

## Politics of news-sharing in contemporary mass media channels in Ghana: Reflecting indigenization of communicative acts and protocols

Collins Adu-Bempah Brobbey<sup>1</sup> and Peter Narh<sup>1\*</sup>

### Abstract

This qualitative study investigated politics of news-sharing in contemporary mass media channels in Ghana, reflecting indigenization of communicative acts and protocols. Globally, mass media channels disguise culturally sensitive news-sharing which undermines communication ethics and values, and Ghana's case is no exception. It purposively interviewed ten political critics and program managers from Joy FM, Citi FM, Onua FM, Star FM, and GBC Radio Ghana because these stations have wider coverage. It gathered information on politics of news-sharing in mass media channels, reflecting indigenization of communicative acts and protocols to elucidate the ambiguity regarding tensions and contradictions in news-sharing. Findings revealed overpoliticization and globalized media contents as responsible for disguising three culturally sensitive news-sharing cases, namely: "News about the dead," "News on divulging of secrete conversation", and "News concerning deliberate falsehood". It concludes that culturally insensitive news-sharing is real issues of communication ethics and values, and that media houses should check overpoliticization and globalised news contents while adequately integrating indigenous communicative acts and protocols into news-sharing for an effective indigenization of communication in Ghana.

**Article History:** Received 2 May 2024

Accepted 5 December 2024

**Keywords:** Ghana, politics, news-sharing; mass media, communicative acts

---

<sup>1</sup> Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana

**\*Corresponding author:** Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana  
Email: pnarh@ug.edu.gh

## Introduction

In recent times, there has been the growing scholarship on politics of the notions, processes, tensions and contradictions of news-sharing in contemporary mass media channels which unfortunately neglects ethics of the indigenization of communicative acts and protocols in Ghana (Aslinger, 2016; Bornstein et al., 2013). Evidence showed that news-sharing, particularly on culturally sensitive matters through contemporary mass media channels has been deviated from communication ethics and values. The current study argues that globally, contemporary mass media channels disguise culturally sensitive news-sharing and that such deviation undermines communication ethics and values of which Ghana's case is no exception.

This probably stems from the manner the mass media has been handled by successive governments (Anokwa & Ghosh, 2005; Aslinger, 2016). How do we explain the political interference and globalized media contents in the media operations? Are there implications of the increasing notions, processes, tensions and contradictions for the news-sharing phenomenon in Ghana? Indeed, this study investigates how Ghanaians appreciate politics of news-sharing in contemporary mass media channels, their indigenization of communicative acts, and protocols and to know how to elucidate the ambiguity of the politics of notions, processes, tensions and contradictions involved in news-sharing relative to indigenization of communicative acts and protocols. Studies have shown that contemporary news-sharing protocols disguise culturally sensitive news contents due largely to overpoliticization of news contents and globalized media contents which have resulted from de-indigenization of communicative acts and protocols (Aslinger, 2016; Harper, 2013; Meassngun, 2020).

Similarly, Seyd (2002) posits that indigenization of communicative acts and protocols have neither been prioritized in mass communication nor adapted and integrated into the contemporary mass media news-sharing. Thus, indigenization of communicative acts and protocols have not adequately be captivated in a useful manner to provide effective indigenization of communication in Ghana (Seyd, 2002). This is a critical gap in the literature which this study intends to bridge it.

## Background

Following the 6th March 1957 declaration of independence by Ghana from the United Kingdom, there were only around four newspapers, the then, leader Kwame Nkrumah eventually controlled all the press in Ghana and saw it as an instrument of state authority (Halegoua, 1986, as cited in Buckley, 2014). The press provided propaganda that encouraged national unity and created a hierarchal system of state apparatus to manage the media (Rex, 1983, as cited in Murphy, 2007). Although Nkrumah's policies witnessed several dismissals or premature retirement in the media, these dismissals did not significantly affect the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation because it was a vital communication channel for major information dissemination (Halegoua,

1986, as cited in Seyd,2002). Similarly, Hilla Liman, an advocate of liberal media reform, established a 12-member Press Commission on 25th July 1980 (Halegoua, 1986, as cited in Seyd,2002) and in a maiden meeting he said:

As President, I can do no more than reassure its members and our journalists that my government will respect, uphold and defend the Constitution and thus, do everything in our power to help the Press Commission discharge its obligation, in the overall interest of the public to which we are all to varying degrees accountable. The Press Commission, as enshrined in law, were to investigate complaints about the press, uphold press freedom and provide necessary regulation and licensing to media outlets (Brown, 1987, as cited in Anokwa & Ghosh, 2005).

During Limann's rule, he respected the new Constitution and accepted criticism from the media (Brown, 1987, as cited in Anokwa & Ghosh, 2005). This did not last long however, as Jerry John Rawlings, citing "corruption and maladministration", once again seized power under the Provisional National Defence Council on 31 December 1981, and repealed the liberal media reforms promulgated by Limann (Halegoua, 1986; as cited in Murphy, 2007). Under the new government, the Third Constitution, along with the Press Commission, was abolished (Ray, 1986, as cited in Burkley, 2014). Rawlings passed laws that prevented criticism of the government or its policies, dismissed editors critical of him and passed various laws such as the Preventive Custody Law (PCL) and Newspaper Licensing Law (NLL), which allowed indefinite detention without trial of journalists. These laws stifled private media development (Halegoua, 1986; as cited in Murphy, 2007). The PNDC Secretary of Information, Joyce Aryee, in 1983 defending direct government control said:

I don't see the press as lying outside the political institutions that we already have. This is where I feel people ought to realize that the press differs from country to country. In a situation like ours, where we need to be conscientizing people, and where we have an illiteracy problem, you use institutions like the press to do the conscientization (Halegoua, 1986; as cited in Murphy, 2007).

Rawlings and the NDC government remained critical of the private press, calling it "politically irresponsible" and motivated by profit. One government official claimed the private media "tested the limits of the government", while others accused it of portraying Parliament as inferior (Halegoua, 1986; as cited in Murphy, 2007).

Socio-culturally and politically, media experts and practitioners have been influenced by diverse news-sharing protocols including globalised mass media contents, acculturation of local cultural values ethics and knowledge, personal experiences and dispositions, professional orientation, and biases as they transmit the news (Meassngun, 2020). Consequently, news-sharing by modern mass media reflecting indigenization of communicative acts and protocols has suffered over-politicization of news-sharing

phenomenon. This has bedevilled Ghanaian media operating space, such that the mass media outlived their ethics of communication and practicality (Harper, 2013).

Accordingly, this study posits that the modern mass media must be socio-culturally positioned to adequately meet the appropriateness of the communication and information needs of Ghanaians. The socio-politico-cultural context of the dissemination of culturally sensitive news through mass media channels and the ambiguity surrounding it may serve as a driving force that could converge and interact positively within the conglomeration and proliferation of mass media channels without breaching the ethics of communicative acts and protocols (Meassngun, 2020). Thus, the emergence of the contemporary mass media's roles reflecting the indigenization of communicative acts and protocols of news-sharing particularly, dissemination of culturally sensitive news nowadays has much to desire.

## Literature review

Scholarly studies attest to the fact that mass media news-sharing activities have come to occupy centre stage of many media political critics of which Ghana's case is no exception (Bornstein et al., 2013; Harper, 2013). Particularly, some media political critics have misgivings about the little concern given to the values of indigenous communicative acts and protocols and ethics of communication in the mass media channels in Ghana (Bornstein et al., 2013).

Evidence showed that news-sharing, particularly on culturally sensitive matters in recent times, through contemporary mass media channels has deviated from communication ethics and values (Buckley, 2014). This probably stems from the manner the mass media has been handled by successive governments (Murphy, 2007). Consequently, there has been an upsurge of breach of communicative acts and protocols hence communication censorship, which is a threat to press freedom (Bornstein et al., 2013).

Incidentally, the increasing threat on the media has given impetus to some media avoiding all discussions of politics altogether and focused on other topics like sports or entertainment instead (Murphy, 2007). In 1992, Ghana promulgated a new constitution and returned to democratic rule on 7<sup>th</sup> January 1993. Rawlings as leader and President of the National Democratic Congress liberalized the media by repealing previous laws the PNDC government signed into force. The state media, however, maintained a favourable image of Rawlings (Rex, 1983, as cited in Bornstein et al., 2013). Rawlings acknowledged the years of media repression, though he defended the military coup (Ray, 1986, as cited in Anokwa & Ghosh, 2005). Yet, all that have happened during the last decade cannot be divorced from today's constitutional order (Brown, 1987, as cited in Murphy, 2007).

Indeed, how the mass media has been manipulated in Ghana today, is a long story, hence studies concerning politics of news-sharing and political communication are on the increase (Aslinger, 2016; Murphy, 2007). However, there is inadequate empirical

study elucidating the comprehensibility of the politics of news-sharing in contemporary mass media channels in Ghana that reflects the indigenization of communicative acts and protocols and the associated ethical implications. As a result, this review is limited to some recurring themes in the conversation about how the media handles culturally sensitive news. Therefore, it reviews the notions and processes involved in the over-politicization and acculturation of news-sharing reflecting indigenization of communicative acts and protocols. This work attempts to address gaps about the perceived tensions and complexities of disseminating culturally sensitive news in the Ghanaian society by the mass media particularly, the electronic media.

Previous studies have argued that systematic differences exist in the interest afforded to political news by journalists and their audiences (Buckley, 2014; Harper, 2013). Most of these studies have focused on readership as the primary metric of audience demand for news; with the rise of social media, however, new forms of news engagement have emerged beyond readership. This is the case with news sharing—today, on social media, users can easily redistribute news items to extensive networks well beyond a news organization's original and intended audience (Harper, 2013). Because of the implications news-sharing has for online information networks, it is paramount to understand not only differences between news publication and news readership but also differences with news-sharing, particularly reflecting culturally sensitive news.

Furthermore, Meassnguon (2020) alluded to the indigenization of communicative acts and protocols that it can adequately address the news gaps in the communication needs in society and that Ghana's case is no exception. Indeed, Buckley (2014) holds a contrary view that the contemporary mass media channels are rather considered as high-class in visuals, and that they are unable to address deep-rooted societal and culturally sensitive issues. Despite the contemporary mass media channels' ability to reach huge audience, the useful values of media's news-sharing using communicative acts and protocols is yet to be well-integrated to provide effective communication in communities dealing in culturally sensitive news (Harper, 2013).

In fact, Murphey (2007, pg. 23) maintains that "the way people interact with one another depends on the understanding of our behaviours or expectations from whom we are communicating with". Furthermore, Buckley (2014, p.26) contends that "communicative acts extend to knowledge and expectation of who may or may not speak in certain settings, when to speak and when to remain silent, to whom one may speak, how one may talk to persons of different statuses and roles, what the routines for turn-taking are in conversation". Contributing to the news-sharing and the observation of communicative acts and protocols, Bornstein et al. (2013, p.18) drew attention to the "understanding of how culture can surely contribute to or may hinder effective communication. Harper (2013) alluded to the assertions made by Abrahams (1973, as cited in Bornstein et al., 2013) that conversations may involve several persons talking at the same time using different communicative manners, a practice which always violates rules of interaction. In such situations the speaker intent may be misunderstood because

of different expectation patterns for interpretation. Indeed, this study emphasizes the news gaps in the literature that contemporary news sharing through communicative acts and protocols turn to be abused by the mass media due to globalized media news contents and cultural hegemony (Bornstein et al., 2013).

Buckley (2014) and Murphey (2007) emphasized the linguistic and sociolinguistic communicative acts and maintain that the two are components under communicative acts. And that this proves that communicative acts be it indigenization of native, or foreign is banked on language (usage), which is one of the major elements of culture. This assertion perhaps motivated Burkley (2014) posits that one of the patterns of communication is “Culture specific rules of rhetoric – telephone conversation, greetings, public address among others.” To Bornstein et al. (2013), the complexities of news-sharing by the mass media reflects differential communicative culture which tends to produce diversity in language use and demonstration in different environment hence they indicate that it makes it imperative to delve into mass media approach toward culturally sensitive news-sharing. To this end, it is noteworthy that communicative acts “extend to knowledge and expectation of what to say and how to share news for instance, about strong relationship between mass media agenda setting and news sharing as noted by Bornstein et al. (2013). Mass media tends to use preferential language for news-sharing regarding for example people celebrating any event for whatever reason, hence mass media news- sharing may influence the ways people communicate and accept news content and context as well.

## Conceptualization of communicative acts

Harper (2013) sees “Communicative acts” as covering “knowledge and expectation of” what nonverbal behaviours are appropriate in various contexts, how to offer or decline assistance or cooperation, how to give commands, how to enforce discipline in communication. The following sections mainly focus on non-verbal communication or body language which is another essential component of communicative acts culture.

### *Gestures or body language*

As noted by Burkley (2014), total comprehension of a spoken message involves more than words and sounds. Non-sound items, such as gestures, distance between the two speakers’ eye movement, smiles, grimaces, and, in some situations, lip reading contribute the remaining seventy percent to our comprehension. Incidentally this explains why it seems more difficult to comprehend a foreign language over the telephone – we are only getting thirty percent of the clues that we need for comprehension. Unfortunately, little knowledge is shared if not reserved for this medium of communicative acts and protocols. These non-verbal gestures indeed play a very significant role in communication in diverse ways socio-culturally, and politically.



### *Linguistic communicative culture*

Linguistic cultural area is the distance between two people who are having a conversation. This distance depends on the relationship between the two speakers (Murphy, 2007). The broad start of global integration and its trend of communication come along with unique culture(s) of each country. It also provides the terminologies relevant to the topic and novel examples for better insight. Personal perspectives were included since people view culture distinctively and behave towards it differently as well. This is what the study offers to bridge the news gaps in the ethics of communication. Linguistic culture is deemed to be superior as it depicts cultural contents and does not gloss-over the communicative culture and the communicative acts and protocols which this study refers to as the ethical culture. (Burkley, 2014) argues that linguistic culture has also not been given the needed attention it deserves, meanwhile, it plays a very significant role in shaping and communicating culturally sensitive news in many cultures. Before illustrating those points, it is important to grasp the full meaning of these terminologies, such as communicative culture and communicative acts.

### *Communicative culture*

Communicative culture means a way of communicating the life and experiences of a given people and that a common view of communicative culture is that of something learned, transmitted, passed down from one generation to the next, through human actions and inactions, often in the form of face-to-face interaction, and, of course, through linguistic communication (Burkley, 2014). This view of culture refers to any child regardless of his or her genetic heritage, largely through language socialization, and they will acquire the communicative culture (language included) of people he or/she lives with (Burkley, 2014). According to Murphy, 2007), culture is a blueprint that guides the behaviours of the people in a community and is communicated in family life. Besides, Burkley (2014) sees the concept of “culture” as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, morals, religion, customs and habits or any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society”, while Aslinger (2016) believes that each country around the world has its unique communicative culture which according to him, refers to diverse meanings and context and, that it is a sole component representing each individual society. Also, Anokwa and Ghosh (2005) note that culture has an enormous influence on the ways people interact or communicate. Indeed, communicative culture assists individuals to be aware of how far they can go as individuals and what their responsibility of communication is to the group or the society. Similarly, Chamberlain (2005, p. 197) said that communicative culture represents “the values, norms, and traditions that affect how individuals of a particular group perceive, think, interact, behave, and make judgments about their world”. “Communicative culture explains how people make sense of the words of their world” (Varner & Beamer, 2011. p.4, as cited in Aslinger, 2016). Seyd(2002, p. 299–300) notes that “communicative culture is the way of life of a group of people and is shared

by all or almost all members of some social group” Similarly, Harper (2013, p. 180) sees communicative culture as the “*software of the mind*” that separates members of different groups from each other”.

### **Indigenization of communicative acts**

In the language of communicative acts, is a word “Communication” which is derived from a Latin word “*commūnicāre*”, meaning “to share”(Harper,2013). It is the activity of conveying information through the exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, such as speech, visuals, signals, writing, or behaviour. It is the meaningful exchange of information between two or among a group of living creatures (Murphy, 2007). Pragmatics define communication as any sign-mediated interaction that follows combinatorial, context-specific, and content-coherent rules (Pantic et al., 2024). Communication is any act by which one person gives or receives from another person information about that person’s needs, desires, perceptions, knowledge, or affective states. Communicative acts may be intentional or unintentional, may involve conventional or unconventional signals, may take linguistic or non-linguistic forms, and may occur through spoken or other modes (Pantic et al., 2024). Hyme(1966, as cited in Pantic et al., 2024) argues that communication process is complete once the receiver has understood the message of the sender. Moreover, Chomsky (1965, as cited in Harper, 2013) asserts that communication alone is not enough to explain what people need to know but includes using communication acts as a broader notion of developed to cover performative knowledge of an expression, Thus, Hyme (1974, as cited in Pantic et al., 2024) states that appropriateness of communicative acts involve knowing not only the language code but also what to say to whom, and how to say it appropriately in any given situation. Furthermore, it involves the social and cultural knowledge that speakers are presumed to have which enables them to use and interpret communication (Pantic et al., 2024). This give impetus to establish the politics of indigenization of communicative acts and protocols of news-sharing through which the mass media could socio-culturally be positioned to adequately meet the information needs of Ghanaian society.

### **Theoretical foundation**

To understand the underlying assertion that for indigenization of communicative acts to adequately address the communication needs of Ghanaian communities should be contingent upon the nature of encoding and decoding model of communication (Kümpel & Karnowski, 2015). This is a model of mass communication that uses a preferred language or communication protocol rather than considering only the ethics of the communicative culture that reflects the situational reportage. Kümpel & Karnowski (2015) argue that events had to be encoded into televisual stories reflecting an intended meaning. The encoding and decoding model gives flexibility for a media house to use specific communicative culture to suit a given situation. The advantage is that it promotes



media agenda setting and reinforces what media contents should determine and reflect such that it would be able to produce newsworthy enough for public consumption. Nonetheless, it is very risky, especially in the situation where the media is ethically required to disseminate information that is culturally sensitive to create balanced news to the audiences. This model is very significant in elucidating the comprehensibility of how Ghanaians make meaning through news-sharing in 'everyday natural settings and the politics that it plays out, and the perceived tensions and complexities associated with its outcomes (Kümpel & Karnowski, 2015). This study adopted the news gap theory which is the rubric of the encoding and decoding model of news-sharing theory.

The 'News Gap theory indicates that political and culturally sensitive news situations often significantly reduce the differences between journalists' and readers' interest in political or culturally sensitive news-sharing processes (Kümpel & Karnowski, 2015). During moments of heightened political attention, the gap between editorial and audience supply and demand for political news become more evenly matched, reducing the news gap. The news-sharing gap might witness similar—if not greater—fluctuations, as previous studies have shown the outsized effect culturally sensitive news has on mass media news-sharing (Kümpel & Karnowski, 2015). This theory helps to contribute to the depth of understanding of mass media journalism in three critical ways. Firstly, to understand the extent to which engagement with culturally sensitive news differs across periods of varying media news-sharing activity in relation to the attention afforded by journalists. Secondly, to comparatively ascertain the communication scholarship by extending the measure to contemporary conversation relative to culturally sensitive issues. Lastly, methodologically, studying news dissemination patterns is complex (Kümpel & Karnowski, 2015).. So, it provides sophisticated insights into news-sharing patterns around the globe, but it also contributes to a research agenda on mass media news engagement that allows for small scale country-specific studies (Kümpel & Karnowski, 2015)..

A significant stream of scholarship focuses on the news gap in preferences between journalists and news consumers, where journalists consider stories about politics to be more newsworthy than others (Kümpel & Karnowski, 2015). Despite this ample supply of political news, citizens choose to read non-political news content instead (Kümpel & Karnowski, 2015). As a result, Kümpel & Karnowski, (2015) introduce the notion of the "news gap" between the publishing and reading of political news. Several studies have generated comparable evidence of a significant gap between consumers' news preferences and the news items editors or journalists deem important ((Kümpel & Karnowski, 2015). It is important to note that today, journalists are no longer the sole gatekeepers of news—on social media. Citizens are incidentally exposed to news shared by connections and can share news themselves (Amin et al.,2024). News sharing, therefore, impacts incidental exposure (Amin et al.,2024). It is tied to the normative news gap theory which is a crucial element in the erosion of the gatekeeping function of the media (Pantic & Ziek 2024), with social media actors empowered to shift attention

and information beyond editorial preferences. While there is considerable research about why citizens choose to share news, hardly any work has addressed whether there is a difference between the news that users share on social media and the news published by news media organizations (Kümpel & Karnowski, 2015). With its enhanced media choice and user selectivity, today's digital news landscape may increase the likelihood of divergence between editors and news consumers (Kümpel & Karnowski, 2015).

Scholars, therefore, maintain that to correctly understand the relationship between news production and distribution in today's digital society, there is the need to bring the role of news sharing into the folds of the news gap (Temler et al. (2024).

To understand the idea of a distinct "news sharing gap" is to grasp the difference between what journalists choose to publish and what mass media audiences choose to redistribute (Amin et al.,2024). Such a news gap needs to be understood in relation to the user environment provided by social media more broadly, and Facebook specifically, as its technical aspects and affordances shape how today's online information flows occur. Platform affordances, that is, the "perceived" and "actual" features of social media, "determine just how the thing could possibly be used" (Temler et al., 2024, p. 9), therefore redefining the boundaries of how news can be engaged with and disseminated.

This includes the availability of basic technical features, such as a "share" button (Amin et al.,2024), as well as more abstract notions of scalability (Temler et al., 2024), and "affective" affordances that influence how users can engage emotionally with news content (Kümpel & Karnowski, 2015). News sharing is also shaped by the content incentives placed in the "Like economy" and internal algorithmic curation promoting specific material (Kümpel & Karnowski, 2015). News sharing therefore needs to be understood as behaviour that is distinct to that of reading, and that is responsive to the constraints and opportunities presented by mass media platforms (Temler et al., 2024). Mass media platforms allow consumers to decide if they want to share a story by glancing at a headline , with stories dominating online attention when they previously had little traction, and despite being of low quality (Kümpel & Karnowski, 2015). Furthermore, algorithmic curation has meant that ideologically extreme news sites on Facebook are the ones being interacted with the most, despite only receiving a fraction of the readership of established news organisations (Amin et al.,2024).

Essentially, citizens looking to be informed are not the only actors sharing culturally sensitive or political news, as is a common assumption in the literature (Kümpel & Karnowski, 2015). The ease of communication, engagement and dissemination provided by platform affordances mean political actors have much to gain from social media and the sharing of particular information on these platforms (Temler et al., 2024). As a result, politicians, bots, organizations, pages monetizing heated partisan engagement on news, campaign strategists, and activists play a key role in political news dissemination (Temler et al., 2024). This type of dissemination, which goes beyond the ideal of the "citizen trying to share news with their friends," has been linked to both the spread of misinformation and political propaganda, as well as to the spread of mainstream news

(Temler et al., 2024). This is especially the case during elections (Temler et al., 2024).

High-choice media environment has long been the suspected culprit for decreasing culturally sensitive and political news readership (Murphy, 2007), may have a different effect on culturally sensitive and political news sharing. Previous research focusing on the links between mass media and news-sharing has shown that it is those with high political interest that are most likely to share any kind of news (Kümpel & Karnowski, 2015). As such, these individuals have an outsized impact on what information is redistributed. Additionally, partisan strength has been shown to be a strong predictor of overall news-sharing (Temler et al., 2024). More recent work has confirmed this relationship, as well as in relation to misinformation, with partisan polarization being the main sharing driver (Amin et al., 2024).

Taken together, the idea of the news-sharing gap theory aims to conceptualize the diverging interests in news between journalists and consumers while recognizing that news sharing follows distinct patterns. The implications for journalism are straightforward: the existence of this news gap should directly inform how media organizations are either over- or under-serving news to their publics (Harper, 2013). The existence and perpetuation of a news sharing gap has implications for our understanding of online audiences in dynamic democracies (Burkley, 2014). Working in the digital sphere promotes the information people can counter online—whether selectively or incidentally—can influence their involvement in political processes. Significant discrepancies between journalists and what is being distributed on social media can have an impact on a citizen's perception of what is important and what is currently happening in the world. More importantly, however, it links back to Murphey's (2007) ideas of information inequality. People who rely on social media platforms as their main access point to news may be presented with a distorted picture of the news agenda. It puts the media agenda into the hands of those most politically interested, the most vocal, and those who feel they have a stake in politics (Burkley, 2014).

## Methods

This study deployed a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews for data gathering. This is because one major feature of well-collected qualitative data is that it tends to focus on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings, so that the researchers have a strong handle of what real-life issues are (Creswell, 2013; Braun & Clarke, 2012.).

For the current study, the qualitative approach also stems from our conviction that most news items are constructed by newsmakers and media, to fit their own agendas. Understanding constructions of meaning is more effectively obtained through a qualitative approach. Thus, this study was conducted with the philosophical imperatives of qualitative -explanatory research paradigm. This research philosophy or paradigm emphasise that reality is socially constructed (Harper, 2013; Meassngun, 2020).

It focuses on understanding phenomena from the perspectives of participants lived

experiences. This study adopted the imperatives of the interpretivist philosophy because the primary aim of the study is understanding the participants' lived experiences with communicative acts in Ghana (Harper, 2013; Meassngun, 2020). Elsewhere, what might be experienced or established as a role of communicative acts in promoting civil participation in the information dissemination may be seen as abhorrence in Ghana.

Participants were selected purposively based on their long-term experience as media journalists, media managers, and media experts. Ten participants comprising three media political critics, three media experts, two journalists, and two radio presenters were selected from the public media, and five from the private media houses in Accra. Prior to the interactions, the researchers distributed letters to the prospective interviewees requesting their consent to participate in the interaction process. Accra was chosen because of the concentration of the electronic media houses and as a cosmopolitan space where gaining access to media houses was not problematic.

Institutionally, the study drew information from five radio stations including Joy FM, Citi FM, Onua FM, Star FM, and GBC Radio Ghana in Accra. In-depth interviews were conducted with managers of these media houses. These radio stations were selected due to their wider coverage in the country and have corresponding affiliate stations to air their programmes. Thus, the contents and status of these radio stations were deemed appropriate for the study. It investigated how Ghanaians appreciate politics of news-sharing in contemporary mass media channels, their indigenization of communicative acts, and protocols. This explains why participants included media political critics, media experts, and journalists.

Researchers scheduled interview meetings with participants, giving them the opportunity to decide on the convenient time for the interview exercise. This was done in sync with the established ethical principles for reliability and validity of the information sought for. English and Twi languages were used interchangeably during the in-depth interviews. Participants were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality before the commencement of the interviews. In-depth interviews were audio recorded. The audio recorded information was played and transcribed. One major feature of well-collected qualitative data is that they focus on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings, so that, we have a strong handle of what real life issues are (Harper, 2013; Meassngun, 2020).

Secondary data were obtained from peer reviewed articles that were textually analysed. The encoding and decoding model of communication was also deployed as the theoretical model. The latter have carefully and critically been analysed in the previous section. As already indicated, this model is very significant in explaining how Ghanaians make meaning through indigenization of news sharing in 'everyday natural settings and the politics that it generates.

## Findings and discussions

The findings and discussion aligned with study's objectives, highlighting politics of news-sharing in contemporary mass media channels in Ghana, a reflection of the indigenization of the communicative acts and protocols. It discovered a three culturally sensitive news cases dominating in everyday conversation in Ghana which were thematized as; "News about the dead," "News on divulging of secrete conversation", and "News concerning deliberate falsehood".

Institutionally, this study drew information from ten (10) program managers of the following radio stations in Accra, Joy FM, Citi FM, Onua FM, Star FM, GBC Radio Ghana. As Already stated, the objectives are to investigate how Ghanaians appreciate politics of news-sharing in mass media channels, examines the indigenization of communicative acts, and protocols in mass media channels and to explore how to elucidate the ambiguity of the politics of notions, processes, tensions and contradictions in news-sharing relative to indigenization of communicative acts and protocols.

In responding to the type of culturally sensitive news-sharing, findings revealed the three cases "news about the dead," "news on divulging of secrete conversation", and "news concerning deliberate falsehood" as the dominant news. Further findings relative to responses to mass media news-sharing manner confirmed that contemporary mass media news-sharing, indeed, disguises culturally sensitive news contents because of overpoliticization news and globalized media contents hence the de-indigenization of communicative acts and protocols.

Findings confirming overpoliticization and excessive leverage on global news-sharing protocols, also, revealed mass media's news-sharing negatively influencing distinct nature and culturally sensitive news-sharing protocols and indigenous communicative acts. Similar findings revealed that indigenization of communicative acts and protocols have not been given the priority it deserves in terms of adaptation and integration into the contemporary mass media news-sharing such that it adequately integrates in a useful manner to provide effective indigenization of communication in Ghana.

With regards to views expressed by the ten programme managers of radio stations selected from Joy FM, Citi FM, Onua FM, Star FM, GBC Radio Ghana, most media presenters "*alluded to the fact that announcements of news about the dead in Ghana is rich in socio-cultural significance, reflecting the community's collective attitudes towards death, life, and social identity*". "*These announcements, until recently only found in Ghanaian newspapers, are not merely notices of someone's passing but a display of rich Ghanaian culture, societal norms, beliefs, and practices*". "*They embody a unique blend of verbal and non-verbal elements that communicate respect, honour, and remembrance, showcasing the deceased's life, achievements, and the family's status within the community*". *The media political critics were of the views that "the crafting of announcements about death in Ghana involves careful consideration of age, gender, and socio-economic status, influencing the language, structure, and presentation of these notices"*. "*Through a blend of traditional values and modern expressions, Ghanaian*



death announcements serve not only to inform but also to celebrate the lives of the departed, reinforcing the bonds of community and continuity of cultural heritage". "Since the digital transformation causes people to use digital and social media more for communication with family and friends, it is expected that the need for a digital replacement of announcements by way of digital media will increase significantly".

Most media presenters alluded to the following responses from the media political critics:

"That 1992 Constitution provides that no person shall be subjected to interference with the privacy of his home, property, correspondence, or communication except in accordance with law and as may be necessary in a free and democratic society for public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the protection of health".

An informant, a media political critic interviewed however, noted that:

"The 1992 Constitution allows for secret recordings of conversations provided they are for the prevention of crimes. He added that even though every Ghanaian has a right to privacy, that right is not total. Secretly recording another person is wrong, even at law. It is against the right to privacy, particularly, privacy of communications. The right to privacy is protected by our Constitution. Because of this protection, our courts do not reward the practice of secretly recording someone".

The informant further explained that

Sometimes, the courts even punish such practices of secret recording. So, generally, one cannot use a secret recording for an official purpose. That, however, is just one side of the stories. The other side is that the right to privacy is not absolute. It has exceptions. Thus, the 1992 Constitution of Ghana allows a secret recording to be used for official purposes in some cases, for example, if using such a recording becomes necessary for the prevention of a crime. This, however, does not mean that anyone could secretly record others in the hope of discovering or establishing a crime. That will be surveillance, which is not allowed by the Ghanaian Constitution.

The ten programme managers also provided responses on the culturally sensitive: "*news concerning deliberate falsehood*": Most informants alluded to the fact that:

"The issues of news concerning deliberate falsehood were also considered and views were elicited. Insightfully, overwhelmingly all the freelance journalists agreed to the fact that the security agencies, particularly the Ghana Police Service, are abusing the law. The popular argument is that if public officials and people linked to power feel defamed by a publication, the correct approach is not to use the police to arrest journalist and molest under the false publication provision but to sue under civil law".



Also, the freelance journalist agreed to the argument that,

The state has enough resources to counter any false publication by putting out the facts. Journalists also feel the law is simply being abused to 'teach' dissenting opinions 'where power lies'. Where a civil remedy is available, speech should not be criminalized.

Indeed, the media presenters and the freelance journalists' responses indicated that the law on false publication was not supposed to be applied to everyday commentary",

It could be amended to limit it in scope and clearly define acts or conducts that may cause fear and alarm. In its current form, the law is draconian, archaic, nebulous and subject to abuse. It is better not to have it at all since there are alternative remedies in tort, rejoinder, arbitration and national security and public order laws. Others, such as the media political critics were of the view that there is a global narrative on how to fight the fake news epidemic, but no agreed set of useful laws or approaches. The popular view has been to hold social media platforms and mainstream media responsible, and for governments to counter false news with accurate, timely and reliable information.

At this point, we do some prognosis in the light of the objectives and the existing literature to elucidate the comprehensibility of the gaps and whether they are verified. Media experts conclude that the state should embark on public education to enable the public to decipher likely false information (Burkley, 2014). Those that go over the edge and affect emergencies, life-saving activities, security of the state and natural disasters may be criminalized. Theoretical results in the immediate section above revealed that participants, comprising media experts and practitioners were influenced by diverse cultural protocols such as intertextual cultural knowledge, personal experiences and dispositions, professional orientation, and biases as they decoded the cases/images. Also, insightful results which corroborated Burkley's (2014) assertion, showed that the media practitioners often displayed their interest in cultural awareness issues and read the cases in the preferred and negotiated modes of the encoding/decoding model. They were not pleased with the originators of the publications and those who shared them. Further the cultural experts mainly used the preferred approach to read and were also irritated by the creators of the texts and those who published them and that the indigenization of communicative acts still inadequately address the communication needs of Ghanaian communities. In this regard, the contemporary mass media channels considered as high-class in visuals, which can captivate the useful values of media should be integrated to provide effective communication to Ghanaians.

Further, findings revealed that to communicate with each other appropriately in a different culture, personally, requires awareness, attitude, skills, and knowledge of that culture to integrate our situational and cultural understandings with our linguistic or non-linguistic resources to enable our minds and bodies to interact with others and

this assertion corroborated Burkley's (2014), view on linguistics significance in news-sharing and communicative acts and protocols. A further insight from the results is that communicative culture is a defining property of a person in the 21st century, a natural phenomenon, and a process. It has a unique integrated character, being a global phenomenon. Interviews with the media managers reveal that:

Without determining the laws and characteristics of the development of a communicative culture of an individual, the evolution of general and professional education is impossible. The system of global communication and the growth of its intensity affects every person; it becomes a condition for the realization of freedom, individuality, self-consciousness as a person with ethical and moral responsibility. In this regard, in the field of education there is a problem of improving the quality of communicative training of modern specialists. The effectiveness of professional activity depends on many factors, among which a special place is played by a successful communicative activity of a specialist as the basis of productive relationships, achievement of mutual understanding and achievement of goals and objectives of professional activity and all life activities. This is a way of self-improvement, self-realization and overcoming personal crises.

Participants in this study confirmed that three major thematic areas should be identified and elucidated. These are: i) the need to foster the free exchange of information among mass media channels; ii) the need to promote the establishment of appropriate communicative acts for dissemination of appropriate information through the channels and provide advisory services to those who want to develop broadcasting services; and, iii) the need to develop a website function that would allow free but authentic information flow to compare their disseminating rules. There is therefore the need for the unique initiative of a new era for communicative acts ecology, television channels and broadcasters.

The feedback from "how Ghanaians appreciate politics of news-sharing in contemporary mass media channels, their indigenization of communicative acts, and protocols and how Ghanaian media is able to elucidate the ambiguity of the politics of notions and processes involved in news-sharing relative to indigenization of communicative acts and protocols". The findings revealed that:

Contemporary news-sharing protocols disguise culturally sensitive news contents due largely to overpoliticization of news contents and globalized media contents which have resulted from de-indigenization of communicative acts. Related to this, the pervasive culturally insensitive news-sharing through contemporary mass media channels has undermined the communication ethics and values in recent times in Ghana.

## Conclusion

This study has elucidated the comprehensibility of the politics of news-sharing reflecting indigenization of communicative acts and protocols in Ghana and the notions, processes, tensions and contradictions that have bedevilled Ghanaian mass media news delivery. It is imperative to note that mass media, if socio-culturally positioned, could adequately meet the information needs of Ghanaian society. Culturally, media experts and practitioners have been influenced by diverse protocols including cultural values ethics and knowledge, personal experiences and dispositions, professional orientation, and biases as they transmit the news. As a result, indigenization of communicative acts needs to be reinvigorated such that it does not only facilitate but also, remain the ultimate solution to communication needs of Ghanaians. In this case, the mass media channels considered as a high-class in visual values a more useful manner should be integrated to provide effective communication to Ghanaians.

Similarly, culture matters in communication. To communicate with each other appropriately in our respective cultures, personally, requires awareness, attitude, skills, and knowledge of that culture to integrate the situational and cultural understandings with the prevailing linguistic or non-linguistic resources to enable the minds and bodies to interact with others in a more appropriate manner. Thus, diverse cultural competences or cultural diversity should therefore become another focus to be studied and developed for effective news-sharing that provides cognizance to the appropriateness of indigenization of communicative acts. This work concludes that overpoliticization and excessive leverage on global news-sharing protocols have not only influenced the distinct nature and culturally sensitive news-sharing protocols but also, undermined the indigenous communicative acts. Indeed, the constitutional provisions turn to entrench the media activities thereby given the mass media an inelastic operating space it recommends that mass media using social media should consider imperative, the cultural and ethical values including people's freedom, self-reliance, equality, individualism, competition, efficiency and time to provide effective communication needs of the Ghanaian. Finally, indigenization of communicative acts should remain the ultimate solution to the communication needs of Ghanaians.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## ORCID

Collins Adu-Bempah Brobbeey  <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-3149-930X>

Peter Narh  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6648-2650>

## References

- Anokwa, Y. & Ghosh, A. (2005) "Variable-Resolution Information Dissemination," Proc. 2nd Ann. IEEE Communications Society Conf. Sensor and Ad Hoc Communications and Networks, IEEE Press, 2005, pp. 487–497. University of Washington
- Aslinger, B. S. (2016). Clueless about Listening Formations?. *Cinema Journal*, (53) 3 126-131.
- Amin , Z. ; Ali, N.M. & Zinaida, R.S. (2024) Tune-Attention Model: Designing Cybernetics Intervention for Information Sharing Behavior DOI:10.1109/ICE3IS62977.2024.10775858 Conference: 2024 4th International Conference on Electronic and Electrical Engineering and Intelligent System (ICE3IS).
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology*, Vol. 2. Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological (pp. 57–71). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-004>
- Bostein, A. Dixon, J. & Keyes, D. (2013). The permanent disruption of social media.
- Buckley, P. (2014) Threat Status of Commercially Exploited media in the Ghanaian media landscape. *Open Journal of Communication Network*, p44-68.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles Sage.
- Harper, D. (2013) "Communication". *American Journal of Educational Research*, 6(5), 485-489.
- Kümpel, A.S. & Karnowski, V. (2015) News sharing in social media: A Review of Current Research on News Sharing Users, Content, and Networks *Social Media + Society* 1(2) DOI:10.1177/2056305115610141CC BY-NC 4.0
- Meassngunon, S. (2020) Competency in the digital era": *Competency-based Education and Evaluation [Overview]*. Retrieved on August 10th, 2019, from: <https://slideplayer.com/slide/5022089/> Curriculum Expert Consultant Freelancer Published Jan 8, 2020
- Murphy, J.(2007) International perspectives and initiatives of mass media news. first published: 28 February 2007 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-1842.2007.00704.x>
- Pantic, M. & Ziek, P. (2024) Gatekeeping in a Digital Media Habitat: The Role of Secondary Gatekeepers DOI:10.1109/ICE3IS62977.2024.10775858 Conference: 4th International Conference on Electronic and Electrical Engineering and Intelligent System (ICE3IS)

Seyd, P. (2002) "High-intensity Participation: The Dynamics of Media Activism in Britain Colonies. University of Michigan Press, p. 234-252

Temler, M. ; Paterson, H. M. & Maccann, C. (2024) Higher dissociation and lower verbal ability predict news-related information sharing on social media [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283180028\\_News\\_Sharing\\_in\\_Social\\_Media\\_A\\_Review\\_of\\_Current\\_Research\\_on\\_News\\_Sharing\\_Users\\_Content\\_and\\_Net](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283180028_News_Sharing_in_Social_Media_A_Review_of_Current_Research_on_News_Sharing_Users_Content_and_Net).