of their interaction. Once the parties are in a situation of goal incompatibility, their conflict develops in a dynamic fashion, initiating valuable and

much-needed constructive changes or leading to escalating strategies and sometimes, destructive consequences (Bercovitch, 2001; Rahim, 2011).

The concept of conflict, because of its ubiquity and pervasive nature, has acquired a multitude of meanings and connotations, presenting nothing short of the semantic jungle (Mashanne & Glinow, 2008). Like other terms, conflict generates considerable ambivalence and leaves many scholars and administrators quite uncertain about its meaning and relevance and how best to cope with it. Conflict situations are inevitable in organisations (Rahim, 2001). Therefore, state of disagreement or misunderstanding in organisations (which is also referred to in some cases as workplace conflicts) resulting from the actual or perceived dissent of needs, beliefs, resources and relationship between the members of the organization has been explored by several scholars (Barsky, 2002; Borisoff & Victor, 1998; Daft, 2001; Folger, 1993; Mashanne & Glinow, 2008; Omisore, 2014; Robbins *et al.*, 2003; Tillett, 1991; Viletta, 2012; and Victor, 1998).

According to Omisore (2014), conflicts have human-faces especially within the corridors of an organisation. He adds that conflicts at the workplace usually occur when one party suggests that its interests are being opposed by another party. People see only the observable aspect of conflict like angry words or actions of the opposition. However, these observable aspects of a conflict are only a small part of the conflict process (Mashanne & Glinow, 2008). There are varying views of conflicts within organizations. While some may view conflict as a negative situation that must be avoided at any cost (Bercovitch, 2001), others may see it as a phenomenon which necessitates management to take initiatives that eventually provide the opportunity for growth and change (Ongori, 2009; Rahim, 2011). Wherever one may fall on this continuum of viewpoints concerning conflict, it is however important also to emphasise

that seldom would one expect to be in a continual state of conflict as the basis for organisational growth or change (Bercovitch, 2001; Ongori, 2009).

It is important to note that crisis and conflict are intricately interrelated, both conceptually and empirically (Brecher, 1996). Wilcox and Reber (2013) define crisis as a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting an organization, company or industry as well as its publics, products, services or good name. Also, Regester (1995) explains crisis as “an event that causes the organization to become the subject of widespread potentially unfavorable attention from the media and other external groups such as shareholders, politicians, trade unionists and environmental pressure groups who, for one reason or another, have a vested interest in the actions of the organization.”(p.159).

From the preceding, it can be argued that both conflict and crisis are characterized by mutual mistrust between adversaries, turmoil, tension and hostility. In essence, every crisis reflects a "state of conflict" between two or more adversaries; but not every conflict is reflected in crisis. Moreover, the focus of crisis is usually a single issue, whether a border dispute, an economic boycott, alleged mistreatment of a minority group or threat to a political regime. Crisis occurs within an organisation or outside organization Brecher, (1996)

Following the ideas of Brecher 1996 that crisis and conflict are intricately linked, this study uses crisis and conflict interchangeably to address issues in the study. In the particular case of UEW, which is the focus of this study, the media framed the issues around crisis as well as conflict. This therefore justifies the use of crisis and conflict as interrelated concepts in this study.

It has been argued by Dodd (2003), as cited in Adomi and Anie (2005), that organizations operate in a turbulent environment where they continually search for measures to improve their performance, competitiveness and corporate image. Thus, one of the organisational behaviours that go a long way to influence an organisation's performance, competitiveness and corporate image is conflicts (Dodd, 2003). Organisational image refers to people's global impressions of an organisation or people's loose structures of knowledge and beliefs about an organisation (Highhouse, Brooks & Greguras, 2009). Organisational image represents the net cognitive reactions and associations of customers, investors and employees, to an organisation's name (Highhouse, Brooks & Greguras, 2009). Accordingly, it serves as a template to categorise, store, and recall organisation-related information (Frandsen, 2017). Thus, if an organisation does not manage its conflict situations effectively and efficiently, it will directly have an adverse effect on the organisation's performance in terms of utilising the scarce resources and achieving the organisational objectives (Adomi & Anie, 2005). The poor handling of organisational conflicts can also translate into poor organisational image (Frandsen, 2017).

Some scholars have contended that there is no such thing as the organisation's image because an organisation typically has multiple images (Berg, 1985; Bernstein, 1984; Dukerich & Dutton, 1991). These multiple images result from various groups (also known as stakeholders or corporate audiences) holding different images of the same organisation (Hudson, 2008; Scott, 2013). Nevertheless, organisational images typically develop over longer periods. They result from, among other things, media coverage, individual or group sense-making, and communication on the part of the organisation (as reflected in an organisation's advertising, sponsorships, and publicity). However, it should be clear that organisational images are not static. Specifically,

organisations often audit their images. In these image audits, the aim is to carefully determine which factors make up the image among various stakeholders to strategically modify the image held by their stakeholders (Frandsen, 2017).

It should be noted that the media plays a central role in shaping organisational image (Frandsen, 2017). The media is one of the medium in disseminating information (Hornby, 2000), so much so that, the media is referred to as the fourth estate of the realm in many countries. Information dissemination remains a key issue in the daily functioning of every society. Therefore, the importance of the channel or medium of information dissemination cannot be overemphasized (Owusu & Poku, 2013). The media has become very important for corporate organisations to send a particular message about themselves to the general public. Therefore, media relations is a core activity among corporate organisations and the media. Media relations has over the years become an increasingly significant profile and this has added value to the business bottom line. According to Argenti (2000), “the media is both a constituency and a conduit through which investors, suppliers, retailers and consumers receive information about and develop images of a company” (p. 8). The kind and amount of information the media disseminate about an organization, brand, service or product play a significant role in determining the perceptions that would be held about the organisation, brand or product. This makes the media a powerful tool in making or breaking the reputation of an organization in the corporate world (Argenti, 2000; Owusu & Poku, 2013).

Media coverage of any organisation influences their corporate reputation or image (Fransen, 2017). Deephouse (2001) refers to news as favourable news coverage when an organisation is praised for its action or is associated with activities that raise its reputation, while unfavourable coverage refers to reportage that decrease or tarnish its

reputation. Through time, media coverage has proven to be a key contributor – among many factors – that have shaped and affected the public discourse and actions of certain organisations. Coverage, by way of media representational practices, has broadly affected public understanding and have shaped perceptions of various issues concerning certain organisations and their public image (Weingart *et al.*, 2000). While news is often thought to be objective and value-free, this is rarely the case (Silke, 2018), especially when conflict is involved. It is, however, important to point out that public opinions are often shaped by how the media cover stories, therefore, how media cover conflicts in organisations is worth studying. The media focuses attention on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning. The angle or perspective from which a news story is told is described as media framing (Arowolo, 2017; Chong & Druckman, 2007) and in the context of this study, it shapes public perceptions about organisations and affects public image of such institutions.

This study, therefore, seeks to explore the online media coverage of organisational crisis using the University of Education, Winneba as a case study.

1.1 Online News

The internet has tremendously improved access to information and dissemination channels, but at the same time, it has unleashed a spate of unethical practices, the most worrying being plagiarism and lack of verification (Lazzarato, 1997, cited in Deuze, 2007). Digitisation has been one of the main drivers behind the changing nature of journalism as it affected news values, professional ethics, workflows, working conditions and newsroom management (Dragomir & Thompsom, 2014). The digital process, according to Ward (2003), breaks down all information - be it data, text, graphics, audio, still pictures or video - into a sequence of numbers (digits), transports it by wire, cable or broadcast frequency to a destination and then re-assembles it back into its original form. The advent of the internet has led to a contemporary form of journalism where editorial content is distributed via the internet, as opposed to publishing via print or broadcast (Karlsson, 2017).

It is generally accepted that the traditional and online media have coexisted for more than two decades (Višňovský & Radošinská, 2017). This period has been marked by publishers' scepticism towards the digital media and pessimist visions of the newspapers' future significantly (Višňovský & Radošinská, 2017). The predictions by many media professionals that 'the digital turn' would result in decreasing readership of the press, or even in total extinction of the print newspapers, have appeared repeatedly (Višňovský & Radošinská, 2017). It is, therefore, no surprise that publishers have been forced to take various steps leading to the preservation of their then existing readership bases. However, this does not suggest that the state of matters will change radically in the near future (Akinreti, 2003; Deuze, 2007; Karlsson, 2017).

On the contrary, it is rather reasonable to expect a further decrease in the sales of daily newspapers (Acuña, 2017). Paradoxically, some print newspapers and magazines published in the United States and the countries of Asia and North Africa are slowly but steadily increasing their circulation (Acuña, 2017). Again, widespread concerns that the print newspaper industry across the world and in Ghana particularly faces an uncertain future and a long-term decline in readership and circulation due to the prevalence of internet-mediated news websites exists (Amadu, 2019). Despite this development, online news portals will most probably strengthen their contemporary market position of highly profitable information sources. The development of journalism in the sphere of social media and digital applications will, undoubtedly, expand further as well (Akinreti, 2003).

In recent years, online journalism has become prevalent especially because internet users have significantly increased and daily more and more people spend a lot of their free time online (Karlsson, 2017). Online media have also made their mark within the development of various dimensions of alternative news dissemination including the notion of citizen journalism (Grant, 2007). Reacting to the current situation in the field of professional news production and distribution, Gant (2007) notes that the century which preceded the emergence of the internet - a period dominated by large news organisations, increasingly controlled by profit-oriented corporations - appears to have supported an artificial distinction between journalists and everyone else: “In a sense, we are returning to where we started. The institutional press no longer possesses the exclusive means of reaching the public. Anyone can disseminate information to the rest of the world” (p.23). The emergence of specialised production practices and new tools for disseminating journalistic information indicates that the publishing houses’ and editorial offices’ primal distrust of the internet, so typical for the second half of the

1990s, has slowly vanished, mostly due to the quick technological improvements and possibilities offered by the online environment (Deuze, 2007; Grant, 2007).

The internet has become a good partner but also a strong competitor of the traditional media. It is currently securing its position of an extremely popular communication means bound to young and middle-aged generations of media audiences. It also functions as a particularly important tool for informing and educating its audience. By implication, it shapes how the public perceive people, issues and organisations through coverage. The traditional media are aware that they cannot ignore these aspects of online journalism. Therefore, trends in digital communication has established that the traditional media are trying to use the internet's many advantages for their benefit so far as the conventional way of producing journalistic content is concerned (Akinreti, 2003; Grant, 2007).

Even though no generally accepted consensus would explain how exactly the internet has changed the ways news is produced, disseminated and accessed, scholars focusing on journalism agree that the journalism industry is witnessing many shifts in the field of professional production of news and information (Višňovský, 2015). Regardless of whether the newspapers are available in traditional or online forms, the factor deciding on the efficiency of their public impact and acceptance is bound to attract and hold the recipients' attention (Višňovský, 2015).

1.2 Universities as an Organisations and Conflicts in Universities

Studies have shown that universities are replete with conflicts as studies showed that the university and academia are by their nature and structure breeding grounds for conflict (Bampoh-Addo & Ansa-Koi, 2015). These conflicts range from student conflicts (Katz, Sosa & Kovack, 2018) to promotion-related conflicts (Bampoh-Addo & Ansa-Koi, 2015). Aside from these are faculty management conflicts that have been noted as a major challenge existing in African universities (Mayer, Wilde, Dinku, Fedrowitz, Shitemi, Wahlers & Ziegele, 2011).

Fundamental to these conflicts is the idea that universities inhabit two coexisting distinctive governance cultures (Bolman & Gallos, 2011). Firstly, is a bureaucratic and corporate culture of administration with an emphasis on centralized decision-making, organizational hierarchy, and a system of policies, procedures, and objectives intended to make higher education run more like a business (Bolman and Gallos, 2011). Secondly, is faculty-led culture characterized by a *laissez-faire*, a collegial culture of educators that value debate, shared decision-making, and autonomy meant to foster environments that stimulate creativity and critical assessment - sometimes of the very systems and practices that it operates within (Bolman and Gallos, 2011).

These unique features contribute to a higher likelihood of interpersonal and group conflicts among employees because such conditions facilitate competition over resources, conflicting views, and power struggles (Bolman and Gallos, 2011; Rahim, 2001). Bureaucratic corporate and the faculty-led cultures are made to be more conflictual because supporting staff are accountable to both cultures and perform a delicate dance between the two. In such situations, administrators face several dilemmas because the same policies that protect productive faculty with tenure or multi-

year contracts also protect the less productive and there is an increasing need to keep up with the external pace of accreditation, diversification, and innovation (Bolman & Gallos, 2011).

In times of conflicts in universities, their status as the gateway to social, economic, and intellectual enhancement is of much concern. Universities, as institutions of higher education, are complex endeavours that blend business principles with ambitious educational vocations. It is argued in the literature that managing institutions of such nature require “navigating the intricacies of internal and external forces” and “satisfying multiple levels of stakeholders” (Katz *et al.*, 2018: 2). The authors further add that it also requires “fostering environments for diverse disciplines, securing scarce resources, coordinating the everyday interdependence, and ... managing the conflicting governance cultures that make higher education a unique enterprise” (Katz *et al.*, 2018: p. 2).

Some studies have addressed the preparedness of universities to manage as well as the nature of conflicts in universities (Bampoh-Addo & Ansah-Koi, 2015; Cram & MacWilliams, 2014; Katz *et al.*, 2018). Evidence indicates that the institutions are often unprepared to manage conflicts because the career ladder from faculty to administration does not typically include administrative experience or leadership training (Bolman & Gallos, 2011). In the United States of America, about 3% of academic leaders were found to have hardly any type of leadership training or preparation while their move into a leadership position was unanticipated (Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Cullen & Nickerson, 2017; Gmelch, 2002). A study of 400 experienced and new deans in the United States by Cullen and Nickerson (2017) found that university leadership-related conflicts had to do with three ability domains: the ability to lead organizational change;

the ability to think strategically and solve problems creatively; and the ability to develop new leaders and communicate effectively.

The effects of conflict in university communities is an increased awareness of the cost and effects of poorly managed conflict which is considered to be the largest reducible cost in organizations (Cram & MacWilliams, 2014). Workplace conflict contributes to the exorbitant cost of legal cases, worker absenteeism and presenteeism, turnover rates, and it is estimated that managers spend 25% to 60% their time settling disputes between team members (Raines, 2013). However, services like informal consultations, mediation, problem-solving, and leadership training are adopted by universities to resolve conflicts (Katz *et al.*, 2018). Also, universities are emphasising community inclusiveness, diversity, collaboration, and communication as compatible working methods for effectively dealing with the substantive, procedural, and interpersonal issues at the core of most workplace disputes (Katz *et al.*, 2018; Raines, 2013). These methods are seen as particularly appropriate for navigating the institutional complexity of coalitions, departments, and divisions competing for scarce resources such as funding and access to those with decision-making power: all with differing underlying interests (Barsky, 2002; Gmelch, 2002).

The recognition of the need to manage the human side of higher learning organizations and the potential of conflict resolution services to enhance administrative capacity and organisational effectiveness (which can impact morale and quality of work-life balance for employees) have been identified as some of the positive aspects emerging from conflicts in universities (Bampoh-Addo & Ansah-Koi, 2015; Katz *et al.*, 2018). Missing from the literature, however, is an examination of the consequences of media reports of conflicts in universities. How media frames conflicts within universities and the effects

of media framing on perspectives of media audience seems to be absent from the literature. This is the gap that this research attempts to fill.

1.3 Profile of University of Education, Winneba

The University of Education, Winneba (UEW) is a multi-campus University with its central administration at Winneba, Central Region of Ghana. It was established in September 1992 as a University College under PNDC Law 322. On 14th May 2004 the University of Education Act, Act 672 was enacted to upgrade the status of the University College of Education of Winneba to the status of a full University. The University has three other satellite campuses in Ajumako, Kumasi and Asante-Mampong. The University is charged with the responsibility of producing professional educators to spearhead a new national vision of education aimed at redirecting Ghana's effort along the path of rapid economic and social development. UEW is expected to play a leading role in the country's drive to produce scholars for the education sector, whose knowledge would be fully responsive to the realities and exigencies of contemporary Ghana and the West African sub-region.

1.4 The Supi Kwayera Initiated Crisis in UEW

Since 2017, the University of Education, Winneba has been in crisis. The institution has been plagued with a myriad of controversies and disturbances taking the centre stage of both traditional news media and most importantly, online news portals in Ghana. Key among the issues reported by the online news portals was the infamous lawsuit by the former Donkoryiem Assemblyman, Supi Kofi Kwayera, over the continuous stay of the then University's Council members whose tenure had expired.

In a writ issued on 23rd May 2017, the plaintiff, Supi Kwayera, adduced that the University Council's mandate had expired in November 2013 yet the Education Ministry failed to constitute a new Governing Council for the University. Rather, it allowed and permitted the defunct Governing Council, which had not been properly constituted therefore had no mandate, to continue to function as a properly constituted Governing Council. This, Mr Kwayera insisted was unlawful, hence, his legal action against the University of Education, Winneba. The ramifications of the above lawsuit among others resulted in the initial interdiction of some principal officers.

This prompted the University's Governing Council, which had been properly constituted after the Mr Kwayera's suit, to form a fact-finding committee to gather facts about the matter to help defend the University in court. In the course of the work of the fact-finding committee, some officers who had come under the scope of the committee's work were interdicted so that they could not interfere in the committee's work. A prima facie case was established against the cited officers which triggered a disciplinary board to be formed to allow the indicted officers to answer the queries that had been raised in the fact-finding committee's work. For some reasons, the indicted officer refused to appear before the disciplinary board and this led to the eventual removal from office of some of the University's Principal Officers including the former Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mawutor Avoke, and the finance officer, Dr Theophilus Senyo Ackorlie.

Subsequently, Reverend Father Professor Anthony Afful-Broni, who was then Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Pro-VC) by virtue of his position and in accordance with the provisions of the University statutes, was elevated to the position of Acting Vice-Chancellor (VC). On completion of his tenure as Pro-VC cum Acting VC, the

Governing Council appointed Reverend Father Professor Anthony Afful-Broni in his capacity as substantive Vice-Chancellor given his experience in the position and what he had achieved as Acting VC. His induction as the new Vice-Chancellor of UEW was held on September 17, 2018. Shortly after Reverend Father Professor Anthony Afful-Broni's induction, a violent demonstration by some students rocked the University because of the suspension, demotion and dismissal of some senior staff members of Winneba and Ajumako campuses. These violent protests ultimately led to the temporary closure of the aforementioned campuses. The Winneba and Ajumako campuses of the University of Education, Winneba were closed down indefinitely by the Regional Security Council on March 14, 2019, and students were asked to vacate the respective campuses.

The crisis in UEW relentlessly prevailed. On the 23rd of July, 2019, the former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), Professor Mawutor Avoke, accompanied by some staff, some of whom had also been dismissed went to the University to announce their reinstatement to their former offices. In a press statement by Professor Mawutor Avoke, he emphasised that they had been cleared of all wrongdoings by the Economic and Organised Crime Office (EOCO), therefore, they want to resume their respective offices. Following that incident, Education Minister, Dr Matthew Opoku Prempeh, in a press conference on 24th July 2019, backed the current Vice-Chancellor of the University of Education, Winneba, Professor Anthony Afful-Broni, saying "there's only one Vice-Chancellor at the University of Education, Winneba and that Vice-Chancellor is Reverend Father Professor Anthony Afful-Broni" (Graphic.com.gh, Jul 24, 2019). Honourable Dr Matthew Opoku Prempeh's support came on the back of brewing tensions in the University that occasioned a combined team of National Security Operatives and Police Personnel to prevent the former Vice-

Chancellor Professor Mawutor Avoke accompanied by some serving and dismissed staff of the University from having the press conference.

The former Vice-Chancellor of the university, Professor Mawutor Avoke, and his team upon hearing the declaration of the Education Minister later paid a courtesy call on him to apologise for undermining the process of resolving the impasse at the University. Prof Avoke who led the team said their conduct of taking matters into their own hands was out of place because they should have consulted the Minister (myjoyfmonline.com, August 23, 2019). He also petitioned the Minister to look into their dismissal. Later, the new Governing Council was constituted after the end of tenure of the Prof. Abakah led council and they were charged to find a lasting solution to the conflict.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

Media coverage of issues are of importance to scholars due to media effects. As a result, there have been numerous studies on how the media cover or frame issues (Agyekum, 2014; Anipah, 2017; Ayikpa, 2015; Baresch, Evers, 2016; Hu & Reese, 2016; Ofori-Birikornag, 2009). For instance, Evers (2016) studied the differences in the use of frame and tone in the coverage of the refugee crisis in Europe by some selected Dutch newspapers - De Telegram and AD as popular newspapers; and NRC and De Volkskrant as quality newspapers. Findings showed that the media coverage was framed along with responsibility and human-interest frames. Also, the human interest frame was higher in popular newspapers than quality newspapers. The tone of the coverage was similar to the popular and quality newspapers because they were all mildly negative.

In the Ghanaian context, Ayikpa (2015) explored how the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* newspapers covered the 2015 flooding in Accra. In so doing, Ayikpa (2015) looked at the extent to which the media gave prominence to stories of flooding in the capital of Ghana and the angling of the reportage on this natural disaster. Anchored in a qualitative research approach, this study found out that most of the stories on flooding focused on the loss of human lives and properties. The study further found that nearly 60% of flood stories were placed on the front, centre and back pages of the two newspapers indicating that the two newspapers attached prominence to their coverage of the phenomenon.

Another study conducted by Agyekum (2014) studied the level of prominence and fairness the state-owned newspaper, *Daily Graphic*, used in its coverage of the 2012 presidential election petition at the Supreme Court of Ghana. Using quantitative content analysis method, the study sought to determine the dominant tone with which the newspaper covered the election petition. Data for the study was collected by analysing 219 stories within the study period of April to August, 2013. The study showed that stories on election petition were classified to be prominent in terms of the size of the story and headline as well as story enhancement and the article type. The findings also revealed that the *Daily Graphic* was fair in its coverage of the 2012 presidential election petition since most of the stories had either positive or neutral tones.

It is important to note that the media are selective in reporting news and this affords them a powerful effect on their mass audience (Little John & Foss, 2011). Therefore, researchers have investigated how the media give coverage to issues to understand how they are able to influence public perception of the issues. For example, Chang (2009) conducted a qualitative content analysis to analyze the frames some newspapers in the USA state of Iowa used in reporting the issue of biofuels and how these media frames

influenced the perceptions of the newspapers' audience. Chang's (2009) study purposively sampled three newspapers, thus, the *Des Moines Register*, the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* and the *Davenport Quad City Times* for one year (from September 2007 to September 2008). Using a complete article as the unit of analysis, Chang (2009) used a document analysis and cross-sectional survey as data collection methods. Chang's (2009) study found that the media framed the biofuel on economic consequences as the media presents events, problems, or issues of biofuel in terms of its economic impacts on the society. Also, findings revealed that the news media framed the biofuel issue on the frame of food versus fuel as most of the news stories considered the risk of diverting farmland or crops for biofuels production to the detriment of the food supply on a local or global scale. The study also found that media frames used shaped the perceptions of the audience because the audience perceived biofuels as a danger to food and crop production, thereby, affecting food supply to their local community.

With a focus on investigating the role the mass media play in conflict management and resolution, Mensa and Acquah (2019) have examined the Tuabodom conflict in Ghana. The authors conducted a study to evaluate the role of the media in the Tuabodom conflict, as well as the residents' perceptions of the media's role in managing the Tuabodom conflict. They employed questionnaires and interviews as data collection instruments in gathering data for their study. With media framing as the theory underpinning their study, Mensa and Acquah (2019) found the conflict that occurs in Tuabodom was given impetus to aggravate through the reportage from the mass media.

There have been some studies on online news coverage and media framing (Agorde, 2017; Jibril, 2015; Skonieczny & Morse, 2013; Smith & Smith, 2016; Zhang & Matingwina, 2016). The study by Agorde (2017) aimed at identifying the dominant frames in the coverage of the West African Ebola virus disease by Cable News Network

(CNN of the United States), Global News Network (Liberia) and Daily Nation (Kenya) online news portals. A quantitative content analysis was carried out to study a total of 555 online news items by CNN, GNN and Daily Nation from the 1st March 2014 to 31st December 2014 through a composite week sampling. The study found that action, consequence and reassurance frames were the major issue-specific frames used, with action being the most dominant. Within that frame, more than half of the stories were centred on disease statistics which included cases and casualty figures as well as conditions of Ebola patients.

Also, Jibril (2015) studied the coverage of the Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) campaign in Nigeria by online newspapers. Taking 71 editions of *Daily Trust*, *the Punch*, *Sahara Reporters* and *Vanguard* newspapers from April 2014 to October 2014, the study examined how the stories on the campaign were framed in the newspapers. Using a mixed-method approach, the study found that the newspapers among other things provided mostly favourable coverage of the campaign with a total of 59 (83.1%) out of 71 total stories having a positive tone.

Aside from media effect studies, literature has also given attention to organizational conflicts (Basky, 2002; Folger & Shubert, 2005; Bondesio, 1992; Henry, 2009; Stanley & Algert, 2007). For instance, Henry (2009) studied the causes, types, effects and strategies on how to manage conflicts in organisations effectively to enhance organisational performance in Gaborone. The convenience sample of one hundred and thirty managers from government departments, parastatals and private companies was selected for the study. Analysis of the questionnaire administered revealed that sharing of limited resources was the major course of the conflict in organisations. He also found that organisations were adversely affected by conflicts in terms of performance and

wastage of scarce resources. Effective communication of procedures in place to resolve conflicts was identified as the best strategy in conflict management.

It is equally important to note that under literature on organisational conflicts, attention has been given to conflicts in universities (Bampoh-Addo & Ansah-Koi, 2015; Christophersona, Gertler & Gray, 2014; Rahim, 2011). Mention can be made of Christophersona et al (2014) who studied universities in crisis in Europe. Using quantitative content analysis, the study examined the nature of the crisis and its consequences. They concluded that there were tensions around the scale and scope of the university, forms of competition, and its relationship to the region and nation that hosts the institution. Also, they found that the conflicts were inherent in reconceptualising the university as an individual rather than a public good.

Bampoh-Addoh and Ansah-Koi (2015) also examined conflicts in Ghanaian universities and found that different internal conflicts were on-going in the higher education institutions. Bampoh-Addoh and Ansah-Koi (2015) further discover that Ghanaian universities were replete with faculty promotion-related conflicts that affected individual staff performance, and interactions among staff and productivity of the institution as a whole. The study also revealed that conflicts, if not managed well, engender strife, feelings of resentment, aggressiveness, tension and hostility within an institution.

According to Pavelka (2013, p. 627), “agendas of ... higher education institutions and research centres, connected with their everyday lives do not have a big chance to get covered on the news” unless a negative phenomenon occurs in such institutions. Thus, using the experience of Czech institutions of higher learning, Pavelka (2013) argues that coverage of events taking place in these institutions becomes interesting and

worthy of media coverage if these events can be labelled as scandalous. Jakobsen (2011) also indicates that in the coverage of conflicts, the media often do not explain the ongoing processes, contexts or backgrounds in which the events occurred. Based on the preceding, the study of media framing of conflicts in universities is important.

Although studies on framing and online news stories as well as conflicts in organisations/universities abound, there is a dearth of literature when it comes to studies on online media coverage of conflicts in universities, especially in Ghana. Studies on how issues about conflicts in Ghanaian universities are framed, the factors affecting this process as well as the consequences of media framing are hard to find. In the particular case of recent developments at UEW, there appear to be no studies on how Ghanaian online news stories framed the UEW conflict. This study, therefore, sets out to examine how some selected news sites in Ghana framed issues about the UEW conflict using insights from the framing theory and a qualitative case study research approach. Beyond the framing of the issues on the conflict by online news sites, the study also investigates the tone of coverage and the perspectives of UEW staff and students on the online media coverage of the conflict.

1.6 Research Objectives

Based on the foundation established by the statement of the problem, this research seeks to:

1. Examine how issues about the UEW conflict were framed by Ghanaian news sites.
2. Investigate the tone of coverage of the UEW conflict by online news sites.
3. Explore the perspectives of UEW staff and students on the coverage of the UEW conflict by Ghanaian news sites.

1.7 Research Questions

1. How did the Ghanaian news sites cover issues on the UEW conflict?
2. What is the tone of coverage of the UEW conflict by news sites?
3. What are the perspectives of UEW staff and students on the coverage of issues on the conflict by the Ghanaian news sites?

1.8 Significance of the Study

Researching this subject is of value to academia and stakeholders in manifold ways. First, this study adds to the existing literature on media framing and coverage of conflicts in higher education institutions by online news sites in Ghana. The study also paves the way for further studies to be conducted on media framing and online news stories specifically on the University of Education, Winneba. Furthermore, this study also increases the knowledge and awareness of university central administration bodies and news consumers on how various news stories frame the conflict in question.

According to Frandsen (2017), an organization's image, which largely denotes people's knowledge and beliefs about the organization, can be badly tainted by bad media coverage or negative publicity. Thus, poor handling of organizational conflicts can further translate into negative publicity and then, poor organizational image (Frandsen, 2017). In light of this assertion by Frandsen (2017), the findings and recommendations of this study provides a feedback loop to the Governing Council of the University of Education, Winneba in particular and other Ghanaian public universities in general.

Besides, the findings and recommendations of this study also provides an overview of what conflicts in the administration of tertiary education in Ghana can create. Thus, this

study admonishes other stakeholder groups like the government and the traditional chieftaincy units who act as the custodians of the land to intervene in such matters soon enough before they hit crisis levels.

1.8 Delimitation

This study focused on media framing of crisis in universities in general. More specifically, the study examined coverage of the UEW crisis from 2017 to 2019 from the top two Ghanaian online news sites, thus citifmonline.com and myjoyonline.com news portals. The study also investigates how students and staff of the university perceived the coverage of the UEW conflict by the Ghanaian online news sites.

1.9 Organisation of the Study

The study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the introductory chapter which includes the background of the study, the objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation and the organisation of the study. The second chapter presents a review of the literature on the study and outlines the theoretical framework underpinning the study. The third chapter presents the methods through which data was collected for analysis. Aspects of this chapter include the research approach, research design, sample and sampling technique, data collection instruments, data collection procedure and method of data analysis. The findings and discussions of the data collected were discussed under the fourth chapter of the study. Data gathered from the study were analysed and discussed in themes using insights from the theory underpinning this study. The fifth chapter presents the summary and conclusion of the findings and makes recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature related to the study as there is sound scholarship on the many aspects of conflict; its management in institutional leadership and management; how they are intertwined; and aspects of the overall effective functioning of higher education institutions (HEI). It presents a review on the concept of conflict, conflict in organizations, the role of the media in conflict, media and conflict framing, and the framing theory as a theoretical framework and empirical literature underpinning the study.

2.1 Conflicts in Organisations

Conflict is a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals (Pia & Diez, 2007). Defined in broad terms, conflict denotes the incompatibility of subject positions (Diez, Stetter & Albert, 2006). Howard's (2004) definition of conflict is in line with Pia and Diez's (2007) as he avers that it is a misunderstanding between two opposing forces, as such it arises in situations where two or more individuals try to pursue objectives which they believe cannot be shared or when people want change and others disagree. Howard (2004) asserts that certain issues such as an unequal distribution of power, little or no communication between opposing groups or individuals, incorrect ideas and beliefs about each other or unresolved grievances from the past can fuel conflicts in organizations and society as a

whole. However, it is important to note that not all conflicts are violent (Canetti, Khatib & Rubin, 2019; Macassi, 2019). How individuals discuss the conflict, problem, or challenge can have a significant impact on how the conflict unfolds as expressed struggles are activated by a triggering event (Maxwell, Odukoya, Stone, & Chui, 2014). Howard (2004) further states that when a disagreement is managed peacefully, it can be a positive process which will lead to progress in society.

To Wilmot and Hocker (2011), there are types of conflict namely constructive and destructive conflicts. Scholars also suggest that conflict can both be constructive and destructive (Bondesio, 1992; Rahim, 2011). Wilmot and Hocker (2011) see destructive conflict as an expressed struggle between interdependent parties with perceived incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving goals which normally polarizes groups and make cooperation among groups difficult. Conflict, if not managed well, might escalate and lead to a destructive result which is often in the form of physical violence that is increasingly seen as legitimate as conflict intensifies (Canetti et al, 2019; Macassi, 2019). Destructive conflict, which is also known as dysfunctional conflict, is considered damaging, therefore, discouraged in organizations. Dysfunctional conflict is discouraged because it increases dissatisfaction and decreases not only the affective well-being of the employees but organizational efficacy (Rahim, 2000; Guerra, Martinez, Munduate & Medina, 2005).

On the other hand, constructive conflict is a conflict type involving interdependent parties with different perceived goals, however, it opens up issues of importance resulting in issue clarification (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). Constructive conflict helps to build cohesiveness as conflicting parties learn more about each other (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). This can lead to a new social or political organisation, therefore, be productive if the parties involved can deal with their incompatibilities so that such a

new organizational form is achieved (Macassi, 2019). Constructive conflict is known as functional conflict while destructive conflict is known as dysfunctional conflict (Adzahlie-Mensah, Golo & Agbevivi, 2017; Bampoh-Addo & Ansah-Koi, 2015). Functional conflict is defined as constructive challenging of ideas, beliefs, and assumptions, and respect for others' viewpoints even when parties disagree (Massey & Dawes, 2007). It is considered useful for the organization and is therefore welcomed

Conflict is always imminent in organisations (Rahim, 2011) and higher education institutions are also not free from this. Individuals who engage in conflict especially within the school set up react to and cope with conflict in diverse ways (Rahim, 2011). Many forms of conflict management strategies exist, however, constructive and creative conflict management aids in resolving conflict within the school thereby furthering the achievement of the school's objectives (Rahim, 2011). The conflict in such institutions mostly takes place between the faculty and administration (Bampoh-Addo & Ansah-Koi, 2015) and often has negative implications for the image of the institutions. Therefore, numerous scholars have urged educational institutions to learn conflict management skills to deal with it easily when it arises (Kriesberg & Dayton, 2012; Mitchell, 2014; Mitra, 2016; Morris, 2018).

In every organization, especially social organization such as schools, conflict is almost inevitable. This is because every social organization consists of humans who seek to achieve specific tasks through collaboration (Rahim, 2011). However, due to the unique nature of individuals in terms of capabilities, motivations, values, needs, knowledge and experiences, conflict is inevitable in social organizations (Rahim, 2011). Conflict as a phenomenon is an interactive process and an outcome of human reaction and behaviour (Rahim, 2011). They are attributed to different factors such as disagreement

in attitudes and perceptions, values and needs, tasks and policies, conflicting interest in project or differences emanating from competition, mistakes, negative behaviour and reactions of organizational members (Kantek & Gezer, 2009).

Though a large part of research on organizational conflict has been carried out in the typical organizations which have non-academic settings, it does not mean that educational institutions are free from conflict (Hearn & Anderson, 2002; Maxwell, Odukoya, Stone, & Chui, 2014). Conflict exists in the educational institutions, it is considered as a negative force and its existence in such institutions is strongly disliked by faculty members (Bampoh-Addo & Ansah-Koi, 2015; Browman, 2002; Katz, O'Campo, Brisbois, Zerger & Hwang, 2018).

2.3 Conflicts and higher education institutions

There is the assumption that universities have credible policies with in-built procedural appeal systems that prevent conflict (Bampoh-Addo & Ansah-Koi, 2015), however, Hearn and Anderson (2002) posit that the university and the academic departments within it are not immune to conflicts. Evidence suggests that conflict has been part of academic life since ancient times (Holton (1995) as cited by Bampoh-Addo & Ansah-Koi, 2015). As conflicts in organizations, especially schools, are inevitable, they have tolls on organizational performance (Rahim, 2011). Within the school set up, conflicts may occur between students, leadership and educators of schools, as well as the school itself and other social parties of the school such as local authorities and politicians (Henkin & Holliman, 2009). Henkin and Holliman (2009) aver that conflicts in schools occur because the school belongs to the service sector, therefore, educators are under pressure to achieve and maintain standards of performance to satisfy the desire and

needs of the society. Due to this, Somech (2008) opines that there is always an increased likelihood for conflicts to emanate in schools and valuable amount of time is spent to resolve the problems that emanate from conflict or disagreement among school members (Achinstein, 2002; Bagshaw, Lepp & Zorn, 2007).

Classical theorists such as Fayol (1949) and Taylor (1911) consider conflicts in organisations, especially schools, to be a phenomenon that must be avoided owing to the negative toll of conflict on the management of schools (Rahim, 2011). This aversion by the classical theorists is in contrast with modern management perceptions of conflicts in organizations. According to Rahim (2011), modern management see conflicts in organizations as a positive indicator of organizational performance that contributes to better evaluation, decision making and effectiveness of the organization. To this, Rahim (2011) avows that it is inevitable to eliminate conflicts from organizations and any attempt to eliminate conflict may have rather a long-term effect on teamwork and individual workers' productivity. This aversion of Rahim (2011) is only true when conflicts in schools are seen as "a mutual problem that needs common consideration and solution" (Tjosvold, Hui & Sun, 2000, p. 6). It is only through this that conflicts in schools can positively impact on the creation of more creative ideas and the release of tension and goal clarification as problems prop up - thereby allowing the problems to be easily resolved and organizational performance improved (Fassoulis, 2006; Nir & Eyal, 2003; Rahim, 2000, 2001, 2002; Somech, 2008; Tjosvold & Hui, 2001; Tjosvold & Su Fang, 2004).

As the negative impact of conflicts in schools become critical, it may lead to counterproductive behaviours such as stress, regular absence among workers and students in the case of school set up, and lack of communication that have the potential

to harm human relations and jeopardize the school management and operation process (Androulakis & Stamatis, 2009; Balay, 2006; De Lima, 2001). This is because conflict may reduce the motivational level and performance of staff and students alike (Morris & Wilson, 2004; Rahim, 2001). Notwithstanding the negative and positive consequences of conflicts in schools, schools have increasingly become the centres of organizational conflicts as conflicts borne out of internal disagreement keeps increasing (Rahim, 2011).

Sources of conflict fall into three main categories thus Personal behaviour, Structural and Communication factors (Bondesio, 1992). Personal behavioural related conflict emanates due to the behavioural and attitudinal incompatibilities of persons in organizations (Bondesio, 1992). Structural related conflict is borne out of personal interest of individuals in managing and leading organizations as heads. To Bondesio (1992), communication-related conflict deals with incoherencies in how persons working in organizations understand and execute tasks and projects given them by their superiors in organizations. Bampoh-Addo and Ansah-Koi (2015) aver that conflict in universities in Ghana emanate from faculty related promotions (structural conflict), personal behaviour and communication factors.

According to Barsky (2002) some common sources of conflict within the school or universities pertaining to structure are competition, hierarchy, stressful work environment, and changes in the structure of the university or units within it. The aforementioned align with Bondesio's (1992) category of structural conflict. Some other common sources of conflict in the departments of higher education institutions, responsible for provoking jealousy, rupture, uneasiness and maltreatment, are appointments, merit and promotion processes, system for annual appraisal and tenure (Barsky, 2002). Moreover, faculty hiring decisions, inadequate space, personality

conflicts, belief systems held by faculty, limited resources, faculty retention, and diversity of issues are also sources of conflict in institutions (Stanley & Algert, 2007) and they fall under both personal and structural conflict (Bondesio, 1992). Competition among faculty members takes place due to insufficient resources, shrinking funds and undue division of resources, which has been identified as being responsible for most of the conflict in universities (Barsky, 2002). Insufficient and limited resources may be in the form of financial, manpower, equipment and information resources. Henry (2009) asserts that competition for limited resources accounts for 29% of conflict and interdependence accounts for 19% of conflicts in the organizations.

To Folger and Shubert (1995), colleges and universities are no longer seen as institutions which are free from conflicts that emanate due to hierarchical organizations. Differences in goals and plans for resource allocation, misinterpretation or inconsistent in the application of institutional regulations, breaches of formal or informal contracts, power struggles and personal hatred are possible sources of conflicts (Folger & Shubert, 1995). These assertions by Folger and Shubert (1995) align with the findings of Rahim (2001).

Due to the interest of scholars in conflicts in educational setups, research has given some attention to conflict in higher education although it is scanty. There are two main understandings of higher education in crises. One is how higher education exists within conflicts occurring in a larger society and then how internal conflicts within the higher education institutions affect the institutions. The focus of this study is on the latter.

Recognition of conflicts in higher education institutions also exist (Bampoh-Addoh & Ansah-Koi (2015; Rahim, 2011; Sati, 2014). For instance, Bampoh-Addo and Ansah-Koi (2015) have examined conflicts in Ghanaian Universities using interviews and surveys as data collection instruments. The study found that there are different internal

conflicts that are on-going in the higher education institutions. Bampoh-Addo and Ansah-Koi (2015) also found that Ghanaian universities are replete with faculty promotion-related conflicts that affect individual staff performance, and interactions among staff and productivity of the institution as a whole. The study revealed that conflicts, if not managed well, engender strife, feelings of resentment, aggressiveness, tension and hostility within an institution. Therefore, they argue that it is important to investigate and improve on how faculty promotion-related conflicts are resolved.

In another study, Rahim (2001) used a qualitative approach to investigate the factors that bring conflicts in universities. Rahim (2001) employed interview and document analysis as data collection methods and used the modernist theoretical approach to analyze the data. Rahim's (2001) study found that conflicts in universities emanate due to maltreatment of faculty staff by university leadership. The study also found that conflicts in universities emanate as a result of the biased promotion of staff and demotion of other staff who are seen as enemies to the leadership regime. Rahim (2001) suggests that constructive and creative conflict management aids in resolving conflicts in schools. The findings of Rahim (2001) is in line with Barsky's (2002) which found that conflicts in higher institutions are borne out of lack of proper administrative processes such as appointments, merit and promotion processes, and maltreatment of staff.

In a study to ascertain the occurrence of conflicts in schools, Saiti' (2014) has also investigated the potential sources of conflict and its management in Greek primary schools. Saiti's (2014) study purposively selected two primary schools in the urban region of Greece. The study employed questionnaires as a data collection instrument to select a sample of 414 respondents for the study.

Saiti's (2014) study found that conflicts do occur frequently among educators and the school departments as the majority of the respondents, representing 68.8%, indicated that conflicts often occur in the school. These respondents also indicated that the conflicts that emanate in the school among educators and school departments are often attributed to interpersonal and organizational reasons. Saiti's (2014) study found that good communication might reduce the possibilities of conflicts in the school as almost half of the respondents, representing 58.2%, indicated the show of maturity of school leaders and a well and stable structure of duties and regular environment of work were the factors that contributed to good communication. The study again discovered that conflict had a negative effect on the educators, school department and students alike because 44.9% of the respondents indicated that conflicts prevent the school to function efficiently. Saiti's (2014) study indicates that although conflicts occur in schools, it is always imminent in urban schools as there is a lot of power-play among individuals working in such schools. Saiti (2014) concluded that the cultivation of a constructive conflict management skill such as collaboration, integration and coherence in schools of conflicts in primary schools are significant strategies in managing and resolving conflicts.

Insights from the reviewed literature on conflict and its types enabled the researcher to understand and appreciate the issues discussed in the coverage of the UEW conflict, especially at the data analysis stage of this study.

2.4 Role of the Media in Conflict

The media serves as a mouthpiece of society especially the vulnerable and marginalized in society (Jakobsen, 2011). The media, mostly traditional media, give a lot of attention to occasional violent events when reporting conflict in society (Jakobsen, 2011). In reporting conflicts, the media often do not explain the ongoing processes, contexts or backgrounds in which the events occurred (Jakobsen, 2011). The author avers that this affects the understanding of the conflicts being covered.

The role of the media is not just limited to reportage of issues affecting society (thus conflict) but it is also to aid in building a peaceful society. To help build peace in the society, Jakobsen (2011) suggests the theory of peace journalism as a tool for journalists who strive to understand conflicts in a larger context. Jakobsen (2011) posits that the choices made by journalists when reporting conflicts in society affect not just other people's understanding but importantly, what is perceived to be the solution to the conflict. The author further states that not giving a background and context in which a conflict occurs affects the conflict and its outcomes.

According to Melon (2002), the media is very influential in society due to their ability to give their audience information about the society. The media, due to its influence, can shape the course of a conflict in society (Melon, 2002). Therefore, Melon (2002) notes that during conflicts, the media may either play an active role by increasing violence in the conflict or stay independent of the conflict, thereby, make contributions to the resolution of the conflict. In the context of this study, Melon's (2002) assertion is important because it helps to establish the role online news sites played in their reportage of the UEW conflict.

With a focus on investigating the role the mass media play in conflict management and resolution, Mensa and Acquah (2019) have examined the Tuabodom conflict in Ghana. The authors conducted a study to evaluate the role of the media in the Tuabodom conflict, as well as the residents' perceptions of the media's role in managing the Tuabodom conflict. They employed questionnaires and interviews as data collection instruments in gathering data for their study. With media framing as the theory underpinning their study, Mensa and Acquah (2019) found the conflict that occurs in Tuabodom was given impetus to aggravate through the reportage from the mass media. Thus, 20 respondents out of the total 60 respondents, representing 40 %, agreed that the kind of frames used by the media affects the resolution of the conflict. For instance, the respondents of the study highlighted that the use of stereotypical frames and wrong reportage by the media in referring to conflicting communities made it difficult for residents to reconcile with each other.

Mensa and Acquah's (2019) study also found that the lack of decorous expressions used by the panel of programmes during their discussion of the conflict contributed to the escalation of the conflict and not its resolution. Most importantly, Mensa and Acquah's (2019) study confirmed Jakobsen's (2011) assertion. Thus, it found that the mass media such as radio can aid in managing and resolving conflicts in society especially when accurate background information and facts are given to the society by the media. Thus, 40 respondents, representing 90% of respondents for the study, concluded that the media can help resolve conflicts. Mensa and Acquah's (2019) found that respondents were not happy with how the media framed the Tuabodom conflict and indicated that the kind of information given by the radio, for instance, was biased towards the conflicting communities.

Another study that examines the role of the media in conflict management and political change was conducted by Schoemaker and Stremmlau (2010). They sought to assess evidence of the media's role, especially print media, in contributing to conflict management and resolution through reportage. Schoemaker and Stremmlau (2010) made use of search strings to scan through 19 journal databases which aided in identifying 22,000 papers that reported on conflicts in Africa. These papers were filtered using publications in the selected year of study (2011) on 19 countries that recorded conflicts. The authors selected and reviewed 32 papers after the scanning process.

Upon analysis, Schoemaker and Stremmlau (2010) found that the media play a key role in managing and resolving conflicts. However, the realities that underpin the conflicts were insufficiently explored and understood - the media did not provide ample background to the conflict - thereby affecting media reportage on the conflict. Schoemaker and Stremmlau (2010) believe that the lack of background to the conflicts may affect how the media audience understand and interpret the cause of the conflict and its possible solution.

Also, Fransen (2017) conducted a study to explore the role the media plays in a corporate scandal with a focus on how the media framed a corporate scandal in Dutch Petroleum Corporation in Twente (Schoonebeek, Drenthe). Fransen's (2017) study was a qualitative case study that employed interviews and document analysis as data collection instruments. Fransen (2017) purposively sampled 16 newspapers that reported on the scandal about the Dutch oil company. Fransen (2017) also sampled 11 participants for the study using a non-probability sample strategy.

The study established that when there was a problem within the environment in which an organization operates, it affected the image of the organization as the media frame

the problem around everything in the environment of the organization thereby creating a bad image for the organization. For instance, Fransen (2017) indicated that a corporate organization suffered an image crisis because the environment in which the organization operates was involved in an earthquake and water pollution. The study also found that corporate organizations used the media to sustain a reliable image in the eyes of the public as the media were often engaged by corporate organizations to frame the organization's image in a positive light. The findings of Fransen (2017) may be helpful to the current study especially as the study seeks to examine the frames used by the online news sites on the UEW conflict and how their coverage affected the perspectives of staff and student of the university.

2.5 Theoretical framework

This study is underpinned by framing theory. Framing was first postulated by Bateson (1972) when he defined psychological frames as a spatial and transitory bounding set of interactive messages that functions as a form of meta-communication (Hallahan, 2008). According to Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2005), framing refers to how the mass media organize issues, topics and events. Framing describes the practice of thinking about news items and content of story within a familiar context. Framing theory has its basis hinged on the idea that media place attention on events and then place the events within a field of meaning (Entman, 1991).

Framing, as a theory of mass communication, refers to how the media packages and presents information to the public. According to the theory, the media highlights certain events and then places them within a particular context to encourage or discourage certain interpretations. In this way, the media exercises a selective influence on how

people view reality. Framing, as a theory, explicates that the media create frames by introducing news items with predefined and contextually narrowed perspective designed to enhance understanding of the news item or cognitively used as a shortcut to link stories to a bigger picture (Weaver, 2007). The theory of framing suggests that how the news media present news to their audience (which is called the frames) influence the choices of the audience about how to process the information given by the media (Entman, 1991).

Frames are defined as organising themes or ideas, linking stories together historically and building up a narrative over time and across political space (Weaver, 2007). Frame supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration (Scheufele, 2000). Frames, which are abstractions that work to structure message meaning, is commonly employed in terms of the frames the media places on information they convey to the audience. D'Angelo (2002) avers that frames that dominate news are believed to invariably dominate the audience. Dunwoody and Peters (1992) suggest that one function of frames for the audience is to make individuals act without placing much cognitive energy to the task. Frames in specific terms, affects the audience' perception of issues or topics by addressing certain values, considerations or facts with more obvious relevance to the topic than they might have under another frame (Nelson, Clawson & Oxley, 1997; Scheufele, 2000). Frames are properties of a news story that encourage those who perceive and think about events to elaborate particular understandings of the events (Entman, 1991).

Entman (1993) avers that to frame is “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in communicating context in such a way as to promote a particular definition of problem, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment

recommendation” (p.52). In simple terms, how the news media presents news influences what their audience members think about issues, people and events covered in the news (Durfee, 2006). Entman (1991) opines that “frames are difficult to fully and reliably detect as many of the framing devices can assume a natural appearance, using unremarkable choices of words or images” (p.6). However, comparing the nature of frames reveals that such choices are not unavoidable but rather they are central to the way the news frames establish the widespread interpretation of events (Weaver, 2007).

Media frames activate knowledge structures about physical things and events in our environment (Dunwoody & Peters, 1992). In this cognitive process, individuals activate parts of their prior knowledge that aids them to form interpretations; therefore, how individuals perceive events in their environment occurs at a point of contact of frames and the individuals’ prior knowledge (D’Angelo, 2002; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Gamson and Modigliani (1989) opine media discourse is made up of a set of interpretive packages that give meaning to an issue. The core of this package’s internal structure is a main organizing frame or idea used to make sense of relevant events (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). In furtherance of Gamson and Modigliani (1989) assertion, Gitlin (1980) states that media frames organize the world for both journalists who report it, and for the general public who relies on the report of the journalists.

People’s exposure to media frames, Scheufele (1999) suggests, helps to develop in their minds, what he termed as, cognitive schemas about issues and topics or “audience frames” in which the manner and way people understand the news is a function of the frames given to them by the mass media. Writing on the importance attached to an evolving bio-economy, Scheufele (1999) state that the way the media frame topics bordering on energy, for instance, can shape how the audience perceives the issue of energy, the importance they assign to them, and the feasibility of embarking on a

national effort to produce fuel from alternative sources like biomass. Due to how the media frame issues, scientists, for instance, are worried about the inaccuracies in news reports that distort scientific findings and consequently, public perceptions of scientific research results and other products of the scientific enterprise (Scheufele, 1999). This is because audiences need accurate information to make their judgments about risks or any kind of scientific message disseminated by the media (Scheufele, 1999). In line with Scheufele's (1999) assertion, Dunwoody and Peters (1992) opine that the news media have faced criticisms about science because of omissions of relevant information and taking "results out of context".

Goffman (1974) opines that people interpret what is going on in their world through their primary framework, which is often taken for granted by the user. Goffman (1974) asserts that there are two distinctions within primary frames, thus natural and social, and adds that both play the role of assisting individuals to interpret data. The difference between the natural and social primary framework is evident in how they function (Goffman, 1974). As the natural frameworks identify events as physical occurrences which takes natural quote without attributing any social forces to the causation of events, social frameworks perceive events as socially driven occurrences as a result of the goals and manipulations on the part of other social players although the social framework is built on the natural framework (Goffman, 1974).

It is important to note that Goffman's (1974) assertion aligns with the literature which points to the fact that the tone of media coverage is a factor is media framing. Thus, there is a link between the news frames used in reporting issues and the tone of coverage (Barnes, Hanson, Novilla, Meachan, McIntyre & Erickson, 2008; Hart, 2011). Thus, both natural and social frameworks and the frames they create in the communication of individuals influence how data is interpreted, processed and communicated (Goffman,

1974). Evidence has also established that the inclusion or omission of certain words by the media in their coverage of a subject influence how news consumers to form meaning, manage information and arrive at decisions (Barnes et al, 2008; Hart, 2011). According to Pavelka (2013) media tone has to do with the manner in which the media presents the issue to the public. This takes two forms - the frequency of presenting particular topics in the media and the manners in which the media deals with topics.

Hence, news stories can have a neutral, negative or positive tone towards the issue being reported due to the interpretations the media give to the issues they cover and repetition of such frames. In the context of the current study, this implies that the natural and social frameworks of news consumers will make them interpret the online news stories on the UEW conflict in a positive, neutral or negative light due to the inclusion or omission certain words in their coverage. This will enable the researcher to establish the tones the online news sites used in their coverage of the UEW conflict.

Baumgartner and Jones (1991) opine that media coverage of an issue has two dimensions, thus attention and valence. Whereas attention is closely connected to the salience of frames used by media, valence gives specificity to the tonality of the frames used by the media. De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003) state that certain frames are by themselves inherently valenced, as journalists emphasize the tonality of frames by portraying an issue in terms of good (positive) or bad (negative). Just like frames, tones also influence audience members to think in a certain way about a particular issue covered by the news media (Brunken, 2006). For instance, Brunken (2006) avers that if a content is negatively framed, audience members tend to have more negative attitudes towards the topic covered by the news media.

Guenduez, Schedler and Ciocan (2016) conducted a quantitative study to explore the feasibility and usefulness of five generic frames in analyzing the framing practices in a multifaceted journalistic field from 2008 to 2013. The focus of the study was to examine how Swiss media outlets framed a highly polarizing policy of the Swiss government's clean money policy. Guenduez *et al.*, (2016) study gathered data through a content analysis of 1175 news stories published from February 2008 to September 2013 in the Swiss press. As German, French and Italian are the three widely spoken languages in Switzerland, Guenduez *et al.*, (2016) study selected newspapers and magazines published in the three most widely spoken languages in Switzerland and employed news stories that dealt with the government of Switzerland clean money policy implemented after the global economic crunch of 2008 as the unit of analysis.

Guenduez *et al.*, (2016) study found that media framing of issue using conflict and responsibility frames is closely related to the use of negative tonality as indicated in the newspapers analyzed. German-speaking newspapers framed the Swiss government's clean money policy as a political issue to salvage the image of the government. This frame, which indicates the government of Swiss created the crisis and is responsible for dealing with the economic crisis was given a negative tone, especially in the selected German newspapers and magazines as 44.8% of news stories discussed in *Blick* and *Weltwoche* predominantly used a negative tone in their coverage of the clean money policy.

Guenduez *et al.*, 's (2016) study found that framing issue neutrally is linked to the more sparing use of both conflicts as a frame and responsibility as a frame. By employing less conflict and responsibility frames, the French and Italian newspapers used a neutral tone as they distanced themselves from the German newspapers. Guenduez *et al.*, 's (2016) study concluded that supplementing generic frames (conflict, responsibility,

economic consequences, human interest and morality) through the tonality expressed in news stories enhances analytical quality.

To make identification of news frame easy, Entman (1991) suggested five popular frames the media use for news stories. These are conflict, human interest, consequence, morality and responsibility frames. The media frame news around conflict by giving priority to issues on the parties involved in the conflict against the actual decision made which led to the conflict. When the news is framed around human interest or personality, the story is presented with a human face whereas the consequence frame focusses on the outcome of actions taken. When the media frame news around morality, issues about the indiscretions of political actors or alternative policies are given attention by the news media through news coverage (Entman, 1991). The responsibility frame is used when the media concentrate on the attribution of a solution or a cause of a problem. Valkenburg, Semetko and Vreese (1999) however, point out four ways in which the news media commonly frame news. These are by emphasizing conflicts between individuals or groups, by focusing on emotions or an individual as an example, by attributing responsibility, crediting or blaming individuals or institutions, and by focusing on economic outcomes.

Entman (1991) avers that there are two types of frames, thus specific and generic frames. Specific frames deal with the consequences and issues of responsibility as the generic frames deals with conflict and the game of politics as against frames of value (Entman, 1991). On levels of frames used by the news media, Entman (1991) opines two, namely frame in communication (which consist of communication from different actors and sources of the news which could be positive or negative), and framing in thought (which is made up of mental representation, interpretation, simplification and manipulation of reality) (Entman, 1991).

There is a clear conceptual intersection between framing as a theory (Weaver, 2007) and the second level agenda setting because framing as a theory is similar to the second level of agenda setting which examines the relative importance of attributes of issues (Ghanem, 1997; McCombs, 2005). Framing is sometimes referred to as second-level agenda setting because of its close relation to the Agenda-Setting Theory of McCombs and Shaw (1972) - which describes the "ability to influence the importance placed on the topics of the public agenda". It focuses on how media draws the eye of the public to specific issues by setting an agenda and then moving further to create a frame through which the audience will understand such information. As Giles (2010) points out, its basic idea lies in the fact that a frame is a combination of various media elements, such as a headline, photograph, and text. Every single statement can be put into a particular frame. Such a frame can then be used to influence the audience's attitudes and opinions. According to Giles and Shaw (2009) - who offered a complex concept of the media framing analysis - several areas should be carefully observed within the framing process. These are the story, its characters, its narrative form, the language used and the way in which the story is interconnected with other stories/topics (i.e. its generalization). This generalization forms a media template (Giles & Shaw, 2009).

Though framing theory is related to the agenda-setting tradition, it expands beyond how the mass media colours a particular event for their media audiences by focusing on the essence of the issues at hand rather than on a particular topic (Matsaganis & Payne, 2005). According to Kitzinger (2000), agenda setting helps the audience make sense of new information. Also, agenda setting theory elaborates the connection in terms of relationships between the emphasis that the mass media put as an issue and the media audiences or the public's reaction or attributes to such issue (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). However, the basis of framing theory is that the media focuses attention on certain

events and then places them within a field of meaning. Framing theory goes further to explain that the way in which the news is presented. It frame refers to the way media, as gatekeepers, organize and present the ideas, events, and topics they cover. This creates a frame for that information.

Frames are abstractions that work to organize or structure message meaning. They are systems of pre-conceived ideas used to organize and interpret new information. The most common use of frames is in terms of how the media frame the news or the spin the media place on the information they convey (Kahlström & Norin, 2012). The argument is that framing theory suggests that how something is presented to the audience and influences the choices people make about how to process that information (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009; Pavelka, 2013). They are thought to influence the audience's perspectives of the news. In this way, it could be construed as a form of second level agenda-setting because they do not only tell the audience what to think about (agenda-setting theory), but also how to think about that issue (second level agenda setting, framing theory).

To examine media frames and its impacts on audience perception, Chang (2009) conducted a qualitative content analysis to analyze the frames some newspapers in the USA state of Iowa used in reporting the issue of biofuels and how these media frames influenced the perceptions of the newspapers' audience. Chang's (2009) study purposively sampled three newspapers, thus, *Des Moines Register*, *Cedar Rapids Gazette* and *Davenport Quad City Times* over one year (from September 2007 to September 2008). Chang (2009) used a complete article as the unit of analysis to examine the how the newspapers framed the issue and also used a cross-sectional survey to investigate how it influenced audience's perceptions on the issue.

Chang's (2009) study found that the media framed the biofuel on economic consequences, technology and food versus fuel. Thus, the media presented events, problems, or issues of biofuel in terms of its economic impacts on the society. This finding buttresses Valkenburg *et al.* (1999) claim when they suggested that the news media commonly frame issues around economic repercussions and impacts on society. Chang's (2009) study also found that the news media framed the issue of biofuel on technology as the news discussed biofuels as a new and efficient technology in producing fuel, which was technically seen as a new alternative energy source. The study also found that the news media framed the biofuel issue on the frame of food versus fuel as most of the news stories consider the risk of diverting farmland or crops for biofuels production and use to the detriment of the food supply on a local or global scale.

Chang's (2009) study found that media frames shape the perceptions of the audience as the study concluded that the audience perceived biofuels as a danger to food and crop production thereby affecting food supply to their local community. This finding is in line with Valkenburg *et al.* (1999) assertion that media frame issues by attributing responsibility, blaming or crediting individuals or institutions for certain consequences on their environment.

Chang's (2009) study provides the current study with insights on how media frames affect the perceptions of the audience as the current study seeks to investigate how issues about the UEW conflict were framed by Ghanaian news sites as well as how staff and students of the university perceived the coverage by the news sites. It is important to note that while Chang (2009) uses qualitative content analysis and survey to study framing of biofuel in newspapers and audience's perception on the issue, this study uses

document analysis and interviews to investigate framing of the UEW conflict and the perspectives of staff and students on the coverage of the conflict.

2.6 Media Framing of Conflicts

Media framing of conflict has been a subject that is pervasive in the literature (Mitchell, 2014; Mitra, 2016; Morris, 2018; Nicolás, 2011). The media is known as an important actor in conflicts monitoring and framing (De Echave *et al*, 2009) that provides public visibility (Rubenstein *et al*, 1994) and accelerates or decelerates conflict dynamics (Strohm, 1999). It is argued that the media provide accessibility for different audiences to understand the conflict through a narrative form (Mander, 1999), and help shape and define conflict issues by providing an interpretive framework (Lederach, 1991). This interpretive framework promotes the involvement of other actors and draws the attention of government officials to conflicts, its causes and possible resolutions (Macassi, 2011). Additionally, news coverage promotes global discussion of the conflict and influence interpersonal exchanges and conversations of the conflict from different perspectives (Tichenor, Donohue & Olien, 1999).

Nelson (2019) explored how *Russian Television* (RT) and *Voice of America* (VoA) framed the conflict of the Russian-Ukrainian war of 2011 and the Arab Spring of 2011 respectively in their coverage. By way of comparative study, Nelson's study sought to identify the frames employed in reporting the conflicts to determine whether the coverage produced frame effects that were supportive of foreign policies of the countries. He employed Galtung's concept of peace journalism as an analytical lens for a frame analysis. Nelson (2019), in his analysis of how the two media entities framed the conflicts, concluded that editorial synchronization was observed not only between

RT and the Russian government, but also between Voice of America and the US government.

In another study that sought to ascertain the dominant frames and perception of media audience on conflicts, Ezegwu, Udoyo and Chime-Nganya (2017) conducted a study to examine Nigerian newspaper framing and the perception of University students on the Gambian political conflict. Their study aimed at ascertaining the dominant frames employed by Nigerian newspapers (*The Guardian*, *The Punch* and *Vanguard*) and the influence of the framing on the newspaper's audience. It employed questionnaires and content analysis as data collection instruments to gather data for the study. Ezegwu et al's. (2017) study purposively sampled content of three daily newspapers published between the period of December 2016 and January 2017 and randomly selected 400 undergraduate students of the University of Oyo.

Ezegwu et al (2017) found that Nigerian newspapers employed several frames during reportage of the Gambian political conflict. However, the dominant frames used were the rescue frame which represented 65% of the issues reported by the newspapers, followed by political frame which represented 22%, and economic frame representing 12% of the issues reported by the newspapers. They also discovered that the newspaper reportage on the Gambian conflict influenced the perceptions of their audience as 272 respondents, representing 74%, indicated that the reports on the Gambian conflict were simple and interpretative which aided the audience to have a better understanding of the Gambian conflict. This finding is in tandem with the framing theory which is premised on the assumption that the manner and way in which issues are characterized in news reports can influence how the audience understand the issues (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Findings from the study also revealed that the rescue frame, which was one of the dominant frames used by the newspapers, influenced the audience of the newspapers as the respondents of the study opted for the military intervention of the Economic Community of West African States and other foreign governments in dealing with the Gambian conflict. Ezegwu et al's (2017) study concluded that the frames used by newspapers in writing their stories had a way of shaping the perceptions of the newspaper audience to think towards a particular direction and proffer possible solution to a problem based on the information given in the news reportage.

Whereas these propositions are visible about how the media frames social conflicts affecting society, there is not much literature on how media coverage of organizational conflicts, such as the conflict in UEW, frames such conflicts and this is the thrust of this study. Therefore, in the analysis of the media coverage of the UEW conflict, this study explores the framing of issues about the conflict by online news portals and the perspectives of UEW staff and students on the coverage by the news sites.

2.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, framing which is the theoretical framework that underlines the study is explained. As discussed in the chapter, the effects of adopting framing are overtly visible in how it contributes to understanding the conflict, its processes and dynamics as well as resolution considerations. The chapter also reviewed literature on the concept of conflict, conflict in organizations, the role of the media in conflict, media and conflict framing and empirical literature underpinning the study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methodological steps and procedures used in the collection and analysis of data for this study. It captures the research approach, the research design, sampling techniques, data collection methods and data analysis techniques employed by this study. This is in line with the thinking of Powell and Connaway (2004) who argued that a research methodology is an aggregation of multiple steps a researcher employs in a study with the aim of attaining higher levels of validity and reliability.

3.1 Research Approach

The approach to this research is qualitative. Qualitative research approach, as opposed to quantitative research approach, is theoretical and interpretive in nature (Brennen, 2017; Creswell, 2013). It emphasizes an understanding of complex concepts and making sense of language which is generally based on human experiences and relationships (Brennen, 2017). Qualitative studies highlight latent meanings other than the quantity of events (Hancock, 2002). This idea is duly corroborated by Kvale (1996, p.11) who argued that qualitative research is not “objective data to be quantified, but meaningful relations to be interpreted”. Creswell (2013) also argued that qualitative research is mainly concerned with examining or exploring the meanings people attach to social phenomenon rather than measuring a situation using predetermined yardsticks.

This is due to the argument that social realities are individually constructed based on preconceived thoughts and personal experiences (Creswell, 2013).

This study set out to examine how some selected news sites in Ghana among other things, framed issues about the UEW conflict with its inherent experiences and interactions. This study is targeted at exploring how the patterns of emphasis and exclusion in news coverage create frames that can have considerable effects on news consumers' perspectives and attitudes regarding UEW. It becomes conclusive that this study explores the subjective meanings Ghanaian news portals attached to the phenomenon under investigation. Qualitative research approach, therefore, becomes the most preferred research approach based on the nature of this study.

3.2 Research Design

Research designs are purposefully created to draw a master plan with which the entire research is carried out (Zikmund & Babin, 2007). Research designs are tailored to suit the focus of the research, the objectives of the research as well as the researcher's own experiences and philosophical position (Creswell, 2013).

Taking into account the focus and the aims of this study, a case study design was employed. Primarily, a case study design is used when a researcher wants to probe deeper into a phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Mostly, the research questions tend to determine the research design appropriate for the study. To Yin (2009), a case study may be relevant when a researcher's research questions are tailored in a way that would explain a present occurrence. Yin (2009) presents a twofold definition in explaining what a case study is. Firstly, "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a

contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident” (p. 18). Secondly,

the case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (p. 18).

Corroboratively, Creswell (2013) also posits that case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports a case description and case themes. This study gathers data from multiple sources - document analysis and interviews – to explore the phenomenon under investigation.

Per the above authors’ explication, the case study design is adopted for the study because it affords the researcher an appropriate scientific justification to thoroughly investigate the phenomenon of media framing and how some selected online news portals in Ghana portrayed issues about the UEW conflict in their news stories. Adapting Creswell’s (2013) definition to suit my study, the internet or the online space is a contemporary bounded system and data was collected over a period of time through document analysis.

3.3 Sampling Technique

To Daymon and Holloway (2011), qualitative approaches demand different sampling techniques from the randomly selected and probabilistic sampling which quantitative researchers generally use. The underlying principle of gaining thick and rich information generally guides the sampling strategies of qualitative researchers. Hence, under the qualitative research approach, the object or subject selected for the study, where and when, depends on certain criteria which are determined by the purpose of the study. The term purposive or purposeful sampling, therefore, is applied (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Lindlof and Taylor (2002) also note that no qualitative researcher can capture every event as it unfolds, hence, the purposeful selection of data sites for a particular study. The two scholars further acknowledge that the right choice of a sampling strategy enables researchers to make a systematic contact with communicative phenomena with a minimum of wasted effort. In line with the above assertions, purposive sampling was adopted for this study. Hence, two online news portals studied and the participants for this study were purposively selected to gain rich and in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon under study,

3.4 Sample Size

Daymon and Holloway (2001) refer to qualitative research as small-scale studies. In their view, qualitative researchers are interested in deep exploration in order to provide rich, detailed, holistic description – as well as an explanation. Therefore, small samples are the norm.

Daymon and Holloway (2001, p. 158) also note that,

... it is not necessary to specify the exact number of informants in the sample, although you are expected to indicate the numbers involved in your initial sample,

that is, ‘the initial sample will consist of x number of informants’. This sampling strategy differs from quantitative research where you choose all participants before the project begins.

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) corroborate the assertions of Daymon and Holloway (2001) with the view that the sample size is the terra incognita of qualitative sampling strategy. No tests or coefficients exist to tell the researcher when the sample is big enough. Also, Perrin (2001) asserts that the process of reading and coding text is so time-consuming that studies using qualitative techniques tend to be relatively small. The appropriate number of participants chosen for research depend on the type of research question, the type of qualitative approach used in the study, material and time resources as well as the number of researchers involved in the study (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Per the above explanation, this research purposively selected the top two Ghanaian news portals as established by Agyarko-Mensah (2019) and Frimpong (2018) in their study on online news in Ghana. These top two Ghanaian online news portals (in no particular order) are myjoyonline.com and citifmonline.com. Stories on the conflict from the news portals were sampled for a period of 32 months which span from April 2017 to December 2019. This is because Austmann (2015) suggests that a study that seeks to probe into media framing of crisis should consider a considerable number of stories that span from the inception of the issues all the way to point where the issues appeared to be dying out. Using a paragraph as a unit of analysis, the study sampled 1,220 paragraphs from the two selected Ghanaian online news sites.

The decision regarding the selected sample for the interview was taken by a researcher based on the participants’ knowledge on the issue under study as well as the willingness of the participants to take part in the study (Oliver, 2006). Thus, this places them in a

better position to share their perspectives on the issue under investigation. In view of Oliver's (2006) assertion, ten (10) participants (5 students and 5 staff of the University of Education, Winneba) were sampled with the view of examining their perceptions on the media framing of the UEW conflict. This consist of 3 undergraduate students, 2 graduate students, 2 junior staff and 3 senior staff.

3.5 Data Collection Method

Spencer and Snape (2003) aver that certain data collection methods have also been identified with qualitative research such as observational methods, in-depth interviewing, group discussions, narratives, and the analysis of documentary evidence. In this study, the researcher employed document analysis and interview as data collection methods.

3.5.1 Document analysis

Document analysis “is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material... in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge” on an issue under investigation (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). As a research method, document analysis is particularly applicable to qualitative case studies—intensive studies producing rich descriptions of a single phenomenon, event, organisation, or program (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Bowen (2009) defines document analysis as a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material. It is asserted that “document analysis yields data...that are organised into major themes, categories, and case

examples specifically through content analysis” (Labuschagne as cited by Bowen,2009, p.28).

Daymon and Holloway (2001) aver that documents consist of words and images that have been recorded without the intervention of a researcher. They are in written, printed, sound, visual and digital forms. To Bowen (2009), documents can take various forms like advertisements, attendance registers, and minutes of meetings; manuals; background papers; books and brochures; diaries and journals; letters and memoranda; maps and charts and newspaper.

Both Stake (1995) and Yin (1994) state that analysing documents is a useful method because of its unobtrusive, non-reactive nature. This assertion is apt since the researcher did not create or co-create the electronic documents retrieved because they were posted before this study and without the researcher’s knowledge. This makes the documents naturalistic and also possess a built-in level of authenticity (Leavy, 2014).

In the case of this study, the researcher retrieved and analysed online news stories about the UEW conflicts that were published by the sampled top two Ghanaian online news portals within the period of study.

3.5.2 Interview

As a core feature of qualitative research, interviews aid a researcher to understand the experiences and perspectives of social actors on a phenomenon under study (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Qualitative interview is an event in which an interviewee is encouraged by an interviewer to freely articulate his/her experiences and interests with the aim of the interviewer gathering information, gaining insights and understanding the interviewee’s (respondent) perspectives and experiences that can hardly be observed

using other means (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). In situations whereby a researcher wants to obtain unique information or interpretation held by study respondents, interviews are used (Stake, 2010). Stake (2010) avers that, in interviewing respondents, the interview should be semi-structured and conversational with the interviewer asking probing questions to elicit, clarify and refine the information and interpretation. The interview questions should not be complicated and put to all the respondents in the same manner and way (Stake, 2010). Creswell (2014) avers that qualitative researchers in conducting interviews, should resort to face-to-face or telephone interviews with participants. The nature of the interview should be unstructured and generally be open-ended questions that are few with the intention of eliciting participants' views and opinions (Creswell, 2014).

The current study resorted to the use of a telephone interview as a method in gathering data on how the selected study participants perceived the UEW conflict as reported by the selected Ghanaian online news sites. Thus, it became difficult for the current study to employ face-to-face interviews due to the COVID-19 pandemic, hence, telephone interview with study participants was resorted to in order to gather the views and perspectives of the participants.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

This section outlines the steps the researcher followed in order to gather the data for this study. Description of the details at every step taken under each data collection methods are enumerated below:

3.6.1 Document analysis

For each of the purposively selected online news portal, the researcher used the search engine on the sites to search for the stories about the conflict. Thus, 'UEW conflict/crisis' was entered as the keyword. From the news stories that popped up, the ones that covered the crisis and were within the period of study were selected. The selected news stories and their accompanying images were then retrieved and stored in MS Word document. This procedure was followed to select all the news stories on the UEW conflict within the period of study from the two online news portals.

After the compilation and storage of retrieved news stories and accompanying images in Microsoft Word, the researcher converted the Word documents into PDF files to prevent possible changes from being made to the data mistakenly. The documents were then printed for analysis. This procedure follows Altheide and Schneider's (2013) advice of saving the data retrieved for later research because it can be more easily searched and it is a more secure way of reviewing data since the researcher can go back to it at any given time in the course of the study.

To gather data for the study, the researcher first skimmed through the stories and later engaged it closely putting down descriptive notes at every stage in order to gain a detailed understanding of the contents. After having a full grasp of the issues that were espoused in the data, the researcher began coding. The recurrent issues in the news stories were identified to derive a code by ascribing labels to them. The researcher later subsumed the codes into fewer themes since some of them were interwoven. The researcher coded the rest of the data based on the codes that emerged. He kept notes on insights, ideas, patterns, and connections that emerge during the researcher's

engagement with the data (Benaquisto & Given, 2008). The notes helped him to keep track of the emergent definitions of codes and their distinctive criteria.

3.6.2 Interview

To gather data for the study through interviews, the researcher first called the purposively selected participants to outline the focus of the study and the need to interview them for their perspectives on the issue under investigation. Thus, the researcher established a rapport with the study participants by introducing himself and explaining the rationale and purpose of the study. This was to first seek their consent then to ensure that there was some flexibility and conducive atmosphere for the participants to freely share their perspectives through the interviews (Holstein, 2002). Upon approval from the study participants, the convenient dates and times for the interviews were agreed on. Using a designed interview guide, the researcher conducted the interviews in an informal manner which allowed participants to feel relaxed and speak in a language they were conversant with. To examine the perspectives of the study participants, the researcher asked questions that were derived from the questions underpinning the study. All the interviews were conducted in the English language and at the convenience of the study participants.

Ten different interview sessions were conducted with the study participants with each interview lasting between 10 to 15 minutes. The interviews with participants were conducted via telephone. The Call Recorder Application on the phone was used to record the interview. The researcher then transcribed the interviews into a word format and cleaned the transcripts for easy coding, analysis and interpretation.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis – Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis

This study employed the qualitative content analysis as its data analysis method. The goal of content analysis is “to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p. 314). The above definition resonates with the case study design which seeks to study a phenomenon in-depth for a better understanding and interpretation. “Content analysis is the intellectual process of categorizing qualitative textual data into clusters of similar entities, or conceptual categories, to identify consistent patterns and relationships between variables or themes” (Julien, 2008, p. 120). This method of data analysis is a way of reducing and making sense of data and also deriving meaning. It is a commonly used method of analysing a wide range of textual data that might be in verbal, print or electronic form, including interview transcripts, manuals, recorded observations, narratives, responses to open-ended questionnaire items, speeches, postings to listeners, and media such as drawings, photographs, and videos (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Julien, 2008).

Some of the works that the researcher reviewed on the phenomenon of media framing employed content analysis as a data analysis method. For instance, Evers (2016) also used the content analysis method when he probed the frames and tones of the media coverage of the refugee crisis in Europe. Ayikpa (2015) also used content analysis to ascertain how the two Ghanaian newspapers covered flooding in Accra. Based on the above explications, the current study employed the content analysis approach to analyse data in order to understand, to gain new insights and interpret the stories on the UEW conflict shared by the Ghanaian online news portals. Furthermore, the researcher went through the systematic process of analysing the data collected from the news portals by

first skimming (superficial examination), reading closely, organizing the information into categories and themes and finally making interpretations.

Thematic analysis was also used to analyse the interview data. The responses of the study participants were also coded into the category of themes, which were later subsumed into fewer themes since most of the categories of the themes were interwoven with each other.

3.8 Ethical Issues

Bowen (2009) states that in a research, the researcher is expected to demonstrate objectivity (seeking to represent the research material fairly) and sensitivity (responding to even subtle cues to meaning) in the selection and analysis of data from documents. Ultimately with “passive research” online (i.e. studying pre-existing content), one must be ethically concerned about the use of comments or stories of individuals or organisations (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 81). However, if the site is intended to reach the general public the material may be freely analysed and quoted to the degree necessary in the research without consent (Austmann, 2015; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Aligning with this assertion, Altheide and Schneider (2013) posit that researchers must be mindful that collecting certain data from the internet may require ethical approval, however, other data that are posted to publicly accessible group pages as public information are probably safe for collection. Since the online news stories on the UEW conflict are public, they are accessible to every internet user. Moreover, these stories are published online for news consumers, therefore, do not “have an expectation of privacy concerning the stories or the entities these stories concern” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 81). Finally, many studies (Austmann, 2015; Ayikpa, 2015;

Brandfog, 2016; Evers, 2016; Jameson, 2014) have been conducted by retrieving and analysing data from online news blogs or portals without the researchers seeking the consent of the online news blogs or the entities whom the stories concern before collecting the needed data. News stories on the UEW conflict from the Ghanaian online news portals are public, thus, are accessible to everyone once they visit these online news portals, therefore, using it as a data source in this study does not breach ethical considerations.

With regard to the interview, the researcher sought the consent of the study participants before the interview was conducted. Creswell (2013) also avows that the researcher must be mindful of study participants privacy and confidentiality when conducting a qualitative study. Hence pseudo names were given to all the study participants. the names of the staff were represented with letters A-E while that of students were replaced with number 1-5.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the process of the research and the method of data analysis. Firstly, it highlighted the approach of research used and the design suitable for the study. Secondly, it shed light on the sampling method and size and at every stage rationalises to suit the study. Finally, it discussed the method of data collection and analysis in detail and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

The chapter analyses the data collected for the study and discusses the findings derived from the data collected from the document analysis of the news stories on the UEW conflict and the interviews from study participants. Content analysis was used by the researcher to analyse the data gathered from the study. The data was simplified into numerous thematic units to make analysis and interpretation of the data easy. Each theme was described thoroughly and critically using insights from the theory and relevant literature reviewed to reflect the objectives of the study.

The study was guided by the following research questions during the analysis stage:

1. How did the Ghanaian news sites cover issues on the UEW conflict?
2. What is the tone of coverage of the UEW conflict by online news sites?
3. What are the perspectives of UEW staff and students on the coverage of issues on the conflict by the Ghanaian news sites?

4.1. RQ1: How did the Ghanaian news sites cover issues on the UEW conflict?

To answer this research question, content analysis of the sampled thousand two hundred and twenty paragraphs from the news stories from citifmonline.com and myjoyonline.com within the period of study was carried out. The researcher read

through the paragraphs and categorized issues covered by the news sites into the themes: power struggle between parties within the university's stakeholders; poor administrative procedures and victimisation by university's management; resolution of the conflict as the responsibility of the university's stakeholders and protraction of the conflict as a result of some actions taken by the university's stakeholders. The themes identified from the data are in sync with the five frames outlined by Entman (1991). These are *conflict, human interest, consequence, morality and responsibility*. Findings on the frames used to present issues about the UEW conflict on the online portals are presented in the order of dominance in table 1 below:

Table 1: Frames used in the coverage of the UEW conflict

Frames	Citifmonline.com N (%)	Myjoyonline.com N (%)	Total N (%)
Conflict	302 (24.75%)	86 (7.05%)	388 (31.80%)
Morality	253 (20.74%)	69 (5.66%)	322 (26.40%)
Consequences	162 (13.28%)	53 (4.34%)	215 (17.62%)
Human interest	98 (8.03%)	46 (3.77%)	144 (11.80%)
Responsibility	97 (7.95%)	54 (4.43%)	151 (12.38%)
Grand Total	912 (74.75%)	308 (25.25%)	1, 220 (100%)

Source: Field data

4.1.1 Conflict frame (*Power play between parties involved in the crisis*)

Findings from Table 1 revealed that the news sites dominantly used the conflict frame in their coverage of the UEW crisis. Out of the total of 1,220 paragraphs analysed, 388 paragraphs, which indicate 31.80%, used the conflict frame. The conflict frame had the highest frequency in the coverage by both citifmonline.com and myjoyfmonline.com as it recorded 24.75% and 7.05% respectively of the total paragraphs.

In explaining the conflict frame, Entman (1991) posits that the media frame news around conflict by giving priority to the parties in the conflict than the actual decision made which led to the conflict. Issues about the power play between parties dominated in the coverage of the conflict. The online news sites, in reporting the UEW conflict, did not give much focus to the decision that led to the conflict but focused on issues about personalities/parties involved in the power play that led to the conflict. The conflict was framed as a struggle between the immediate past and the current VCs of the institution. For instance, the March 29, 2019 story about the conflict by myjoyonline.com reports that

Rev Prof Afful-Broni must step aside for peace to prevail. They have made an appeal to the Papacy for the ‘recall and re-assignment of Rev. Fr. Prof. Afful-Broni...to save the church from further embarrassment.’ The Man of God is being accused by those on the other side of the feud of being vindictive. Since Prof. Afful-Broni ascended to the highest office of the university, some thirty staff have either been dismissed or have their ranks reduced. What these members of staff have in common is that they are believed to have sympathies for Prof. Afful Broni’s predecessor, Mawutor Avoke who was ousted in Rambo style (para. 4- 5).

Thus, the above quotation shows that the focus of the paragraphs is on the Rev. Fr. Prof. Afful-Broni as a Catholic priest and VC. It has been avowed by Entman (1993) that to frame is “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in

communicating context in such a way as to promote a particular definition of problem, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation” (p.52). In making the current VC more salient in this coverage, the issue/problem of dismissing staff who sympathize with the former VC is defined, the causal interpretation that the VC dismissed the staff because he is vindictive is made and the moral evaluation that he is a man of God is used to make the recommendation that he should be reassigned by the Pope to save the church from embarrassment and step down for peace to prevail.

The analysis of the data suggested that the UEW conflict was often presented as a power play between the top hierarchies of the University management who wanted to lead the university. Thus, some of the coverage from the sites framed the taking over of the VC’s position by the current VC as “coup d’état” (citifmonline.com, July 14 2019, para. 1), as the ousting of the former VC “ in Rambo style” (myjoyonline.com, March 29, 2019, para. 5) and as the storming of the former VC to campus to reinstate himself (myjoyonline.com, July 23, 2019). This portrays an interpretative framework of a power struggle between the former and the current VCs and does not focus on the decisions that led to the crisis. Entman (1991) avers that “frames are difficult to fully and reliably detect as many of the framing devices can assume a natural appearance, using unremarkable choices of words or images” (p.6). However, comparing the nature of frames reveals that such choices are not unavoidable but rather they are central to the way the news frames establish the widespread interpretation of events (Weaver, 2007). This implies that choice of words like *coup d’état*, *Rambo style*, *storms* as used by the sites are central to the interpretation of the issue of power struggle to establish the conflict news frame.

The data also revealed that the parties involved in the conflict were given prominence and framed as contributing to the conflict in the university due to their parochial interest. For example, the December 19, 2019, report of the UEW crisis by citifmonline.com focused on the newly appointed Council Chairman of the university. The Council Chairman was presented as being interested in enjoying his position and power as the council chair than to find a lasting solution to the UEW impasse. Thus,

...sadly, you have ignored all the good advice in my previous open letter to you and now you seem to be basking in the eddy currents of the UEW 'Pharaoh' leadership (i.e. headteacher and primary pupils' relationships). Can't you realise you are not your normal self anymore? I want to wake you up from the "spell influence" over you since you attended the 19th September 2019 commissioning of the 5-storey block of flats at the UEW North campus, SSNIT Road, Winneba (para. 2-3).

Thus, the Council Chairman is presented as "basking in the eddy currents of the UEW Pharaoh leadership" than listening to earlier advice given to him. According to Gamson and Modigliani (1987), media frames are "a central organizing idea or storyline that provides the meaning to unfolding strips of events... the frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue" (p.143). Therefore, the conflict interpretive device used in paragraphs quoted above will cause news consumers to have the understanding that the Council Chairman is no more able to take critical decisions to resolve the conflict because he is enjoying his position.

Coverage from the news sites also framed the conflict as a struggle between the university management and UTAG (National and UEW). The coverage by myjoyonline.com on March 29, 2019 which focused on the summoning of the current VC before Parliament over the student unrest at Winneba and Ajumako campuses of the university indicated that

...Our worry is further informed by the entrenched positions adopted by the University Council on the one hand and the University

Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG) – UEW local chapter and National, who appear to have the support of the students of UEW on the other. We believe the current debacle, as a matter of urgency, must be resolved to allow normalcy to return to UEW, a requirement for effective teaching and learning (para 8).

The MP for the area was also framed as meddling in the affairs of the university due to his interest. Thus,

Afenyo Markin has been accused of meddling in the affairs of the school, with some blaming him for the unrest by students which resulted in the closure of the university months ago. He subsequently explained that his interest in the University is borne out of the strategic place the school holds in the entire development process of his constituency (citifmonline.com, July 19, 2019, para.5-6).

The dominance of conflict frame in the coverage of the UEW crisis in line with the identification of structural related conflicts as one of the key sources of conflicts in universities (Barsky, 2002; Bondesio,1992; Folger & Shubert, 1995). According to Bondesio (1992), structural related conflict is borne out of personal interest of individuals in managing and leading organizations as heads. This source of conflict in universities is also identified as power struggles by Folger and Shubert (1995). These claims are affirmed by Barsky (2002) when he notes that hierarchy and competition are among the common sources of structural conflicts within universities. Therefore, by dominantly framing the UEW conflict as a power play between top stakeholders of the university, the crisis is presented as emanating from a structural source of conflict. The findings on conflict frame, in conformity with the assertion by Entman (1993), suggests that the online news media selected the parties involved in the crisis and made the more salient (than the decisions that led to the crisis) in their coverage hence the conflict was defined management/leadership crisis.

4.1.2 Morality frame (Victimization and poor administrative procedure).

The frame that emerged second among the frames identified is the morality frame. A total of 322 paragraphs, representing 26.40% used this frame. From table 1, it is realised that citifmonline.com and myjoyfmonline.com dedicated 253 (20.74%) and 69 (5.66%) paragraphs respectively to the morality frame.

Entman (1991) avers that the morality frame is used by the media when they frame news around the indiscretions of actors or when alternative policies are morally questioned through news coverage. Key actors of the university have the moral obligation to adhere to statutes or accepted procedures, therefore, the news sites use the morality frame to question the refusal of actors to adhere to the statutes governing the university. Issues about disregard for accepted procedures or statutes also dominated in the coverage of the crisis. It was discovered from the analysis of the data that the morality frame was built on the contraventions in administrative procedures with emphasis on victimization. The selected online news sites in their coverage of the UEW impasse framed the conflict in the university as a crisis that was also fueled by the university management's disregard and breach of the university statutes in appointing and promoting unqualified staff to vacant positions in the university which usually resort in court suits by aggrieved parties within the staff. Thus, analysis of such paragraphs presented the management of the university as disregarding the laid down statuses of the university in promoting, suspending, demoting and transferring staff. For example, the December 7, 2019 story from citifmonline.com reports that

... the irresponsible victimization that happened under the Prof Abakah led-Council is still ongoing under your leadership. It is alleged that the most experienced and competent Senior Deputy Registrar of UEW has been wrongly removed from her post of Ajumako College Registrar to an obscured office in Winneba. This is gender discrimination. A Senior Assistant Registrar who was promoted to

that rank, just two years ago, has replaced her in Ajumako. As if that was not enough, without any legal basis or reasonable administrative process, salaries of two lady secretaries at Ajumako campus have been withheld, as well as that of the Acting Finance Officer, Bruno Chirani. Are you really in charge as chairman of the council? How can you deny staff their earned salaries? (para. 31- 34).

The paragraphs (31-34) presents the Chairman of the Council as wrongly endorsing the transfer and promotion of some staff members as well as the withholding salaries of some staff members. The removal of the Senior Deputy Registrar from the main operations of a registrar at the Ajumako Campus and the replacement of a Senior Assistant Registrar to that position is presented as being wrong. Thus, the Senior Deputy Registrar is more qualified to perform the function of the registrar of Ajumako Campus than a Senior Assistant Registrar, therefore, her removal from the Registrar's position is presented as being unacceptable.

Coverage from the news sites also indicated that the conflict in the university was given impetus to continue without any resolution due to victimization of the university staff. Thus, findings from the data showed that the disregard for statutes on proper administrative procedures in the transfers, promotions and appointments of staff were acts of victimization against some members of staff who were perceived as opposing the administration of management. In this regard, the December 7, 2019 publication by citifmonline.com discloses that

... let me remind you that Statutes 7 states inter alia (Statute 7b) that the Pro-Vice-Chancellor shall be elected by Convocation and appointed by Council and Statutes 7d states that in the event of a temporary absence of both the Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, from the University or when both posts are vacant, the most senior Dean shall act until Council is able to make a formal appointment. I am sure with hindsight, you are aware of the blunder you have caused. Prof.... was neither elected by convocation nor was she the most senior Dean, yet you approved her as acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor (para. 23).

In the above quotation from an article published on the conflict, the crisis is portrayed with a morality frame because the issue of a professors' appointment to the Office of Pro-Vice-Chancellor is presented as not following the due process so far as the statutes of the university is concerned. Thus, the moral obligation of adhering to the statutes so far as appointments of Pro VCs are concerned is given attention in this coverage.

Also, coverage of the attempt by the former VC to reinstate himself at a press conference at the Council Chamber of the university was framed via morality frame because it was portrayed as a breach of an accepted procedure. Therefore, in a publication on the attempted reinstatement by the former VC, the citifmonline.com report quotes the Public Relations Officer of the university as declaring that

As far as we know, they are dismissed staff of the University. They have no rights to enter certain places within the university. Even though the university is a public place, they cannot come in and transact whatever business they want, and there are certain places that are out of bounds for them. Places like the council chamber where they were going to have the press conference without notifying the university that such a thing was going to happen was unlawful and weren't going to allow that

Attribution from another staff of the university who disagrees with the action taken by the former VC was also reported by joyonline.com as

It is not something we agree with...they are very wrong and we think that the right things must be done and the right thing includes a court's ruling or a Council may appoint because the power to appoint lies in the Council and anybody who says he has been appointed to the office at the University – a senior office – that person must be appointed by neither by a Council or an authority acting on behalf of the council (myjoyonline.com, July 24, 2019, para. 15).

The frame of morality was used to condemn actions from the factions of the conflict that disregarded accepted procedures or statutes governing certain procedures.

To Scheufele (2000), frame supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, exclusion and elaboration. Hence by framing the UEW conflict around victimization and poor administrative procedure, the online news sites supplied the context of victimization and suggested the issue of poor administrative procedure through the selection and elaboration of disregard for statues on promotions, transfers suspension and demotion of some of the staff of the university. These findings corroborate that of both Rahim (2001) and Barsky (2002) when they aver that conflicts in higher institutions emanate due to the lack of proper administrative processes such as appointments, merits, promotions and maltreatment of staff. The finding of the current study also acknowledges the findings of both Saiti (2014) and Bampoh-Addo and Ansah-Koi (2015) when they all suggested that educational institutions, especially universities are replete with faculty promotion-related conflicts that affect the performance of staff and interactions among staff and the productivity of the institution as a whole.

4.1.3 Consequence frame (Actions that protracted the conflict)

The third most dominant frame used to report the conflict was the consequences frame. It was discovered from the analysis of data that 215 paragraphs, which represents 17.62%, used the consequence frame. Also, citifmonline.com had 162 of the paragraphs (13.28%) using this frame while myjoyfmonline.com dedicated 53 paragraphs (3.34%) to the same frame.

According to Entman (1991), consequence frames can be wide-ranging but it borders on the premise of the outcome of an action or inaction. With this frame, the media present issues around the results of an action taken. The sites, in their coverage of the conflict, attributed the cause of the protracted crisis to political interference as well as

actions of the university's leadership against individuals they perceive as not supporting their mandate. Thus, the conflict got protracted due to actions taken by some politicians and the university's management.

The issues around the actions of the Member of Parliament for Efutu constituency were framed with the consequence frame. The data analyzed indicated that more than 100 paragraphs from the online news sites indicated the Member of Parliament was a key player in the university conflict. He was portrayed as taking actions that started and inflamed the conflict (due to his interference with the management of the university). Thus, his actions initiated and increased the complex nature of the crisis. This was because he started the crisis by petitioning the Minister of Education with allegations against the former VC and some principal officers which eventually led to their dismissal. After the current VC was appointed, he started making allegations of nepotism and mismanagement against the current VC and declared support for the former VC who was dismissed. In this regard, the November 8, 2019 publication by citifmonline.com, reports that

The Member of Parliament for the Effutu constituency, Alex Afenyo Markin has accused authorities of the University of Education Winneba (UEW) of engaging in nepotism by only promoting the well-being of friends and family. He alleged that the University has failed in putting in place a local content policy to enhance development in Effutu ... Afenyo Markin has been accused of meddling in the affairs of the school, with some blaming him for the unrest by students which resulted in the closure of the university months ago. He subsequently explained that his interest in the University is borne out of the strategic place the school holds in the entire development process of his constituency (para. 1-6).

The background information to the story in the same publication also noted that “the Efutu Member of Parliament, Alexander Afenyo-Markin in May 2017 petitioned EOCO through the Education Minister, Mathew Opoku Prempeh, with 13 allegations against some principal officers of the University” (citifmonline.com, 2019, para 64).

Also, the March 29, 2019 publication from myjoyonline.com, which focused on a statement issued by the Minority in Parliament about the UEW conflict, portrayed the protraction of the conflict as an outcome of interference from ruling NPP government.

Thus,

We recognise that the NPP Government may be embarrassed by the current unfortunate situation at UEW, because its actions, overt and covert, assisted the fermentation of the impasse. Even so, we believe the government has a responsibility to the students of the UEW to do the needful. Inaction will only entrench the embarrassment (para.36).

The actions of Minister of State in charge of Tertiary Education towards the agitation of students was also framed as not good enough to resolve the impasse at the university (citifmonline.com, March 16, 2019). From the analysis, the online news sites framed issues about the conflict as a crisis that was spurred on by political actors/interference. The consequence frame was used by the news sites to present the actions of political actors as facilitating rather than resolving the conflict.

Aside from political interference, the frame of consequence was also used by the news sites in their coverage to presented actions of the university's leadership as a cause to the continual upheavals in the university. Leadership was portrayed as taking actions against individuals who were perceived as not supporting their mandate. For instance, the March 29, 2019 story about the conflict on myjoyonline.com reports that

...since Prof. Afful-Broni ascended to the highest office of the university, some thirty staff have either been dismissed or have their ranks reduced. What these members of staff have in common is that they are believed to have sympathies for Prof. Afful Broni's predecessor, Mawutor Avoke who was ousted in Rambo style. The new management of the university was tasked to restore peace among the staff after that media war. But six months after the investiture of the new VC, things have fallen apart. Students of the university staged a three-day demonstration that led to damage to school property worth GH¢250,000 (\$46,728). The students cited unfair dismissal of their lecturers as the reason for their protest (para. 5-8).

The frame was also used in the coverage of students' demonstration that happened in March 2019. In the coverage of the demonstration by the news sites, there was the indication, from the Acting SRC President, that the violent demonstration was as a result of the actions of "some highly respected members" in the university community. Thus, they sponsored the demonstration (citifmonline.com, March 28, 2019, para 1). In this regard, citifmonline.com reports that

The Students Representative Council (SRC) of the University of Education, Winneba, has said the violent demonstration by students which subsequently led to an indefinite shutdown of the school, was sponsored by some highly respected members of the community. According to the SRC, the invisible persons were driven by their selfish desire to bring the name of the University into disrepute (citifmonline.com, March 28, 2019, para 1-2).

The online news sites presented the leadership and management of the university as aggravating the crisis because they were not ready to get along with some staff they considered to be against the current university management. According to insights from framing theory, the media highlights certain events and then places them within a particular context to encourage or discourage certain interpretations. In this regard, the consequence frame was used to place the actions taken by key stakeholders within the context of aggravating the conflict than resolving it. According to Melon (2002), the media is very influential in society and can shape the course of a conflict in society. Therefore, Melon (2002) notes that during conflicts, the media may either play an active role by increasing violence in the conflict or stay independent of the conflict thereby make contributions to the resolution of the conflict. This implies that by highlighting actions from key stakeholders that aggravated the conflict, the news sites played a role in protracting the conflict.

4.1.4 Responsibility

The next dominant frame used by the news sites in their coverage of the UEW conflict was the frame of responsibility. According to the results in Table 1, a total of 151 paragraphs, which indicates 12.38% of the paragraphs analysed employed this frame. Thus, 97 paragraphs (7.95%) from citifonline.com and 54 (4.43%) from myjoyonline.com, employed the responsibility frame in their coverage.

The responsibility frame, according to Entman (1991), is used when the media frame issues around attribution of responsibility for a cause or a solution. Issues about the conflict that were discussed under this frame ascribed to the university's leadership and other stakeholders the duty to resolve the conflict. The analysis of the data gathered for this study indicated that the news sites attributed the amicable resolution of the UEW conflict as the responsibility of the leadership of the university. Thus, the coverage from the news sites suggested that the needed solution lies within their power since the university's leadership was deeply involved in the conflict.

For instance, the Minister of State for Tertiary Education charged the Governing Council to restore calm to campus following student's unrest due to the conflict. The responsibility frame was used in reporting this issue in the March 12, 2019 online publication by citifmonline.com. It reported this issue as:

Giving details of what was discussed at the meeting, the Minister said 'the issue that emerged between us in the interaction was for the Council to take whatever steps that are necessary to ensure that peace and harmony returns to campus within the shortest possible term to ensure that normal academic work resumes and that the students go back to school and the lecturers continue teaching if they have boycotted classes' (para 3).

In another instance, coverage on suggestions for resolution of the conflict from the MP for Efutu attributed the responsibility of resolution of the conflict to the Council.

I expect that in the interest of justice and fairness, your council upon receipt of this report will do the needful and take appropriate action. I need to reiterate that Ghanaians are following the events of the Education of Winneba keenly,” excerpts of the letter said (citifmonline.com, November 7, 2019, para.3).

Also, coverage on utterances of the former president, Jerry John Rawlings, about the UEW conflict during the December 31, 2019 revolutionary anniversary in Winneba used the responsibility frame because he tasked the Governing Council to ensure resolution of the conflict. Thus, the former president indicated that the Governing Council should ask the current VC to step aside for an ongoing investigation to be completed and for the conflict to be resolved. Thus,

Former President Jerry John Rawlings wants the current Vice-Chancellor of the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), Rev. Father Professor Anthony Afful Broni to step aside to allow for investigations currently ongoing against him to be expedited. ... According to the former president, although [the] government has laid a road map to resolve the matter, little has been done about EOCO’s report on corruption charges against the current Vice-Chancellor...I understand there are investigations ongoing regarding the current Vice-Chancellor. It will be appropriate for the Council to request that he steps aside for fairness to prevail as has been the practice with other similar circumstances in the past (citifmonline.com, December 31, 2019, para.1-8).

Mostly the news sites framed the resolution of the conflict in the university as a leadership responsibility based on what political figures wrote or said.

When it comes to conflict resolution, it is expected that key parties involved in the conflict must play a crucial role in resolving it. One of the key assumptions of framing theory is that news stories are reported through an interpretative device known as frames and news consumers depend on such frames to make sense out of the issues being reported by the media (Entman, 1991; Goffman, 1974; Kahlström & Norin, 2012). Therefore, the news sites used the responsibility frame as an interpretive device

to presents issues about the resolution of the conflict so as to enable news consumers to understand that it was the responsibility of the university's stakeholders to resolve the conflict since they are involved in the conflict.

4.1.5 Human interest

Human interest was the least frame used by the news sites in their coverage of the conflict. Out of the 1,220 paragraphs analysed, 144 (11.80%) employed the human interest frame. This consisted of 97 (7.95%) from citifmonline.com and 54 (4.43%) from myjoyonline.com.

When the news is framed around human interest, the issue in the story is presented with a human face (Entman, 1991). In using the frame, the media present issues in a manner that draws attention to the way the issue being covered affect readership or a group. Analysis of data gathered showed that the news sites, in their coverage of the issues used the human interest frame to draw attention to the effect of some of the actions taken by some of the stakeholders on the general public and the Effutu community.

In a coverage of an attempt to resolve the conflict, the MP for Efutu appealed to the general public to ensure that the right thing is done so far as the resolution of the conflict was concerned. He was quoted to have said:

We owe it a duty to mother Ghana and a duty to the academia to ensure [the] right things are done. If we allow things to degenerate and we say it is academic freedom, autonomy and all that. One day it will come back and haunt all of us. What was wrong yesterday remains wrong today and will remain wrong tomorrow. Let us look at the critical issues and address them once and for all so that at the end of the day all those affected staff will see themselves as one," he said (myjoyonline.com, April 8, 2019, para. 18).

In another coverage, the human interest frame was used to report the MP's (for Efutu) call for the need for the university to help grow the Efutu economy. Thus, in the July 19, 2019 publication from citifmonline.com, he was reported as

He subsequently explained that his interest in the University is borne out of the strategic place the school holds in the entire development process of his constituency. He said his interest is for peace to prevail in the school to positively affect the development of his constituents.

“I was born in Winneba, I grew up there, I still live there. If you go out and cross the Taxi rank and go to the seashore, that is where you see real poverty, so when we are making the noise it is peculiar to us. I think one means of addressing it for the benefit of [the] student, the community is to engage the university and I will be consistent... he said (para. 5-7)

In the quoted paragraphs, the human interest frame was used to draw attention to the likely effects of not addressing the critical issues about the conflict: “one day it will come back and haunt all of us” (myjoyonline.com, April 8, 2019, para. 18). Also, in explaining the interest of the MP in the university, the human interest frame was used to the issue as it was in the interest of the development of the Efutu community.

According to Lederach (1991), the media help shape and define conflict issues by providing an interpretive framework. Therefore, the human interest frame was used to help shape the effects or implications of the conflict on the general public and the Efutu community if they stand aloof and not help to resolve the conflict.

4.2 RQ 2: What is the tone of coverage of the UEW conflict by online news sites?

This question sought to determine the tone with which the news sites covered the conflict. How the media present issues to the public determines the tone. To Pavelka (2013), media tone has to do with the manner in which the media presents the issue to the public (insert frames determine tone). Therefore, journalists emphasize the tonality

of frames by portraying an issue in terms of good (positive), bad (negative) or neutral. In the context of this study, paragraphs about the conflict that portrayed the university in a progressive light were coded as having a positive tone, the ones that put the university in an undesirable light were coded as negative while the ones that were neither progressive nor undesirable were coded as having neutral tone. Findings on the tones used in reporting the UEW conflict is presented in table 2 below:

Table 2: Tone of Coverage

Tones	Citifmonline.com N (%)	Myjoyonline.com N (%)	Total N (%)
Negative	468 (38.36%)	290 (23.77%)	758 (62.13%)
Positive	202 (16.56%)	118 (9.67%)	320 (26.23%)
Neutral	110(9.02%)	32 (2.62%)	122 (11.64%)
Grand Total	780 (63.93%)	440 (36.07%)	1, 220 (100%)

Source: Field data

Results in table 2 indicate that the news sites dominantly used negative tones in their coverage of the conflict. Out of the total 1,220 paragraphs analysed, 758 (62.13%) were in negative tones, 320 (26.23%) had positive tones with 122 (11.64%) in neutral tones.

4.2.1 Negative tones

The analysis of the data showed that negative tones were employed in the coverage that focused on the parties involved in the conflict as well as paragraphs that centred actions that aggravated or protracted the UEW conflict. Data gathered from the two news sites revealed that majority of the paragraphs (62.13%) with negative tones reported the

conflict as a crisis created by the power struggle between parties within the leadership of the university, therefore, their actions created the crisis. Coverage from the news sites portrayed key individuals in management as being interested in the benefits from the crisis than focusing on the resolution of the conflict. IN the April 17, 2019 publication from citifmonline.com on the former VC's demand to be reinstated, current VC and the previous Council Chairman were portrayed as not being willing to accept the dismissed VC back into the university upon Supreme Court's ruling because his presence would clash with their parochial interest. Thus,

...they should rise above their parochial interest to enable them work for the good of the institution. Although the Supreme Court overturned a High Court decision which led to the removal of Prof. Avoke, he has not been able to assume office following the induction of Prof. Fr. Afful-Broni. The school's Governing Council had also threatened to deal with him if he dares show up on campus. Prof. Abakah has also been accused of conflict of interest in the award of himself full professor status although the school maintains due process was followed – both situations led to an uneasy calm in the school which was shut down some time ago over students protests (para. 3-5).

For instance, the above paragraphs gave the indication that the former Council Chairman was interested in the benefit of awarding to himself the status of a full professor after he had retired from active service than the Supreme Court's decision that overturned the High Court decision.

Also, the current VC was portrayed as sabotaging the university by the news sites. For example, coverage on views of the MP for Bongo about the conflict indicated that the current VC should step aside in the name of peace. The March 17, 2019 publication by citifmonline.com discloses that

The Member of Parliament for Bongo, Edward Bawa is concerned a man of the clergy is at the heart of the leadership crisis that has engulfed the University of Education, Winneba. He feels on those

grounds alone the UEW Vice-Chancellor, Rev. Fr. Prof. Anthony Afful-Broni, should step aside in the name of peace. Prof. Afful-Broni's dismissal of some lecturers sparked student protests that culminated in the school being shut down indefinitely. Students and the University Teachers Association of Ghana have accused the VC of trying to sabotage the school (citifmonline.com, March 17, 2019, para. 1-3).

The above paragraphs indicated that the current VC, as a man of God, should prioritize peace and sacrifice his position for peace in the university rather than to make decisions that sparked the student protest. This put the university in an undesirable light because management is supposed to take decisions and actions that should put the university at an advantage so far as university education in the country is concerned than the personal advantage of individuals.

Also, the portrayal of management as not following accepted procedure or stipulations in the statutes show disregard to the laws that govern the management of the university and this put the university in an undesirable light. For instance, the September 3, 2018 publication by citifmonline.com reported that the “ Minister of State In-Charge of Tertiary Education, Professor Kwesi Yankah, has said he is not sure if the University of Education's Governing Council dismissed the former Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mawutor Avoke, and four others in line with laid down regulations” (para.1). This paragraph suggested that accepted procedure was not followed in dismissing the former VC.

In another publication by citifmonline.com on September 10, 2019, it was reported that the Acting Finance Officer of the university had taken a legal action against the institution for termination of his appointment. Thus,

The Acting Finance Officer of the University of Education Winneba, Bruno Bejuase Chirani, has sued the University of Education,

Winneba (UEW) over the termination of his appointment from that post.... According to Bruno Bajuase Chirani, he received a letter of terminating his appointment dated September 3, 2019, but contrary to usual administrative procedures of the school, the said letter did not direct him to a new post. Bruno Chirani alleged that he was targeted after he warned the Vice-Chancellor of the University about payment of monies to one Paa Kwesi Abaidoo who is a lawyer (para. 1-3).

These paragraphs have a negative tone because it creates an undesirable image for the institution. Thus, the paragraphs portrayed leadership of the university as not following the due administrative procedure in terminating his appointment.

From the analysis, it was discovered that paragraphs with conflict and morality frames had negative tones. In using the conflict frame, the management of the university was portrayed as being interested in their parochial interest than the welfare of the university while the use of morality frame in also portrayed management to be disregarding some of the statutes of the university. These support the assertion that there is a link between the news frames used in reporting issues and the tone of coverage (Barnes *et al.*, 2008; Hart, 2011).

This finding also aligns with that of Guenduez et al, (2016). In their study of the framing of the Swiss government's monetary policy, it was discovered that the newspapers used the conflict frame to portray the policy as an attempt by the government to salvage its image. Therefore, coverage was about creating a good image of the government but not about the policy. Also, the responsibility frame was used to attribute the responsibility for a cause of the economic crisis. The actions of the government led to the economic crisis. As a result, Guenduez et al (2016) assert that the media employed negative tones for stories that used the conflict and morality frames in reporting the monetary policy since they portrayed the monetary policy as a political issue to salvage the image of the government and their actions led to the crisis.

According to Pavelka (2013), the tone of coverage has to do with the manner in which the media presents the issue to the public. This takes two forms - the frequency of presenting particular topics in the media and the manners in which the media deals with topics. Hence, the paragraphs had negative tones towards the coverage of the UEW conflict due to repetition of the conflict and morality frames and the interpretations the media give to the crisis. The conflict frame bothers on prioritizing issues about the parties (than issues about decisions made about the conflict) while morality frame centres on the indiscretions of actors or when alternative policies are morally questioned through news coverage (Entman, 1991). These two frames were predominantly used by the news sites in their coverage of the conflict and this accounts for the dominance of negative tones. Thus, over half of the total number of paragraphs analysed (N=710, which is 58.20%) employed the two frames. Therefore, the high frequency of the use of conflict and morality frame to portray the parties involved and their indiscretions accounted for the 62.13% of negative tones from the analysis of data.

4.2.2 Positive tone

Results in table 2 indicate that out of the total 1,220 paragraphs analysed, 320 (26.23%) were in positive tones. This consisted of 202 paragraphs (16.56%) from citifmonline.com and 118 (9.67%) from myjoyonline.com. Analysis of data revealed that the news sites used positive tones in their coverage whenever they presented issues on the resolution of the conflict. The paragraphs were coded with positive tones because they suggested ways of resolving the crisis and that was an indication of progression. For instance, in the December 31, 2019 publication by citifmonline.com, paragraphs 1-8 gave the indication that government had taken steps to resolve the conflict and the

former president was also making his inputs to better the steps government was taking to resolve the conflict. Thus,

According to the former president, although government has laid a road map to resolve the matter, little has been done about EOCO's report on corruption charges against the current Vice-Chancellor...I understand there are investigations ongoing regarding the current Vice-Chancellor. It will be appropriate for the Council to request that he steps aside for fairness to prevail as has been the practice with other similar circumstances in the past (citifmonline.com, December 31, 2019, para.1-8).

The above paragraphs have a positive tone because they indicate progressive attempts by stakeholders to resolve the conflict.

Also, in coverage given to the 24th Congregation on July 27, 2019, the current VC in his address indicated the need for stakeholders to not indulge in blame games but to unite and work towards the development of the university. Thus, myjoyonline.com reported that

He said peace was what the university needed at the moment. "Indeed, this is not the time to apportion blames. Calm has been restored now and academic work has resumed smoothly. I urge all staff, students, and stakeholders to come together as one united body to safeguard the peace we are enjoying and work together towards the development of our young but progressive university," he urged. The UEW Vice-Chancellor entreated the students to view their graduation as a journey and not a destination (myjoyonline.com, April 27, 2019, para. 5-6).

The above paragraphs have positive tone because they give the indication that the current VC (who has been framed as disregarding the university's statutes via his actions) was making progressive attempts towards the resolution of the conflict.

Also, the lead paragraph of the April 8, 2019 publication by citifmonline.com on the need for peace in UEW had a positive tone because it portrayed the MP for Efutu (who

had been framed as taking actions that initiated and protracted the crisis) made attempts to attribute the responsibility of resolution of the conflict stakeholder. Thus,

The Member of Parliament for Efutu, Mr Alexander Afenyo-Markin has called on stakeholders in the impasse at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), to adopt a reconciliatory path to bring to an end to the crisis at the school (para. 1).

From the analysis, it was discovered that paragraphs with responsibility frame had positive tones. Paragraphs with positive tones attributed the responsibility for a resolution of the crisis to key stakeholders. In using the responsibility frame, the news sites focused on ways of resolving the crisis and that was an indication of progression. Thus, attributing the responsibility of solution of the conflict to key stakeholder is the conflict is a positive indication (Barnes et al, 2008; Hart, 2011). This is in line Entman's (1991) explanation of the responsibility frame. According to Entman (1991), the responsibility frame has to do with the attribution of a cause or a solution. Thus, this when the use of responsibility frame portrays solution to an issue/problem, it is linked with positive tone but if it portrays the cause of the problem, it is linked with a negative tone. In the context of this study, findings on the link between the use of responsibility frame and positive tone supports Entman's (1991) explanation because they focused on ways of resolving the crisis and that is an indication of progression.

Evidence has also established that the inclusion or omission of certain words by the media in their coverage of a subject influence how news consumers to form meaning, manage information and arrive at decisions (Barnes et al, 2008; Hart, 2011). This implies that the words used in coverage give expressions that help to determine the tone. Through data analysis of paragraphs with positive tones, most of the words used were constructive in nature so far as the resolution of the conflict was concerned. Expressions from words like *adopt reconciliatory path, bring an end to crisis* from the

lead paragraph of the April 8, 2019 publication by citifmonline.com; *peace, not time to apportion blames, united body, development, progressive university* from the April 27, 2019 publication of myjoyonline.com (para. 5-6); and *road map to resolve, for fairness to prevail* from the December 31, 2019 publication (para.1-8) give positive indications so far as the resolution of the conflict is concerned.

4.2.3 Neutral tones

In table 2, findings indicated that out of the total 1,220 paragraphs analysed, 122 (122%) had neutral tones. This consisted of 110 paragraphs (9.02%) from citifmonline.com and 32 (11.64%) from myjoyonline.com. Analysis of data revealed that the news sites used neutral tones in their coverage whenever they used the human interest frame to present issues about the conflict. Though the human interest frame was used to give a human face to issues being reported on and to draw the attention of to the long term effect of the conflict on the general public and the Efutu community, these aspects of the coverage did not cast the university in an undesirable light nor progressive light. For instance, paragraph 18 of the April 8, 2019 news story about the conflict from myjoyonline.com states

We owe it a duty to mother Ghana and a duty to the academia to ensure the right things are done. If we allow things to degenerate and we say it is academic freedom, autonomy and all that. One day it will come back and haunt all of us. What was wrong yesterday remains wrong today and will remain wrong tomorrow. Let us look at the critical issues and address them once and for all so that at the end of the day all those affected staffs will see themselves as one," he said (myjoyonline.com, April 8, 2019, para. 18).

In this paragraph, the MP for Efutu was calling on the management of the university to reinstate the dismissed staff in order to ensure peace and resolve the conflict.

There were instances where the neutral tone was also used in issues framed with the conflict frame. For example, in the story on the call by Minority in Parliament for Head of the Catholic Church (Pope) to reassign the current VC to ensure peace in the university, the reported stance of the Catholic Church on the issue had a neutral tone.

Besides that, Rev. Abbey-Quaye asked the Minority to understand how the Catholic Church operates before calling the Pope into a local matter. “Since when did the Pope become a police officer, assigning and re-assigning Catholic priests in the world,” he wrote in a statement (myjoyonline.com, March 29, 2019, para 11-12).

Thus, in the above paragraph, the reaction from the representative of the Cape-Coast Arch Diocese of the church did not cast the university in neither undesirable nor progressive light. Therefore, it has a neutral tone.

In the framing literature, tone “is designated as valence and may be positive, neutral or negative” (Brunken as cited by Evers, 2016, p.10). It is clear from the analysis of the data that the framing of the issues affects the tones employed by the news media in the coverage of the issue. Thus, there is a link between the news frames used in reporting issues about the UEW conflict and the tone of coverage (Barnes et al, 2008; Hart, 2011) because de Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003) posit that the application of tone to the concept of framing has shown that frames are indicative of positive versus negative dichotomy or both. This buttresses Baumgartner and Jones (1991) assertion that media coverage of an issue has two dimensions, thus attention and valence. Whereas attention is closely connected to the salience of frames used by media, valence gives specificity to the tonality of the frames used by the media. This supports the assertion by De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003) that certain frames are by themselves inherently filled with valence, as journalists give emphasis to the tonality of frames by portraying an issue in terms of good (positive), bad (negative) or neutral.

Critical analysis of data gathered showed that the issues framed with conflict, morality and consequence frames were negative. This account for why the tone of coverage from the sites were predominantly negative. This is because conflict, morality and consequence frames make up for over 75% of the paragraphs analysed and they were used to show that the conflict was a power struggle between stakeholders; that management disregarded accepted procedure and statutes governing the university, and that they took actions that protracted the conflict. These do no cast the university in a desirable light, therefore, the domination of negative tones.

4.3 RQ 3: What are the perspectives of UEW staff and students on the coverage of the UEW conflict by the online news sites?

This research question sought to examine the perspectives of both staff and students of the university on the coverage of the conflict by the news sites. The data derived from the interviews with study participants was analyzed thematically. The current study selected ten (10) study participants who comprised of five undergraduate students and five staff from different management levels in the university. For privacy and confidentiality purposes, the names of study participants were replaced with letters and Numbers. Thus, letters were used for the participants who are staff and numbers for participants who are students. The analysis of the data indicates that the study participants perceived the coverage of the UEW conflict as a power struggle between some stakeholders in the university; as mismanagement and favouritism by the university's management; and as having a negative toll on/ created a bad image for the university.

4.3.1 *Personal power struggle between stakeholders*

The analysis of the data gathered from the interviews with the study participants revealed the study participants perceived the coverage of the UEW conflict by the news sites as a personal power struggle between individuals in the university who wants to occupy high position in the university management. All the participants were of the view that certain key political figures and individuals in the university had their parochial interest that seems to fuel the conflict as they all vie for the position of power within the university leadership. Data established that both political figures within the Effutu constituency where the university is situated and lecturers and other staff of the university with the motive of getting high positions in the university fueled the crisis as indicated by the findings from the study participants

For instance, in indicating the power struggle between the university's management and the MP for Efutu constituency, Participant 3 discloses that

It is all over the news that this whole university brouhaha started from the MP who has his interest. He says his interest is to make sure UEW is run effectively to benefit all stakeholders especially his constituents. But the same news reports that the university management is saying the interest of the MP is to force management to give him lucrative contracts in the university. Whatever it is, both the MP and the leadership of this university are glued to their interest which is not helping our university (Participant 3).

Another informant stated the following to show the power struggle between key individuals in the university:

...Anyway, check the news. It was always a conflict in which people were expressing their personal interest and not institutional interest. A lecturer will sue the university today, tomorrow it's the former VC suing the university so he comes back to his position. The next time it is the current VC suspending a staff because he thinks the staff is misbehaving by not supporting him. Tell me if this is not a personal interest (Participant 4).

Another participant stated this;

... this is a personal conflict I believe. You check the news media and see how certain staff in this university are using the crisis to engage in a personal vendetta. Truth be told...I remember during last year's 'demo', some of us were paid to make sure we demonstrate our displeasure for what was happening in the university. Funny enough, we realized we were demonstrating for a lecturer who disliked students, but we had to demonstrate because the person thinks he was being victimized by management for not supporting their regime. (Participant 1)

The above excerpts indicate that the study participants after reading the news coverage perceived the UEW crisis as a conflict in which certain individuals were fighting for their own personal interest. The participants indicated that individuals who wanted to annex power in the management of the university used the conflict as a channel to do so. This finding buttresses the aversion by Folger and Shuber (1995) that power struggle is one of the sources of conflict in universities. It also affirms the assertion by Henkin and Holliman (2009) that within the school set up, conflicts do occur between students, leadership and educators of the school as well as other social parties of the school such as local authorities and politicians. It was evident from the analysis of the data that conflicts in universities emanate from different sources including disagreement in attitudes and perceptions, and behaviour and reactions of organization members. This acknowledges Kantek and Gezer's (2009) assertion that conflicts in higher institutions are attributed to factors like disagreement in attitudes and perceptions, values and needs, tasks and policies, negative behaviour and reactions of members of the organization.

According to Chan (2009), how the media frame issues affect their perceptions about that issue. Findings from the study indicated that the conflict frame was predominantly used by the news sites in their coverage of issues about the UEW conflict. Thus, the conflict frames activated the cognitive structures about physical things and events about

the crisis in the environment of the participants (Dunwoody & Peters, 1992) and that aided them to form the interpretations that the conflict was about the power struggle between some stakeholders in the university (D'Angelo, 2002; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). The dominant use of the conflict frame implies that the news sites framed the crisis around parties involved. This explains why the participants perceived the conflict as a power struggle between some stakeholders of the university. This is because D'Angelo (2002) avers that frames that dominate news are believed to invariably dominate the audience.

4.3.2 Mismanagement and favouritism by university's management

Another theme identified was mismanagement and favouritism by the leadership of the university. The data analysis indicated that study participants perceived the UEW conflict as a conflict brought about by mismanagement and favouritism perpetrated by management of the university and other key stakeholders within the jurisdiction of the university. The study participants indicated that the conflict emanated from mismanagement because the statutes governing the demotions, transfers and promotions were not followed in some of the decisions taken by management which resulted in some staff being favoured and other staff being victimised by such decisions.

For example, a study participant states that

.... surely there is a crisis in UEW. People are doing whatever they like. But I believe leadership can stop whatever is going on here. They are supposed to manage the affairs of the university, so I think they should deal with the crisis in this university. Unfortunately, that's not what they are doing. People are sacked or transferred or even demoted. Check the university statutes....it talks about how to manage the university. But every indication from the media shows that the university statutes are not respected....and that's why there are a lot of court issues here (Participant B).

Another participant also notes that

.... to deal with the conflict, management must be up and doing. It is everywhere in the media that the action of the university leadership is further creating more conflicts. They are reporting that UEW is suspending and transferring staff especially the staff who don't support the current regime. Others are being promoted without looking to see if they really qualify. That's what the news is reporting (Participant 2).

The participants also admitted that but for the mismanagement and unfair treatment of other staff by the university management, the UEW conflict would not have escalated to the proportion it assumed. In this regard, a participant notes that

But you see... if you want to get a solution for conflicts, you don't clearly show you like other people than others. You bring everyone together to deal with the conflict. You don't further stoke [the] fire in the conflict by suspending, transferring and even demoting individuals you think don't support you (Participant C).

The assertion of the current study participants that the UEW conflicts will only be resolved when the management of the university play the responsible role of being fair to the staff and not favour some individuals over others. This finding reinforces the assertion of both Folger and Shubert (1995) and Rahim (2001) that inconsistencies in the application of institutional regulations, breaches of formal or informal contracts, power struggles and personal hatred are possible sources of conflicts in universities. Also, it is consistent with Bampoh-Addo and Ansah-Koi (2015) when they aver that conflict within universities emanate from disagreement in attitudes and perceptions, competition among staff, negative behaviour and reactions of organizational members.

It can be argued that the perception of the study participants is shaped by what they have been reading from the selected news sites. This is because their perception of mismanagement and favouritism supports the morality frame. This adds up to the assertion of Jakobsen (2011) and Udoyo and Chime-Nganya (2017) that the perceptions

of news audience are influenced by what the news media report in their coverage of issues.

4.3.3 Negative toll and bad institutional image

From the analysis of the interview data, it was discovered that the participants had the perception that the UEW conflict had created a bad image for the university and importantly it was going to have a negative toll, both financially and academically, on the university. The participants indicated that as parties involved in the conflict engaged in suit and countersuits in the law courts, it had dented the image of the university among the public as it painted the university as a university of litigations. The study participants indicated that the university, through the conflict, had lost its image as one of the peaceful academic institutions in the country which prior to the crisis, hardly appear in the news for negative reasons.

A study participant stated this;

Our university has become a bad example for universities in Ghana. The university is always in the news for all the bad reasons. Today this person sues this person, the next day the MP fights leadership of the university in the media. All you hear is UEW this, UEW that. I sometimes feel bad to tell my friends that I'm a student here. Anytime your university is in the media for negative news, your friends in other universities will call and tease you. UEW image nowadays is very bad. I'm even sure our students' enrolment will be affected. Yes...who wants to attend a school which is always in the news for the bad reason? (Participant 5).

Brunken (2006) contends that a negatively framed content tends to make audience members have more negative attitudes towards the topic covered by the news media. Therefore, the participants had a negative perception about the coverage of issues about the conflict because the media negatively framed them.

The participants were also of the view that because the management of the university failed to resolve the conflict, it brought a heavy financial burden to both the university as an institution and the student body as the conflict resulted in a demonstration and destruction of university properties.

...we are all not happy with whatever is happening here. People are just using their authority to unduly control affairs here. That's how come the crisis here doesn't go away. In the end, no one suffers than the university. Sometimes you get calls from colleagues outside asking about what the problem is in this university. Sometimes, people just call to maybe tease you. This is where this conflict has gotten to. Our image as a... university is negative. Good works are ongoing here but that's not what the media wants. They are interested in bad news and I think we always give them the bad news (Participant C)

Five of the study participants (who were students) also indicated that the conflict in the university had negatively impacted the university both academically and financially. They indicated that although they do not know the exact amount of money students of the university were asked to pay after the destruction of the university properties, the news media reported that the destruction of the university's properties amounted to about two hundred thousand Ghana cedis (Ghc 200,000), which they believe the university would levy them to pay.

Oh yeah...I don't believe conflict is good at all. But they do happen. When they occur, we shouldn't wait for it to disrupt activities in the university. Look at the demonstration we students had during the sacking of some lecturers. Personally, I didn't like the idea and so I didn't take part but after destroying the properties of the university by our own students, what do you expect? Yes...definitely we will pay it. I'm thinking of how to pay my school fees next semester and look at what has happened. I have to start preparing to pay additional fees for what my colleagues destroyed in the university (Participant 2).

A study participant stated this;

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my school fees next semester and look at what has happened. I have to start preparing to pay additional fees for what my colleagues destroyed in the university (Participant 2).

This finding also supports Chang's (2009) assertion that media frames shape the perceptions of the audience as both students and staff of UEW perceived the conflict in the university to have a dire economic consequence on them and the university as an institution. The finding reinforces Balay's (2006) assertion that conflicts in schools may be considered to carry an economic cost, both for the school as an institution, the leadership of the school and units within the school. This is also in line with the assertion that conflict in the university, if not managed well, might escalate and lead to destructive results, often in the form of physical violence that is increasingly seen as legitimate as the conflict intensifies (Canetti, Khatib & Rubin, 2019; Macassi, 2019).

The above excerpts, which indicate how the study participants perceived the UEW conflict, show that the conflict of the university negatively impacted the university and the student body as the activities and programmes of the university were disrupted due to the mismanagement of the conflict which resulted in a demonstration and destruction of properties. It is evident from the findings of the study that the manner and way the Ghanaian online news sites framed the UEW conflict affected the perceptions of the study respondents who are both students and staff of the university of education, Winneba. Analysis of the data from the interview, especially from the student participants, indicate that the participants perceived the conflict to have disrupted the academic activities of the university especially class schedules and graduation ceremony of students who had completed their study. The study participants believe that they also incurred some financial and academic losses as both classes and graduation was cancelled after graduating students made preparation to grace the

occasion. They believe that the conflict in the university of education, Winneba did not impact negatively only on the students, but also their family and friends.

This finding also acknowledges the assertions of both Balay (2006) and Briggs and Wohlstetter (2003) when they aver that regular conflicts in schools disrupts a large part of activities in the school and does not promote school leadership and educators' constructive contribution to the improvement of the school process. Again the finding is in line with Ezegwu, Udoyo and Chime-Nganya (2017) study which that found that newspaper reportage on conflicts influences perceptions of their audience. Thus, 272 respondents of their study representing 74% indicated that the reports on the Gambian conflict were simple and interpretative aiding the audience to have a better understanding of the Gambian conflict as reported by the news media. These findings are in tandem the framing theory which is premised on the assumption that the manner and way in which issues are characterized in news reports can influence how the audience understand the issues and significantly affect their perceptions since the news media play a key role nurturing public perceptions (Gregory, 1991; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

4.4 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the findings for the study. Findings revealed that citifonline.com and myjoyonline.com, used the conflict frame to report the conflict as a power play between stakeholders; the morality frame to report management's disregard for accepted procedures and statutes which led to poor administrative procedure and victimisation; the consequence frame to report actions taken by stakeholders that protracted the conflict; and responsibility frame to attribute the

resolution of the conflict to the stakeholders of the university in order of dominance and sync with Entman (1991). These frames designated tones of coverage (de Vreese & Boomgaarden as cited by Evers, 2016) because a negative tone was designated to issues framed with the first three dominant frames while a positive tone was designated to issues framed with the responsibility frame. In agreement with D'Angelo (2002) who avers that frames that dominate news are believed to invariably dominate the audience, the selected staff and students of UEW perceived the conflict as a power play between stakeholders; as mismanagement and favouritism by the university's management; and as creating a bad image for the university.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarises the study, draws conclusions and makes recommendations on the significance of taking issues of conflict in tertiary education and its management into consideration. The chapter also looks at the limitations of the study as well as areas for further research.

5.1 Summary of findings

The study sought to gain a deeper understanding of how Ghanaian online news sites framed issues about the UEW conflict in their coverage. Therefore, it examined the dominant frames, tones used and the perception of staff and students of the university of education, Winneba (UEW). An extensive review of relevant literature was undertaken to serve as the foundation of the findings of this study. Conflict as a concept, Conflicts in organizations, Role of the media in conflict, Conflicts and higher education institutions, Media framing, Media and conflict framing, and media tones were reviewed in conducting the study. Entman's (1991) framing theory was used as the theoretical framework to analyse the findings of the study. The use of the framing theory enabled the researcher to make meaning out of the data analysed.

The research approach for this study was qualitative and the design was a case study (Creswell, 2014). This gave me the opportunity to read the online news stories to have a deeper understanding of the meaning they ascribed to the UEW crisis. Purposively, publications from the news sites within the period of April 2017 to December 2019

were selected and analysed. Also, staff and students of the University of Education, Winneba were interviewed using the purposive sampling strategy (Zikmund & Babin, 2007). The researcher used two data collection methods, namely document analysis and interview (Creswell, 2014). The interview with the study participants were conducted via telephone (Creswell, 2014) and in an informal manner which allowed the participants to feel relaxed and speak in a language they were conversant with. To examine the perceptions of the study participants, the researcher asked questions that were derived from the questions underpinning the study. All the interviews were conducted in the English language and at the convenience of the study participants. Ten different interview sessions were conducted with the study participants with each interview lasting between 10 to 15 minutes. Finally, the researcher thematically analysed the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). This allowed me to systematically organise and analyze my data set in detail. Findings revealed that Entman's *conflict*, *morality* and the *responsibility* frames were predominantly used even though consequence and human interest frames were also used. The conflict, morality and consequence frames had negative tones while the responsibility frame had a positive tone. Therefore, the students and staff of the university perceived coverage of issues about the conflict as a power struggle between stakeholder of the university, as mismanagement and favouritism by management and as creating a negative image for the university.

5.2 Conclusion

- In answering the first research question which sought to examine how the online news site framed issues about the UEW conflict in their reportage. Findings revealed that the news sites framed issues about the conflict around the following major themes: power struggle between parties in the university's

stakeholders; poor administrative procedures and victimisation by university's management and resolution of the conflict as the responsibility of the university's stakeholders. These themes correspond with Entman's (1991) frame of conflict, morality and responsibility. The conflict frame had the highest frequency in the coverage by both citifmonline.com and myjoyfmonline.com as it recorded 31.80% of the total paragraphs. This was followed by the morality frame which had 26.40% of the paragraphs, with responsibility, consequence and human interest frames recording 17.62%, 12.38% and 11.80% respectively. The finding acknowledges the assertion of Henkin and Holliman (2009) that within the educational set up, conflicts may occur between students, leadership and educators of school, as well as the other social parties of the school such as local authorities and politicians. Again, the finding also acknowledges the assertions of both Balay (2006) and Briggs and Wohlstetter (2003) when they aver that regular conflicts in schools disrupts a large part of activities in the school and does not promote school leadership and educators' constructive contribution to the improvement of the school process.

- Moreover, in answering research question two which sought to investigate the tones the online news site used during the reportage of the UEW crisis. From the analysis of the data, it was revealed that issues framed with conflict, morality and consequence frames had negative tones because framing the conflict around issues of power struggle between parties; disregard for accepted procedures and statutes; and action that protracted the conflict painted the university in an undesirable light. Issues framed with the responsibility frame also had positive tones because they focused on attempts towards conflict resolution whereas issues with human interest frames drew attention to issues without casting the

university in a negative or positive light. This supports the assumption by Pavelka (2013) that framing of the issues affects the tones employed by the news media in the coverage of issues. It also buttresses Baumgartner and Jones (1991) assertion that media coverage of an issue has two dimensions, thus attention and valence. Whereas attention is closely connected to the salience of frames used by media, valence gives specificity to the tonality of the frames used by the media. De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003) state that certain frames are by themselves inherently filled with valence, as journalists give emphasis to the tonality of frames by portraying an issue in terms of good (positive), bad (negative) or neutral.

- Research question three looked at the perceptions of both staff and students of the University of Education, Winneba on how the online news media framed the UEW conflict. Findings revealed that media framing of issues in the media affected the perception of the participants for the study. They perceived the conflict as a power struggle between stakeholders in the university, as mismanagement and favouritism on the part of the university's leadership and as having a negative toll on the image of the university. This finding is in line with the finding of Ezegwu, Udoyo and Chime-Nganya (2017) study that found that newspaper reportage on conflicts influences perceptions of their audience as 272 respondents of their study representing 74% indicated that the reports on the Gambian conflict were simple and interpretative aiding the audience to have a better understanding of the Gambian conflict as reported by the news media. This finding is also supported by the framing theory which is premised on the assumption that the manner and way in which issues are characterized in news reports can influence how the audience understand the issues and significantly

affect their perceptions since the news media play a key role nurturing public perceptions (Gregory, 1991; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). It is evident from this finding that the manner and way the Ghanaian online news sites framed the UEW conflict significantly affected the perceptions of the audience of the Ghanaian online news media study.

5.3 Limitations

The study set out to examine the issues discussed as well as the tones Ghanaian online news sites used in covering the UEW conflict. The study also examined the perceptions of staff and students of the university on how they understood and interpreted the conflict as reported by the news sites. This study comprised ten (10) participants whose perceptions were understood from an individual perspective as opposed to a generalised portrayal of a whole population.

Besides, getting interviewees' to interview also proved to be challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This made the processes in conducting the research pressing and time-consuming. However, in spite of the challenges the researcher encountered, the qualitative data gained gave major significant insight into the participants' views of responding to their perception on how the online news sites framed the UEW conflict.

Getting study participants to interview proved to be an arduous task, especially staff of the university who feared their confidentiality was in danger although I ensured them of their confidentiality. Again, because initially, I planned to conduct a face-to-face interview with study participants, I could not due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, study participants agreed to have the interview with me through the telephone as I adjusted to the use of a telephone interview. Recording study participants' telephone

conversation became difficult as some of the participants disagreed with me recording their conversation.

Transcribing the interviews with study participants on paper for easy analysis became very challenging as sometimes it became difficult to hear what study participants said during the interview. In spite of all the limitations of the study, it has serious implications for further studies.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

The study sought to investigate how Ghanaian online news sites framed issues about the UEW conflict in their coverage. Therefore, it examined the dominant frames, tones used and the perspectives of staff and students of the university of education, Winneba (UEW).

Future research can look at expanding the sample of participants to explore the perceptions and experiences of other stakeholders such as the natives of the town in which the university is situated. Further studies on how media frames conflicts in tertiary institutions can be done by taking into consideration a multiple case study to draw out the similarities and differences in the frames and tones of news stories employed by online news sites, as well as perceptions of media audience on the frames and tones used by the media. Further studies on how traditional media, such as newspaper, frames conflict in universities in Ghana can be undertaken to examine the frames and tones, as well as the perceptions of the newspapers' audience on the framing of the conflict.

5.5 Recommendations

The study recommends that leadership and management of tertiary institutions should adopt constructive and creative ways of resolving conflicts by extensively engaging all conflicting parties together in communication processes that seek to solve the conflict especially when the conflict emanates from poor administrative management, bias promotions, victimization, dismissal and appointments.

The study recommends that leadership and management of tertiary institutions involved in conflict avoid the knee-jerk reaction of telling their side of the conflict to the media and be proactive since most media coverage of conflicts creates a bad image for the institution involved in the conflict.

It is again recommended that tertiary institutions use the media to construct a positive image of their institutions especially during periods of conflict as suggested by Fransen (2017) that corporate organisations use the media to create a reliable and positive image in the eyes of the public as the media is often engaged by corporate organisations to frame the organisation's image in a positive light.

Finally, the study recommends that tertiary institutions minimize conflicts within the university since conflicts in the university affects individual staff performance, academics, productivity and interactions among the staff of the university.

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