Framing Femicide in Kenyan Online Print Media:
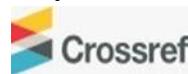## Language, Imagery, and Major Narrative Strategies

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Framing Femicide in Kenyan Online Print Media: Language,

Imagery, and Major Narrative Strategies

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to analyze the framing strategies employed by Kenyan online print media in their coverage of femicide cases, particularly focusing on the use of language, imagery, and major narrative structures.

Materials and Methods: The research employs a qualitative case study approach utilizing thematic analysis to examine the framing of two high-profile femicide cases involving public figures. The data were collected from three major Kenyan online newspapers and analyzed to identify dominant frames and narrative strategies.

Findings: The study finds that the media predominantly frames femicide cases through sensational legal dramatization and focuses on high-profile individuals, which overshadows the gravity of the crimes and detracts from the victims' narratives. Gender disparities are evident, with female suspects often portrayed more sympathetically, reinforcing traditional gender roles and societal norms.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: This research contributes to framing theory by demonstrating how media frames influence public perceptions of femicide and gender-based violence. It calls for more balanced, victim-centered reporting in media practices to raise awareness and encourage gender-sensitive approaches in journalism. Additionally, it provides a foundation for future policy recommendations that advocate for gender-sensitive media training and collaboration with advocacy groups to address systemic gender violence.

Keywords: *Femicide, Media Framing, Gender-Based Violence*

INTRODUCTION

Femicide, defined as the intentional murder of women because they are women, is a global human rights issue affecting countries around the world (Weil, 2016). According to the demographic and health survey (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2014), violence against women is prevalent, with 45% of Kenyan women having experienced physical violence and 14% having experienced sexual violence in their lifetimes. A particularly brutal manifestation of this violence is femicide,

which has been increasing over the past decade in Kenya. According to data from the National Crime Research Center, the number of femicides more than doubled from 264 in 2014 to 597 in 2018, indicating it is a growing epidemic (Kigaya, 2021). Many Kenyan women view these recent incidents as indicative of a systemic issue. An analysis conducted by the Africa Data Hub for a newspaper reveals that over 500 women have fallen victim to femicide in Kenya from 2016 to 2024. However, it's important to note that this figure likely underrepresents the true extent of the problem (African Data Hub, 2023).

Femicides often involve extreme brutality, including sexual assault, mutilation, and torture. A recent high-profile case involving the torture, rape, and murder of athlete Agnes Tirop, allegedly by her husband (Njeru, 2022), is such an example. The increasing frequency and cruelty of femicide cases have led to public outcry and demands for government intervention in Kenya. However, some argue that part of the solution involves addressing the way femicide is framed and discussed in Kenyan media (Ng'ang'a, 2021; Wamathu, 2018).

The news media play an influential role in shaping public discourse and attitudes on important social issues like femicide. Through processes like framing and agenda-setting, the media highlight specific aspects of issues like femicide while downplaying others (Chernov, 2018). Common frames used when reporting on femicide include emphasizing interpersonal conflicts within relationships as causing the crime, portraying it as an isolated incident, or focusing on the victim's behavior rather than the perpetrator (Wasuna, 2019; Chesney-Lind & Chagnon, 2017). These frames tend to individualize or exceptionalize femicide rather than situate it in the wider context of patriarchal social structures and systemic violence against women. There are concerns these types of victim-blaming or isolating frames may influence negative perceptions towards women in Kenya (Wamathu, 2018), hindering efforts to address the root causes of femicide and promote gender equity (Ng'ang'a, 2021; Wamathu, 2018).

During the latter months of 2018, Kenyan media outlets were saturated with reports on two highprofile femicide cases involving young women, which captured widespread attention (Muia, 2018; Nation, 2018; Griffin, 2018; BBC, 2018; Standard, 2018). The murders of Sharon Otieno, a university student, and Monica Kimani, a businesswoman, implicated well-known media personality Jackie Maribe, further intensifying media coverage due to the involvement of notable individuals. Similarly, in 2012, the media extensively covered the murder of Careen Chepchumba, a Kenya Power employee, involving well-known personalities like Louis Otieno. Recently, another young woman, Ciru Muriuki, became a subject of media attention in a similar context (Nation, 2024; Standard, 2024).

These cases prompted national and international attention, with significant public outcry and activism demanding an end to femicide and violence against women (Media Council of Kenya, 2015). Beyond these high-profile incidents, numerous other femicides occurred, as reported by platforms like Counting Dead Women Kenya, underscoring the prevalence and urgency of the issue (Nation, 2019; Standard, 2019; People Daily, 2019; Star, 2019). The media's role in covering these cases not only informs public discourse but also influences policy discussions and societal responses.

Research indicates that media framing significantly influences audience perceptions and responses to social issues, potentially amplifying perceived risks regardless of factual accuracy (Wong & Harraway, 2020; Kasperson et al., 2003). Consequently, the media must exercise caution in their reporting, avoiding sensationalism and ensuring fair treatment of both perpetrators and the accused until proven guilty in a court of law. Further, the media influences the audience's understanding and their perspective towards certain issues disseminated to them (Hall, 2005). According to McCombs (2014), media use an appropriate tone in their messages to ensure the information it passes has the desired effect on the audience. This helps in providing detailed insights into the pictures the audiences have in mind, allowing them to develop the attitudes the media intended them to have (McCombs, 2014).

An alternate empowering frame for describing femicide emphasizes how gender inequality intersects with other oppressions, shedding light on the misogynistic belief systems underlying such crimes. Framing theory, which examines how media shapes public perception by emphasizing certain aspects of reality while omitting others, provides a critical lens for understanding these narratives (Entman, 1993). However, few studies have systematically examined how Kenyan media employs such frames, creating a significant knowledge gap given the media's agenda-setting power, particularly in the digital age. With more Kenyans relying on online media for news, the framing of femicide by these outlets becomes increasingly crucial. A study by the Media Council of Kenya (2015) suggests that online media in Kenya often perpetuates gender stereotypes, further underscoring the need for detailed analysis. For instance, reports often sensationalize incidents of femicide involving high-profile figures, which may detract from broader systemic issues. This study investigates how Kenyan online newspapers narrate femicide incidents, particularly those involving public figures such as Monica Kimani and Careen Chepchumba, with Jackie Maribe and Louis Otieno implicated in their cases. Statistics from the National Crime Research Center (NCRC, 2019) indicate that femicide cases in Kenya increased by 15% between 2010 and 2018, a trend that demands closer scrutiny of how media narratives contribute to societal perceptions of genderbased violence. These data were collected through a nationwide survey of police reports and community interviews, offering a comprehensive overview of the issue. This study aims to elucidate the prevalence of frames in media narratives, distinguishing between those that individualize or exceptionalize femicide and those that recognize the broader gender inequalities contributing to such violence.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to analyze the framing strategies employed by Kenyan online print media in their coverage of femicide cases, focusing on language, imagery, and narrative structures. The research aims to identify the major framing strategies utilized by these media outlets. Furthermore, the study seeks to investigate how media narratives around femicide are constructed, providing a deeper understanding of how media frames influence public perceptions of genderbased violence in Kenya. This purpose aligns with the research questions, which explore how femicide is framed by Kenyan media and the specific strategies used to shape these portrayals, as detailed in the subsequent section.

Research Questions

- How do Kenyan online print media outlets frame femicide cases in terms of language, imagery, and narrative structures?

- What are the major framing strategies used by Kenyan online newspapers in the coverage of femicide cases?

Significance of the Study

Advancing Media Reporting Practices: This study aims to revolutionize media reporting practices by providing an in-depth analysis of how femicide cases are framed in Kenyan media. By exploring the language and narrative structures employed, this research advocates for responsible journalism that avoids perpetuating harmful stereotypes and focuses on victim sensitivity. The findings can inform better practices in media reporting, fostering a compassionate and informed public discourse around gender-based violence.

Enhancing Public Awareness of Gender-Based Violence: By highlighting how femicide is portrayed in Kenyan media, this research can significantly raise public awareness about genderbased violence. The study offers insights into how media representations shape societal perceptions, which can be used to develop targeted advocacy campaigns. These campaigns can challenge misconceptions, promote empathy towards victims, and encourage policy interventions aimed at preventing and addressing gender-based violence. For instance, in the case of the United Kingdom, the media's increased focus on domestic violence following high-profile cases such as the murder of Sarah Everard led to a societal shift, where discussions around consent, accountability, and victim support gained prominence (BBC News, 2021). Similarly, in the United States, the "Me Too" movement, amplified through media reporting of sexual harassment and assault, led to widespread changes in social norms and policy reforms (Molloy, 2018). These examples show how enhanced media reporting and the framing of gender-based violence can challenge public attitudes, fostering a more supportive environment for victims and driving institutional change.

MATERIALS AND METHODS Research Design

A case study is a detailed examination of a single subject (Yin, 2013) that allows for an in-depth exploration of specific phenomena within their real-life context, which is essential for understanding the complexities of media framing in femicide cases (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The rationale for choosing this method lies in its ability to provide rich, detailed insights into the media narratives surrounding the selected cases, allowing for an exploration of how these narratives evolve and are shaped by various factors such as journalistic practices, societal norms, and individual biases (Tracy, 2010).

This study employed a qualitative case study approach, utilizing thematic analysis to examine media framing of selected high-profile femicide cases in Kenya. The primary cases under investigation are the murder of Monica Kimani (a businesswoman, which implicated media personality Jackie Maribe), and the murder of Careen Chepchumba (a Kenya Power employee, involving media personality Louis Otieno). The research focused on news coverage from three

leading Kenyan online publications: *The Star*, *Standard Digital*, and *Daily Nation*, which have a combined readership of over 12 million monthly viewers, representing a significant portion of Kenya's online media landscape.

Data Collection

Data was collected primarily through a systematic review of news articles and editorials from *The Star*, *Standard Digital*, and *Daily Nation*. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select a corpus of relevant news articles, opinion pieces, and editorials from the three outlets, specifically covering the two high-profile cases. Purposive sampling helps in improving the rigor of the study and the trustworthiness of the data and results (Campbell et al., 2005). The sample included coverage from when each case emerged until the present day, allowing for an in-depth analysis of how the media narratives evolved. To ensure comprehensive understanding, the sample included articles extensively featuring the implicated journalists, Jackie Maribe and Louis Otieno, as well as other notable femicide incidents in Kenya.

Analysis Technique

Qualitative thematic analysis was employed to identify dominant frames, narratives, and portrayals present in the media coverage. This approach involves systematically coding and analyzing the data to identify patterns, themes, and variations within the text. The analysis was guided by a developed codebook, which helped categorize the data according to predefined themes and concepts. It included indicators to assess individualized or exceptionalized femicide frames focusing on interpersonal factors, as well as frames contextualizing incidents within broader systemic gender inequalities and oppressive belief systems. Particular attention was paid to the portrayal dynamics of Maribe and Otieno, examining potential gender-based disparities.

Reliability, Validity, and Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness, strategies like triangulation and peer debriefing were employed. Triangulation in qualitative research assumes that "findings may be judged valid when different and contrasting methods of data collection yield identical findings on the same research subjects" (Bloor, 2001, p.34). The codebook underwent expert validity checks and piloting before the primary analysis phase (Burla et al., 2008). Qualitative findings were supplemented by basic quantitative content analysis to assess prevalence across outlets and over time. Articles for this study were selected from Kenyan online print media between January 2018 and December 2023, ensuring a comprehensive examination of recent media narratives. Only English-language articles were included to maintain consistency with research's focus on widely accessible media sources. This integrated approach allows an in-depth exploration of media narratives surrounding highprofile Kenyan femicide cases, shedding light on framing techniques and public perception impact. **Literature Review**

Framing Theory

Framing theory is directly relevant to examining how news media portrays femicide cases to audiences. The theory suggests communicators actively "frame" information to promote certain interpretations over others through selective highlighting of attributes and contextual details (Entman, 1993). Frame-building is shaped by factors like organizational pressures and individual

journalist biases, which influence framing choices (Scheufele, 1999). These considerations are essential regarding Kenyan digital news production.

Framing impacts public opinion as audience pre-existing schema interacts with media frames to influence attitudes (Chernov, 2018). Evidence suggests common femicide media frames, such as victim-blaming or emphasizing domestic conflicts as isolated incidents, nurture societal tendencies to ignore wider gender inequalities behind the crime (Chesney-Lind & Chagnon, 2017). Framing research remains critical for gauging media's role in shifting cultural narratives to foster change on issues like femicide. The proposed study responds directly to calls for more investigation into emergent framing patterns as online news grows increasingly influential in Kenya (Wasuna, 2019).

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory also provides theoretical grounding to investigate digitized news discourse impacts regarding femicide. The theory posits repeated media exposure gradually "cultivates" viewers' conceptions of reality. As TV programming, now extending to online narratives, provides dominant perspectives that prime social cognitions (Morgan et al., 2018). As many Kenyans consume more digital versus traditional media (Opoku, Anyango & Alupo, 2018), online news framing matters for "cultivating" certain worldviews.

A pertinent cultivation hypothesis suggests greater exposure to media violence "mainstreams" aggression, desensitizes audiences, and shapes fatalistic attitudes justifying further violence—applicable to femicide framings (Morgan et al., 2018). Thuo (2012) found cultivation of fearrelated cognitions around domestic homicide risks following prolonged exposure to news coverage emphasizing such violence. A similar "mean world" effect could manifest for Kenyans frequently consuming graphic digital femicide reports (Wamathu, 2018). Tracking cultivation impacts will enhance public debate regarding media's role in femicide.

Empirical Review

Existing scholarship recognizes domestic violence and broader gender-based violence (GBV) as global endemic issues, with women disproportionately affected (McQuigg, 2011; WHO, 2021). In Kenya specifically, GBV prevalence is enabled by entrenched gender inequality intertwined with sociocultural belief systems justifying violence against women and girls (Mumali, 2021). Femicide represents an extreme manifestation of this normalized GBV continuum.

International media analysis on coverage of femicides and "intimate partner violence" (IPV) homicides reveals concerning trends. Chesney-Lind & Chagnon (2017) found U.S. newspapers frequently quoted law enforcement over victim advocates, isolating IPV incidents rather than connecting them to wider GBV systems. Australian research noted deficiencies around language implying domestic homicide inevitability or victim-blaming (Richards et al., 2014). Scholars argue such coverage obscures root IPV causes like gender socialization and restrictive conceptions of masculinity (Aldrete & Fernández-Ardèvol, 2023).

In the Kenyan context, theories like framing and cultivation effects can provide a lens through which media's portrayal of femicide and GBV can be better understood. Framing theory suggests that the way media frames an issue shapes how audiences perceive it (Entman, 1993). In Kenya, media outlets often frame femicide either as isolated events or through sensationalized narratives

that do not adequately address the broader systemic gender inequalities contributing to these crimes. This framing may contribute to cultivating perceptions of femicide as a private, rather than a societal, issue (Gerbner et al., 2002). Cultivation theory, which suggests that prolonged media exposure influences how individuals perceive social reality, may help explain how repeated portrayals of femicide in the media may desensitize the public to the root causes of GBV and limit collective action against it.

Ng'ang'a (2021) suggested online environments nurture patriarchal discourse in Kenya. Wasuna (2019) stressed responsible, contextual reporting on femicide is vital. However, existing scholarship lacks empirical investigations into prevalent frames manifesting from complex social negotiations between journalism ethics, public interest, and reader emotions. Tracking such patterns can strengthen initiatives advocating for coverage recognizing oppressive root causes. This study addresses key knowledge gaps around emergent framing impacts from increasingly influential online journalism spaces on progressing feminist activism against femicide.

FINDINGS Gender of the Journalists

Monica Kimani Murder Case Analysis: The Monica Kimani murder case received extensive coverage from both male and female journalists across various online print media. In this case, clear distinctions emerged between how male and female journalists framed the case:

- *Male Journalists*: The articles written by male journalists, such as those in *The Star* ("Monica Kimani murder: DPP to appeal Maribe's acquittal" and "No evidence! Jacque Maribe acquitted in Monica murder case"), primarily focused on the legal processes, emphasizing courtroom developments and the technicalities of evidence presented. These articles tended to downplay Monica Kimani's role as the victim, instead focusing on the legal outcomes, particularly Jacque Maribe's acquittal. This reflects a more process-driven, institutional approach, aligning with findings by Wasuna (2019), who notes that legalcentric reporting can detract from the emotional and social dimensions of femicide cases.

- *Female Journalists*: On the other hand, female journalists, such as Perpetua Etyang from *Standard Digital*, included broader societal contexts and emotional impacts in their reporting. For instance, her article "Jowie found guilty, Jacque Maribe acquitted in murder of Monica Kimani" covered not only the courtroom drama but also highlighted the impact on the victim's family and the emotional toll of the case. This mirrors findings by ChesneyLind & Chagnon (2017), who argue that female journalists are more likely to focus on victim experiences and social justice aspects, offering a more nuanced and human-centered perspective.

Careen Chepchumba Murder Case Analysis Similarly, in the case of Careen Chepchumba's murder, male and female journalists portrayed the case in notably different ways:

- *Male Journalists*: Articles by male journalists, such as "Louis Otieno to face fresh probe over Careen Chepchumba's death" (*The Star*), placed emphasis on legal procedures and the reopening of investigations, without delving into Chepchumba's experiences or the exploitation she suffered at the hands of Louis Otieno. This reflects Tracy's (2010) assertion

that male reporters often focus on procedural details in criminal cases, which can diminish the visibility of the victim's plight.

- *Female Journalists*: In contrast, female journalists like Perpetua Etyang in *Standard Digital*'s "Careen Chepchumba 'was to sue ex-TV anchor Louis Otieno for extortion'" explored Chepchumba's financial exploitation and the gender dynamics in her relationship with Otieno, highlighting themes of power, gender inequality, and victimization. This aligns with findings by Ng'ang'a (2021), who emphasizes that female journalists tend to address the gendered power imbalances in such cases, thus framing them within the broader context of systemic violence against women.

Analysis of Articles

Several frames were observed in the analysis of the selected articles on the Monica Kimani and Careen Chepchumba cases:

Monica Kimani Murder Case

1. Femicide Frames: Articles like *The Star*'s "Monica Kimani murder: DPP to appeal Maribe's acquittal" framed the case primarily around the legal developments and the involvement of high-profile individuals such as Jacque Maribe. These articles focused heavily on Maribe's acquittal and the DPP's intention to appeal, neglecting the broader context of gender-based violence that led to Monica Kimani's murder. This aligns with Chernov's (2018) observation that legal-centric framing can overshadow the societal dimensions of crimes like femicide.

2. Gender Inequalities: The articles demonstrated clear gender biases in how suspects were portrayed. Maribe was depicted as less culpable, with a focus on her acquittal and personal circumstances, as seen in "No evidence! Jacque Maribe acquitted in Monica murder case." This reflects findings by Chesney-Lind & Chagnon (2017) that female suspects are often portrayed as more sympathetic or passive, reinforcing gendered stereotypes in media coverage.

3. Oppressive Belief Systems: The framing of Maribe's acquittal as a legal victory, while downplaying her role in the murder, reflects patriarchal structures within the media. Articles such as *Standard Digital*'s "Jowie found guilty, Jacque Maribe acquitted in murder of Monica Kimani" emphasized legal outcomes over victim experiences, which reinforces oppressive belief systems that position women as less culpable or involved in violent crimes (Ng'ang'a, 2021).

Careen Chepchumba Murder Case

1. Femicide Frames: In articles such as *The Star*'s "Louis Otieno to face fresh probe over Careen Chepchumba's death," the focus was predominantly on the reopening of the investigation and Otieno's defense, with little attention given to Chepchumba's victimhood or the abuse she suffered. This reflects findings by Wasuna (2019), who argues that focusing on procedural aspects can detract from the true nature of gender-based violence.

2. Gender Inequalities: Louis Otieno's portrayal in the media was notably different from that of female suspects like Maribe. Articles like "Otieno visited Careen often, spent some

nights, guard says" (*The Star*) framed Otieno as a central figure, focusing on his control over Chepchumba, which aligns with findings by Richards et al. (2014) that male suspects are often portrayed as dominant or controlling figures in femicide cases.

3. Oppressive Belief Systems: The emphasis on Otieno's defense and the procedural issues in the investigation, as seen in "Louis Otieno: Careen was sexually abused by her father" (*Daily Nation*), shifts the focus away from Chepchumba's experiences, reinforcing patriarchal narratives that downplay the role of men in violent crimes and obscure the systemic nature of gender-based violence (Ng'ang'a, 2021).

Key Observations on Framing Strategies

The study identified three major framing strategies in the media coverage of femicide cases in Kenya:

1. Legal Dramatization: As seen in articles like "Jowie found guilty, Jacque Maribe acquitted in murder of Monica Kimani," the media often dramatizes legal proceedings, focusing on courtroom dynamics and the outcomes for high-profile individuals like Maribe and Jowie. This reflects findings by Chesney-Lind & Chagnon (2017), who argue that legal dramatization often overshadows the true issue of gender-based violence in femicide cases.

2. Focus on High-Profile Individuals: The media frequently centers on well-known figures involved in femicide cases, such as Jackie Maribe and Louis Otieno, as evidenced in "Jackie Maribe: I learnt of Monica Kimani's murder while reading TV news" (*Daily Nation*). This focus detracts from the victims' narratives and reduces femicide cases to legal dramas involving public figures (Wasuna, 2019).

3. Narrative Shifting: Articles like "Louis Otieno: Careen was sexually abused by her father" (*Daily Nation*) introduce alternative narratives that shift the focus away from the crime itself, often obscuring the systemic nature of gender-based violence. This aligns with Aldrete & Fernández-Ardèvol's (2023) findings that narrative shifting can deflect attention from the core issues of femicide by introducing sensational subplots or defenses.

These findings support the framing theory discussed in the literature review, which posits that the way media frames cases can shape public perception and discourse. The media's focus on legal outcomes, high-profile individuals, and narrative shifting obscures the broader societal issue of femicide and reinforces gendered biases in how victims and perpetrators are portrayed (Entman, 1993). The gender disparities in the portrayal of suspects like Jackie Maribe and Louis Otieno reflect deeper societal inequalities that are perpetuated through media coverage, aligning with Scheufele's (1999) argument that media framing is shaped by societal norms and biases, particularly regarding gender.

Comparing media outlets reveals different framings of femicide cases. One article emphasizes the legal outcome of the Monica Kimani murder case, focusing on the DPP's appeal of Maribe's acquittal and highlighting the involvement of high-profile figures. Another outlet centers on the insufficient evidence that led to Maribe's acquittal, shifting attention from the victim to the accused. Similarly, coverage of Maribe's acquittal emphasizes her family's emotional relief,

overshadowing the victim's story. In contrast, Jowie Irungu's conviction still centers on the perpetrators rather than the broader issue of femicide.

Media reporting on femicide cases in Kenya reveals gender-based disparities. Female journalists are more likely to highlight the emotional and societal impact of cases, exploring the victim's suffering and broader gender dynamics. For instance, a female journalist covers both the legal facts and the emotional toll in the Monica Kimani murder case. In contrast, male journalists often focus on legal procedures and defense strategies, with male suspects like Louis Otieno portrayed as more controlling and involved in the crime. This contrast in reporting reflects how the gender of both the journalist and the suspect influences the framing of femicide cases and shapes public perception.

Despite these differences, the overarching theme across these articles is the sensationalization of femicide cases, as reflected in their legal-centric and celebrity-focused coverage. This approach to framing these cases serves to obscure the structural issues of gender inequality and violence that underpin the crime itself. The media often portrays femicide as a legal matter or personal drama, rather than addressing it as a societal issue that requires systemic change.

Summary of Findings

The analysis of the selected articles reveals that Kenyan online print media often frames femicide cases through a legal and sensationalist lens, focusing on high-profile individuals involved in the cases, such as Jackie Maribe and Louis Otieno, rather than on the victims themselves. This framing strategy tends to emphasize legal outcomes and courtroom drama, often at the expense of the victim's narrative. The major framing strategies identified include legal dramatization, a focus on well-known figures, and narrative shifting, which introduces conflicting stories that detract from the core issue of femicide. By concentrating on the sensational aspects of the cases, such as the involvement of celebrities or public figures, the media detracts from the severity of the crime and shifts the public's focus away from the victim's story, which is vital in understanding the larger societal issue of femicide.

Gender disparities are evident in the portrayal of male and female suspects. Women, such as Jackie Maribe, are often depicted in a more sympathetic light, being portrayed as either passive figures or less directly involved in the crime. In contrast, men, such as Joseph Irungu (Jowie) and Louis Otieno, are framed in dominant or more involved roles, often characterized as protective figures or as directly linked to the crime. This disparity in media framing reinforces traditional gender roles and societal expectations, influencing public perception and potentially leading to biased legal outcomes. The portrayal of women as more innocent or peripheral in femicide cases, despite their involvement, contrasts sharply with the harsh framing of male suspects, which can create a gendered bias in how these cases are interpreted and judged by the public.

This analysis agrees with the framing theory, which posits that the way media frames events shapes how audiences perceive those events. The media's emphasis on sensationalism and courtroom drama rather than on the systemic issue of femicide aligns with the theory that media framing can influence societal understanding and shift focus from the true issue at hand. In these cases, the framing of legal battles and high-profile individuals overshadows the gravity of the crime against the victim, Monica Kimani, or the general issue of violence against women in society. Therefore,

the findings support the framing theory by demonstrating how the media's focus can shape public discourse and perceptions of femicide in Kenya.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS Conclusion

The study concludes that the framing of femicide cases in Kenyan online print media is heavily influenced by gender biases and societal norms. The media's focus on high-profile individuals and legal outcomes often shifts attention away from the victims, minimizing the gravity of the crime. The differential treatment of male and female suspects reflects underlying gender inequalities, where women are often portrayed as less culpable and men as dominant or protective, thereby reinforcing oppressive belief systems. These media portrayals contribute to a skewed public perception of femicide cases, which can influence legal proceedings and outcomes, ultimately perpetuating gender-based injustices. However, the study's reliance on qualitative data and focus on high-profile cases limits the generalizability of the findings, as they may not fully capture the broader patterns in femicide coverage across all media outlets.

Recommendations

1. Balanced Reporting: Kenyan online print media should aim for more balanced reporting that centers the narrative on the victims of femicide rather than on the legal drama surrounding high-profile individuals. This approach would ensure that the gravity of the crime is adequately represented. For example, countries like Sweden and Norway have implemented reforms that shift focus to the victim's story, ensuring that femicide cases are framed with a focus on the impact on the victims and not just the legal aspects.

2. Gender Sensitivity in Coverage: Media outlets should adopt gender-sensitive reporting practices that avoid reinforcing traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Training journalists on gender issues and the impact of their reporting on public perception could help mitigate biased portrayals. Countries like Canada have introduced media guidelines aimed at reducing gender stereotypes, which have led to more responsible reporting on cases of gender-based violence.

3. Focus on Victims' Narratives: The media should prioritize the stories of the victims in femicide cases, ensuring that their experiences and the broader implications of genderbased violence are not overshadowed by the sensational aspects of legal proceedings. For instance, in the UK, the media is encouraged to focus on the victims' lives and their families in femicide coverage, helping to humanize the victims and shift the conversation away from sensationalist aspects.

4. Critical Analysis of Legal Processes: Media coverage should critically analyze the legal processes involved in femicide cases, highlighting any gender disparities or biases that may affect the outcomes. This analysis could lead to greater public awareness and pressure for legal reforms that ensure justice for all victims. The success of media-driven legal reforms in countries like Argentina, where the media actively engaged in challenging legal

processes, offers an example of how public discourse can influence changes in the justice system.

5. Journalist Training on Legal Reporting: There is a need to train journalists on how to report court cases to understand the legal implications, rather than focusing on sensationalism. Additionally, journalists should receive training on gender-sensitive reporting.

6. Collaboration with Gender Advocacy Groups: Media organizations should collaborate with gender advocacy groups to develop guidelines for reporting on femicide and other forms of gender-based violence. These guidelines would help ensure that media coverage contributes positively to the fight against gender-based violence rather than perpetuating harmful stereotypes.

7. Global Insights on Media Framing: The study's offer valuable insights for global discussions on media framing and gender-based violence. By highlighting how gender biases shape media portrayals of femicide, especially through the victimization of women and the framing of male suspects as more dominant, the study emphasizes the role of media in perpetuating gender stereotypes. This aligns with global trends where media often marginalizes female victims or portrays them as passive, contributing to a culture of victimblaming and reinforcing gender-based violence. The study also underscores the need for more gender-sensitive reporting that focuses on the victim's narrative, rather than sensationalizing legal drama or high-profile figures.

8. Ethical Media reporting: These findings can inform global media reform efforts by illustrating the impact of biased reporting on public perception and legal outcomes. In countries like Sweden and Norway, where media reforms have prioritized victim-centered coverage, the approach has led to more informed public discourse around gender-based violence. The study encourages a shift towards more ethical, empathetic reporting practices worldwide, urging media outlets to adopt gender-sensitive frameworks that challenge traditional narratives and foster societal change. This can contribute to broader media reforms that advocate for the dignity and agency of victims of gender-based violence on a global scale.

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