FAMILY PLANNING, ABORTION & HIV IN GHANAIAN PRINT MEDIA:
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE MOST WIDELY CIRCULATED GHANAIAN NEWSPAPER SINCE 1950 – THE DAILY GRAPHIC

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Background

- **GHANA** has a vibrant press:-
  -- plays a key role in political discourse & national identity
  (Hasty, 1999)

- Emerged in the 19th century:
  - Pre-Ghana press:- Powerful voice to campaigns for independence
    (Ainslie, 1966)
  - Today’s press:- National unity, development, and democracy (Asante, 1996)

Since its inception, the press has established a distinguished history of political activism for Ghanaian journalism
Ghanaian press is often preoccupied with politics and sports, giving very little attention to health matters.

Reportage on reproductive health (RH) issues e.g. family planning, abortion, & HIV is even worse.

Significance of the research

It is sometimes argued rather controversially that these issues have been over-flogged;

Repeating them with the aim of --

[1] reinforcing the message

[2] educating new audiences &

[3] sustaining individual behavior

RH activists are faced with almost daily task of correcting common misconceptions on some RH issues.
Research question

Does the Ghanaian press give attention and prominence to the following reproductive health issues?

family planning, abortion, & HIV

Research objective

To determine the attention and prominence given by Ghana’s best selling newspaper (The Daily Graphic) to the RH issues in question:

family planning, abortion, & HIV
Content analysis:


- Berelson (1952):- stated a similar definition for the method
Methodology

- Currently about 40 newspapers are published in Ghana

- The state funds two daily newspapers (Daily Graphic and Ghanaian Times) and two weekly entertainment papers (The Mirror, and The Weekly Spectator); all produced in Accra
The Daily Graphic since 1950 has been the most widely circulated Ghanaian newspaper (Ansu-Kyeremeh & Karikari, 1998).

Approximately 200,000 issues are circulated daily (Maja-Pierce & Adewale, 1996).
The universe: entire editions of the Graphic published between Jan 1st 2008 and Mar 31st 2009 – exactly 443 editions {there are no issues on Sundays, and statutory public holidays}

Relying on previous methods of content analysis the composite week sampling technique was used.

Riffe et al (1993) demonstrated that a composite week sampling technique is superior to both a random sample and a consecutive day sample when dealing with newspaper content

Berelson (1952) “… produces just as valid results as the analysis of a great deal more – except that, you spend much less time and effort …”
Composite week sampling Technq.

One day in a week is drawn every week of every month, throughout the sampling period [Jan 1 08 – Mar 31 09]

A total of 62 editions were selected
Actual data collection procedures

Two groups of coders coded the data within one month

Coding 1\textsuperscript{st} done by myself, then 2\textsuperscript{nd} group was given fresh coding sheet and the sampled newspaper to coded also
The unit of analysis was the theme of stories:

- [A] Straight news
- [B] In-depth analysis

Excluded from the analysis were all advertising, comics, obituaries, weather reports, announcements, commodity quotations, stock markets, and letters to the editor.
Prominence/quality of reportage

- Measured using the following attributes:
  - Headline size:
  - Column space/area:
  - Page placement: front, center, back, middle
Picture enhancement

Were stories enhanced with pictures?

How big/prominent were these pictures?
Data analyses

- SPSS Version 15.0 (SPSS Inc. Chicago, Illinois) used;

- 1st appropriate measures of centrality, dispersion, and also frequencies were computed

- To assess trends in coverage over time, the 15 months sampled were grouped into five mutually exclusive periods

- The differences in mean coverage across these periods were then assessed using Analysis of Variance statistical technique

Inter-Coder Reliability Assessment: Kappa Statistic was used

Kappa statistic = 0.90 – Total # of stories
Kappa statistic = 0.98 – total # of stories on health
Kappa statistic = 0.98 – total # of stories on RH
This analysis shows that coverage of the four RH issues was incredibly poor; percent coverage < 1;

A considerable proportion of the RH news were not enhanced with pictures;

Most of them were relegated to the middle pages.
Attention given to RH issues

N = 4,690 items (100%) were reported!

197/N items (4.2%) were on health

25/N items (0.5%) were on RH

4/N items (0.09%) were on FP

19/N items (0.4%) were on HIV

2/N items (0.04%) were on abortion
The 62 editions of the paper contained a total space
\[= 2,937,962.00\text{cm}^2;\] 0.2% of this space given to all RH items.
Quality of reportage

The findings also show that little prominence was given to these RH news items.
Total coverage: $F(4, 61) = 1.07; p = 0.38$

Health coverage: $F(4, 61) = 0.96; p = 0.44$

RH coverage: $F(4, 61) = 1.49; p = 0.22$. 

Trends in reportage: ANOVA
Contribution to knowledge

1. Findings have confirmed the current speculative concerns that the Ghanaian press is preoccupied with non-reproductive health issues;

2. The finding is a wakeup call for RH activists to look for innovative ways of integrating RH issues into existing media outlets

How do we do this?

✓ Sensitization of staff of existing newspapers on the essence of adequately covering RH issues;

✓ Contributions in the form of feature articles to the papers by RH activists…

✓ NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF THE PRESS: could be harnessed to support FP
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