

Newspaper Framing of Gender-based (domestic) Violence of Women –on-Men from Nyeri County, Kenya

Muthoni E. King'ori¹, Ukaiko A. Bitrus-Ojiambo²

¹St. Paul's University

²St. Paul's University

Abstract

This paper examined print media representations of gender-based domestic violence messages from Nyeri, Kenya, one of the counties inhabited by the Kikuyu ethnic group. The Kikuyu are Kenya's most populous ethnic group – this is according to the 2009 Kenya population census (Basse, 2010). Two newspapers, the Daily Nation (mainstream) and the Nairobiian (tabloid-style) weekly provided the data for the study. Content analysis was used to examine the frequency of frames, prominence, type of stories, and sources used in the stories while critical discourse analysis (CDA) helped examine emergent themes. Purposive sampling was used to select news articles on gender-based domestic violence in Nyeri County published by the two newspapers between June 1st, 2015 and August 31st, 2015. In total, 22 articles were analyzed from both newspapers. The main findings: (1) Most of the news articles had a negative tone: Daily Nation (eight) and the Nairobiian (nine); (2) the Nairobiian covered the domestic violence in Nyeri in a sensational manner using vivid language, graphics and colorful pictorials, while the Daily Nation used a conservative approach in its coverage; (3) The two newspapers framed the Nyeri woman as an angry, violent and dangerous woman while the Nyeri man was framed as mainly an alcoholic and helpless victim; and (4) Previous gender media narratives such as the Bobbitt's gender violence story and the Angry black woman phenomenon parallel the localized Nyerification effect.

Key Words: *Nyerification, Gender-Based (Domestic) Violence, Stereotypes, Media Framing, Content Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis*

Introduction

Mass media, such as newspapers, TV and film, and radio, allow large volumes of information to be transmitted to many people, at any given time, without direct contact with the source of the content (Wood, 2009). Stories and features in print are reported through message frames which “help the media user to form an opinion and to arrive at conclusions about a given issue” (Albertazzi & Cobley, 2013). A major frame that this research sought to investigate is *Nyerification*, a term that gained prominence in the country during the period under study. The frame has become a lens in which gender-based violence of women-on-men in Nyeri is read and understood; which we present as problematic.

To elaborate on the research context, it is prudent to describe Nyeri County and the Nyeri woman. Nyeri County covers 3,337 square kilometers (approximately two thousand square miles) and is 150 kilometers (57 miles) north of the country’s capital, Nairobi, in the former Central Region (KIG, 2015). From the 2009 National Census data, the county is home to slightly over half a million people, 49% male and 51% female (KIG, 2015). The county is home to former President Mwai Kibaki, Kenya’s fourth head of state. Olympic and marathon medalist, Catherine Ndereba also hails from Nyeri.

Not only is Nyeri County known for these prominent people, it has since become synonymous for its “tough women.” This stereotype insinuates that the Nyeri woman does not have time for a man who does not *pull his weight*. Some prominent Nyeri women, including politician, activist, and Nobel Peace prize winner, the late Professor Wangari Maathai have been affected by this stereotype. Wangari was blamed for being too hard-headed when her marriage ended in divorce (Maathai, 2006).

The “Nyeri woman” phenomenon continues to be a contemporary discourse with the initial description of a dominant, strong-willed woman, now replaced with the stereotype (frame) of a woman who is an aggressor and perpetrator of violence. Media frames “are structured through the presence or absence of given key words, expressions, stereotypes, images, sources of information and sentences which all serve to back up a given opinion or judgment” (Entman, 1993, in Albertazzi & Cobley, 2013, p.462). Entman’s views on frames and how they are used in structuring media messages were important in this research as they helped explain the manner in which the two newspapers packaged their stories on domestic violence from Nyeri County. The frames helped explain both the covert and overt messages that the news stories conveyed.

This research is important, first, because it enables the scholars to critically expound on scholarly discourse about the manner in which media messages propagate stereotypes that create socially constructed meanings among the audience, or society as a whole; second, because it presents a space for the researchers to challenge the power structures that language, through coining the term *Nyerification*, has created (Gee, 2011). Although this study is about the media depiction of women, the Kikuyu ethnic group is not part of the national minority. However, a power struggle still exists in the muting of the opposite genders' (domestically) violent acts. Prior to this paper, such critiques of local media messages have not been done. Media critiques tend to be political or investigative in nature, with few by way of scholarly contributions that have a wider reach (beyond MA theses which are not open access). Third, this study is different, as it examines coverage of violence from the premise of the woman as a culprit rather than the victim.

As authors, we used autoethnography (Boylorn, 2008) as a lens to gaze inward (to their cultural experiences) and critique outward (to interrogate the media stories, language, and meanings). The phrase *Nyeri woman* intrigued one of the authors whose parents both originate from Nyeri, although she was born in Nairobi. Media portrayals and emergent stereotypes of Nyeri women led to necessary conversations with friends and family; which then sparked a commitment to seek out meaningful interpretations of the phenomenon. Similarly, the co-author has experienced being questioned about her *identity* based on other's (mis)perceptions that she does not "sound nor look" Nigerian, mostly based on media representations of Nigerians. Thus our experiences reinforce the idea that most people relate with others based on what they see (and read) in the media (McQuail, 1987 in Bitrus, 2001; Jandt, 2007); and the frames that they use to interpret reality.

Statement of the problem

Media representations of domestic violence perpetuate gender stereotypes (Waterhouse-Watson, 2012). Stories from Nyeri about gender violence treat "gender" as synonymous with *woman*; and although the "violence" is *domestic*, this is not clearly differentiated in the narratives. The problem with the nature of reporting about this social malady is that current media practice

reports on gender-based violence, as a blanket act / term, without discriminating and specifying the nature of the act for the reader. This misnomer, “gender violence,” when reported, has thus created and normalized the interpersonal, domestic violence that a woman engages towards a man while muting the type of gender based violence that men perpetrate against women.

Similarly, that the man is depicted favorably, and the woman, unfavorably - means this criminal activity which *should be* taken seriously, does not get the type of media coverage it deserves. Gender-based (domestic) violence should be exposed and written about in the same manner, regardless of the gender who is the victim or perpetrator. The *Nyerification effect* occurs when gender-based violence narratives from other regions of the country focus on exposing negative characteristics and actions of the woman, while protecting the positive self-concept of the man. That the stories do not address violence within the domestic context means that violence has not been clearly defined and exposed, and a status quo is being maintained (that what happens to the man is talked about, not the woman).

Research questions

In order to understand the framing messages related to the Nyeri woman, four research questions were formulated: (1) How did the *Nation* and the *Nairobi* newspapers frame gender-based (domestic) violence stories in Nyeri County in the period between June 2015 to August 2015? (2) How did these stories portray the Nyeri woman as compared to the Nyeri man? (3) Who were the sources of these news stories? And (4) What kind of prominence was given to these stories?

Definition of terms

The following are operationalized terms used in this paper.

Media framing is a paradigm used to explain how people interpret their reality using social cues provided by media. This is discussed further in the theoretical framework section.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a scholarly, critical method used to analyze the hidden meaning in language and texts (Gillespie & Toynbee, 2006).

Stereotypes are generalizations that “minimize the complexity of an individual, group, or situation to a familiar and quickly understood and defining set of attributes” (Long & Wall, 2009, p. 83). Media acts as a tool in which these stereotypes are reinforced (Wood, 2014).

Nyeri woman refers to a woman with origins from Nyeri County, Kenya. *Nyerification* is a term coined to explain the phenomenon where Nyeri women attack and assault their husbands or male partners by mutilating their genitals. From the findings the *Nyerification effect* causes other

gender-based stories from other places to be told in a similar way, in which the woman is the perpetrator and the man is the victim.

Gender is a social construct, while sex is a biological construct, based on human anatomy. Gender is “a label that is associated with non-physiological characteristics that society or specific cultures assign to men and women” (Unger, 1979 in Abrams, 2012).

Gender-based (domestic) violence refers to violent acts perpetrated interpersonally; that is by one gender on another. In this paper, it refers to violence among people who live together as heterosexual couples in general, and women-on-men violence.

Methodology

The methodology for this paper was descriptive research design. The design was chosen as it appropriate for examining “the status of a phenomenon” (Jha, 2014, p.132). In this study, the researchers were interested in describing the *Nyerification* phenomenon. Content analysis, a research approach which allows one to study a text, in-depth (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013) was used to examine newspaper articles on domestic violence in Nyeri County. Priest (2010) describes quantitative media content analysis as a study on the quantity of stories, words, or items; while qualitative media content analysis is an examination on the themes that emerge in media content, providing evidence.

After analysis of the numerical data, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (a qualitative technique) was used. CDA is concerned with power struggles hidden in media texts, and seeks to “unveil the hidden subtexts of media” so as reveal “the extent to which a particular, partisan view of the world is presented” (Gillespie & Toynbee, 2006, p. 187). In this case, the language used to divide male and female worlds was analyzed (Gee, 2011). As a branch of linguistics, CDA seeks to understand how and why certain texts affect the readers and hearers (Evans, 2013; Gee, 2011). The population of the study was articles published by the Nation and the Nairobiian. Purposive sampling which is a “deliberate” method of choosing a sample that will provide key information of your research (Punch, 2014), was used to select a sample of news articles covered in the period of June 2015 to August 2015. The period was chosen on the basis of the heightened media debate on domestic violence at the time, and the emergence of the term “Nyerification” in media

reports. These two papers were used to compare coverage by a mainstream paper with another that uses a soft, entertaining and provocative approach.

The unit of analysis of the research was the *Nation* and the *Nairobiian* newspapers. The *Nation* was chosen as the leading mainstream paper in the country and the *Nairobiian* as a newspaper that employs tabloid-style reporting but which is also popular.

The *Nairobiian* which was started about two years ago by the Standard Media Group has continued to gain popularity through its provocative and sensational style. For the *Nation*, the daily paper and the *Sunday Nation* were included in the analysis.

Data was collected using a coding sheet developed by the researchers prior to analyzing the articles. The researchers used what Wimmer and Dominick (2013) refer to as a priori coding where content categories are developed before data collection. Categories that were defined included the sex of the reporter, types of articles, placement of the story, use of illustration/photo/graphics, news sources, tone of the story, framing used to describe the Nyeri woman and framing used to describe the Nyeri man. Once the code sheet was developed it was tested and revised. The quantitative data was then collected by one of the researchers. The other researcher conducted a CDA on the findings. The findings were discussed and summarized and related with question/hypothesis, present findings.

Theoretical Framework

Goffman's framing theory is important to media scholars as it helps to "analyze the imbalances and underlying power structures that mediate political issues" (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009, p. 407). Smith (2014) seeks to differentiate framing theory from McCombs' agenda setting theory arguing that while the latter focuses on newsworthiness, framing is concerned with how the media present a message to an audience (Smith, 2014; de Vreese, 2005). Framing has been described as a framework that helps examine how media "can elaborate and reinforce" frames to audiences (Baran and Davis 2009, p. 316). Baran and Davis (2009, p.317) further define a frame as "a specific set of expectations used to make sense of a social situation at a given point in time". These expectations that people have are not only derived from their interactions with other people but also from media content. Frames have been illustrated as media presentation of

“topics from a particular perspective” where some parts may be highlighted or even downplayed (Albertazzi & Cobley, 2013, p.462).

The above proposition was relevant to this study as the authors posited that the two newspapers exaggerated the women’s roles in the violence while downplaying the factors that triggered it. This in turn explains how framing theory helps expound how media reinforce certain perspectives and stereotypes. In this research, the theory was used to compare the framing of stories of the two newspapers and also to expose the biases of the different reports (Ibid).

Literature Review

Gender role portrayals in media

Media portrayals of gender contrast media reality from lived reality. In a graduate conference paper of myths perpetuated through TV, Carroll et. al., (2001) found that although some shows seem to be feminist on the surface and portray women as strong, smart, successful, and independent, underlying myths still reinforce traditional societal roles of women. Similarly, in the Bill Cosby Show (a TV show that aired in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s), Claire Huxtable, the wife of Dr. Huxtable, a career woman and mother, was not portrayed as an empowered, intelligent, and independent woman (Bitrus, 2001).

Intertextuality

Intertextuality (Gee, 2011) is the idea that texts we are exposed to (in print or speech) are based on prior frames of reference (or similar themes). One of the themes that make the concept of *Nyerification* easy to grasp is the story of Lorena and John Wayne Bobbitt. The second theme, linked to media effects is the narrative of the *Angry Black Woman*.

The Bobbitts. Over two decades ago, a domestic violence case became globally broadcast of a woman who cut off her husband’s penis due to infidelity and violence (Siemaszko, 2013). In fact, the story is retold, in part, as:

“Twenty years ago... a frustrated Virginia housewife grabbed a kitchen knife and turned the name Bobbitt into a verb by slicing off her drunken husband’s penis...Of course, that wasn’t the entire story. But the bizarre brutality of the case struck a chord with the public, which lapped up every lurid detail. Bobbitt

became a punchline, a euphemism for emasculate, a word that produced nervous snickers in many a man — and raised eyebrows among some women...At her trial, Lorena claimed her husband was a world class jerk who sexually abused her, flaunted his infidelities, and “forced” her to have an abortion...In the process, Lorena became a symbol for abused wives everywhere — and focused national attention on the issue of marital rape....John denied his wife’s claims...Most men at that point would have crawled into a hole to hide. But John Wayne Bobbitt was not most men...Interviewed on the set, John said he was determined to “basically show everybody that I’m healed and fully functional.’...His operation was “recorded in medical journals,” he said. “It’s part of history, you know.” (Ibid)

From the above excerpt, “Bobbitt” became a household name; a husband mistreated his wife, and was heralded as a hero. Words used to describe her include (momentary) “insanity” while he is shown to have been “saved from emasculation” by the doctors.

The language in the story frames the woman as aggressor, the man as victim. The verb “Bobbitt” was coined thereafter was only able to spread due to the media agenda setting. In one of the local (Kenyan) accounts of the *Nyeri woman*, this same story is referenced. This shows the powerful role media has in shaping opinions in society.

The Angry Black Woman. The second underlying intertextual link is the narrative of the *Angry black woman*, ABW. This perspective is well documented within American scholarly works. McKoy (2012) elaborates this phenomenon in an article that examines the representation of black women in the films of renowned African American filmmaker, Tyler Perry. Mckoy argues that characters in Perry’s films help propagate stereotypes about black women that have lingered in contemporary society from the days of slavery. Characters such as the famous Madea portray the African American woman as “violent, threatening, domineering, masculine and unattractive” (McKoy, 2012, pp.137-138). McKoy argues that as much as these films can be viewed as a way of African Americans poking fun at themselves, they in the end do more harm by entrenching negative portrayals of black women in the society.

Although the paradigm is American, people in other countries have been exposed to western media (including print, such as adverts in magazines and TV ads) dating back to the 1950s and onwards. These exposures have been through travelling to the USA, reading western literature,

listening to western music over the radio and / or (prior to that) on gramophones, or even watching these sitcoms in their home countries). Thus the gendered and racial stereotypes become familiar to and normalized among a global audience.

Findings and discussions

The content analysis of the two newspapers showed surface differences in how gender-based (domestic) violence in Nyeri was framed in print media within the period studied. While the *Nation* stuck to its conservative mode of reporting (hard news), the *Nairobiian* displayed a more liberal approach (sensational). Similarly, whereas the *Nation* avoided using slang or newly coined words such as *Nyerification*, the *Nairobiian* liberally used phrases commonly associated with local FM radio shows (for shock value).

The use of colloquial terms removes the reader from the seriousness of the act and makes light of, although non-intentionally, what would be deemed a crime (domestic violence) using a legal lens.

The consequence of this fun-poking reporting is that while the Nyeri man was framed as a helpless victim, it is out of pity, not empathy. Words such as “half man” used by the *Nairobiian* to describe a man whose penis had been mutilated are a depiction of the tabloid-lingo. That such words are printed in the public sphere does not fit consistently with social public discourses on African identity (traditional, conservative).

From the critical discourse analysis, it was evident that language preferences were used as tools (to achieve a goal, by the authors). For example, in the use of euphemisms, the *Nairobiian* referred to the penis as a rod (*rungu*), tree of the homestead (*mitiyaboma*), and tool box (*sehemunyeti*). The use of euphemistic language made it ‘permissible’ to discuss a topic that would otherwise have been considered taboo. The following is a detailed outline of the analysis.

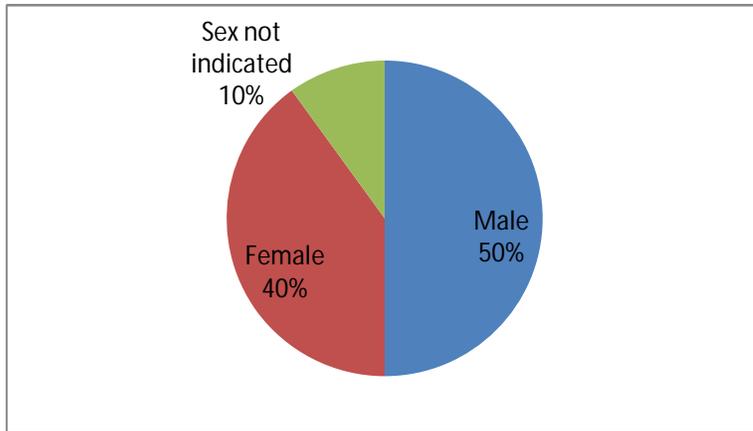
Content Analysis

Number of articles

In the three months under study, the two selected newspapers had a total of 22 articles on domestic violence in Nyeri County. Of the 22 articles, 12 were reported by the *Nairobiian* while 10 by the *Nation* newspaper. The month of June had the most stories on domestic violence in the county, with a total of 20 articles written by both papers, with *the Nairobiian* having majority of

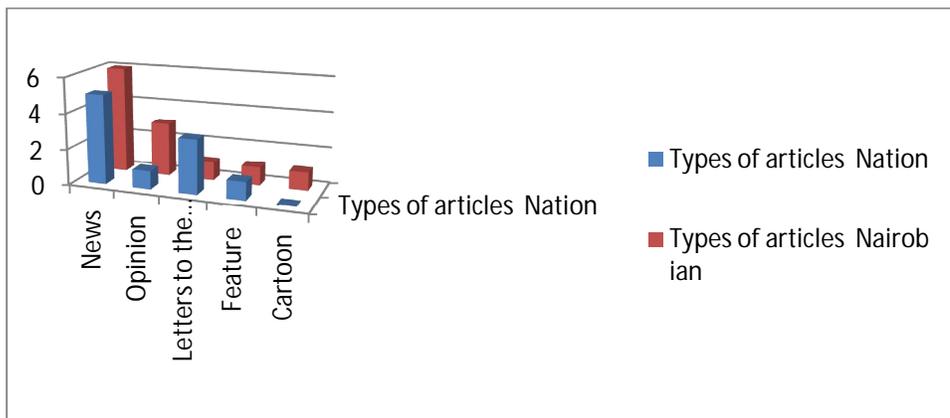
the stories; 11 while the *Nation* had nine. In July and August, each of the newspapers had only one story.

Figure 1: Sex of reporter



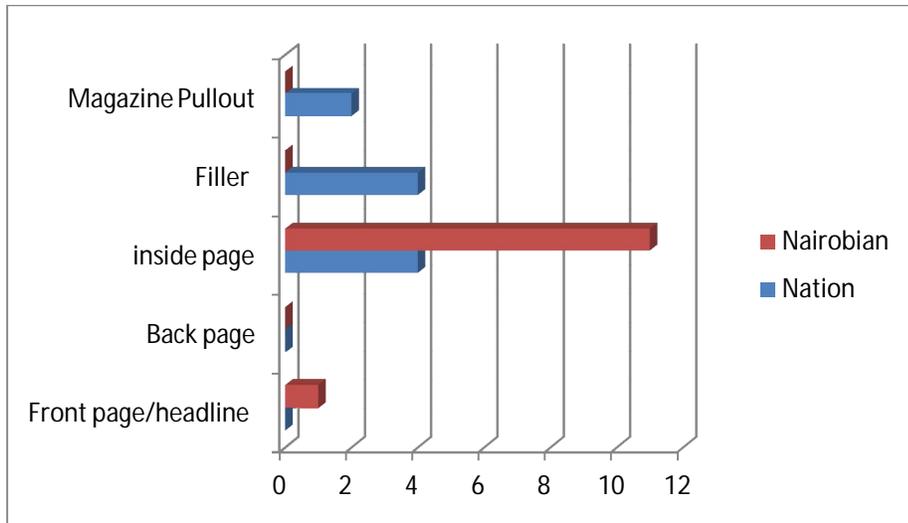
Most of the writers for both newspapers were male (50%) while female reporters were 40 percent. Three stories (10 %) did not have the name of the writer indicated hence making it impossible to tell the sex of the reporter.

Figure 2: Type of stories



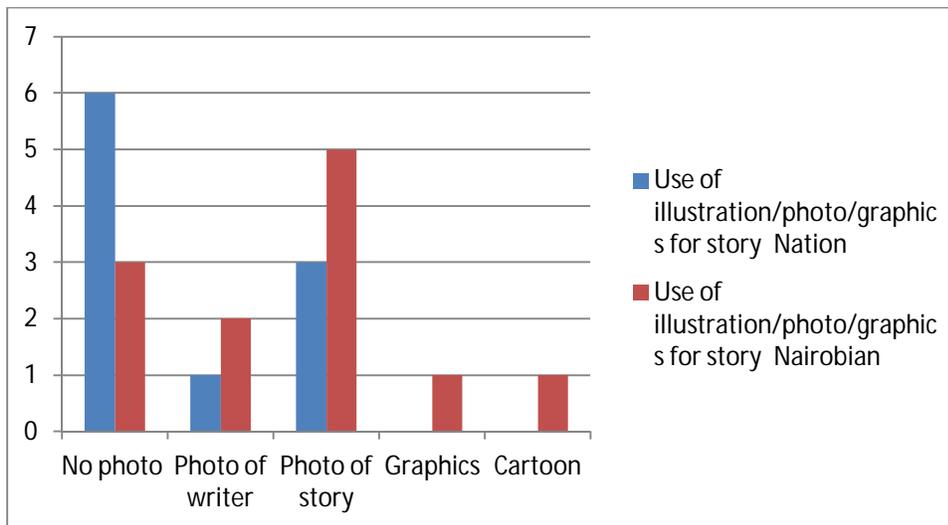
Most of the stories were news items; *Nation* (5) and *Nairobiian* (6). The *Nation* had only one opinion article while the *Nairobiian* had three opinion articles. The *Nairobiian* had one letter to the editor while the *Nation* had three. The *Nairobiian* had one cartoon, while the *Nation* had none.

Figure 3: Placement of story



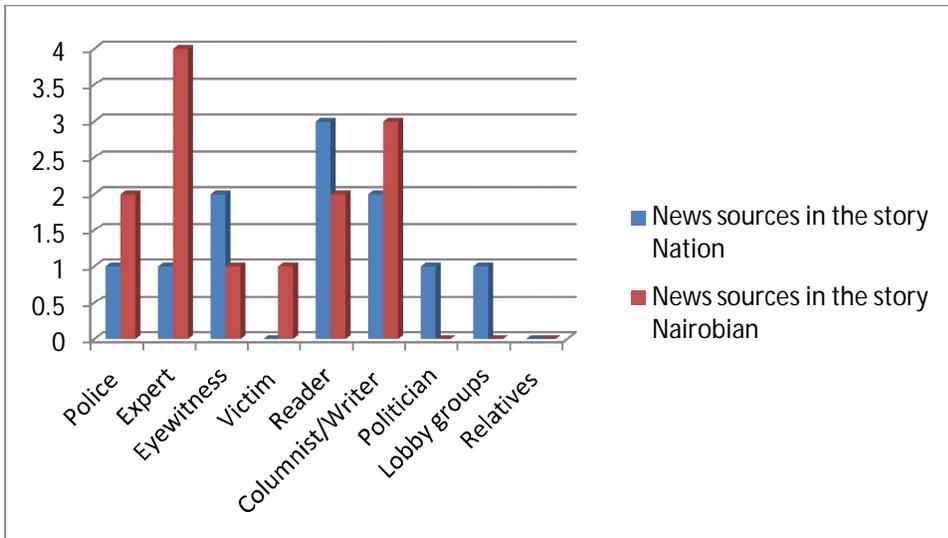
Most of the stories were in the inside pages with a total of 15 articles in the two newspapers being placed in the inside pages of the papers. The *Nairobiian* however, had one front page headline story on June 12. The *Nation* did not have any front page story on the issue.

Figure 4: Use of illustration in the story



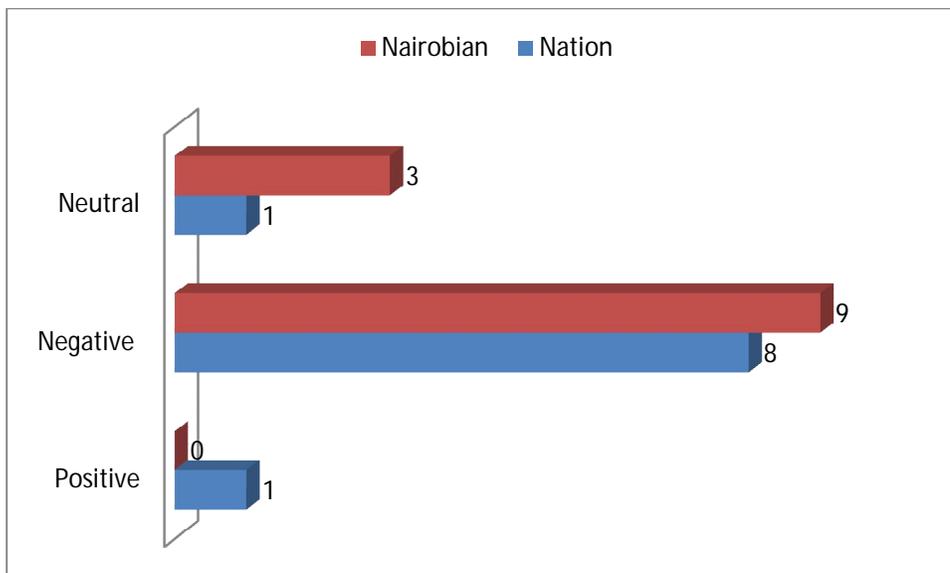
Nine stories that had no photos. Three stories had photos of the writers. Eight stories had photos accompanying the stories, Nairobiian (5), Nation (3).

Figure 5: News sources



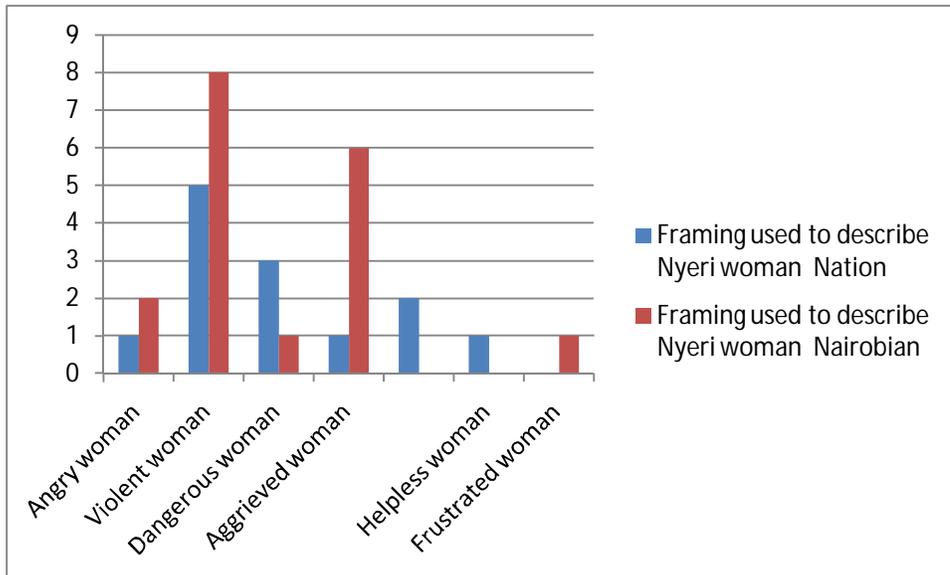
Only three stories in the two newspapers quoted police sources. The *Nairobiian* had more experts as sources (4) while the *Nation* had a story quoting an expert. Three stories in the two newspapers quoted eyewitnesses, while five stories were reactions from readers. Five stories were opinions articles. One story in the *Nation* quoted politicians from the Nyeri County. One story in the *Nairobiian* quoted the victim. One story in the *Nation* quoted a lobby group defending men’s rights called *Maendeleo ya Wanaume*.

Figure 6: Tone of the story



Majority of the stories were negative (17); *Nation* (8) and *Nairobiian* (9). There was only one positive story in the *Nation*. The *Nation* had one neutral story while the *Nairobiian* had three.

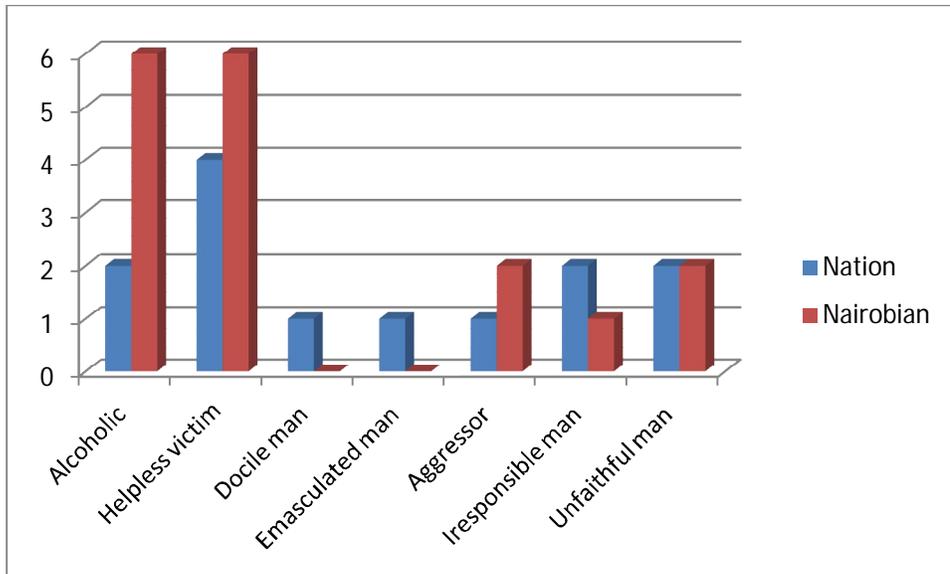
Figure 7: Framing of Nyeri woman



The most recurrent frame in both newspapers was that of describing the Nyeri woman as a *violent woman*. This frame recurred 13 times in both newspapers - *Nation* (5 times), *Nairobiian* (8 times). The *aggrieved woman* frame recurred seven times with the *Nation* (one time), *Nairobiian* (six times).

The frame of *the dangerous woman* appeared four times; the *Nation* (3) and the *Nairobiian* (1). Other minor themes were that of the *misunderstood woman*, *helpless woman* and the *frustrated woman*.

Figure 8: Framing of the Nyeri man



Framing of the Nyeri man: most of the stories described him as a *helpless victim* with a total of 10 such frames appearing in the two papers. The *Nairobiian* had six stories with the helpless victim frame while the *Nation* had four. The second recurrent frame of the Nyeri man was that of *the Alcoholic man* with the *Nairobiian* having six stories with that frame while the *Nation* had two. The frame portraying the Nyeri man as *unfaithful to his wife or girlfriend* appeared in four stories. The *irresponsible man* frame appeared three times as like that of the aggressor.

Critical Discourse Analysis

This was linked to the findings of content analysis; in conjunction with generative theme analysis where the themes that emerged were interpreted from a linguistic perspective.

Headlines and themes that emerged from the stories

i) *The Nation*:

A letter to the editor was headlined: *Liberal women don't beat men, they offer solutions*. This headline framed the woman as an aggressor who is bent on getting revenge for an alleged wrong instead of trying to sort out the issue. It also shows that the woman who beats a man is not progressive or liberal, and adds to the problem.

Another letter to the editor penned by a female reader equally portrays the woman as an aggressor and violent person inflicting unwarranted pain on the male. The headline reads:

Attacking men will not solve our problems. The story while not solely on Nyeri women, implied that Kenyan men are under attack by Kenyan women. It also carried the tone of needing to protect the one who is attacked, in this case, the man; it does not however, name the attacker. This silencing is in a way a problem because it does not name who is the attacker, nor who ‘our’ are.

One letter to the editor from a female reader counters the view that the Nyeri woman is a violent-vindictive person. The headline of the story is: *Not all females from Nyeri are she-devils.* The author took issue with the media for what she called “joining efforts to ridicule Nyeri women and label them as only capable of doing harm.” In this headliner, using the tautology “all females” and strong imagery “she-devils” in itself conjures the impression that one could not have trusted women from Nyeri in the past.

Another headline reads: *From Boys to men: How to bring up a well-rounded son.* The story in question is an opinion piece penned by a female journalist, Carole Mandi; who writes a weekly column, *That’s Life*, for the Sunday Nation. The story does not blame the Nyeri woman for the domestic violence in the county.

A neutral story that does not blame the woman for the violence has a headline that read: *There is more to Nyeri violence than meets the eye, so we should not be quick to judge Nyeri women.* The story is an opinion piece written by Dr. Joachim Osur, a columnist who writes about sex matters. The article frames the Nyeri woman as a woman who is *frustrated and traumatized*; one who uses assault on male manhood as a way of venting out her frustrations.

Another interesting headline is one titled; *Nyeri ward reps defend ‘tough women image’.* The story quotes Members of the County Assembly (MCAs) in Nyeri County protesting against the negative media coverage of the women from the area. The MCAs are quoted saying that the media have used a few isolated cases to make “a blanket condemnation of Nyeri women.”

ii) The *Nairobi*

The *Nairobi* as a newspaper adopting tabloid style had headlines and stories that contained a lot of euphemisms to describe the penis. Some of the words used to denote penis were slang words that would not appear in a mainstream paper. The following is a review of some of the headlines in the paper.

Reference to male private parts. The headline read: Why **Nyeri** Wives **Chop** off genitals: *Sehemu Nyeti*: Experts advise men whose “tool boxes” have been ripped off. The headline

combines both Swahili and English words. *Sehemu nyeti* is a Swahili word denoting private parts. The headline is on the front page of the paper but the story is in the inside page. A notable thing is that the words Nyeri and chop are in red color. *Sehemu nyeti* (private parts) is also printed in red.

Not all hope is lost. This is another headline that combines both English and Swahili words: *Reattached penis can still “simama”- Doctor*. The word “*simama*” is Swahili for erect or stand. The story quotes a doctor who states that even if a penis is cut, if medical treatment is given in time, it can function normally. This story gives an expert opinion that shows sympathy to the victim.

Woman as frustrated. *Women who chop off “rungu” are frustrated- expert*. This is yet another headline that has a Swahili word “*rungu*” (a rod). Here the male penis is viewed as a rod.

Image of the penis as trees of a homestead. In this headline, *Nyerification: Shock as two angry wives cut men’s “mitiyaboma,”* the Swahili words “*mitiyaboma*” (trees of the homestead) are used to refer to the penis. The headline also contains the term *Nyerification*, coined following the media and public debate on the alleged violence that is being meted out on Nyeri men by Nyeri women. The word emerged from the highly publicized beatification of a Catholic nun, Sister Irene Stefani at the Nyeri County in May this year.

-*Nyerinization*: Men who marry from Nyeri should consider insurance for their *rungus* or better still invest in ‘appropriate’ wedding ceremonies. The word used in a cartoon about the domestic violence in Nyeri introduces the word, *Nyerinization* to depict the said atrocities that the men from the county are experiencing at the hands of their women. The word, *rungu*(rod) is introduced here again to depict the penis.

b) Use of Photos and illustrations

The *Nairobi* being an entertainment paper, made extensive use of photos to frame the story of the Nyeri woman. The *Nation*, on the hand had fewer photos. One of the catchy photos used by both papers is that of smiling Valentine Mugure (one of the women accused of assaulting her husband). Valentine’s photo appeared on the front page of the *Nairobi* June 12- June 18, 2015 issue. The photo was accompanied by a big headline: “Why Nyeri wives chop off genitals”.

The smiling photo appears to imply that the woman, who is a criminal, does not appear remorseful about her actions.

Findings support the powerful effects perspective in shaping narrative around a social phenomenon particularly, the power of media *intertextuality* (Research question 1). Similar to the message frame of the *Bobbitt story*, where the woman was framed as perpetrator, the *Nyeri woman* is framed as violent, dangerous, and aggrieved; misunderstood, frustrated, and helpless. On the other hand, the *Nyeri man* is framed as victim (as with John Wayne Bobbitt). Similarly, the the *Angry black woman* message frame is a continuous theme linked to media effects. This is so, even across continents, and decades removed from the era of racially motivated stereotypes in the media.

Furthermore, the *Nyerification* frame presently perpetuates a stereotype that *gender-based* violence is about women-on-men gender violence in the domestic context, perpetuating a gendered stereotype. Critically assessing the current narrative, one assumes that the stories are about women who act aggressively towards their men partners. This demonstrates a view of the world that is limited. Are there no stories about the Nyeri men who have committed domestic violence towards their women partners? That the other side of the story is muted, not addressed, poses one of the key problems of framing (Gee, 2011).

In comparing how the stories portrayed the Nyeri woman *vis-a-vis* the Nyeri man (Research question 2), the research looked at the person writing the story. Both men and women used the same negative tone and label and frame setting (de Vreese, 2005) to discuss the nature of the relationship. It was of interest to note that women who were writing about women used the same language and frames as men. This presents a problematic stance for the scholars who as women gazing into their context (Boylorn, 2008), understand what it means to be marginalized by a dominant narrative. To be part of that same machinery means that the dominant, oppressive view is pushed into the public sphere. However, this same situation presents an opportunity for women to discuss what it means to write and tell stories about other women, even if they are not from one's ethnic group.

Similarly, the writers did not adequately present a social/economical/historical/relational context (Research question 3) for the audience or media consumer to fully understand the situation (Gee, 2011).

Before a narrative is presented about gender based violence, a wider perspective would need to situate the cultural practice. Without a context, the presentation of the story lacks objectivity, does not give space or voice to both sides (women and men), and so does not represent the issue of gendered (not just women-on-men) violence.

As to the final question (Research question 4), although only one story was headlined on the first page, in the three month period under study, we found that there were various formats of the message from opinion pieces, features, and a cartoon. These stories highlight a social phenomenon that presents women from one community in a certain frame. Once different audiences begin to read about an issue that is presented in the same way, each time it is reported, then a type of cultivation effect occurs and people learn that the right way, or normal way to relate with each other is through a misguided, uncritical lens.

Lastly, from the unit of analysis selected since the first *Nyerification* piece, no investigative, in-depth feature was written to interrogate the social and psychological reasons behind the violence. The stories in the two newspapers seem to have been ended at the basic level (“Who-did-what?” and “To whom?”). Where there was an attempt to discuss what happened, we are told that the woman defended herself (in a tone that did not make it plausible) and that the father of the man confirmed that there were issues (in tone that removed responsibility, *not blame*, on the man). Thus the reports simplified the issue, while reinforcing the stereotype of the *Nyeri woman* as a violent man-beater. In a few opinion pieces, there seemed to be oppositional readings, with some members of the public rejecting the frame that *Nyeri women*, that is, “all of them (Nyeri women),” are violent.

Conclusion

Kenyan print media consistently misrepresented the Nyeri woman by using a one-sided message frame: that she is violent; frustrated, and the aggressor and misnamed the act of violence as ‘domestic violence.’ Part of the misnomer and muting effect includes not exposing domestic violence as gendered (both genders), but rather repeatedly and consistently linking it to women-on-men domestic violence acts. At the same time, the media omitted information about the context by showing the Nyeri man as passive, innocent, and the victim. Thus this one-dimensional narrative presents a limiting view of gender and gender-based violence; such that the audience member views mediated gender narratives as related to women (while there is more

than one gender) and gender-based violence to mean women who act aggressively towards their domestic partners (while the opposite is true; including other parties).

Recommendations

There is need for the country to focus on media literacy of both users and content creators. Through such initiatives the media scholars, journalists, media practitioners and users can engage in critical discourse about the interconnected relationship between language choice in framing a message; and second that academics and media practitioners will engage in critical discourse about the way in which traditional and contemporary media messages perpetuate stereotypes, language choice in headlines and stories frame messages, and what those choices mean to members of society.

There is need for further research where a survey targeting the audiences of the kind of media content examined in this study could give their views on how such messages affect them. It would be interesting to further study the influence of social media, which has made topics that were deemed private come up into the public arena and how that has also influenced the growth of a paper like the *Nairobiian*.

Future research can examine the views of journalists on the stereotypes propagated by media with a view of understanding why media continually propagate these stereotypes and to gauge the possibility of educating reporters and editors to produce more balanced, and educational content.

References

- Abrams, J. A. (2012). *Blurring the Lines of Traditional Gender Roles: Beliefs of AfricanAmerican Women. A Thesis Proposal Submitted In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science at Virginia Commonwealth University.* Director: Faye Z. Belgrave, Ph.D., Department of Psychology. Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia. Accessed: <https://digarchive.library.vcu.edu/bitstream/handle/10156/3867/Final%20Thesis.pdf?s>
- Albertazzi, D., & Cobley, P. (2013). *The media: An introduction.* New York: Routledge.
- Baran, S. J., & Davis, D. K. (2009). *Mass communication theory: Ferment, and future* (5th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Basse, M. (2010, August 31). Census, Kenya has 38.6 M people. *Daily Nation Newspaper.* Nairobi: Kenya. Retrieved from www.nation.co.ke/news
- Bitrus, U. A. (2001). *A Rhetorical Analysis of the Cultural Values Exhibited on The Cosby Show (TCS).* A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of South Alabama in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts. Mobile, Alabama. Thesis Chair: Dr. Richard Ward.
- Boylorn, R. M. (2008). As Seen On TV: An Autoethnographic Reflection on Race and Reality Television. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 25: 4, 413 - 433.
- Carroll, T., Bitrus, U., Pike, B., Powell, S., Moore, M., Mona Moore., & Aivas, A. (2001). *HBO's Sex and the City and the Perpetuation of Myths About Women: A Feminist Cultural Criticism*, presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. <http://list.msu.edu/cgi->

- de Vreese, C. H. (2005). News framing: Theory and typology. *Information Design Journal and Document Design*, 13 (1), 51-62.
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing U.S coverage of international news: Constraints in narratives of the KAL and Iran air incidents. *Journal of Communication* 41 (4), pp. 6-68.
- Evans, M. (2013, May 9). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. [Blog Post] Retrieved from www.languageinconflict.org on October 4, 2015
- Gee, J. P. (2011). *Introduction to Discourse Analysis* (3rd Ed). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gillespie, M., & Toynbee, J. (Eds.). (2006). *Analysing media texts*. England: Open Press University.
- Jandt, F. E. (2007). *Introduction to intercultural communication: Identities in global community*. (5th Ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Jha, A. S. (2014). *Social research methods*. New Delhi: McGraw-Hill.
- Kenya Information Guide.com (KIG). (2015). *Overview of Nyeri county*.<http://www.kenya-information-guide.com/nyeri-county.html>
- Lewis, J. (2008). *Cultural studies: Basics, The* (2nded.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Littlejohn, S. W., & Foss, K. A. (Eds.). (2009). *Encyclopedia of communication theory, volume 1*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Littlejohn, S. W. & Foss, K. A. (2004). *Theories of human communication* (8th Ed). Belmont, CA; Wadsworth Publishing.
- Littlejohn, S. W. (1999). *Theories of Human Communication*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Lull, J. (2000). *Media, communication culture: A global approach*. (2nd Ed). NY: Columbia University Press.
- Long, P., & Wall, T. (2009). *Media studies: Texts, production and context*. England: Pearson Education.
- Maathai, W. M. (2006). *Unbowed: A memoir*. London: William Heinemann.
- Machin, D., & Mayr, A. (2012). *How to do critical discourse analysis: A multimodal introduction*. London: Sage Publications.
- McKoy, B. (2012). Tyler Perry and the weight of misrepresentation. *McNair Scholars Research Journal* 5 (1), pp.127-146. Retrieved from <http://commons.emich.edu/mnair>

- Macnamara, J. (2005). Media content analysis: Its uses benefits and best practice methodology. *Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal*, 6 (1), 1-34
- McQuail, D. (2005). *McQuail's mass communication theory* (5th ed.). New Delhi: Vistaar Publications.
- Priest, S. H. (2010). *Doing media research: An introduction* (2nd ed.). California: Sage Publications.
- Punch, K. F. (2014). *Introduction to social research: Quantitative & Qualitative approaches*. London: Sage Publications.
- Shrikhande, V. (2003). *Stereotyping of women in television advertisements*. (Master's thesis, unpublished). Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, Baton Rouge.
- Siemaszko, C. (Sunday, June 23, 2013, 7:00 AM). *20 years ago: Lorena Bobbitt cuts off penis of then husband John Wayne Bobbitt in case that horrified — and fascinated — thenation*. *NewYorkDailyNews*.(15/11/15
<http://www.nydailynews.com/news/crime/20-years-today-lorena-bobbitt-cuts-husband-penis-case-horrified-fascinated-nation-article-1.1379112>
- Smith, R. (2014). *Public Relations: The basics*. New York: Routledge.
- Waterhouse-Watson, D. (March 2012). Framing the Victim: Sexual Assault and Australian Footballers on Television. *Australian Feminist Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 71. ISSN 0816-4649 print/ISSN 1465-3303 online/12/010055-16
- Wood, J. T. (2009). *Communication in our lives* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning.
- Wood, J. T. (2014). *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender, and Culture*. (11th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth. Retrieved from <http://www.udel.edu/comm245/readings/GenderedMedia.pdf>
- Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2013). *Mass media research. An introduction* (10th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.