

The Media in Ghana and the Fight against “Galamsey” in Ghana: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

This study discussed the pivotal role of the Ghanaian media in the ongoing effort to defeat the menace of illegal small-scale mining, otherwise known as *galamsey*. In the background of deteriorating environmental conditions, pollution of water resources, and the threat to agricultural livelihoods, the study critically discusses the role of media framing, reporting, and investigative journalism in shaping public discourse and policy actions, as well as in exposing the dynamics of power and complicity as it regards to *galamsey*. Gaining direction from the qualitative paradigm, 24 participants namely, journalists, policymakers, community leaders, civil society actors and scholars were engaged through in-depth interviews. The analysis utilised a thematic approach by listing three main objectives as aims for the research. These core objectives surrounded the contribution of the media to the anti-*galamsey* campaign, the factors that hinder effective media coverage, and how the media influences both government policy and general environmental governance. Findings revealed that the media presents *galamsey* as a national crisis, a criminal activity, and a political and economic puzzle, which more than anything, escalates the fury among citizens and compels short-term government responses. These stories are sometimes unbalanced, failing to consider the socio-economic forces that compel disadvantaged groups to flock into illegal mining. In addition, the sensationalist type of reporting, although a good way to attract attention, has the potential to undermine attempts towards sustainable solutions. In addition, the research revealed significant obstacles for effective media engagement: fear, harassment, and media censorship, especially in investigations involving politically connected actors. Constraints on access to credible data and mining sites,

as well as logistical and financial limitations, further restricts the ability of the media houses to undertake continuous and comprehensive reporting. Irrespective of these barriers, this study has established that continuous media publicity has been instrumental towards public awareness, and pushing the government to set-up immediate measures such as Operation Vanguard and the establishment of Galamsey Courts. Yet, the effect is weak and can be characterised by reactive policies rather than long-term systemic changes. Media pressure tends to spark temporary action, but the lack of political will and systemic support frequently stalls lasting change. By applying the Framing Theory, the study offered a nuanced understanding of how media narratives can either reinforce entrenched perspectives or stimulate reform. As part of its recommendations, it encouraged the capacity-building of investigative journalism, the enhancement of safety measures for journalists, depoliticisation of media ownership, and the establishment of institutions to grant free access to information. When adopted, the measures will enhance the role of the media as a watchdog and an ally in policy formulation, enforcement of accountability, and protection of Ghana's environmental future.

Keywords

Framing, Galamsey, Ghana, Illegal Mining, Journalism, Media

1. Background of the Study

Small-scale mining, known as “galamsey”, in Ghana has become a widespread problem marked by social and economic repercussions, environmental degradation, the depletion of land and water resources, and health risks for miners and residents. These adverse effects of galamsey have influenced the government of Ghana and other stakeholders to implement measures geared towards the crack-down of illegal mining activities and its impact on the community. The purpose of this study is to explore how the Ghanaian media has collaborated as a significant stakeholder in the course of dealing with galamsey in Ghana.

Small-scale mining is currently viewed generally as a contributing factor to resource depletion and environmental deterioration in regions where such valuable minerals are exploited. The situation becomes much more serious when the focus shifts to illegal mining, which is referred to as “galamsey” in Ghana. [Adu-Baffour et al. \(2021\)](#) asserted that notwithstanding the benefits and gains from artisanal small-scale mining (ASM), such as employment opportunities, lowering poverty levels, and support for local enterprises, the proliferation of illegal mining enterprises in Ghana poses a significant threat to the use of the environment for both present and future generations. The term “galamsey” is used to describe the activities of small-scale miners who operate without a permit or license issued by regulating agencies like the Ghanaian Minerals Commission ([Annan, 2024](#)). For instance, 85% of miners in Ghana are reportedly working illegally, and over one

million individuals are involved in illegal ASM (ENACT Africa, 2024). The implication is that the activities of a greater percentage of miners in Ghana could not be traced or supervised to ensure adherence to the rules and regulations that govern mining activities. Some of the main adverse effects and repercussions of illegal mining activities in Ghana include land degradation, extinction of plants and animals, extraordinary water body contamination, and agricultural devastation (Darko et al., 2023). Small-scale illegal miners operate their activities close to large rivers and streams because they require water for their operations, which in turn pollute water bodies (Annan, 2024). Annan (2024) further noted that both people and animals in the galamsey communities drink from these polluted water bodies, which causes several sicknesses and diseases, such as typhoid and the deformation of babies.

The continuous violation of the mineral laws in Ghana, including the current Minerals and Mining Act (Act 703, 2006: Section 82-99) by local and foreign actors in the extractive industry and the increasing effects of galamsey has influenced the government of Ghana to declare war against “galamseymen”—entities who engage in galamsey—and encouraged stakeholder collaboration to fight to the galamsey menace (Aziabah and Ayelazuno, 2024). In the recent fight against illegal mining, the government established the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Illegal Mining (IMCIM) to aid in the reform of Ghana’s ASM industry (Anyame et al., 2022). The government also used the security services to fight ASM in what Ayelazuno and Aziabah (2025) have called a “war” Under the guise of Operation Vanguard. Pein (2018) opined that Operation Vanguard realized a 75% success rate in the effort to stop Galamsey activities by apprehending 1129 illegal miners and destroying 7000 pieces of illegal mining equipment (Pein, 2018). The restriction, which was eventually abolished for registered ASM in December 2018, lasted over two years even though it was originally only supposed to last six months (Nti et al., 2020). Further, districts such as the Atiwa West District of the Eastern Region have formed a 62 Galamstop Taskforce at Kwabeng to patrol the Birim River to protect it from pollution (Folley, 2019). Notwithstanding the implementation of all these measures in the fight against galamsey, the menace persists, with several hectares of forest reserves and waters bodies being encroached and destroyed by the activities of illegal mining.

The foregoing shows that much effort is required to complement the already existing measures and enhance the fight against galamsey in Ghana. This study maintains that the media is a significant stakeholder in the fight against galamsey. For instance, the framing theory argues that media coverage of galamsey—whether as an environmental catastrophe, economic issue, or governance failure—drives public perception and dictates government action (Msughter et al., 2023). Policymakers can be forced to act if the media consistently report galamsey as a crisis facing the nation, but where economic issues are emphasized, enforcement efforts may face public resistance. Thus, media coverage and reportage can have a significant impact on the fight against galamsey. Media refers to the various communication

platforms—including newspapers, radio, television, and digital news outlets—that report on galamsey in Ghana, shaping public discourse, influencing policy decisions, and holding authorities accountable through investigative journalism and advocacy (Jensen, 2022). Despite the media playing a core function in revealing illegal mining activities, the generation of public opinion, and holding authorities accountable, its contribution towards suppressing galamsey is not evident. There is limited scholarship on the influence of the media's strategy, framing, and coordination with stakeholders on policy implementation and behavioural change among host communities and miners. Studies such as Kpienbaareh et al. (2021) use a media agenda-setting theoretical lens to examine the media's role in the ongoing crackdown on galamsey activities from January 2017 to March 2018. Sojková (2022) aimed to comprehend the media's framing of galamsey in the first two years of the campaign. Biney (2019) aimed to determine what knowledgeable media professionals needed to launch a persistent, lifelong learning campaign against galamsey in Ghana. This study seeks to determine how the media is engaged in fighting galamsey, the challenges, and the potential avenues of enhancing its contribution towards taming the threat.

Statement of the Research Problem

The devastating effects of galamsey, such as the degradation of land and forest reserves and the destruction of water bodies, cause treat to both human and life (Darko et al., 2023). For instance, water treatment plants have been forced to close due to the use of heavy metals by illegal miners, which have contaminated certain water bodies (Darko et al., 2023). Armah et al. (2010) noted that some communities suddenly lack enhanced sources of potable water when these treatment plants close. People are forced to use unimproved water sources as a result, which raises the possibility of contracting typhoid and other waterborne illnesses. Data from the 2020 Ghana Rapid Health Situation Assessment Report indicated that typhoid is highly prevalent in mining areas in Ghana (Taylor, 2023). Reports have also shown that some communities can only access contaminated water, and this has caused an increase in skin infections and waterborne diseases (Taylor, 2023). The US embassy in Ghana raised a concern by indicating that illegal small-scale mining has wreaked havoc on farmlands, contaminated the air, water, and soil, and contributed significantly to deforestation. In mining towns, it has also led to significant health issues and a rise in school dropout rates, which presents problems for sustainable development (US Embassy in Ghana, 2023). These effects underscore the urgent need for the government and stakeholders such as the media to implement effective measures towards the fight against galamsey.

The media in Ghana is recognised for its role in shaping public opinion and influencing government policies on socio-economic development (Arthur, 2010). Similarly, the media contributes to the fight against illegal mining in Ghana. However, despite the media playing a core function in revealing illegal mining activities, the generation of public opinion, and holding authorities accountable, its contribution towards suppressing galamsey is not evident. While the media is rec-

ognized as a significant stakeholder that could contribute to the fight against galamsey, few researchers have conducted empirical studies on what the media has performed in this regard. Studies such as Kpienbaareh et al. (2021) explore the role of the media in the ongoing crackdown on galamsey activities through a Media Agenda-setting theoretical lens between January 2017 and March 2018. Sojková (2022) sought to understand how galamsey was framed in the media during the first two years of the campaign. Biney (2019) sought to ascertain what informed practitioners in the media space to mount a sustained lifelong learning drive against “galamsey” in Ghana. The review shows that past research has focused on different issues: Kpienbaareh et al. (2021) utilized Agenda-Setting Theory to study the impact of the media over a specific duration (2017-2018), Sojková (2022) compared media framing but for the first two years of the anti-galamsey crusade, and Biney (2019) explained media practitioners’ reasons but not actual influence of media narratives. The present research fills this gap by deploying Framing Theory to explore the ongoing role of media, difficulties, and contribution towards government policy and environmental decision-making beyond erstwhile time intervals.

Purpose of the study

This study explores the ongoing role of media, difficulties, and contribution towards government policy and environmental decision-making beyond erstwhile time intervals.

Research Questions

- 1) How has the media contributed to the fight against galamsey?
- 2) What challenges does the media face in reporting on galamsey-related issues?
- 3) How does media coverage of galamsey influence government actions and environmental policy-making in Ghana?

Research objectives

- 1) To ascertain the contribution of the media to the fight against galamsey.
- 2) To explore the challenges that impede the effort of the media in reporting on galamsey-related issues.
- 3) To ascertain the influence of media coverage of galamsey on government actions and environmental policy-making in Ghana.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to practice, policy, and theory. In the first place, the study contributes to practice by shedding light on how journalists and the media can present galamsey in a manner that sensitizes and mobilizes the public towards action. The study offers concrete recommendations on better reporting, investigative reporting, and agitating for even more effective mobilization of the media against illegal mining.

In policy, the research examines the extent to which media coverage influences government reaction and environmental control. By examining the way the media stories influence policymaking and regulation processes, the research offers suggestions on how policymakers can collaborate with the media to enhance envi-

ronmental policy and enforcement practices against galamsey.

The study is also theoretically important in utilizing Framing Theory to investigate how media narratives affect public opinion, government response, and policy making. The theory fills knowledge gaps in media and environmental studies in Ghana, on which other studies are established on the role of media in environmental governance.

Study structure

This study is structured into five main sections. The first section introduces the study by presenting the background to the study, the statement of the research problem, the research questions and objectives, and the significance of the study. Section two focuses on the review of theories and concepts as well as related empirical studies. The third section discusses the materials and methods that are used to gather and analyse the data for the study. Section four presents and discusses the findings of the study, and section five provides the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews the theories, concepts, and empirical studies that are related to this current study. Thus, the section is divided into three main sections. The first section reviews the framing theory that underpins this study, the second section reviews the concepts, and the third section focuses on the review of empirical studies.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by the framing theory. The framing theory was first proposed by Gregory Bateson. Framing is used to define the process of considering news items and narrative content in a familiar perspective. Goffman, in 1974, described framing as a method of organizing information to derive meaning and contextualize the world (Cacciatore et al., 2016). The idea of framing then underwent additional development, moving from explaining meanings to describing how media could effectively communicate with people in a specific area (Gitlin, 1980). Gitlin (1980) went on to suggest that the media produces and disseminates ideologies by framing ideology for viewers. Accordingly, Gitlin views the media as a crucial framing agent. The media plays a critical role in framing and agenda-setting, influencing foreign policy decisions, and forming public opinion (Gitlin, 1980). Frames are little linguistic shifts that can dramatically affect public perception by drawing emphasis to specific, chosen elements (Taylor and Cronkhite, 2020). Fielding (2024) defines frames as spatial and temporary bounding of a set of interactive messages that function as a type of metacommunication. Policymakers and the media may, therefore, gradually alter the language or narratives to garner support for a policy change (Taylor and Cronkhite, 2020). According to Sojková (2022), the basis of framing is the notion that individuals constantly try to make sense of the world and use cognitive frames, or schemas, to guide their

decision-making. People give the world around them meaning by selecting facts and determining which are more important or relevant than others (Sojková, 2022). As a result, how the media frames the problem has a significant impact on how individuals think about it.

Framing Theory is employed in this study to discuss the manner the Ghanaian media frames news of galamsey and how this type of news affects people's opinion, government policy, and policy-making. The theory helps the study to look into how reporters select, accentuate, and frame certain of the factors in galamsey—be it environmental destruction, economic cause, or government influence—to frame society's understanding of the matter. Applying Framing Theory, this study investigates whether and how the media frame galamsey as a problem of a governance failure issue, economic necessity, or a national problem, and how and under what circumstances it influences policy response and enforcement, and how challenges in reporters' coverage of galamsey influence how public debate and government intervention occur. This theory is used to reveal the extent of media engagement in Ghana's environmental policy intervention and regulation.

The framing theory has been used in several media and environment-related studies globally. For instance, Mateu and Domínguez (2019) used framing theory to examine how environmentalists and the media communicate environmental issues in Spain. Also, Vu et al. (2021) employed the framing theory in their study on social media and environmental activism. Günay et al. (2021) used the framing theory to explore how the media in developing countries framed climate change issues and actions. The authors found more adaptation framing in Nigerian newspapers, whereas adaptation and mitigation frames are more evenly seen in Turkish newspapers. The study also found that the use of foreign sources in news with a climate action frame is negatively correlated with the use of an adaptation frame in our sample.

The Framing Theory can be utilized in this study because it has been widely used in media and environmental studies to analyse the way media framing affects public opinion and policy response. Mateu and Domínguez (2019), Vu et al. (2021), and Günay et al. (2021) provide instances of how media framing constructs discourse on the environment, activism, and climate change in various contexts. The application of this theory will help to shape the media's reporting of galamsey, blaming, and triggering government action and policy intervention in Ghana.

2.2. Illegal Mining (Galamsey)

Artisanal mining of valuable minerals, especially gold and diamonds, is commonly referred to as small-scale mining in Ghana (Ofosu-Mensah, 2017). It should be mentioned that Ghana also engages in small-scale mining of other industrial minerals, including salt, sand, gravel, granite, quartzite, clay, and kaolin (Okofu et al., 2022). Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) is a practice that

includes crude methods of extracting minerals, labor-intensive procedures, dangerous working conditions, and often detrimental effects on the health of people and the environment (Bansah, 2023). ASM in Ghana was considered an informal industrial activity before the Small-Scale Mining Act (PNDCL 218) was passed in 1989. PNDCL 218 provided the legal framework for the operation of small-scale mines. Small-scale gold mining has been significant to the Ghanaian economy for many years (Stemn et al., 2021). Small-scale miners account for 35% of Ghana's total gold output and directly employ over one million people, with an additional 4.5 million workers benefiting indirectly (Nhede, 2025). Since 1989, Ghana's economy has benefited from roughly US\$117 million in small-scale gold mining (Wireko-Gyebi et al., 2020). The ASM industry contributes roughly 35% of Ghana's total gold production, in addition to employing 60% of the nation's mining workforce (Tuokuu et al., 2019). ASM, primarily for gold and diamonds, has grown significantly in Ghana in recent years. Ghana earned \$11.6 billion from gold exports in 2024, up 52.6% compared to 2023; the nation is currently Africa's second-largest producer of gold behind South Africa (Akinochi, 2025).

ASM can help reduce poverty through the provision of employment and the expansion of local businesses. According to Awumbila et al. (2014), artisanal mining may also reduce rural-urban migration by complementing or supplementing other rural economic activities. For example, ASM can act as a catalyst for the growth of small enterprises by increasing the demand for regional goods and services (Afriyie et al., 2023). In turn, these small companies help to lessen material deprivation in communities by hiring people who would not otherwise have a job. Similarly to this, the money made from galamsey can be utilized to fund farming endeavors, which will help many families diversify their sources of income. Tschakert's (2009) empirical investigation demonstrated that one of the main drivers of galamsey mining in Ghanaian rural communities was the necessity to save money to launch a trading enterprise. However, it usually keeps individuals in poverty because of its great sensitivity to illnesses, accidents, and physical hazards, as well as its ignorance about safer, more effective, and ecologically friendly methods. These elements frequently keep miners caught in a cycle of vulnerability and poverty. The challenges of ASM were highlighted by Teschner (2012), who opined that ASM is typically viewed as an unofficial, poverty-driven industry that entails heavy manual labor, hazardous working conditions, little capital investment, and crude methods of mineral extraction (Teschner, 2012). Furthermore, the negligence of African governments and the lack of enforcement of the current ASM laws and regulations have resulted in the proliferation of illegal mining enterprises throughout Africa (Hilson et al., 2017). ENACT Africa (2024) reported that 85% of miners in Ghana are purportedly working illegally, and an estimated 1 million individuals are involved in ASM.

In Ghana, illegal mining, called locally as "galamsey", has received a lot of media attention and raised public concerns about the alleged significant harm it has done to the forest cover. Galamsey has endured for decades despite laws and rules

intended to control it, in part because of cultural, political, and economic considerations (Wireko-Gyebi et al., 2020). According to Nyame and Blocher (2010), one of the main causes of illegal mining in the nation is the land ownership system. Landowners in Ghana are free to use or lease land as they see fit because over 80% of the country's land is owned and managed by the community (Ghebru and Lam-brecht, 2017). Rich private investors now have the chance to target properties with gold reserves. As a result, investors and individuals who buy these properties occasionally start mining without the necessary operational licenses. Sojková (2022) added that the rise in illegal ASM (galamsey) in Ghana and its continued prevalence can be attributed to several factors, including a shortage of land, corruption, unemployment, and Chinese involvement.

Illegal mining is typically carried out by locals, who then invite people from other areas to join the community. In Ghana, more than 4.5 million people depend on the more than a million small-scale miners for their livelihoods. Only Ghanaians with permits are allowed to engage in small-scale, artisanal mining, which accounts for about 35% of all mining activities. But more than 85% of this mining is still thought to be done illegally (ENACT Africa, 2024). Therefore, the artisanal and small-scale mining industry, whose activities are primarily categorized as illegal, contributes significantly to mining revenue. There have been several reports of the devastating effects of illegal mining (Galamsey), which include forest destruction, habitat loss, and biodiversity loss brought on by mining operations (Darko et al., 2023).

The government of Ghana has been working to alleviate the environmental damage caused by unlawful small-scale gold mining, known as galamsey in Ghana, by enforcing bans on the practice for more than ten years (Annan, 2024). Although more individuals have lost their jobs as a result of the government's prohibition on this activity, which has made it difficult for mining communities to make ends meet, the ban is a positive move because it aims to stop and regulate the illegal small-scale mining industry. It is commonly recognized that illegal small-scale mining operations in Ghana have severely contaminated waterways, contaminated the environment, and damaged a large number of farmlands. The prohibition also aims to prevent environmental damage, water body contamination, and forest loss. This study seeks to explore the efforts of the media in the fight against galamsey in Ghana.

2.3. Media in Ghana

The term media is used to describe the platforms and means of communication and distribution of information to the masses. Media have always been classified as print media (newspapers, magazines), broadcast media (radio, television), and online media (online news sites, social media). It is noteworthy that the rise of digital media has expanded its impact on the economy and society (Garcia and Subtil, 2022). Traditional media, which included print media (such as newspapers and magazines), television, movies, audio recordings, and radio, has seen a dra-

matic change in the twenty-first century, giving way to new or digital media (Gastrow, 2015). Digital media refers to any digital communication that is online and includes the interaction of text, images, sound, and technology (Muswede, 2022). Klein (2023) defined digital media as any digital content that covers the entire process of getting it to people and devices for consumption. Various service systems and contemporary network technologies are used to provide information through digital media (Rha and Lee, 2022). In the course of this study, the term “media” refers to the different media channels of communication detailing and covering public discourse on galamsey (illegal artisanal gold mining) in Ghana.

Media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion, policymaking, and the government’s reaction to environmental disasters. Media have been observed to shape the framing of environmental disasters, with an ability to shape policymaking and public opinion (Mateu and Domínguez, 2019; Günay et al., 2021). The media in Ghana played the key role of setting at the top of their agenda the environmental pollution caused by galamsey activities, exposing illegal mining operations, and pushing the government to act. Besides carrying news, media also influence the public agenda through what is emphasized and how it is framed (Wanta, 2023). The media can employ mechanisms such as news investigation, editorial commentaries, and framing to influence national discourse about galamsey to influence the perception of the general public and policymakers about the menace. Research like Kpienbaareh et al. (2021) has examined how media framing influences government response to illegal mining. The framing theory assumes that framing a problem in the media defines how the public frames the same problem (Entman, 1993). Media framing of galamsey can pose illegal mining as an economic need problem, as an environmental problem, or as a governance and hence influence public opinion and policy-making. Vu et al. (2021) demonstrated the impact of media framing of environmental activism on collective action and engagement in policy-making. Apart from reporting, the media are also a judge who puts policymakers to task for overseeing the environment. The media can best communicate policy changes to curb galamsey by revealing corruption, advocating stricter controls, and informing citizens. Research has found that continued coverage by the media can pressure the government into taking stricter environmental regulations and addressing illicit mining activities (Biney, 2019).

An Inter-Ministerial Taskforce called Operation Vanguard was established in 2017 in reaction to the widely-received #StopGalamsey campaign by Citi FM, a significant Ghanaian media outlet. The Media Coalition Against Galamsey (MCAG) was established as a result of the campaign’s participation by other significant media institutions and organizations. The MCAG increased pressure on extractive industry participants to take action to end illicit mining. Media outlets were part of the group. The Ghana Journalists Association, the Private Newspaper Publishers Association, the Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association, the Ghana Community Radio Network, and the Ghana Catholic Bishops Conference are examples of public and private institutions; other examples include the Omni media

(Citi FM), New Times Corporation, Graphic Communications Group Limited, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, Multimedia Group Limited, and Media General Limited (TV3) (Kpienbaareh et al., 2021).

This study maintains that the media is a powerful tool of communication that informs and shapes public opinion, government reaction, and policy formulation on galamsey in Ghana. The media have an important function of agenda-setting for national discussion on illegal mining and its effect on the environment through agenda-setting, framing, and investigative reporting. This study, therefore, explores how the media has contributed to the fight against illegal mining in Ghana.

2.4. Empirical Review

Researchers have shown a considerable interest in how the media contributes to the fight against illegal mining across the world. For example, Naziru (2022) and Naziru et al. (2022) analyzed the collaboration of the media with the government in dealing with illegitimate yellow metal exploration within Zamafara, Nigeria. The findings showed that the media's coverage of illegal mining activities is usually biased since it focuses mostly on the specific politics and negative facts surrounding platinum exploration rather than the positive outcomes of ASGM action.

Kpienbaareh et al. (2021) examined the role of the media in the crackdown on Galamsey activities in Ghana using a theoretical framework of media agenda-setting. Using textual analysis of media coverage of Galamsey from January 2017 to March 2018, the study found that the media used narratives and symbols to (re)shape public discourse and policy in the extractive industry. The authors revealed that the narratives framed by the media influenced the government's policy, as evidenced by the creation of the Multilateral Mining Integration Project to provide alternative livelihoods after effective media campaigns, and strict measures like Operation Vanguard and Galamsey Courts were put in place to combat the Galamsey threat.

Sojková (2022) examined how galamsey was framed in the media during the first two years of the campaign (2017-2018). Four main themes emerged from an examination of 176 stories in the Daily Graphic newspaper: the threat to the environment, criminal behavior, the threat of complexity, and corruption and cooperation. The portrayal of Galamsey was predominantly negative; miners were criminalized and dehumanized; opposing viewpoints were ignored; and Chinese engagement emphasized non-traditional perception (Sojková, 2022).

Biney (2019) conducted a qualitative study to determine what motivated media professionals to launch a sustained, lifelong learning campaign against "galamsey" in Ghana. The study collected data from 15 people who were purposefully chosen through focus groups and in-depth interviews. Additionally, six participants, both male and female, discussed their experiences with the "galamsey" threat and the battle against it. The core of this study is their ideas, opinions, and perceptive con-

cepts. It became clear that the “galamsey” actions were intricate and that both Ghanaians and foreigners used large earthmoving equipment to damage water bodies and forest vegetation cover. The participants bribe their way to safety.

The reviews determine how media uncovered unlawful mining across the globe, particularly in Ghana and Nigeria. [Salati et al. \(2022\)](#) determined that the coverage of unlawful mining in Nigeria by the media was biased toward negative political concerns as opposed to revealing the positives of artisanal mining’s potential gains. [Kpienbaareh et al. \(2021\)](#) illustrated how the media framing of galamsey in Ghana has influenced policy-making through policies like the Multilateral Mining Integration Project and Operation Vanguard. [Sojková \(2022\)](#) also researched galamsey framing in media in Ghana with regular negative representation of miners, limited coverage of opposition voices, and focus on Chinese involvement. [Biney \(2019\)](#) investigated media practitioners’ agenda in Ghana to pursue anti-galamsey campaigns, with suggestions of illegality on mining operations and corruption.

In all these studies, however, there is a missing link on how media framing influences the public perception and policy response after the first couple of years of galamsey suppression. The previous studies looked at agenda-setting in the media and content framing for specific short periods (2017-2018) but not how sustained media narratives influence the government and public knowledge about galamsey in the long term. Additionally, little to nothing has been investigated in terms of issues posed by the coverage of galamsey by journalists, particularly from a political, economic, and security point of view. These gaps, as identified, are what this research aims to fill by using the framing theory to explore how the media in contemporary times frame galamsey, the challenges the media face in reporting about illegal mining, and the degree to which media stories shape government and environmental policy. Such a study will better understand the evolving role of the media in policy and discourse in Ghana’s fight against illegal mining.

3. Research Methodology

In this section, the researcher discusses the methods and materials that are used to gather and analyze data for the study. The sections elaborate on issues such as the research approach and design, the population, sampling size and sampling technique, data collection instrument and procedure, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.1. Research Approach

This study employs the qualitative research approach. The qualitative approach presents a methodical investigation of social phenomena in their natural environments ([Korstjens and Moser, 2022](#)). Social phenomena include the way people experience different parts of their lives, how individuals and/or groups behave, how organizations operate, and how encounters form relationships ([Corner et al.,](#)

2019). The researcher is regarded as the primary tool for gathering data in qualitative research. The researcher investigates the causes, consequences, and meanings of events for the participants in the study. Accordingly, qualitative research is effective in obtaining specific information about behaviors, values, opinions, and social contexts of particular populations (Gerring, 2017).

The qualitative research approach is used in this study to explore the contribution of the Ghanaian media in the fight against galamsey. The qualitative approach was used in this study because it allows the researcher to collect participant perspectives, experiences, and behaviour to investigate and offer deeper insights into how the media contributes to the fight against galamsey. Though the qualitative approach could not precisely quantify phenomena like attitudes, experiences, and behaviours, it allowed the participants to describe their feelings, thoughts, and experiences about how the media helps in dealing with galamsey issues in Ghana.

3.2. Research Design

The exploratory design is used in this to examine the contribution of the media in the fight against galamsey. Elman (2022) argued that exploratory research is conducted to address a phenomenon or provide an answer to a question. The exploratory design is used in this study because the nature of the problem under study—the media’s contribution to the fight against galamsey—makes it hard to control a variable, finish it in a controlled setting, or, more likely, identify all the influences on the entity. Furthermore, this study seeks to uncover broad principles that can be used to explain observations and data.

3.3. Research Population

This study targets various stakeholders who are directly involved in media coverage and policies concerning galamsey in Ghana. In essence, the population comprised journalists and media practitioners such as reporters, editors, and investigative journalists who work for print, electronic, and online media organizations covering illegal mining issues. Government officials and policymakers in institutions like the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Minerals Commission also constituted the study population. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and activists who took part in anti-galamsey protests were also included, as well as media studies scholars and researchers on environmental governance and mining research. Lastly, the residents of the communities where galamsey activities take place, including the local leaders and opinion leaders, were consulted in order to introspect on the actual contribution of the media in dealing with illegal mining activities.

3.4. Sample Technique and Size

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants for this study. Purposive sampling techniques steer clear of random sampling and strive to ensure that par-

ticular types of cases of potential participants are included in the final sample of the research. This study adopted purposive sampling due to the objectives of the study. In that, the objectives of the study demanded that particular types of individuals who have significant and differing opinions about the media's contribution to the fight against illegal mining were included in the study. The purposeful sampling ensured that participants were selected based on their capacity to give rich, pertinent, and varied data to enhance the findings of the study.

The researcher gathered data from 24 participants. The sample was determined based on the judgment of the researchers and the objectives of the study. The 24 participants were necessary to provide comprehensive and diverse views from significant stakeholders to enhance the findings of the study. The details of the sample size are given in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Description of study's sample.

Population	Sample size
Journalists and media practitioners	9
Government officials and policymakers	3
Civil society organizations (CSOs) and activists	3
Scholars and researchers	4
Residents of the communities	5
Total	24

Source: Author's compilation.

3.5. Data Collection Instrument and Procedure

The researcher used an interview guide to gather data for the study, which consisted of three main parts: the first part collected data on the contribution of the media to the fight against galamsey, the second part focused on the challenges that impede the effort of the media in reporting on galamsey-related issues, and the third part collected data on the influence of media coverage of galamsey on government actions and environmental policy-making in Ghana. The researcher sent the guide for peer review to ensure that the items in the guide met their objectives or gathered the information needed to address the study objectives.

The various media houses, institutions, and other pertinent entities gave the researcher permission to collect data from the targeted individuals. The data was collected through face-to-face interviews with the participants at the respective workstations. Some participants asked the researcher to interview them from their workstations at a time that works for them. Participants were asked open-ended questions from the interview guide during scheduled interviews. With the participants' permission, some interviews were taped to guarantee the accuracy of the data acquired during the analysis phase. Confidentiality was upheld, and involvement was entirely optional throughout the process. Each participant's interview lasted roughly half an hour.

3.6. Data Analysis

The data were analysed using the six-step thematic analysis method developed by Braun and Clarke (2019). The interview recordings were first carefully reviewed and transcribed to ensure familiarization. Second, during preliminary coding, relevant codes of the three study objectives—the contribution of the media, challenges that impede the effort of the media in reporting on galamsey-related issues, and the third part collected data on the influence of media coverage of galamsey on government actions and environmental policy-making in Ghana—were discovered. The detected codes were subsequently categorized into possible themes to make sure that these codes represented significant trends in the data. These themes were described, and it was verified that they matched the dataset. The main conclusions were outlined, and the final themes were explained using direct statements from the participants as evidence.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

This study implemented several measures to comply with the ethics that govern the conduct of social science research. First and foremost, the researcher requested participants' informed consent and asked for their permission to take part in the study. Respondent data were handled secretly to preserve the validity of the results. The researcher informed the participants of their position and goal in the study to ensure that the respondents' consent and norms were not broken. Furthermore, the results were reported using pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Additionally, due credit was given to the works of current scholars who were consulted in the creation of this study.

4. Presentation and Discussion of Findings

This Section presents and discusses the findings of the study. The first section presents the findings and is divided into three sections: the contribution of the media to the fight against galamsey, the challenges that impede the effort of the media in reporting on galamsey-related issues and the influence of media coverage of galamsey on government actions and environmental policy-making in Ghana.

4.1. Findings

This section presents the findings under three main themes, reflecting the objectives of the study; the contribution of the media to the fight against galamsey, the challenges that impede the effort of the media in reporting on galamsey-related issues, and the influence of media coverage of galamsey on government actions and environmental policy-making in Ghana.

4.1.1. The Contribution of the Media to the Fight against Galamsey

The first objective was to ascertain the contribution of the media to the fight against illegal mining (galamsey) in Ghana. The study revealed that the media contributes to the fight against illegal mining by framing the issue in several ways.

The themes that emerged included framing issues of galamsey as a national crisis, framing illegal miners as criminals, shaping public outrage and advocacy and political and economic framing of galamsey.

Framing issues of galamsey as a national crisis

The interview revealed that the media framed galamsey issues as a national issue, awakening the populace and stimulating a response from the government. It is often in the guise of illegal mining with unprecedented environmental degradation, contamination of water bodies, and jeopardizing food security. One of the participants had this to say:

“How we report galamsey reflects that we are not faced with a case of one problem but faced with a case of national crisis. We inform the public about the devastation of the forests, contamination of the rivers, and how it turns into a threat to livelihood and agriculture.” [P9, Journalist/Media practitioner].

Other participants also indicated that the media employed sensational imagery and headings to magnify the issue of galamsey and draw people’s attention to how big a problem galamsey has become. This is what one of the participants had to say:

“When we show pictures of polluted rivers and dying fish, it sends the very strong message that something very urgent needs to be done. We make sure the public understands that galamsey is leading the nation towards an environmental crisis.” [P2, Journalist/Media practitioner].

According to the participants, the presentation of galamsey as a national crisis has shaped public perception and informed short-term government policy. Yet the participants also wondered whether such rhetoric amounts to policy change.

Framing illegal miners as criminals

The majority of the interviewees elaborated on the way illegal miners are largely reported by the media as criminals and with little mention of socio-economic factors as the cause or pushing people into galamsey. According to a journalist:

“A lot of the reporting is arresting the miners and portraying them as criminals. We show images of security officers burning their equipment and destroying sites, but we do not usually report on why these people are conducting illegal mining in the first place.” [P1, Journalist/Media practitioner].

This framing, in the opinion of some of the participants, provokes popular imagination that galamsey-caused destruction is only the fault of the miners without taking into consideration the structural aspect. This was succinctly encapsulated by one of the media practitioners as:

“The reality is that most of those miners are poor peasants and jobless youth seeking survival. But our narratives do not always tell that. We do otherwise, we adhere to this narrative that they are criminals and must be punished.” [P7, Journalist/Media practitioner].

In addition, some of the interviewees indicated that foreign nationals, especially the Chinese miners, are usually targeted in the media coverage. As one of the participants explained:

“There is always the emphasis on Chinese involvement in galamsey, which agitates the people. Though their input is astronomical, we are sitting ducks while remaining mute as regards local facilitators and corrupted bureaucrats who make illicit mining a viable business.” [P5, Journalist/Media practitioner].

Overall, the interviewees agreed that although the criminalization frame is likely to increase the scope of government crackdowns, it has little to offer in addressing the root causes of galamsey. Others called for balanced intervention that includes miners’ complaints and proposes sustainable alternatives.

Shaping public outrage and advocacy

Some of the participants noted that the media intentionally portrays galamsey as a national catastrophe to elicit public anger and demand instant government intervention. Through emotive coverage and gruesome images, media reports tend to depict the catastrophic effects of illegal mining on water bodies, farmlands, and communities. A journalist explained:

“We use dramatic imagery—brown rivers, floating dead fish, and children suffering from contaminated water. The images make people sense the urgency of the problem and pressure the government to act.” [P4, Journalist/Media practitioner].

This strategy, in the opinion of some interviewees, has been successful in rallying public as well as institutional support against illegal mining. A television reporter noted:

“When we air reports that expose the devastations of galamsey, the response is immediate. Civil society groups and environmentalists pick up the debate, and soon we hear policy responses from the decision-makers.” [P2, Journalist/Media practitioner].

Some of the participants, however, questioned whether the media approach emphasizes sensationalism instead of more analytical coverage. A researcher who participated in the study narrated:

“Although it is good to create awareness, our narratives focus too much on outrage rather than solutions. We need to move from just showing the problem to also showing alternative livelihoods and responsible mining operations.” [P11, Environmental researcher].

Overall, participants acknowledged the power of the media in informing public discourse but appealed for a more balanced approach that not only provokes response but also encourages long-term solutions.

The political and economic framing of galamsey

The interviewees said that galamsey is largely reported by the media in political and economic terms and evokes public opinion along party lines. Some of the interviewees said that media reporting is largely accusatory of the government for inaction or reporting politically exposed individuals’ involvement in illegal mining. As one of the journalists explained:

“Often the emphasis is on which administration is not doing enough to deal with galamsey instead of the issue at hand. The report either accuses the governing party of having been too soft on the issue or faults the opposition for not doing

anything when they were in power.” [P6, Journalist/Media practitioner].

Others spoke of the way economic interests influence the reporting of galamsey. The reports by the media do show the way powerful businessmen and foreigners are exploiting the illegal gold mining in a way that seems to present the small-scale miners as pawns in a big game of exploitation. An experienced journalist described:

“We have seen cases where power brokers—foreigners and Ghanaian alike—participate in galamsey activities. The small miners are arrested, but the financiers of the venture are not.” [P8, Journalist/Media practitioner].

Some of the actors also intimated that some of the media outlets cover galamsey in a specific manner depending on their affiliation or source of funding. As was revealed by one editor:

“Framing of a story is ownership responsibility of the media house. While others avoid open attacks on powerful individuals, other individuals use galamsey as a weapon of attack against political adversaries.” [P2, Journalist/Media practitioner].

In general, the participants admitted that although media coverage has been instrumental in exposing the galamsey scandal, politically and economically framing of the scandal sometimes eclipses the environmental and social aspects of the scandal.

4.1.2. The Challenges That Impede the Effort of the Media in Reporting on Galamsey-Related Issues

The challenges identified in this study as the challenges that impede the efforts of media in reporting on galamsey-related issues include intimidation against journalists, political and corporate influence on media coverage of galamsey issues.

Intimidation and threats against journalists

The majority of the respondents recounted the dangers faced by journalists in reporting galamsey, describing the experience of intimidation, harassment, and even threats to their lives. Some respondents described that powerful individuals who are involved in illegal mining have a proclivity to muzzle investigative journalists through intimidation. One seasoned journalist with extensive reporting on galamsey matters had this to say:

“Once you start investigating the funders of galamsey, you receive threatening calls. I have been instructed by strangers to stop investigating some individuals, or else I would regret it.” [P7, Journalist/Media practitioners].

The other stakeholders also reported that apart from threats to life, journalists have been attacked or had their equipment vandalized while reporting on illegal mining activities. A journalist recalled one such terrifying experience:

“I was driven out of a mining site by guys who had guns. They seized my camera and told me never to return there again. It is a dangerous job, and a majority of the journalists live in fear of their lives.” [P3, Journalist/Media practitioner].

Apart from outright threats, some of the respondents suggested that journalists also face institutional pressures discouraging them from reporting freely on

galamsey. As one editor explained:

“Other media houses avoid in-depth investigative journalism on galamsey for fear of reprisals. Some owners of the media houses have political or business affiliations with the illegal miners.” [P8, Journalist/Media practitioner].

The respondents indicated that intimidation and fear to a great extent hinder journalists from providing objective coverage of the phenomenon of galamsey, such that most critical dimensions of the phenomenon are underreported.

Political and Corporate Control of Media Reporting

Others cited the mechanisms of media ownership and political association on coverage of galamsey issues, normally leading to censorship, biased reporting, or selective framing to protect powerful figures. The participants cited instances of unwillingness among certain media houses in Ghana to expose prime sponsors of illegal mining due to their associations with powerful political and economic elites in the country. In the words of one reporter:

“There are times where we have received solid proof linking high-profile individuals with galamsey, and our editors tell us to drop the actors. The media is not as autonomous as people believe it to be—it is controlled by its proprietors.” [P4, Journalist/Media practitioner].

Some interviewees also commented that political affiliations shape the framing of galamsey on different media platforms, where some label one particular political party and downplay the role of other political parties. An analyst said:

“Depending on which media house you listen to, you’ll either hear that the government is cracking down on galamsey or that the government is part of it. The political stake determines the framing and not fact reporting.” [P10, Academic/Researcher].

In addition, corporate influence was found to be one of the restrictions on critical reporting of illegal mining. Some of the mining entities, both with concession permits and otherwise, allegedly provide money to encourage positive media coverage. One respondent stated:

“Some media institutions are sponsored by mining companies, and therefore, they do not publish stories concerning the negative impact of mining on the environment. The financial dependency hinders the journalists from being objective.” [P16, Civil society organization/Activist].

The interview showed how political and corporate influence affects the media to provide equal and objective coverage of galamsey, finally deciding what the public and policymakers are aware of and react to, typically for the benefit of vested powers.

Limited Access to Galamsey Sites and Credible Information

The interviewees bemoaned the key challenges journalists face in accessing galamsey sites and collecting credible information for effective reporting. Security concerns, non-cooperation by local authorities, and challenges in fact-checking were named by most as major impediments to investigative reporting on illegal mining. One of the journalists narrated:

“Poking into galamsey sites is extremely risky. You either have to be accompa-

nied by security officials or deal directly with the miners, which would be dangerous. We are mostly scared of getting hurt, so we settle for second-hand information instead of direct inquiry.” [P3, Journalist/Media practitioner].

Another interviewee added that officials at the local level will typically not provide information or actively prevent journalists from reporting on galamsey. As described by one investigative journalist:

“When we request data from district councils or environmental groups, they respond that they don’t have it or keep us waiting indefinitely. It is like they don’t want us to disclose the scope of the problem.” [P5, Journalist/Media practitioner].

In addition to physical access problems, interviewees reported an unwillingness to verify facts due to the informal and secretive nature of galamsey operations. As one media analyst summarized:

“There is so much misinformation surrounding illegal mining. Some are exaggerated, and some are downplayed depending on the agenda. We cannot give an accurate representation to the public without credible data.” [P2, Journalist/Media practitioner].

These limitations hinder journalists from providing comprehensive and fact-based reporting of galamsey, restricting public awareness and dampening media pressure on policy action against illegal mining.

Financial and Logistical Constraints in Investigative Reporting

Some of the respondents explained how logistical constraints and financial limitations make it difficult for media houses to have sustained coverage of galamsey matters. Investigative reporting is a costly activity, but several news outlets suffer from funding constraints that limit their ability to send reporters into the field or carry out extensive investigations. A reporter had this to say:

“Journalistic investigations are expensive. You need money for field trips, for security, even for lawyers, but most news institutions can’t afford the expense of such work. We therefore have no choice but to rely on press releases rather than doing our investigation.” [P1, Journalist/media practitioner].

Journalists also listed the lack of logistical support, including inadequate equipment and training to report in distant and often hostile regions. As one reporter illustrated:

“Few of us are given protective gear, drones, or even basic fieldwork recording tools. Without these, covering galamsey operations in high-risk areas is practically impossible.” [P9, Journalist/media practitioner].

These financial and infrastructural constraints significantly limit the media’s ability to unmask the real extent of illegal mining operations, reducing the effectiveness of journalistic efforts in keeping powerful stakeholders on their toes.

4.1.3. The Influence of Media Coverage of Galamsey on Government Actions and Environmental Policy-Making in Ghana

Construction of Public Awareness and Government Responsiveness

The participants emphasized how ongoing media coverage has significantly

helped put the spotlight on public awareness and raised pressure on the authorities to act against galamsey. The interview showed that the media has constructed government reactions and interventions through ongoing construal of galamsey as a national emergency. As described by one of the interviewees:

“The masses cried out, and the government was forced to act with policies like Operation Vanguard as the media continued to highlight the destruction of water bodies and farmland.” [P14, CSO/Activist].

Others commented that the outrage by the public due to the media prompted policymakers to impose tighter rules and establish specialist courts to handle galamsey cases. One journalist explained:

“The pressure imposed by media exposure rendered it costly in political terms for the government to ignore the issue. We thus saw the establishment of Galamsey Courts and the Multilateral Mining Integration Project.” [P1, Journalist/media practitioner].

Also, respondents indicated that how galamsey had been portrayed as an environmental and social disaster created urgency among the populace, leading to a differential effect on the responsiveness of the government. According to one participant:

“Without the ever-present media coverage, the scope of the problem would have been downplayed. The pressure we mounted forced the authorities to act quickly.” [P4, Journalist/media practitioner].

These findings indicate that the media reportage of the galamsey related issues yielded some results by shaping public perception and policymaking in the fight against galamsey.

Selective Enforcement of Policy and Political Will

Interviewees were concerned that even if media campaigns have succeeded in putting pressure on policy discourse on galamsey, enforcement on the ground is selective and politically motivated. A journalist explained:

“Our reporting pushed the government to come out with programs like Operation Vanguard, but the enforcement is selective. Certain powerful individuals or illegal miners are let off the hook because of their political connections.” [P5, Journalist/media practitioner].

Others have noted that media pressure leads to crackdowns in the short run, but diligent attempts at environmental protection are being offered up on the altar of political expediency. One commentator put it this way:

“The government acts when the media spotlight is bright, but when public interest wanes, enforcement falters. It’s an exercise in political image rather than genuine environmental protection.” [P11, CSO/Activist].

One policymaker even acknowledged the challenge:

“The media have brought the illegal mining into the spotlight. But when political interests and economic gain are involved, it is difficult to apply policy consistently.” [P18, Government official and policymaker].

These findings, as expressed above, show that while the media is a key medium

of debate for policy against galamsey, continued enforcement is undermined by political interference and discriminative action.

Short-Term Reactions versus Long-Term Policy Reforms

Participants were concerned that the government's response to media coverage of galamsey is typically short-term and not long-term in its dedication to structural changes. A participant noted:

"When the media raises its coverage, the government swiftly deploys task forces and bans mining activities. But these are short-term actions, and when the lime-light fades, illegal mining resumes." [P21, Community Leader].

Another participant emphasized the absence of sustainable alternatives for impacted communities:

"We've been highlighting the need for alternative livelihood projects for miners, but everybody is in the business of arrests and military operations instead of getting people jobs or protecting the environment." [P19, Community Leader].

One policymaker confirmed:

"The press is necessary to expose illegal mining, but we require steadier policies and money to ensure long-term reform and community formation." [P16, Government official and policymaker].

These perceptions show that while media pressure triggers rapid government action, the lack of sustained policy interventions and support for affected communities undermines long-term gains in the fight against galamsey.

4.2. Discussion

The results of this research show the effectiveness of media framing to discourse and policy reaction to the issue of illegal mining, or galamsey, in Ghana. Some themes were obtained from the thematic analysis of statements from interviews with journalists, policymakers, and other sources illustrating how media stories influenced public opinion and government action. The findings of the study have been discussed in the following paragraphs on a wider framework of media studies and the paradigm of the framing theory. The findings of the study revealed how the media frame galamsey profoundly influences what the people think and policy direction.

It is made clear that the media highlight galamsey as a national interest crisis through the environment, water pollution, and famine that needs immediate action by the government. This confirms Entman's (1993) argument that framing involves the selection of some aspects of reality to construct a particular problem definition and moral judgment. The Ghanaian media selects titles and reports that reflect galamsey issues as a nationwide issue, awakening citizens and provoking a response from the government. The media portrays or associates illegal mining with unprecedented environmental destruction, water body contamination, and food insecurity. These findings agree with that of Sojková (2022), who found that most Ghanaian newspapers presented illegal mining in predominantly negative terms; miners were criminalized and humanized; dissenting views were muzzled;

and Chinese participation highlighted non-traditional framing. The media reports and the focus on presenting illegal miners as criminals while the socio-economic forces driving individuals into galamsey remain unexplained. Such attribution is in line with the “attribution of responsibility” schema proposed by [Iyengar \(1991\)](#), in which the media focuses on attention to behavior at the individual level rather than cause at the systemic level. For instance, it was found that the media have depicted the miners as hooligans with no mention of unemployment and the few career opportunities that drive them to engage in illegal mining activities. Such emphasis may constrain the agenda of broad-based policy measures that take their root causes into account. The calculated employment of emotive stories and sensational pictures by the media elicits popular indignation and forces the administration to react. This is consistent with [Gross and D’Amboise’s \(2004\)](#) model of emotional framing, in which emotive stories are said to create more audience interest and activism. The research does, however, prompt us to think about the potential that this might lead to reactive short-term policy interventions and not substantive reforms. Besides, the crisis narrative of this type has the propensity to conceal the socio-economic drivers driving individuals into illegal mining and hence ends up leading to reactive, as opposed to sustainable, policy responses. The study also exposed some of the challenges that undermine the Ghanaian media in countering illegal mining.

The findings revealed that Journalists reporting galamsey are intimidated, attacked, and threatened by powerful operators of illegal mining. It implies the interpretation of media capture of [Stiglitz \(2017\)](#) under which powerful actors capture media messages either with money or through coercion. Threats undermine journalistic independence and limit fact-based reporting of the phenomenon. The study identifies that political allegiances and media ownership dictate the galamsey reporting issues, and hence, censorship and biases arise. This is evidence for the Herman and Chomsky propaganda model, which claims that media coverage relies on the agenda of the ruling elites ([Casado Gutiérrez and Sánchez Figuera, 2021](#)). This study observed that some media houses do not condemn powerful people in society who are engaged in galamsey due to political allegiances. This contradicts [Ayelazuno and Aziabah’s \(2023\)](#) reporting, whose contention was that power elites operating under the cover of the military who battle against Galamsey to plunder the environment for financial benefits are more and more evident due to digital media. The leak and the political backlash on the then government are an example of the watchdog capability of ICT revolution-era new media affordances ([Ayelazuno and Aziabah, 2023](#)). Journalists lamented the lack of access to galamsey operations and poor, credible information for good reporting. This outcome supports the information asymmetry hypostudy ([Ouyang et al., 2017](#)), where differential access to information hinders proper decision-making. Restricted access not only infringes on the standard of media coverage but also discourages members from gaining access to the sophistication of galamsey issues. Despite challenges faced by the media to cover galamsey matters, the study iden-

tified that consistent media coverage raised the awareness of the general public and prompted the authorities to respond, for instance, through the organization of task forces and stricter policies to deal with galamsey.

This outcome supports the agenda-setting theory (Zain, 2014), implying that media set the agenda among citizens by keeping a focus on particular issues. However, research again supports the fact that policies influenced by the media are not firmly committed to structural change. The interview participants held the notion that while campaigns by the media intrude on policy discussion, their implementation in a proper sense is politically unsteady and prejudiced. The inability to maintain long-term commitment to livelihood alternatives for poor members negates the efficacies of such measures. Most respondents also presumed the government response towards coverage of activities by the media to be invariably transient and is never structural long-term policy adjustments. This complements the policy feedback theory (Pierson, 1993), emphasizing the need for concerted policy action over persistent social concerns. Without abandoning the source of galamsey, the media-derived policy shall forever remain incomplete and superficial. The findings from this contribute to the ongoing debate on the media's contribution to the fight against illegal mining and provide insights for effective policy decisions and practice.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study is structured into five main sections. The first section introduced the study, the second section focused on the review of theories, concepts, and empirical studies, section three discussed the methods and materials used in gathering and analysing data, and section four presented and discussed the findings of the study. This section provides the summary, conclusion, and recommendations.

5.1. Summary of the Study

The study aimed to explore the contributions of the media in the fight against illegal mining in Ghana. The study adopted the qualitative research approach and used interview guides to gather data from 24 participants. The thematic analysis showed the media framed galamsey as a national crisis, framing illegal miners as criminals, shaping public outrage and advocacy, and political and economic framing of galamsey. The challenges identified in this study as the challenges that impede the efforts of media in reporting on galamsey-related issues include intimidation against journalists and political and corporate influence on media coverage of galamsey issues. The study also revealed that media reportage on galamsey has created public awareness and influenced government policy decisions on the matter. However, there is much to be done to ensure the effective contribution of the media in the fight against galamsey in Ghana.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following are recommended to enhance the me-

dia's performance in combating galamsey, de-cluttering reporting concerns, and rendering policies more effective:

1) Enhance Investigative Journalism Capacity

The media organizations ought to invest in training journalists in investigative reporting capabilities and environmental reporting. This would enhance their ability to undertake in-depth, unbiased reporting on galamsey-related issues.

2) Enhance Journalists' Security and Protection

The government and media regulatory bodies must offer a safety net to journalists to rescue them from threats and intimidation by influential individuals who are engaged in illegal mining. These may be in the form of legal support, helplines, and safe working environments.

3) Promote independent and unbiased reporting

The media owners and editors must be free from political and corporate interference and offer unbiased and balanced reporting of Galamsey. Independent fact-checking sites can be established to fact-check pieces of information to avoid misinformation.

4) Provide Access to Mining Areas and Correct Data

The government must provide an open and inclusive process in which journalists are given access to the sites of mining operations and correct information regarding illegal mining. Coordination with environmental groups and NGOs can allow information exchange.

5) Sustain Media-Government Interaction to Educate Policy

There must be frequent stakeholder engagements like the media practitioners, policymakers, and environmental activists to help ensure that the media agenda-setting has an impact on long-term policy change rather than short-term political reactions (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Implementation plan.

Activity	Stakeholder	Timeline	Required resources	Monitoring and evaluation strategies
Training for Investigative media personnel	Media houses, journalist unions, NGOs	6 months	Financial resources, skilled trainers	Total of trained journalists, quality of investigative pieces output.
Mechanisms of Security and Protection	Government, regulatory institutions of media, security institutions	Ongoing	Support system for legal rights, emergency reaction team	Frequency of threat cases reported attended to, security index of reporters
Creation of Independent Fact-Checking Platforms	Media institutions, civil society organizations	1 year	Information Technology infrastructure, highly trained personnel	Accuracy and credibility rating of reports from media houses

Continued

Enhancing Access to Mining Sites and Data.	Media, government, local government offices.	Continuous	Permitting access, sharing agreements	Access level allowed, number of verified reports
Regular Stakeholder Interactions	Environmentalists, policymakers, media experts	Quarterly	Site, organization, and facilitation fees	Number of policy ideas deliberated, feedback from stakeholders.

5.3. Reflection of the Implementation Limits and Effectiveness of the Plan

The proposed implementation plan is designed to facilitate an enhanced media role against galamsey and policy intervention, but some limitations that are capable of affecting its efficiency are present.

Firstly, political and economic domination of media ownership is a key challenge. Despite training and independent fact-checking protocols, influential political and corporate interests can still manipulate some media organizations to limit the objectivity and depth of their reporting. This can have the potential to negate efforts at depicting galamsey as a national crisis and holding policymakers accountable.

Secondly, the safety and security of journalists remain in issue. Although legal support structures and quick response groups are indicated, political will and security agencies' commitment make or break protection of this kind. When such strongmen who operate galamsey have political patronage, the journalists remain at risk of threats and intimidations, thereby undermining their unbridled freedom of delivering objective and unbiased reports.

Also, limited access to verifiable data and mine sites can be a limit to good investigative reporting. Security authorities and local governments will tend to close off sensitive information, especially if it betrays corruption or the lax application of mining legislation. Without an open data-sharing policy, media reports will not be able to deliver the degree of granularity and proof necessary to inform policy decisions.

Aside from that, the sustainability of normal stakeholder communication and capacity-building activities is questionable. Sustaining needs periodic financing, consensus from media players and policymakers, and the active cooperation of the world of civil society. However, budget politics and political hostility could limit the efficacy and frequency of these initiatives.

Despite such limitations, the strategies advanced offer a credible platform on which to construct media influence on policy and public discussion concerning galamsey in Ghana. Enhanced cooperation between the media, policymakers, and green campaigners will lead to incremental gains. Ongoing monitoring, adaptation, and reaction to structural power relations in the media are the keys to long-term success.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix

Interview guide:

A. Framing of Galamsey by Media

- 1) How do media tend to frame galamsey in reporting their news?
- 2) What do you consider to be the factors influencing how the media frames galamsey?

B. Challenges in Reporting on Galamsey by Media

- 3) What are some of the greatest challenges for journalists reporting galamsey?
- 4) How do intimidation and threats from illegal miners or power brokers affect your work?

C. Influence of the Media on Policy and Government Intervention

- 5) In your opinion, how has media reporting influenced government policies on galamsey?
- 6) Have you witnessed policy change or government action after media campaigns?
- 7) Have you found the media activities effective in the long term in bringing long-term changes?

D. Solutions for Strengthening the Impact of Media

- 8) What are the policy interventions that can be implemented to maximize the effort of the media in combating galamsey?
- 9) In what ways can journalists be sufficiently empowered to report on galamsey without intimidation and prejudice?

E. Concluding Question

- 10) Is there anything that you would like to add about the media's reports on galamsey?