

**THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL MEDIA CONTEST ON VOTER BEHAVIOUR IN
EMBU COUNTY**

BY

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DECLARATION

Declaration by the candidate

This research project is my original work and has not, to the best of my knowledge, been presented anywhere by any other candidate for the award of a Masters Degree. No part of this thesis should therefore be produced in whatever form without the prior knowledge of the author.

Martin Mwanje

K50/82146/2015

Signature.....

Date.....

Declaration by the Supervisor

This research project has been submitted with my approval as the candidate's supervisor

.....

.....

Dr. Elias Mokuu (Supervisor)

Date

DEDICATION

To my God-given elixir and lovely wife Millicent Chibire, and amazing daughter Yolande Pendo

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I take this opportunity to thank the Almighty God for seeing me through this fastidious research work: were it not for his mercies that endure forever, this study could not have come to fruition. I also owe my Supervisor, Dr. Elias Mokuu, immense gratitude, especially for his patience, and for tolerating me during the entire period of the study. I can't even recall the numerous times I knocked at his door: inquisitively seeking guidance over what the next step of my research work entailed. Yet, instead of giving up, he joyously guided me through the process, while whispering to me all manner of words of encouragement and whose echoes I vividly recall: you will make it Martin. Much appreciated Dakitari!

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ACRONYMS

COB	Controller of Budget
COG	Council of Governors
CORD	Coalition for Reforms and Democracy
FDC	Forum for Democratic Change
IEBC	Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission
KCSE	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KDF	Kenya Defence Forces
KTN	Kenya Television Network
KBC	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
MCK	Media Council of Kenya
MCAs	Members of County Assembly
NTV	Nation Television
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PSCU	Presidential Service Communication Unit
UBC	Uganda Broadcasting Corporation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
TBC	Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation

ABSTRACT

This study sought to find out the impact of political media contest on voter behavior in Kenya. Its objectives were to find out ways in which media coverage of political antagonism during county assembly conflicts influences voter behaviour; to investigate the strategies used by antagonists during county assembly conflicts in influencing voter behaviour; to examine the effectiveness of the communication strategies used by antagonists during county assembly conflicts to influence voter behaviour, and to find out the extent to which media gate keeping during county assembly conflicts influences voter behaviour, with Embu County used as a case study. Mixed method approach that included the use of Questionnaires, Key Informant Interviews and content analysis of the printed copies of 50 *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers was incorporated in the study. The study found out that the impact of political media contest is more pronounced among decided voters who are more likely to turn out in large numbers to elect leaders of their choice during electioneering times. The impact of the contest in shifting voter loyalty was found to be minimal. The study was anchored on Gadi Wolfsfeld's political contest theory. The theory posits that conflicts are won and lost in the media. The study concludes that while the influence of political media contest is more pronounced among decided voters, such influence can only have a positive impact if the media articulates the underlying issues during such conflicts to enable voters shift their loyalty because reasons for their 'decidedness' are usually anchored on a wrong premise, in most cases ethnicity in the case of Kenya.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter begins by providing an overview of the background to the study whose key aim is to find out the impact of political media contest on voter behaviour in Embu County in Kenya. An overview of the regional and global political media contest and voter behaviour is discussed at length. The supremacy battles witnessed between County Governors and the Members of County Assembly (MCAs) forms the basis of the statement of the problem, with a key focus given to county assembly conflicts that culminated into the impeachment of several Governors few years after the coming into existence of devolved system of Governance in 2013. The objectives, research questions, the justification, significance and the scope of the study are equally well discussed in this chapter that ends with the definition of terms.

1.1 Background to the study

The news media has in contemporary democracies been turned into a battlefield in which antagonists in the political marketplace fiercely fight and settle their political differences in the court of public opinion. Wolfsfeld (2014) argues that top on the agenda of antagonists during such conflicts is the desire to exploit the media which they regard as a powerful tool that can help them not only promote their arguments, but also consolidate their electoral support base. Their increasing clamour for electoral visibility has even become of key priority due to their realization that politics is increasingly becoming competitive in the face of the emerging multiple avenues of communication platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp, just but to mention a few, and which have emboldened the once passive electorates to abandon their peripheral role in electoral processes and demand more accountability (Brants & Voltmer, 2011; Sampedro, 2011; Lilleker, 2006).

With information now no longer a preserve of political and communication elites (Brants & Voltmer, 2011; Lilleker, 2006), such digital and interactive devices have to say the least revolutionized the political communication discourse by enabling the electorates, in the new information order, to become ‘immigrants’ within the virtual space. By simply dialling their

mobile phones while in the comfort of their living rooms, the electorates (especially the youth) now have the liberty to scout for political information by easily switching from one online media platform to the other, while simultaneously consuming main stream media messages from broadcast platforms such as radio and television. This is a sharp contrast of the pre-emergence of communication technologies epoch where majority of the electorates had to largely rely on traditional media (radio and television) to be informed of the latest developments in the political arena, with most of the available information scanty and skewed by political and communication elites to suit their own selfish interests (Crozier, 2004; Hassan 2004; Bennett 2003).

In the new information order, however, voters have access to colossal information: the very arsenal they have all along been yearning for to hold their usually out-of-reach elected leaders accountable. Simply put, such devices have not only made the electorates become more increasingly sceptical over the manner the political elites manage their affairs, but have also made it more difficult for even the most brutal dictators to maintain control over the flow of information (Anderson, 2011; Howard & Hussein, 2011; Sampedro, 2011). Amid this growing pessimism, political antagonists continue to deploy various strategies that can ameliorate their electorate visibility through the media and which Wagner (2005) considers critical ‘for any serious bid for elected office’ and without which they are unlikely to receive enough votes to win (p. 4).

The strategies employed by antagonists in their pursuit for electoral visibility are by their very nature diverse. They are those who opt to use unconventional means such as character assassination of their opponents, name-calling, engaging their opponents in physical fights and propaganda, while some simply opt to engage in insults-trading in a ploy to get expanded media coverage. There are those who equally understand too well that ‘the media are by far the most important source of information about politics and conflicts for most people, which grants them a considerable influence over citizens’ perceptions, opinions and behavior’ (Vladislavljević, 2015, p.2). Thus they opt to turn to conventional ways of seeking media attention say calling for press conferences or launching impact-driven development projects with an aim of ensuring they get a mention, if possible on daily basis, in the flagship stories of the day, be it on radio, television or local dailies. Equally, they are those who prefer appearing talk show programmes such as *Cheche on Citizen TV*, *Checkpoint* on Kenya Television Network (KTN), *Beyond the Headlines*

on Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) and *People and Politics* on Nation Television (NTV), in the case of Kenya, with a belief that the more they appear on such talk show programmes, the more the chances of getting favorable public opinion.

That political antagonists have taken their battles to the media in their search for electoral support was well captured by Seib (2005) when he took note of the expansion of global television news networks such as Al-Jazeera, BBC World, CNN Network and Sky News. Among other things, he argues that their expansion not only fascinated politicians, but also journalists as well as government officials and scholars alike, with such fascination resulting ‘from a perception of the media in general, and television in particular, as being the most important power broker in politics (p. 1) because as Ridout & Mellen (2007) state, the media usually acts as opinion leaders from whom voters obtain information regarding the goings-on in the political realm.

The closely contested 2016 US election, which Goedschalk et al. (2017) argue was a much-debated subject pitting Democratic party candidate Hillary Clinton and her key rival Donald Trump of the Republican party, perhaps exemplifies the growing antagonism that has permeated the political arena in contemporary democracies. During the contest, the two antagonists took to the mainstream and social media platforms in which they engaged in public confrontations, with the focal point of their animosity being largely the manner in which Clinton handled confidential emails during her reign as the US Foreign Affairs Secretary of State and Trump’s perceived runaway temperament. The fate of Muslims as well as that of thousands of immigrants who had sought refuge in that country also became a subject of heated debate. According to some scholars (Goedschalk et al. 2017; Clementson, Pascual-Ferra & Beatty, 2016), such mediated combats and the use of high intensity language which is highly personalized, specific, assertive, and explicitly directed at the audience by the candidates, as was the case during the 2016 US election, can have influence on voter behaviour.

Even within the legislative institutions in many countries, the US included, heated and televised debates over a raft of policy issues have become a common phenomenon. In the US for example, there has been explosive debates between Democrats and the Republicans in both the House of Representatives and the Congress over a raft of policy issues in the recent past. So much that

scholars such as Heywood (2002) have concluded that while some assemblies may still play an important role in the policy process, many have been reduced to mere ‘talking shops’ that do little more than rubber-stamp decisions that have effectively been made elsewhere (p.311). Rosenthal & Poole (2013) concur when they in particular single out the Congress noting that it has become the most polarized in the country’s history.

Across the globe, however, such has been the trend in many legislative arms of government. In Greece for instance, while there were chaotic scenes witnessed in parliament as divided lawmakers differed over the country’s revised bailout plan, in Brazil, the Senate threw out the country’s then President Dilma Roussef after a grueling impeachment (The Guardian, 2016). In South Africa, televised chaotic scenes erupted in parliament when opposition lawmakers attempted to bar President Jacob Zuma from addressing the chamber claiming he was unfit to hold office. While the Opposition legislators’ attempt to impeach Zuma severally flopped, arguably, they succeeded to portray him as immoral, corrupt and the worst President South Africa has ever had in the country’s history.

In Kenya, the National Assembly and some of the county assemblies have not been immune to such wrangles. Notably, in 2014, Members of Parliament (MPs) allied to the then ruling Jubilee regime and those allied to the Opposition Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD) descended into chaos with the lawmakers exchanging blows during a heated televised session over the contested amendments to the country’s security laws. Outside parliament, political antagonists that comprise elected and would-be elected leaders have similarly intensified their rivalry by trading accusations and counter-accusations in an attempt to get the attention of the wandering eye of the now elusive electorate.

This study therefore seeks to find out the impact of political media contest on voter behaviour in Kenya, with Embu County (which was the first of the 47 county governments to witness heated and animated political differences between Governor Martin Wambora and the MCAs culminating into his impeachment) used as a case study.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Supremacy battles among elected leaders in Kenya remain one of the key reasons why devolution continues to encounter incessant struggles, slowing down the pace of the much needed development across the 47 county units. Within the existing media platforms: radio, television, newspapers and in social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, Governors have been on the receiving end with the MCAs and Senators accusing them of living lavish lifestyles by building themselves extravagant residences (Daily Nation, June 29, 2013). Instead of prioritizing better service delivery to the county residents, Governors have also been accused of insisting on being referred to as ‘Your Excellency’ while flying the national flag, and of trying to appoint county government officials, when this is a constitutional function of the County Public Service Board (Cornell & D’arcy, 2016).

So deep rooted have been the political confrontations between Governors and the MCAs that within a span of three years since the inception of devolution in 2013, the MCAs passed impeachment motions against Governors Martin Wambora of Embu, Mwangi wa Iria of Murang’a, Paul Chepkwony of Kericho, Prof. Kivutha Kibwana of Makueni and Nderitu Gachagua of Nyeri during chaotic sessions that were held in their respective county assemblies. Attempts by the MCAs to impeach Nairobi City County Governor Evans Kidero over alleged misuse of funds twice flopped amid heated verbal spats and physical confrontations between those allied to the then ruling Jubilee coalition, and the Opposition CORD.

Amid the escalating antagonism, the accused Governors sought refuge in the media where they denied the accusations by the MCAs in a deliberate attempt to sway public opinion in their favor. The MCAs on the other hand equally took their battle to the same media justifying their reasons for impeachment. What remains unclear though, is whether or not the antagonism between the two opposing sides had any influence on voter behavior. As noted by Settle et al. (2015), while previous studies about the development and change of political engagement have greatly contributed to our understanding of the dynamics of public opinion, voter choice and the decision to vote, ‘we still do not have a full understanding of the micro-foundations of change in how people think, feel, and act politically on a daily basis’ (p.1).

In a debate whose contours are yet to be exhausted, several scholars have noted that voters who are more exposed to the media are more likely to change their political views during campaigns, while those who are uninformed are less likely to vote (Lad, 2010; Palfrey (1987). To others such as Erbring et al. (1980), the media has minimal influence on audiences. Such divergent views have made Ball & Peters (2005) conclude that the influence of media on voter behavior remains a subject of ongoing debate. In the wake of the ever increasing media supremacy battles among antagonists within the political marketplace, there is no known researcher who has investigated ways in which such political media contest influences voter behavior. The researcher envisions that the findings of this study will provide meaningful insights that will help fill the gap occasioned by the impact of political media contest on voter behavior.

1.3 Objectives of the study

Main Objective

To find out the impact of political media contest on voter behaviour in Embu County.

Specific Objectives

- i) To find out ways in which media coverage of political antagonism during county assembly conflicts influences voter behaviour in Embu County.
- ii) To investigate the strategies used by antagonists during County Assembly conflicts in influencing voter behaviour in Embu County.
- iii) To investigate the effectiveness of the communication strategies used by antagonists during county assembly conflicts to influence voter behaviour in Embu County.
- iv) To find out the extent to which media gate keeping of county assembly conflicts influences voter behaviour in Embu County.

1.4 Research Questions

Main Research Question

What is the impact of political media contest on voter behaviour in Embu County?

Specific Questions

- i) What is the impact of media coverage of political antagonism during county assembly conflicts on voter behaviour in Embu County?
- ii) Which are the communication strategies used by antagonists during county assembly conflicts to influence voter behaviour in Embu County?
- iii) How effective are the communication strategies used by antagonists during county assembly conflicts to influence voter behaviour in Embu County?
- iv) To what extent does media gate keeping of county assembly conflicts influence voter behaviour in Embu County?

1.5 Theoretical framework

The study was anchored on political contest theory by Gadi Wolfsfeld. The central thesis of this theory is that for an antagonist to win a conflict, he must first ensure he gets favourable media coverage (positive press) which the author considers critical in the legitimization of claims. According to this theory, conflicts are won and lost in the media. In the context of this study, therefore, one would argue that the resolve by Governors and the MCAs to settle their political scores via the media was informed by the powerful role it plays in swaying the perceptions and attitudes of the electorates whose influence they regarded critical in winning the conflict.

1.6 Methodology

Mixed method approach was used in investigating the influence of political media contest on voter behavior in Embu County, with descriptive research design also employed in the study. Primary data was obtained through Qualitative and Quantitative Content Analysis of 50 printed

copies the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers. 12 Key Informant Interviews were also incorporated in the study owing to their vast knowledge regarding the topic under study. Also used were Questionnaires that were distributed in the four constituencies of Manyatta, Runyenjes, Mbeere South and Mbeere North that make up Embu County to gauge the extent to which the political media contest between the Governor and the MCAs had influenced voters behavior. Purposive and criterion sampling were used in conducting the study. While descriptive analysis was used in analyzing the data collected qualitatively through the use of themes and coding, the data collected quantitatively was analyzed through the use of Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS).

1.7 Justification of the study

In a democratic polity like Kenya, it is a pre-requisite to have a well informed citizenry capable of making up independent decisions on political questions (Jacob, 2010). Such prospects however remain unlikely, at least for now, owing to the highly ethnicized nature of Kenyan politics (Oyugi, 1997; Jonyo, 2002, 2003). Furthermore, the Kenyan political arena, as Stone (1997) argues, is largely driven by ‘emotion and passion, irrationality, self interest, short-sightedness, and raw power’ (p.373). With ethnic emotions being a key factor in determining who ascends to the reins of power, antagonists have now turned the ever expanding media spaces into their preferred avenues of engaging in public confrontations in a deliberate attempt to sway public opinion.

In Kenya, while there has been increased political antagonism between County Governors and the MCAs since the inception of the 47 devolved units of governance in 2013, there is no research that has been carried out to find out the extent to which such antagonism influences voter behaviour in Kenya hence the reason for this study.

1.8 Significance of the study

The researcher envisions that by the end of the study, stakeholders in the political arena among them Political Science Scholars, Election Experts and the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), this being the body charged with managing elections in Kenya, will understand ways in which political media contest influences voter behaviour in Kenya, and

devise ways of positively turning such influence in a manner that can best improve the country's electoral process.

The researcher equally envisions that through this study, media stakeholders (Journalists, Editors, Media Owners and the Media Council of Kenya (MCK) will have a broader understanding of what political media antagonism entails and review, where necessary, their coverage of county assembly conflicts in cases where there are glaring gaps identified. As a consequence, media coverage of such conflicts will in future be embedded in illuminating the key issues that underpin such conflicts to enable the voter make informed decisions during electioneering processes. In other words, the electorate will begin to deeply dissect such conflicts so that they do not make political decisions as a consequence of the political gimmicks that may be employed by antagonists to blindly sway their opinion in their favour.

With a more empowered electorate, the researcher also envisions a situation where there will be a reduction of political media conflicts because of the realization by antagonists that voters can no longer fall victim to their political gimmicks as played out in the media in their deliberate pursuit to solicit for their support.

1.9 Scope and limitation of the study

The study focused on political media contest and its influence on voter behaviour in Embu County which is one of the 47 counties due to time constraints. The choice of Embu County was informed by the realization that it was the first county where the MCAs impeached the Governor. The post-impeachment period was equally punctuated by high-voltage supremacy battles that found their way to the Senate and later to the judiciary.

The study was restricted to only those respondents who followed Embu County Assembly conflict. County assembly conflicts are however not a preserve of Embu County alone. The central hypothesis of this study was therefore that the data collected, its findings, conclusions and recommendations would help improve governance in counties faced with similar conflicts and which have over time negated the premise under which the devolved system of governance was founded.

1.10 Definition of terms

Political Media Contest – These are positional differences that ensue between antagonists regarding an issue. In this study, political media contest implies differences witnessed between Governors and the MCAs in some of the 47 counties provided for by the Constitution of Kenya 2010 and which led to the impeachment of some of the Governors by the MCAs.

Political Communication – This is the role of communication in the political processes. In this study, political communication implies various ways that were used by antagonists to ensure they get favorable media coverage during county assembly conflicts.

Voter Behavior – These are the determinants of why people vote the way they do. In the context of this study, voter behavior refers to the support accorded to an antagonist by voters as a consequence of political media conflicts.

Authorities – These are antagonists who are more advantaged during a conflict because of the influential positions they hold or the resources they have at their disposal. In this study, authorities refer to the Governors.

Challengers – These are antagonists who are disadvantaged during a conflict because of the less powerful positions they hold. Challengers ordinarily usually have fewer resources compared to the authorities. In this study, the challengers refer to the MCAs.

Media – These are communication tools used to disseminate information to a mass audience. In this study, the media refer to television, radio, newspapers and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as used by antagonists to advance their arguments in their pursuit for positive press.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

This chapter discusses political media contest and voter behaviour, the value attached to the news media by antagonists during a conflict, and the level of dependence, organization and resources at the disposal of the news media and how this impacts on its independence. Gadi Wolfsfeld's political contest theory and on whose arguments this study is anchored is also illuminated at length in this Chapter.

2.1 Political media contest and voter behaviour

Antagonists in the political battleground are more than ever witnessed before now turning to the news media in a deliberate attempt to get the backing of the public not only in times of conflicts, but also during electioneering times (Wolfsfeld, 1997). Unlike in the past when they settled their political disagreements through backroom deals, Zaller (1999) avers that that in the new digital-driven environment, political disagreements are fought out in the news media and settled in the court of public opinion. According to Zaller, in their pursuit for favorable coverage, antagonists often deploy various weapons of combat which include press conferences, photo opportunities, news releases, leaks to the press, and 'spin' (p.1).

In order to get the backing of their supporters during conflicts, antagonists usually resort to the usage of diverse frames to advance their arguments in the media in an attempt to outsmart their opponents. Entman (1993) defines framing as a process that involves the selection of certain features of perceived reality and making them look more salient in a text 'in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation' (p.52). Such diverse frames were evidence during the Embu county assembly conflict, with the economic and ethnic frames being the most preferred by the two antagonists during the conflict. The economic frame was best captured in the accusations leveled against the Governor by the MCAs, especially the accusation that Governor Wambora had procured 16 tonnes of maize seeds at a cost of Kshs. 3.52 million to be distributed to farmer in the county and which according to them did not in fact germinate (The Standard, February 15, 2014).

Aware of the potential impact this frame had to his political future, Governor Wambora similarly invoked the economic frame in refuting claims by the MCAs, first, terming their accusations malicious since the maize seeds distributed germinated, and secondly, maligning his name for quick monetary gains at the expense of county residents who were in dire need of improved service delivery from the county leadership. The ethnic frame was manifest through accusations and counter-accusations between the two antagonists that the Governor was favoring his Embu ethnic community in the implementation of the county's development agenda while neglecting other communities, and in particular the Mbeere ethnic community.

Simply put, both antagonists were tactfully and strategically framing issues surrounding the conflict in a manner that will guarantee them the backing of the county residents during the conflict. As noted by Vladislavljević (2015), 'framing is strategic when communicators, such as politicians, commentators and editorial writers, aim to exercise political influence by proposing interpretations that advance their interests or goals' (p.7). Irrespective of the frames advanced during a conflict, whether economic, social, political, ethnic or religious frame, Wolfsfeld (1997) notes that it is the intensity with which such frames are promoted by antagonist that determines the antagonist that emerges triumphant in a conflict. According to this scholar, the extent to which an antagonist initiates and controls events; regulate the flow of information; and his ability to marshal the backing of his fellow political elites are equally critical factors that need not be overlooked in determining who wins a conflict.

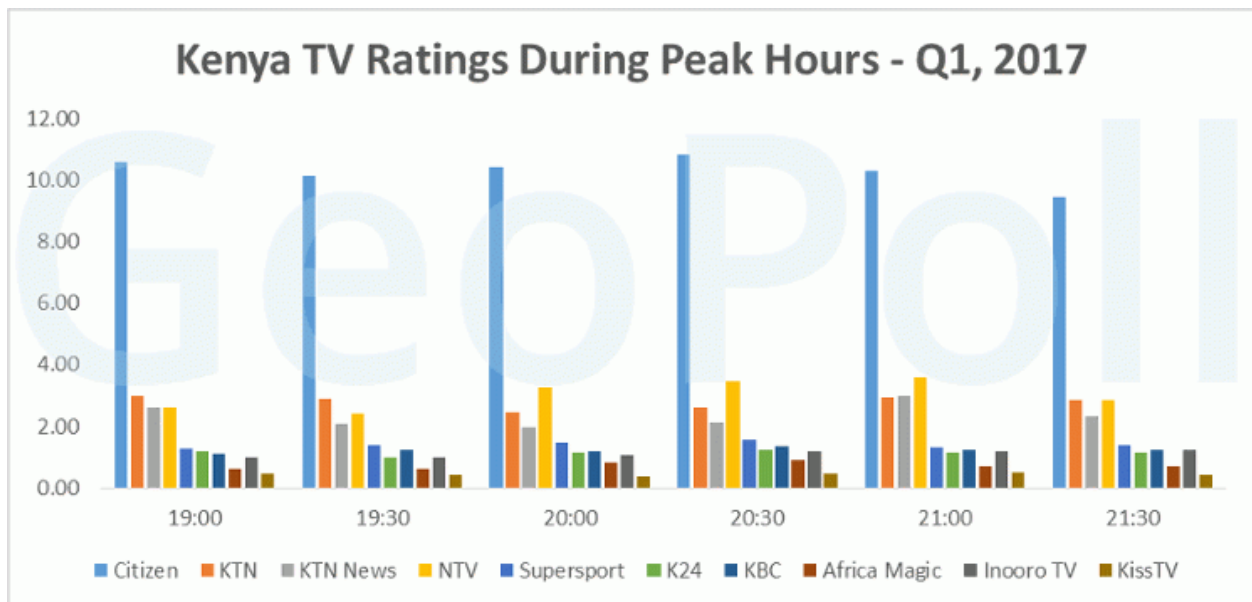
2.2 The value of news media to antagonists

Various non-mediated ways abound that antagonists can use in promoting their frames in the court of public opinion in their bid to emerge winners in a conflict: political rallies, public *barazas*, conducting door-to-door campaigns or even capitalizing on the free opportunities that present themselves during funerals to blow their own trumpets. The fact that many antagonists, however, place much preference to the news media: radio, television, newspapers and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram is testament of the value they attach to the news media as a critical platform that can catapult them into winning a conflict. As Nyabuga (2011) puts it, the media plays a central role in shaping how society operates by articulating ideas and influencing perceptions and attitudes. In a political conflicts situation,

every antagonist always envision a situation where the news media will help them promote and privilege their frames as opposed to those of their opponents and by so doing, guarantee them favorable perceptions and attitudes in the court of public opinion.

In selecting the preferred news media to use in influencing the perceptions and attitudes of the electorates, Wolfsfeld (1997; 2012) is of the view that such a decision must be weighed against key critical factors such as the size of the news medium in question, its political and social status as well as the political power that it commands among its audiences. In Kenya, majority of the antagonists have opted to take their battles to leading television and radio stations such as Citizen TV, NTV, KTN, KBC and K24 as well as social media platforms. In its audience ratings survey of the top television stations in Kenya that conducted between January and March 2017, market research group GeoPoll found out that on average, Citizen TV has a high audience rating of 33.7% followed by KTN at 11.1% and KTN News at 8.5% nationally. NTV that is owned by the Nation Media Group emerged fourth in the survey with an audience rating of 8.5%, while KBC and K24 appeared to share almost the same audience rating. Figure 1 below shows the average ratings for the top 10 stations during the peak hours from 19:00 to 21:30 Kenyan time.

Figure 1: Audience ratings of television stations in Kenya



Source: GeoPoll

According to the survey, Inooro TV and Kiss TV had the least audience ratings. The reason why Citizen TV, NTV, KTN and KBC are the most preferred by the antagonists in their pursuit for favorable public opinion as opposed to such stations such as Good News Broadcasting Service television (GBS) which did not feature among the top ten or Kiss TV is because of the huge viewership they command, as well as the high political and social status that they accord the antagonists in the court of public opinion. Such stations equally not only ensure the antagonists reach as many of their supporters as possible, but also legitimize their claims by virtue of being perceived credible sources of information.

This perhaps explains why in Kenya, journalists attached to the Presidential Communication Strategic Unit (PSCU) are drawn from the mainstream media stations namely KBC, KTN, NTV, Citizen TV and K24. Such stations, as Wolfsfeld would argue, are highly regarded by the audience as credible sources of information and such credibility transforms them into a powerful force of bargaining political power, the very ingredients the Presidency needs to remain at the helm compared to GBS or Ebru TV. Even in developed democracies such as the United States, Wolfsfeld contends that it is on the basis of such factors such as the size, the status and the political power that a given news medium wields that the allocation of offices to its journalists is done by the White House or even the Pentagon.

2.3 The independence of the news media

Various scholars have argued that there are various factors that determine how news is covered by any given news medium, and these factors in one way or another usually have either a positive or negative impact on the nature of the news covered. In their analysis, Baum & Zhukov (2013) for instance found out that the 'ownership structure and newspaper-level attributes have profound impact on the volume and content of news coverage' (p.2). According to the two scholars, independent newspapers are more likely to cover conflicts from a broader perspective that broadens the understanding of its readers of the various facets that underpin a conflict. As the authors put it, when the news media are independently owned, there are likely to be 'relatively free to follow the whims of individual owners' (p.6) The contrary is true of newspapers owned by parent company and which they argue are more likely narrowly cover conflicts and by so doing providing citizens with less information to monitor and influence their

leaders. In fact, in political media conflict context, political antagonists who own news media, or have got a closer relationship with news media owners are more likely to enjoy elaborate and favorable media coverage compared to the coverage accorded to their opponents.

Admittedly, the ability of the news media, whether public or privately owned, to independently gather information and interrogate and triangulate the said information before disseminating it to the public largely depends on the resources at its disposal. Notably, a news medium with more resources is more likely to exercise much freedom in its news coverage and often be critical of the parties involved compared to that which has a weak financial base. In other words, the coverage of a conflict by KTN News can never be the same as that of Ebru TV. While KTN News has the resources to send its staff to the scene of a conflict even if it means Somalia, Ebru TV does not enjoy such privileges, and is likely to rely on third parties to solicit for information relating to the conflict hence compromising its independence. As Wolfsfeld (1997) notes, there is a correlation between the independence of the media and the manner it exercises its freedom in the dissemination of information. That is, it is the resources that a given news medium has that determines whether it authoritatively pursue information to its logical conclusion, or whether it will rely on third parties in soliciting for information, some which may be strategically skewed to serve their own selfish interests.

Robinson (2002) argues that the independence of the media can be seen through its coverage of a certain policy issue and especially when there is varied opinion regarding it among the political elites or even within government. With such dissenting voices, he notes that there is a high possibility that the media will cover the issue from all aspects that reflect the requisite debate that ought to underpin it. Such independence he submits usually wanes if there is consensus among elites regarding the issue in question.

Within the Kenyan context, media independence can best be explained through the journalists drawn from mainstream media houses and who are attached to PSCU. Notably, it is unlikely that such a journalist who has been facilitated by PSCU to accompany the President during his State tour of a foreign country say the United Kingdom would want to dwell on the negativities of the tour no matter the extent of their visibility. With journalists' travel costs and accommodation catered for by the executive arm of government, subjectivity as opposed to objectivity is likely to

become the norm among the embedded journalists. In such a situation, it is unlikely a journalist can employ objectivity for fear of being either expunged from the pool of reporters attached to the unit, or being denied the auspicious opportunity of ‘boarding a plane and traversing the world’ in the company of the country’s Commander-in-Chief, with such fears negating the journalists ability to freely exercise his freedom while writing a news story relating to the presidency.

In unequal conflict, a case in point being the Government of Kenya versus the Mungiki terror gang, the author argues that the government is more likely to enjoy more news coverage due to its level of organization and resources so much that it can even decide to dictate the stories and frames to be promoted by the news media during such a conflict. Consequently, Wolsfeld cites three major factors that determine the level of media independence:

i) The level of official political control over the news medium

This refers to the extent to which the authorities have the power to officially regulate the media. Some scholars such as Vladisavljević (2015) argue that the media coverage of politics in most democracies is usually a reflection of power relations within the political elite. It is the authorities that determine the distribution of frequencies, and they can even decide to switch them off if convinced that a given news medium is violating the regulations governing the media industry. While authorities have the power to regulate the media, Wolsfeld (1997) opines that such controls are most pronounced in undemocratic countries like China where the government has a bigger stake in the ownership of the media. With such ownership, authorities can dictate which aspects of the conflict should be covered, and the people to be used in spinning its preferred messages and even censure it whenever it feels it is being accorded negative coverage. For some scholars (Flitton, 2011; McChesney 2000; Bagdikian 2000), such controls are an affront to democracy.

Such controls are however not a preserve of undemocratic countries alone. To the contrary, in many democratic countries especially in Africa, Kenya included, government control of the news media has always been the norm especially those which are state-owned such as KBC, Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) and Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation (TBC). It is

not by coincidence therefore that during the 2016 general election, UBC accorded President Yoweri Museveni much coverage, most of it positive, compared to his key challenger Dr. Kizza Besigye of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC). In such situations, no matter how ethical a news media may want to be, Wolfsfeld posits that questions of news values more often than not usually become secondary in the coverage of the conflict.

ii) The need for official information

News media is supposedly the yeast that holds functioning democracies together. It not only provides citizens with the requisite information about the state of affairs in the political realm, but also provides the citizenry with carefully investigated and well thought information upon which citizenry make informed decisions (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Pühringer et al. 2008). In conflict situations, the need for information relates to the extent to which the citizenry demands for a particular story relating to the conflict. In political related conflicts, some scholars holds the view that the news media usually acts as cue givers upon which voter's information is derived from (Kepplinger 2007; Ridout & Mellen; 2007). Simply put, the media provides a crucial information linkage between antagonists and the electorates.

In any conflict situation, local journalists are usually disadvantaged in terms of information access, with Wolfsfeld (1997) citing their tendency to rely on official sources of information due to resource related challenges. For instance if Al Shabaab militants attack and kill Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) soldiers in Somalia's capital Mogadishu, it is expected that every media be it Citizen, KBC, KTN, Radio Jambo, Milele FM or Egessa FM will most probably run the story as 'breaking news.' Further, such news media will be preoccupied with giving the latest information regarding the conflict, for example how many soldiers were killed, where they were killed, how were they killed and who is to blame for the killings. While Citizen TV may send their journalists to Somalia for a fact finding mission, it is unlikely Milele FM will dispatch its news team due to resource constraints. In such cases, while Citizen TV will be rich in content disseminated to its audience, Milele FM will most likely rely on official sources such as the government and third parties to update its listeners regarding the status of the conflict. Yet, by their very nature, governments and third parties will always furnish you with information that promotes their preferred frames in the conflict, and in most cases, such information is usually

propagandist in nature. Arguably, it is by covering a conflict first hand that a news media can be in a position to dissect the different facets that underpin a conflict.

iii) The level of organization and resources at the disposal of the news medium

The emergence of new information sources brought about by the diffusion of the internet and cut-throat competition instigated by media pluralism has pointedly redefined the operations of many newsrooms in diverse ways. For instance, unlike witnessed before, many news media channels are increasingly gravitating towards commercialization as they turn a blind eye to grave issues of public interest (Nyabuga, 2011; Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Siegert et al. 2005). Equally not lost is the shrinking revenue stream of many news media outlets triggered by the emergence of multiple platforms of communication Unlike before when we had only one state owned radio and television station like KBC in the case of Kenya, the number of such outlets are today almost countless. In the much liberalized arrangement, they are those stations that broadcast in national languages (English and Kiswahili): Radio Maisha, Radio Citizen, KBC Radio *Taifa*, Milele FM and Qwetu FM; while they are those that broadcast in vernacular languages: Coro FM, Radio Mayienga, Kameme FM and Radio Ramogi among others.

As earlier stated, amid this media pluralism, majority of them have been forced to battle for the increasingly scarce resources to remain afloat. As a consequence, as Siegert et al., (2005) note, cost control has now become a common phenomena in many newsrooms, the number of staff is increasingly reducing each passing day with majority dismissed due to limited resources to foot their monthly pay, public relations agencies are having a field day as majority of the news media begin to prioritize their news releases as timely sources of news, and regrettably, news productions that attract huge cost implications have been calamitously avoided. Supposedly, with Facebook and Twitter becoming timely information source, 'armchair journalism' has now become the norm in many newsrooms with many journalists simply, but lethargically, opting to derive most of their news stories from the social media first, and justifiably so, due to limited resources, but secondly, and in what seems outright escapism, to navigate the workload that comes with one being sent to the field to scout for information from the various news sources.

Yet, in the words of Wolfsfeld (1997), the organization and resources of the news medium is defined by its ability to gain access to alternative sources of information which brings new dimensions to the coverage of the conflict. Mirrored within the Kenyan context, the narrow view that is often witnessed in the coverage of county assembly conflicts can be attributed to first, the inability of the news media to allocate adequate resources to thoroughly articulate the underlying issues during the conflict, and secondly, the failure by such conflicts, no matter the degree of investigation, to bring along commercial returns.

For some of the news media, the quagmire lies in the caliber of journalists at its disposal. While some of the news media channels such as KTN, NTV and Citizen TV may have substantial amount of resources to hire competent journalists, hardly do some of the stations such as Kameme or Mbugi TV have access to such resources. As a consequence, they end up hiring staff that are not well knowledgeable to understand the underlying issues that usually underpin the conflict. Yet, it is Wolfsfeld (1997) who argues that journalists who are in possession of prestige and knowledge usually in a vantage position to solicit more significant information from superior sources compared to those who are devoid of such knowledge.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 Political Contest Theory

Political contest theory is a brainchild of Gadi Wolfsfeld who in his book titled, 'Media and Political Conflict: News from the Middle East' analyzed how antagonists use media to get favorable coverage in their pursuit for favorable public opinion. He refers to antagonists that wield a lot of power during a conflict as 'authorities' and to the less powerful, 'challengers' (Wolfsfeld, 1997, p. 3). The best way to understand the role of the news media in politics, he argues, is to view competition over the news media as part of a larger and more significant contest among political antagonists for political control. This theory rests on five major arguments.

2.4.2 Political processes and their influence on the news media

According to this scholar, political processes have a major impact on the news media because political power can usually be translated into power over the news media. That is, the political

culture of a society can have far reaching influence on how the news media cover conflicts; because the news media are much more likely to react to political events than to initiate them; because political realities often determine how antagonists use the news media to achieve political goals; and because political decisions have a major influence on who owns the media and how they operate.

In Kenya for example, almost all media houses, save for religious stations such as Hope FM and Hope TV, largely thrive on politics to improve their ratings hence get wide viewership. In fact hardly does a broadcast end without the incorporation of political antagonists who are usually invited to illuminate reasons for their dissenting opinion over an issue. Wolfsfeld is however quick to warn against misconstruing this to mean the news media has no influence on political processes. To the contrary, by representing conflicts that they report on in different ways, Vladislavljević (2015) states that the media usually plays a central role in influencing the dynamics and outcomes of conflicts thus shaping the prospects of success of conflict parties. As Graber (2005) would argue, agenda setting is one of the most influential theories on the media's political influence.

2.4.3 Authorities' level of control over the political environment

Politics, by its very nature is a game of witticism; one that involves attempts by antagonists to control not only the flow information disseminated by the news media, but also the electorates and on whose voting decision their political destiny lies. According to Wolfsfeld (1997), political conflicts are characterized by attempts by antagonists to control almost everything insight: political events, dominate political discourses about the conflict, and to mobilize as many supporters as possible to their side. It is the degree of mobilization that antagonists carry out that determines the amount of coverage accorded to an antagonist by the news media. The author inscribes that it is almost impossible for the media to play an independent role in cases where the authorities have dominated the political environment.

Implying no matter how impartial NTV or any other news media may want to be in covering the KDF military operation in Somalia, it can be helpless if its journalists are embedded within KDF and especially if their travel was catered for by the leadership of KDF. In such cases, the journalist is likely to report according to the policy directive of the KDF leadership. However

the influence of the media is visible when the authorities lack or lose control during a conflict, for this usually provides the news media with a multiplicity of sources and perspectives from which to choose from, offering the challengers the much needed opportunity to promote their own frames to the news media. In other words, if Al Shabaab militants were to overpower KDF, then the media is more likely to dictate the coverage of the conflict irrespective whether or not the welfare of the journalists was taken care of by the leadership of KDF.

2.4.4 The role of the news media in political conflicts

There are a number of factors that determine the role the plays in a political conflict. Such factors may comprise of the political context in which the conflict takes place. For instance, the role that the news media can play in undemocratic country like China is different from that which the news media can play in a democratic country. While in the case of China, there is likely to be much control from the government that may want its frames privileged, the news media in democratic countries, especially the privately owned, is likely to be more critical of the antagonists and may in fact cover the conflict using some broader lenses that may widen the understanding of the citizenry.

Other factors may include the resources at the disposal of the news media and this determines the type of staff hired and access to alternative sources; the skills that journalists possess for this determines their understanding of the conflict; and the political power that antagonists in the conflict possess, for instance, the involvement of the government in a conflict may comprise the use of intimidation to censure negative coverage by the news media.

Equally, while an antagonist may want to ensure he gets favorable media coverage, the intention of such an antagonist may backfire if the media happens to have access to more information that negate the narrative perpetuated by the antagonist. In the case of the Jubilee government *versus* Mombasa Governor Hassan Joho conflict which revolved round whether or not Joho had sat for his Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examinations, Joho was initially arguably a victim of negative media coverage. The narrative however changed immediately Joho proved beyond reasonable doubt that he had indeed sat for the examination, turning his coverage by the media from negative to positive.

2.4.5 Antagonists and media dimensions

Top on the agenda of every antagonist in a political conflict is to get more coverage than the opponent. During the scramble to dominate the available media spaces, Wolfsfeld (1997) argues that antagonists usually compete for two critical aspects. First is the access to the media and secondly, the media frames that are promoted by the media in their pursuit for favorable public opinion. By getting more access, each antagonist usually believe that they will be successful in influencing the perceptions and attitudes of their supporters and especially if the frames they privilege are given prominence. The frames may be religious, ethnic or economic in nature.

2.4.6 Prospects of challengers overcoming media coverage obstacles

In any political conflict, authorities usually stand at a vantage point in terms of getting more news coverage compared to challengers. While ideally they have access to more resources with which they can use to manipulate the media into according them more news coverage, the challengers, no matter the resources at their disposal, rarely have resources that can match that of the authorities. As Cottle (2005) notes, in democracies where the levers of power are in the hands of state bureaucracy, monopolistic control over the media more often than not usually makes it serve the interests of the dominant elite.

In the case of this study, while the MCAs may have substantial amount of resources, it is evident the resources at their disposal cannot match those of the Governors who control billions of county resources, can afford to hire public relations agencies to spin for them, while as Wolfsfeld (1997) notes can exploit the dependence of the news media to subdue alternative frames and agendas.

2.4.7 Theoretical framework: Political Media Contest and Public Opinion

The first rectangle in Figure 2 below represents the news medium that antagonists usually turn to tilt public opinion their favor during a political conflict. According to the author, the influence of the antagonist is more powerful when the value attached to a given news medium is greater and the level of the dependence of the said medium on the information provided is smaller. The author further notes that the value of a given medium to antagonists can be understood better by

looking at its audience size, its political and social status, and its level of political power. For instance, an antagonist based in Kenya who wants to address a global audience will most likely look out for CNN, BBC or Aljazeera as opposed to NTV, KTN, KBC, K24 and Citizen TV because CNN, BBC and Aljazeera have a global audience, and their political and their social status is beyond reproach just as is their political power.

In the coverage of political conflicts, such world acclaimed channels have the ability, both manpower, the finances and the technology to critically analyze a conflict by looking at the various angles, including reaching out to alternative sources irrespective of which part of the world they are located, be it in Switzerland, Canada or Denmark, in an attempt to broaden the understanding of the conflict by their audience. Put differently, they are less likely to overly rely on information provided by one side of the antagonism and whose prime aim may be to promote its own frames and whose evidentiary threshold may be questionable.

Conversely, viewed from a global perspective, NTV, KTN, KBC, K24V and Citizen are most likely, though not necessarily the case, to rely on the same information provided by official sources in such a conflict to inform their audience devoid of triangulation of the conflict in question. Such a move may be informed by several factors. First, is their inability to send their crews to the countries where there are such conflicts or even to have correspondents situated in those countries as a consequence of limited resources.

Within the Kenyan context, antagonists in a cattle rustling prone area of Tiaty in Baringo County may be more willing to use NTV, KTN, KBC, K24 and Citizen Television stations in their defense if accused of fanning the vice, as opposed to local vernacular television or radio stations available in the region. One of the reasons that may inform such a decision is national viewership or listenership that such stations command thus by being accorded coverage in such stations, they will reach as many people as possible who may back their standpoints regarding the conflict. Such stations can also resolve to deploy their crew to the region to get the views of residents, local leaders and administrators, or can easily invite antagonists to the conflict into their studios for a deeper discourse on the ensuing conflict owing to knowledgeable personnel they have at their disposal. To the contrary, lack of knowledgeable personnel and inadequate resources make restrict local vernacular stations susceptible to a narrow interpretation of the

conflict and may negate any prospects of antagonists resolving to overly rely on them for fear of implicating them further in the vice.

Figure 2: Political Media Contest and Public Opinion



Source: Wolfsfeld (1997)

The arrow from the left side of the diagram illustrates the power that the media has in terms of audience size, status and its level of political power. The circle illustrates the various strategies that antagonists usually devise in their bid to ensure they are accorded favorable media coverage. All antagonists in a political conflict have only one objective as illustrated in the diagram above: ensure the media accords them favorable media coverage leading to favorable public opinion which is critical in ensuring they win political conflicts.

2.4.8 Assumption of political media contest theory

The theory assumes that conflicts are won and lost in the media. That is, for an antagonist to win a conflict, he must first use the media to solicit for favorable public opinion, with the media regarded by Wolfsfeld (1997) as a critical cog in legitimizing claims by antagonists.

2.4.9 Criticism of the theory

Cottle (2005) argues that the theory tend to rely for the most part on quantitative forms of content analysis that are confined to press reporting. According to Cottle, this theory fails to make use of available textual and visual methodologies. He further posits that there are also significant silences when it comes to the ‘empirical engagement with audiences and readers and how they make sense of the messages and meanings circulated by the media’ (p. 24).

Equally, the theory assumes that for an antagonist to win a conflict, he must first be accorded favorable media coverage. Yet, many cases abound where antagonists have won conflicts despite being negatively covered by the news media. During the 2016 US polls, for instance, despite being a victim of negative media coverage, the Americans elected, in contrast to what was expected, Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States (Goedschalk et al., 2017).

In the case of Kenya, during the now infamous National Youth Service (NYS) scandal, former Devolution Cabinet Secretary Anne Waiguru received widespread negative media coverage following allegations that over Kshs. 791 million, tax payers’ money, had been swindled under her watch leading to her eventual resignation from the leadership of the ministry as a consequence of unfavorable public opinion. Waiguru would later plunge into elective politics, so much that she not only garnered 100, 632 of the votes cast to trounce her key rivals including Kirinyaga County Governor Joseph Ndathi during the hotly contested Jubilee party primaries that were held in April, 2017, but she was also elected the area Governor during the August 8, 2017 polls.

2.4.10 Summary of the Literature Review

The researcher has in this study reviewed literature that will help him get some insightful perspectives into ways in which political media contest influences voter behavior in Embu

County, one of the 47 counties in Kenya. From the aforementioned literature, the researcher identified mediated supremacy battles between Governors and the MCAs as the main gap of the study. In most of the 47 counties, the MCAs have turned county assemblies into an avenue of engaging in political media combats, with some even impeaching the County Governors where they consider their political differences irreconcilable. Within and without county assembly precincts, Governors have also taken their defense to the media, accusing the MCAs of witch-hunt, blackmail and being driven by extortionist tendencies. Yet in the ensuing animosity pitting Governors and the MCAs, there is no single research that has been done to establish the extent to which such political media contest influences voter behavior, hence the need for the study.

The research was premised on political contest theory by Gadi Wolfsfeld which argues that conflicts are won and lost in the media, and that favorable media coverage and favorable public opinion are all preconditions for any antagonist to win a political conflict.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter discusses in detail the data collection and the procedure that was used in conducting the study. The research design, methods and instruments, population and sampling, data collection techniques, research site and time frame, reliability and validity of the instruments and method of data analysis are also explained in this chapter.

3.1 Research design

A research design is a signpost that enumerates steps to be followed while conducting research beginning from data collection to its eventual analysis. In the words of Zikmund (1999), it refers to a master plan that enumerates the methodology and procedures to be used in data collection and analysis. According to this author, a research design ensures the success of any given research because it helps in planning what has to be observed, how it has to be observed, how to record the observations, how to analyze the observations, and eventually how to generalize the observations.

3.2 Research Approach

Mixed method approach (both qualitative and quantitative) was used in conducting this study. Wolfsfeld (1997) observes that the appropriateness of qualitative approach becomes paramount when a research attempts to explain social interaction between two or more systems. For Denzin & Lincoln (1994), qualitative methodologies employ inductive logic by learning as much as possible about a particular social reality and then attempting to build a more general theory based on those findings.

In this study, the researcher employed the use of qualitative and quantitative content analysis of the printed copies of the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers to obtain data that helped put into context the kind of news coverage that was accorded to antagonists (Governors and the MCAs) during county assembly conflicts that were witnessed in Kenya during the period between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2016. According to Nachmias (1996), in an attempt

to understand behavior and institutions, there is need for qualitative researchers to endeavor to know the persons involved and their values, rituals, symbols, beliefs, and emotions. Mirrored within this viewpoint, the researcher in this study endeavored to understand whether political media contest between Governors and the MCAs have any influence on the values, rituals, symbols, beliefs, and the emotions of the electorates in deciding which antagonist to support not only during political conflicts, but also during electioneering times.

Descriptive research design was also used in this study. According to Burns & Groove (2003), this type of design is helpful in providing a picture of the situation as it naturally happens. The two authors note that at the heart of descriptive research design is the behavioral description of a given phenomenon. In this study, descriptive research design was instrumental in helping the researcher find out the nexus between political media contest between Governors and the MCAs and the decision by the electorates to support or withdraw support for either party during county assembly conflicts and when election beckons.

Purposive sampling and criterion sampling were also incorporated in the study. While purposive sampling proved critical in the identification of the key informants to be brought on board as a consequence of their vast knowledge regarding the topic under study, (political and communication experts), criterion sampling was used in picking selected printed copies of the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers that were analyzed and which covered county assembly conflicts for the period between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2016. This is because while there are thousands of newspapers that were published during the same period, not all of them covered county assembly conflicts due to the periodic nature in which they occurred.

3.3 Population and Sampling

3.3.1 Target Population

Chein (1981) defines a population as an ‘aggregate of all cases that conform to some designated set of specifications’ (p. 419). It is from this aggregate that the data is usually obtained and upon which generalizations are made about the larger population. In this study, the targeted population were the 19, 611, 423 voters as enlisted by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) in the run up to the 2017 general election in Kenya. The sample frame for

the study was the 309, 468 registered voters in Embu County while the sample size was 80 registered voters in the four constituencies of Manyatta, Runyenjes, Mbeere South and Mbeere North constituencies. The key aim of the researcher was to find out the influence of political media contest between Governors and the MCAs on voter behavior in Kenya, with Embu County used as a case study.

The study employed the use of qualitative and quantitative content analysis of the printed copies of '*The Standard*' and the *Daily Nation* newspapers for the period between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2016. Considering each year has 365 days and the two newspapers to be studied are published daily, it follows that the targeted population in the case of the newspapers to be studied for the three year period will be 2, 190, that is, $(365 \times 3 \times 2)$. The sample frame in this case was 300, that is, $(50 \times 3 \times 2)$. The decision by the researcher to analyze 50 printed copies of the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers as the preferred sample size was driven by the researchers desire to exhaustively triangulate the findings of the study hence by so doing enhance their accuracy levels.

Worth noting is the existence of other local dailies that are published on daily basis in Kenya and which could also have been used in advancing this study including *The Star*, *The People Daily*, *Taifa Leo*, *Citizen Weekly*, *The Nairobiian* and the *Business Daily*. While it is not lost on the researcher that such publications exist, the decision to settle on the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers was informed by the realization that the two local dailies enjoy a wider readership among Kenyans, and thus can provide a deeper understanding of the topic under study. According to daily measurement for print outlets conducted by GeoPoll research firm in 2015, the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers are the top newspapers by audience size and share, beating the competition by a large margin. According to GeoPoll survey, the *Daily Nation* has a readership of approximately 4,379,400 per day, while *The Standard* has an average of 2,223,500 per day. This implies that countrywide, the *Daily Nation* has a 40% share while *The Standard* a 20% share. In its survey, Answers Africa.Com found out that the *Daily Nation* newspaper has a daily circulation of about 205, 000 copies and that it is the largest newspaper in East Africa with a market share of over 70% for the news and media sector.

During the period between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2016, preliminary investigations conducted by the researcher indicated that there were intense political contest between Governors and the MCAs in a number of counties. So animated were the political differences between the two antagonists that Governors Martin Wambora of Embu, Paul Chepkwony of Kericho, Mwangi wa Iria of Murang'a, Nderitu Gachagua of Nyeri and Prof. Kivutha Kibwana of Makueni Counties were impeached by the MCAs during chaotic sessions that were witnessed in their respective county assemblies. In analyzing data from the two local dailies in Kenya, the researcher borrowed heavily from the methodology used by Gadi Wolfsfeld in developing his political contest theory.

3.3.2 Sampling

Singh & Masuku (2015) point out that sampling is related with the selection of a subset of individuals within a population to estimate the characteristics of the whole population. Sampling is a key element in any given research study. It helps the researcher lower the cost of doing research while speeding up the data collection process. In this study, purposive sampling and criterion sampling were used in the selection of the units to be studied. Purposive sampling was used in the identification of informants to be incorporated in the study through Key Informant Interviews. According to Nachmias (1996), this type of sampling helps the researcher select sampling units subjectively in a bid to ensure it is representative of the population.

Criterion sampling was used in choosing selected printed copies of the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers to be studied for the period between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2016 since some of the newspapers may be irrelevant to the topic under study by the virtue of the fact that county assembly conflicts is not a daily phenomenon.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Three methods of data collection that included the use of Questionnaires, Key Informant Interviews and content analysis were used in collecting data for the advancement of this study.

3.4.1 Content Analysis

Holsti (1986) broadly defines content analysis as ‘any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages’ (p. 601). This method of data collection and analysis requires a researcher to gain an emphatic understanding of the social phenomenon under study. According to Bryman (2001), qualitative content analysis is critical in facilitating contextual meaning in text through the development of emergent themes derived from the textual data.

In this study, qualitative content analysis was used in analyzing news stories that were covered in the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers highlighting county assembly conflicts for the period between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2016. The researcher analyzed the headlines used in the said news stories and the nature of the news coverage. That is, whether the news coverage of the two antagonists was positive, negative or mixed. Quantitative content analysis on the other hand focused on the frequency of the news articles published highlighting the antagonists involved in the conflict. That is, how many news stories were accorded to the Governors and the MCAs, and how many of the stories were mixed news. That is, news stories published by the two local dailies and in which both the antagonists were covered.

Due to the cost implications involved and the time constraints in training coders, the researcher developed a sample of 10 news stories to test the reliability of the coding sheet that was used in conducting the study. The researcher equally conducted a pilot study of questions that were used during the study with questions that received less than 70% approval rating dropped from the Questionnaire guide. The findings of the content analysis of the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers are attached to this study as appendix 1.

3.4.2 Key Informant Interviews

Key Informant Interviews were also used in the collection of data for this study. In a structured interview, Nachmias (1996) contends that the sequence in which the questions are asked is the same in every interview. In this study, the researcher conducted structured face-to-face interviews involving 12 political and communication experts due to their vast knowledge

regarding the area under study. All the interviews were recorded using a tape recorder and later transcribed by the researcher himself. Each interview lasted for approximately 20 minutes.

The researcher also developed an interview guide for a set of the informants that incorporated in the study. While a core set of questions were used in guiding the interview, the researcher asked follow up questions whenever he felt there was need to seek clarification on issues raised by the informant. In cases where such clarifications answered the subsequent questions in the interview guide, the researcher skipped the already answered questions on the interview guide.

In this study, the researcher interviewed three political analysts, three communication experts, three news editors and three journalists, bringing to 12, the total number of informants that were interviewed in this study. The decision to interview the said informants was driven by the researcher's desire to get as many responses as possible that can be used in triangulating the findings of the study to enhance their accuracy levels. Questions posed to the 12 key informants that were incorporated in the study are attached as appendix 2.

3.4.3 Research Questionnaires

Questionnaires were also used in the collection of data in this study with a total of 80 questionnaires distributed to voters in Embu County. 20 questionnaires were distributed in each of the four constituencies of Manyatta, Runyenjes, Mbeere North and Mbeere South. The distribution of the questionnaires was however limited to only those respondents who closely followed the Embu county assembly conflict that later led to the impeachment of Governor Martin Wambora by the MCAs.

Abawi (2013) defines a questionnaire as a data collection instrument consistent of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. Krosnick & Presser (2010) note that one of the first decisions a researcher must put into consideration when designing a survey question is whether to use open-ended or close-ended questionnaires. According to the scholars, open-ended questionnaire involves permitting respondents to answer questions in their own words, while closed-ended questionnaire involves a researcher requiring respondents to select an answer from a set of choices.

In the case of this study, the questionnaires that were used had both open-ended and close-ended questions and were emailed to a journalist based in Embu County who administered them to the respondents in the four constituencies in adherence to the instructions issued to him by the researcher. The decision to use questionnaires in this study was driven by the need to gauge voters' perceptions regarding the incessant county assembly conflicts that were witnessed in the county from 2014 leading to the impeachment of area Governor Martin Wambora, and the extent to which such antagonism influenced voter behavior if any. The research questionnaire that was used in getting the responses of the voters in Embu County regarding the topic under study is attached as appendix 3.

3.5 Research Site and Time Frame

The study was conducted in Embu County which is one of the 47 counties in Kenya that was established following the passage and subsequent promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010. It is listed as county number 14 in Chapter 18 of the Transitional and Consequential Provisions of the constitution. It is made up of four constituencies which are Manyatta, Runyenjes, Mbeere North and Mbeere South.

While this research could have been carried out in any of the five counties in which the area County Governors were impeached, the choice of Embu County was informed by the constant reference to the county assembly conflict by several respondents during the pre-testing of the questionnaire. Among reasons for the reference include the fact that Embu County was the first ever where its Governor was impeached by the MCAs. The post-impeachment epoch was equally punctuated by high level drama, twists and turns and ultimately incessant court battles that annulled the ensuing impeachments.

The researcher thus carried out a study on the influence of political media contest on voter behavior in Embu County for the period between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2016. This is because it is during this period that perennial county assembly conflicts were witnessed in several county assemblies in the country.

3.6 Reliability and Validity of the Instrument

Nachmias (1996) defines reliability as the extent to which a measuring instrument contains variable errors. That is, errors that appear inconsistent from observation to observation during any one measurement attempt or that vary each time a given unit is measured by the same instrument. To ensure the instruments used for data collection are reliable, the researcher ensured the data gathered from the two newspapers was accurately, objectively and critically analyzed to avoid arriving at premature and biased conclusions.

The researcher also ensured that all the informants and whose opinions were sought are men and women of resolute repute and who have vast knowledge regarding the topic under study to help enrich the findings of the study to help positively inform the country's future electoral process.

To ensure the responses given are representative of Embu County residents, the researcher ensured that the questionnaires used in the study were evenly distributed in the four constituencies of Manyatta, Runyenjes, Mbeere North and Mbeere South.

3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation

The researcher analyzed the data collected using qualitative and quantitative analytical techniques. While quantitative analysis was done through Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS), descriptive analysis was used in analyzing the data that was collected qualitatively through the use of themes and coding in accordance with the study objectives. Nachmias (1996) defines coding as the process by which responses are classified into meaningful categories. The findings were presented in form of tables, percentages, frequencies, narratives, pie charts and graphs.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues in conducting any given research usually arise from the kinds of problems that social scientists investigate and the methods they use in obtaining valid and reliable data (Nachmias, 1996). In carrying out this study, the researcher ensured that the requisite research standards are adhered to. All the information borrowed from other scholars was accordingly

attributed. The researcher also guaranteed all the respondents used in the study utmost confidentiality.

The information used in the study was obtained from primary sources to enhance the credibility of the study. To prove that the requisite ethical standards were complied with during the study, the researcher twice appeared before a panel of academics at the University of Nairobi (UoN), and first presented his proposal for the study. The academics then gave their recommendations regarding the study and cleared the researcher for field work as shown in appendix 4. After data collection and compiling the final project, the researcher once again appeared before a panel of academics at the UoN and defended his final work. The academics gave their recommendations and pointed out areas that needed to be reworked on, recommendations that the researcher complied with as evidenced by appendix 5. Having done all that, the final work was presented to the UoN to test its originality and ensure it was devoid of plagiarism. The certificate of originality, Turnitin Originality Report, is attached as appendix 6, and is testimony that this research work complied with all the requisite research standards.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Overview

This chapter delves into the analysis of the data collected both qualitatively and quantitatively in the researcher's pursuit to find out the influence of political media contest on voter behavior in Embu County. The organization of the data collected was premised on the four outlined objectives of the study, while its presentation was divided in two key sections. The first deals with data presentation and interpretation, while the second analyzes the data collected with a view of understanding its meaning.

4.1 Data Presentation and Interpretation

The data presented in this section was collected from 80 respondents via questionnaires distributed in the four constituencies of Manyatta, Runyenjes, Mbeere South and Mbeere North in Embu County. Also presented is the data collected through Key Informant Interviews and qualitative and quantitative content analysis of the 50 printed copies of the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers. The findings derived from the study are presented in form of tables, percentages, frequencies, narratives, pie charts and graphs.

4.1.1 Distribution of Questionnaires

In this study, data collection was done through 80 questionnaires that were distributed in the four constituencies of Manyatta, Runyenjes, Mbeere North and Mbeere South in Embu County. Figure 3 below shows the questionnaires' response rate in the four aforementioned constituencies.

Figure 3: Distribution of Questionnaires in Embu County

Constituency	Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Responded to
Manyatta	20	20
Runyenjes	20	20
Mbeere North	20	20
Mbeere South	20	20
Total	80	80

Source: Field Survey 2017

20 questionnaires were distributed in each constituency with a 100% response rate reported. During the study, the respondents showed much enthusiasm, vigor and valor in their response to the questions asked. It is from this enthusiasm that the researcher regarded the responses given to be a true reflection of the perceptions espoused by voters towards antagonists in Embu county assembly conflict.

4.1.2 Key Informant Interviews

Twelve informants were incorporated in the study through the use of Key Informant Interviews owing to their extensive and elaborate knowledge of the topic under study. The informants included three communication experts, two of them who lecturers at the University of Nairobi and the other at Moi University. Three political analysts also formed part of this rich milieu of informants, one of them a Governance expert and Lecturer at the Kenya School of Government, while the other is a practicing lawyer who dissected the county assembly conflicts using some broad legal lenses. The other was a political economist who equally combed through the conflicts and their resultant influence on voter behavior from an economic prism.

The other informants included three news editors two of them from the state-owned KBC, while the other was from NTV. Critical to note is that the coverage of county assembly conflicts was done by journalists. To get a first hand account of their coverage of county assembly conflicts,

three journalists were incorporated in the study, two from KBC while the other was from the privately owned Capital FM.

4.1.3 Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis of 50 printed copies of two local dailies was done (25 from *The Standard* and 25 from the *Daily Nation* newspapers). The key focus of this analysis was on the headlines of the news stories highlighting the contest between Governors and the MCAs and the nature of coverage. That is, were the antagonists accorded positive or negative coverage or was the coverage a mixture of both. Of the 50 newspapers that were analyzed, a total of 130 news stories were published highlighting the two antagonists (Governors and the MCAs), though there were cases where Senators and MPs were prominently featured in the coverage. Figure 4 below shows a sample of the news headlines reviewed during coverage for the period between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2016. The total number of headlines reviewed in the 50 newspapers that were analyzed in this study is attached as appendix 3.

Figure 4: Qualitative Content Analysis of the Headlines published in the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers for the period between January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2016

<i>Date</i>	Daily Nation Newspaper Headlines	<i>Date</i>	The Standard Newspaper Headlines
Jan 28, 2014	County leaders burn millions in joy travels	Feb 1, 2014	Governors and Senators defend ousted Wambora
Jan 29, 2014	Embu governor impeached over graft	Feb 5, 2014	Leaders challenge impeachment
Jan 30, 2014	Wambora to challenge ouster	Feb 9, 2014	Is Senate using Wambora woes to stamp its oversight authority?
Jan 31, 2014	Governors oppose bid to kick out Wambora	Feb 11, 2014	End corruption or face law, MCAs tell Wambora

Source: Field Survey 2017

4.1.4 Quantitative Content Analysis

A quantitative content analysis of 50 printed copies of the said newspapers was also done (25 from *The Standard* and 25 from the *Daily Nation*). In doing this analysis, focus was given to the publicity accorded to antagonists (Governors and MCAs) during county assembly conflicts in terms of the number of news stories in which they were highlighted as illustrated in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: The Publicity accorded to Governors and the MCAs in the *Daily Nation* newspaper for the period between January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2016

The Contest

Antagonists	Number of news stories
Governors	25
MCAs	19
Mixed news	18

Note: The number of news stories published was physically done by the researcher who perused through the printed copies of the Daily Nation newspaper for the period stated above.

In its coverage of county assembly conflicts, the *Daily Nation* newspaper accorded Governors more coverage compared to the MCAs, though the coverage of the two antagonists was generally fair. Both antagonists were accorded mixed coverage in 18 news stories. Figure 6 below shows the number of news stories accorded to the two antagonists by *The Standard* newspaper during the period under study.

Figure 6: The Publicity of Governors and the MCAs in *The Standard* newspaper for the period between January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2016)

The Contest

<i>Antagonists</i>	<i>Number of news stories</i>
Governors	22
MCAs	16
Mixed news	30

Note: The number of the news stories published was physically done by the researcher who perused through the printed copies of The Standard newspaper for the period stated above.

Source: Field Survey 2017

Just like the *Daily Nation* newspaper, Governors were accorded more coverage by *The Standard* newspaper compared to the MCAs, though the news coverage of the two antagonists was equally generally fair. The number of mixed news accorded to the antagonists was however higher in *The Standard* newspaper compared to the *Daily Nation* newspaper during the period under study.

4.1.5 The Nature of Coverage

This implies the type of coverage the media accorded antagonists during the period between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2016. That is, were the antagonists accorded positive, negative coverage or mixed news coverage by the media during the period under study? And whether positive, negative or mixed, to what extent did the coverage influence voters into supporting certain antagonists as opposed to the others at the time of the conflict and subsequent elections, and why? Figure 7 below puts into context the nature of coverage that was accorded to Governors and the MCAs during county assembly conflicts during the period under study.

Figure 7: The Nature of coverage accorded to antagonists in both the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers for the period between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2016

Nature of Coverage	Daily Nation Newspaper		The Standard Newspaper	
	Governor	MCAs	Governor	MCAs
Positive Press	14	11	16	6
Negative Press	11	8	6	10
Mixed News	18		30	

Source: Field Survey 2017

4.2 Demographic details of the respondents

The researcher sought to find out the demographic composition of respondents in Embu County in terms of age, gender, level of education and profession. This information was considered critical by the researcher in enabling him gauge factors that inform voter behavior among Embu County residents and the logic behind it.

4.2.1 Distribution of voters in Embu County

Embu County is made up of four constituencies namely Manyatta, Runyenjes, Mbeere South and Mbeere North. Figure 8 shows the number of voters listed in the county per constituency. The listing is as per the 2017 voter registration exercise that was conducted by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) prior to the August 8, 2017 general election.

Figure 8: Distribution of Voters in Embu County per Constituency 2017

Constituency Code	Constituency Name	Voters
063	Manyatta	99, 339
064	Runyenjes	86, 977
065	Mbeere South	72, 143
066	Mbeere North	51, 009
Total		309, 468

Source: IEBC

4.2.2 Gender Distribution of Respondents

The researcher also sought to find how many of the 80 respondents were male and female by requiring them to indicate their gender on the questionnaires distributed. The number of respondents who participated in the study in terms of gender is indicated in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9: Distribution of Voters in Embu County in terms of Gender

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Male	44	55.0
	Female	36	45.0
	Total	80	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2017

From the analysis of the questionnaires distributed across the four constituencies, 55% of the respondents were male while 45% were female. With a 10% difference of political involvement between men and women, this is was in itself an indication of the central role women are beginning to play in elective politics in Kenya. The gender equation was considered pertinent, first, because in the Kenyan context, it has become a legal requirement as provided for in

Articles 27 and 81 of the Constitution of Kenya 2010. This article provides that women and men have the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social sphere hence their participation in political processes is considered critical. Secondly, the exclusion of men or women in the study would have brought to the fore issues of bias towards one gender making the findings of the study skewed as a consequence of their exclusion.

4.2.3 Distribution of respondents in terms of age

The researcher also sought to establish the age of the respondents who participated in the study by grouping them within the age brackets of 18-30, 31-50 and those aged above 50. Such categorization was critical since factors that may influence a voter aged 18-30 in voting for a certain candidate may not be necessarily the same for a voter aged above 50 in a political competition. From the analysis of the questionnaires distributed, majority of the respondents were the youth aged between 31 and 50 which was equivalent of 48.8% followed by those aged between 18 and 30 at 45%. The findings of the study seem to suggest the active involvement of the youthful generation in active politics compared to the elderly because, arguably, in Kenya, there is a close correlation between the challenges that afflict the youth for instance youth unemployment and good governance. According to the findings, only 6.3% of the respondents aged above 50 participated in the study as indicated in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10: Distribution of respondents in Embu County in terms of age

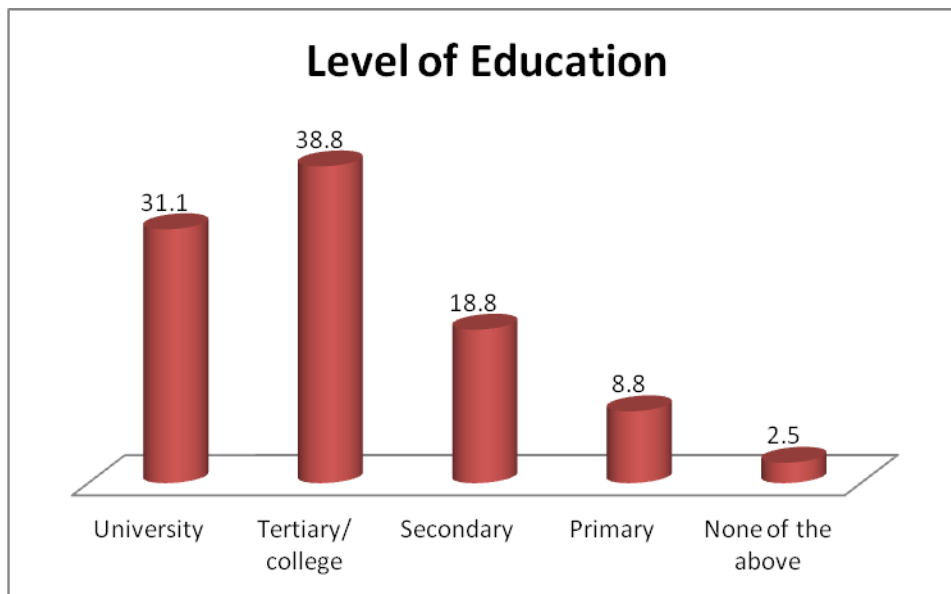
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	18-30	36	45.0
	31-50	39	48.8
	Above 50 yrs	5	6.3
	Total	80	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2017

4.2.4 Distribution of respondents in terms of education levels

The researcher also sought to find out the education levels of the respondents who participated in the study. Education was considered a key variable since in most cases, ones level of education usually informs their voting decisions, though admittedly, this may not be necessarily the case especially in the case of Kenya where elections are largely ethnic driven (Oyugi, 1997; Nyabuga, 2011). For instance, there is a great variation when it comes to the level of interpretation of political conflicts between a university graduate and a primary school leaver. Notably, according to the findings, most of the Embu County residents possess some form of formal education, with majority being graduates from either university or the various tertiary institutions. This may be attributed to the fact that majority of the respondents who participated in the study were youth as shown in Figure 11 below.

Figure 11: Distribution of voters in Embu County as per their education levels



Source: Field Survey 2017

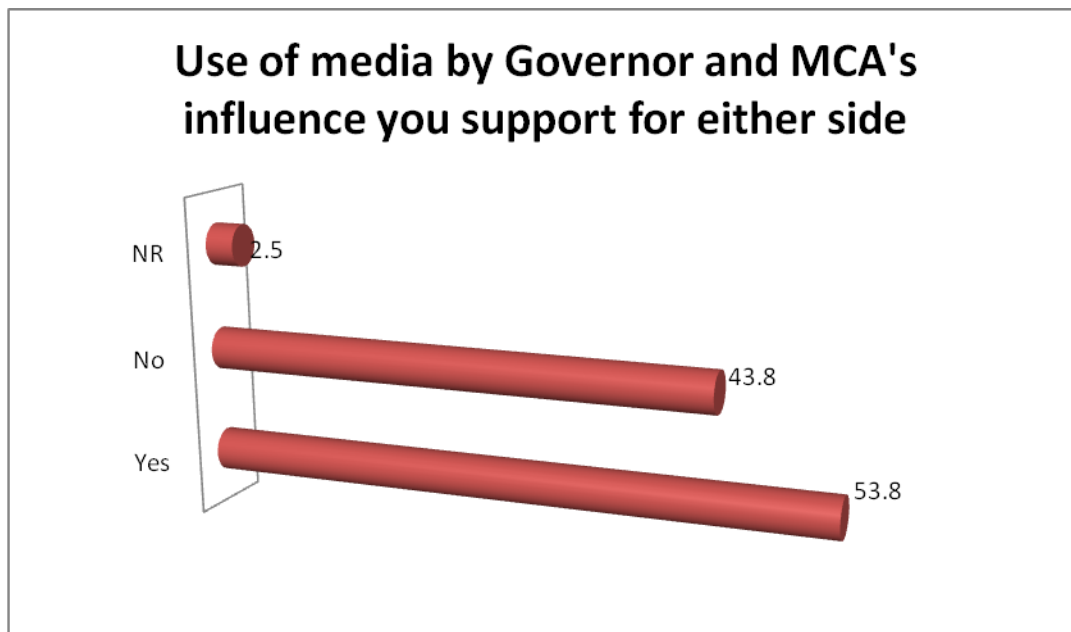
4.3 Data Presentation and Interpretation

This section discusses in detail data presentation and interpretation, with the discussion hinged around, first, the main objective of the study and then, secondly, the four specific objectives as enumerated in chapter 1 of the study.

4.3.1 The Influence of Political Media Contest on Voter Behavior in Embu County

The main objective of this study to answer one fundamental question: to what extent does political media contest influence voter behaviour? Influence as used in the context of this study refers to the extent to which voters elect or de-elect candidates/antagonists or even decide to become apathetic to electoral processes during political conflicts or competition as a consequence of political media antagonism. To determine such influence, if any, the researcher asked respondents, through the Questionnaires distributed in Manyatta, Runyenjes, Mbeere South and Mbeere North constituencies in Embu County, whether the use of media by Governor Martin Wambora and the MCAs during the county assembly conflict had in any influenced their decision to support or withdraw support for either of the antagonists. Figure 12 below indicates their responses to the question.

Figure 12: The Influence of Political Media Contest on Voter Behavior in Embu County



Source: Field Survey 2017

From the above findings, while of the 80 respondents who participated in the study, 53.8% indicated the contest had influenced their voting decisions compared to 43.8% who stated the contrary, the researcher could not at this point authoritatively deduct the exact influence of the contest. This because as earlier stated, there are ideally many factors that usually influence voter

behavior key among them, in the Kenyan context, ethnicity (Nyabuga, 2011; Oyugi, 1997). Informant 11 concurs and even doubts the ability of political media contest on voter behavior when he notes that:

‘...there is a very small degree with which we can sway voters at this stage because they are already decided...how we reported things, I don’t think it had even a 5% influence on the ground in terms of voting...’ – Key Informant 11

Of course other factors such as nepotism, corruption, bribery and a candidate’s past development record usually also play a role in influencing voter behavior. Yet, some of these factors were arguably embedded in the grounds that the MCAs stated for their impeachment of the Embu County Governor as shown Figure 13 below.

Figure 13: Reasons why the MCAs impeached Embu Governor Martin Wambora

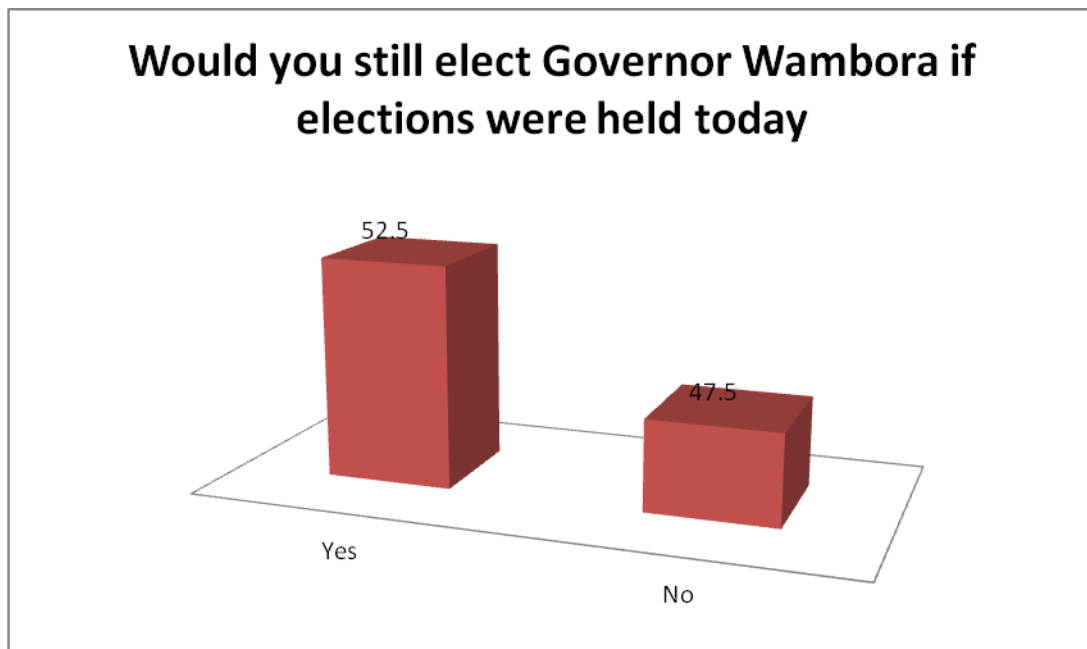
Issue	Accusation
Maize seeds	He violated the law in procuring 16 tonnes of maize seeds at Kshs. 3.52 million which did not germinate
Embu stadium	The Kshs. 8 million tender for the refurbishment of Embu Stadium was illegally done

Source: The Standard newspaper

The exact influence the contest had on voter behavior begins to manifest when one analyzes closely the 53.8% of the respondents who admitted to having been influenced by the contest and the 43.8% who denied such an influence. Of critical concern in understanding this influence is the need to answer one central question: what was the nature of influence that the 53.8% were referring to? To answer this question, the researcher delved further in his line of questioning by asking the respondents, to state whether despite the impeachment of Governor Wambora, they would still elect him if elections were held today?

According to the findings, 52.5% of the respondents indicated they would still rally behind Wambora if elections were held today, 1.3% less of the 53.8% who indicated that political media contest had influenced their voting behavior. Implying that majority of the 53.8% who admitted to having been influenced by the contest were in fact Wambora's supporters. The influence that the political media contest between the Governor and the MCAs had on voters in Embu County is indicated in Figure 14 below.

Figure 14: Despite the impeachment, would you still elect Governor Wambora if elections were held today?



Source: Field Survey 2017

From the above findings, it can therefore be argued that the contest only influenced 1.3% of the voters (53.8%-52.5%) and whose loyalty it is heard to determine if elections were held today. That is, between the time that the county assembly conflict happened in 2014 and when the elections were to be held in August 2017, many variables could have changed. They can decide to support Wambora's candidature or support his opponents altogether. As Informant 4 puts it, as long as there is some intervening period - and this period could be anything between two to three days to months - it is possible for a politician to change the minds of voters within two weeks using all means including dishing out handouts. One of the reasons why antagonists find it

easy to manipulate Kenyans voters is arguably because of their gullibility when it comes to electoral processes.

Informant 4 best captures this gullibility when he notes that:

‘...you know we always have this thing of selective amnesia or peculiar behavior in Kenya. That people can be very angry at a politician, but time passes, barely a month or two months, and circumstances change, and it is as if people forgot that they were ever angry at that politician. Or even the same politician comes and influences them with, you know, normally it is just handouts, and it becomes as if nothing ever happened...’ - Key Informant 4

With respect to the 43.8% respondents who indicated had not been influenced by the contest between Wambora and the MCAs, one would argue they were more likely supporters of Wambora’s opponents, whether Lenny Kivuti, Cecily Mbarire or any other opponent that had expressed interest in succeeding Wambora. To determine the exact influence of contest among the 43.8% respondents however, one would first require to first find out those who were allied to Kivuti, Mbarire and any other would-be Embu gubernatorial candidate in the conflict. a political competition, with the percentage difference between the 43.8% and collective percentage of Wambora’s opponents being the influence of the contest. That is, assuming 25.4% of the electorates were Kivuti’s supporters, 15.7% Mbarire’s and 2.1% for the other opponents, the influence of the contest in such a case would only be 0.6%. That is, (43.8%) (25.4%+15.7%+2.1%). Such an influence is similarly evidently minimal.

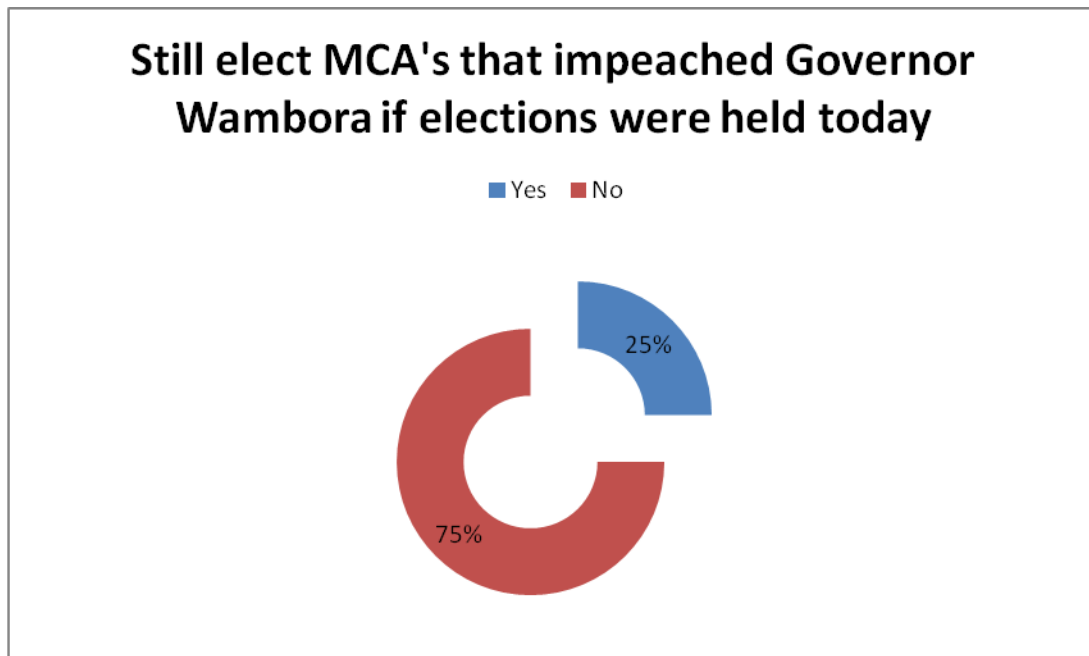
Asked why they still had faith in Wambora even after the grueling impeachments, 20.0% of the respondents stated that he had done a lot for the people of Embu County, 8.4% of them viewed him as a good leader, while 6.3% cited his commitment to serving the county residents. Of those who disapproved his leadership style, 11.6% perceived him to be a bad leader, 9.5% cited the need for change, while 11.6% regarded him as corrupt.

Just like the 1.3% of the voters who were influenced by the contest, it is also fastidious to establish the loyalty of the 2.5% respondents who did not respond to the question, unless one finds out reasons for their non-response to the question asked. It may be that they are undecided of who support between the Governor and the MCAs or between the Governor and his then gubernatorial opponents such as Kivuti and Mbarire. If elections were held today therefore, their

loyalty could gravitate either way, or equally decide to be apathetic to the ensuing electoral process altogether.

Asked whether if elections were held today, they would still elect the MCAs who impeached Governor Wambora, 75% of the respondents were categorical they could not compared to the 25% who said they would give them a second chance as illustrated in Figure 15 below.

Figure 15: Would you still elect the MCAs if elections were held today?



Source: Field Survey 2017

Of the 25% of the respondents who supported the MCAs, 15% of them noted they had executed their duties well, 6.3% considered the antagonism between them and the Governors a common phenomenon while 1.3% cited the need to forgive our adversaries. Of the 75% respondents who disapprove of their leadership, 10% of them regarded them as corrupt, 27.5% stated the execution of their duties was underwhelming, while 17.5% noted they were simply incompetent.

Several issues come to the fore from the aforementioned analysis. First, is the fact that whether minimal, the influence of political media contest worked in favor of the Governors and to the disadvantage of the MCAs validating the argument by Wolfsfeld (1997) that authorities in a

conflict are usually powerful, arguably because of the vast resources and instruments of power at their disposal compared to the challengers. It is not surprising therefore that Governors were accorded more news coverage than the MCAs, and that most of the voters approved of their leadership with 52.5% of the respondents indicating that they would still elect Governor Wambora if elections were held today while 75% of them expressed displeasure with the manner the MCAs were executing their mandate. Admitting the power that the Governors wielded over the MCAs during the conflict, Informant 6 observes that:

‘...the capacity of a Governor to be featured in the media most of the time is more of a possibility. One, because of the fact that person is a Governor, two, the resources they have access to, and three, even the staff capacity to advise them on what to say and how to say it...’ - Key Informant 6

With such resources, the Governors went to the defensive spree, traversing the vast counties in defence of the accusations leveled against them by the MCAs who had inadequate or no resources to counter the onslaught unveiled against them: that of painting them as malicious, greedy and egocentric and as individuals who had been hired by the opponents of the Governor to silence him. In the case of Embu county assembly conflict, Informant 8 points out that ‘...you could see the hand of Kivuti, you could see the hand of Cecily Mbarire...In other words, the opponents of the Governors outside the county assembly were using their proxy MCAs to execute their agenda...’

This ultimately worked against the MCAs making majority of them increasingly unpopular because as Informant 12 observes, ‘...the truth was that the MCAs were impeaching the Governor because the Governor was blocking their greedy train, period...’ Whether this was just a mere perception or was grounded in certain realities remains a subject of future studies since such a deduction cannot be conclusively made by the researcher owing to the fact that the media did not articulate the underlying issues in their coverage of county assembly conflicts as it will be demonstrated later in this study.

4.3.2 Ways in which media coverage of county assembly conflicts influences voter behavior

There are three ways in which media coverage of county assembly conflicts can influence voter behavior at least according to this study. First, media coverage of such conflicts can either reinforce existing perceptions and attitudes of the electorates towards antagonists in the conflict

as argued by behaviorist theorist B.F. Skinner who is famed for his reinforcement theory (Management Study Guide, 2013), secondly, it can shift the loyalty of voters from one antagonist to another and vice versa, and thirdly, it can make the electorates withdraw support to either of the antagonists and therefore become apathetic to electoral processes because of the belief that none of them represents their interests.

As earlier pointed out, of the 80 respondents who participated in the study, 53.8% indicated their voter decisions had been influenced by the contest compared to 43.8% who declined such influence. It is worth noting that of the 53.8% who admitted to having been influenced by the contest, 52.5% indicated they would still elect Governor Wambora if elections were held today compared to 47.5% who indicated they could not re-elect him. Notably, of the 53.8% respondents who admitted to having been influenced by the contest, it is evident that majority had already made up their minds to support Wambora and not even the contest could change their already made decision. The 43.8% could have denied having been influenced by the antagonism between Governors and the MCAs, but it is evident the contest influenced their voting decisions as evidenced by the 47.5% who indicated they could not elect Wambora if elections were held today.

From the findings of the study, it can be argued that the contest only radicalized or reinforced the electorate's initial stand to support or oppose Wambora as a consequence of several factors that include, as Skinner (n.d.) notes, outward behavior of the electorates and their surrounding environment whose role in shaping an individuals perceptions and attitudes is inevitable. As one would argue, an individual's behavior is a function of its consequence (Management Study Guide, 2013). In the Kenyan situation, the functions that inform voter behavior are diverse, and they trace their antecedent from the political party that one is affiliated to from Jubilee, ODM, ANC, Narc K and Ford Kenya among others, or even a candidate's own popularity among the electorates. Some scholars aver that in some cases, certain patterns of social communications and integration such as regional, religious, ethnic, class and age also often play a critical role in informing one's voter behavior (Otiato, 2014; Bean, 1999).

In the case of the Embu county assembly conflict, the ethnic frame played a critical role in influencing, radicalizing, reinforcing and galvanizing the already decided voters to either rally

behind Wambora or his opponents during the conflict, with the conflict degenerating into an Embian versus the Mbeere communities affair. As Informant 5 notes, the war that ‘...was being fought in Embu, was much more than the war about corruption...’ and that a deeper analysis of the county assembly conflict between the Governor and the MCAs revealed it had taken an ethnic dimension. Informant 5 notes that:

‘...the politics of Embu will be based on ethnicity. There is the Mbeere sub-tribe there is the Chuka, Embians and the small small tribes. Whoever they see as theirs, they will only be galvanized for voter turnout using what the other people deed...’ – Key Informant 5

Such ethnic driven politics explains why of the 53.8% of the respondents who indicated they had been influenced by the county assembly conflict, 52.5% indicated that if elections were held today, they would still elect Governor Wambora while 47.5% indicated they couldn’t. While it is not contested that both sides stated diverse reasons for their decision to rally behind each of the antagonists, the most predominant factor for their decisions was the ethnic frame because as Informant 5 puts it, for the electorates, ‘...whoever they see as theirs, they will only be galvanized for voter turnout using what the other people did..’ With the ethnic frame playing a critical role in informing voter behavior in Kenya, some observers, like Informant 12 appears to have given up on Kenya witnessing issue based elections when she contends that:

‘...it gonna be very hard for us to understand why a Kenyan voter votes the way they do...we are a peculiar society. That’s what we are, that’s what we will be five years from now, nothing is gonna change the voter behavior for Kenyans...’
– Key Informant 12

From the ensuing findings, it is clear that the political media contest in Embu influenced voter perceptions and attitudes towards Governors and the MCAs, but the influence was in so far as reinforcing their belief systems towards the antagonists, and such influence can even be more pronounced if an antagonist, as Informant 5 notes, ‘...raises the passion by showing the people that look at this in the media, we are done, watu wetu wamemalizwa...’ Due to the ethnic nature of such conflicts and the passion that the media raises among the electorates, the influence of the media not only becomes more pronounced in influencing the already decided voters, but also a higher voter turn out from the feuding ethnic communities whose intent is usually to demonstrate to each other their numerical strength they wield but through the power of the ballot.

It is not therefore surprising that in the Kenyan context, while it is expected that one of the influence of media coverage of county assembly conflicts should ideally be to shift voter loyalty, this is rarely the case. In the case of this study, as earlier demonstrated, it was only 1.3% of the respondents (53.8%-52.5%) whose loyalty had shifted as a consequence of the conflict, with the figure derived by getting the difference between the 53.8% respondents who indicated had been influenced by the contest and the 52.5% of the respondents who indicated they would still elect Wambora if elections were held today.

While the influence of political media contest on voter behavior is high among decided voters, it is evident such influence in so far as shifting voter loyalty, say from Wambora to Kivuti and vice versa, is evidently minimal. Notably, of the 1.3% of the respondents whose loyalty had shifted as a consequence of the conflict, there is no guarantee that between the time when the conflict occurred and when elections held, their voting decisions would not have been influenced by the ethnic frame. Such is the possibility for the 2.5% of the respondents who did not indicate whether or not they had been influenced by the contest. While their silence may be an indication they had been influenced by the contest and had decided to be apathetic to the electoral process as a consequence, there is also a likelihood that they were equally influenced by the contest and at the time of conducting the study, they were still meditating who to support between the antagonists in the conflict if elections were held today.

Of key concern from this study, is why the influence of political media contest in shifting voter loyalty was minimal during the conflict. Several reasons abound for this, key among them, as earlier demonstrated, voter behavior is a consequence of a multiplicity of several factors such as one's religious and ethnic affiliation, social status and (Otiato, 2014; Bean, 1999). In the case of this study, it was evident the media did not articulate the underlying issues in its coverage of the Embu county assembly conflict as was attested to by the 12 informants who participated in the study as well as 71.3% of the respondents and corroborated by the researcher's own analysis of the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers.

For example Informant 1 notes that:

‘...the only thing that a viewer or a reader or a listener could get is that there was a conflict in the county assembly, it involved so and so and so, and perhaps a very weak explanation of what was the immediate reason. But with respect to what are the underlying causes, what are the aftermath, what are the implications, how does it compare with other places, you know, what can be done to prevent that kind of thing, that one was given almost a blackout...’ – Key Informant 1

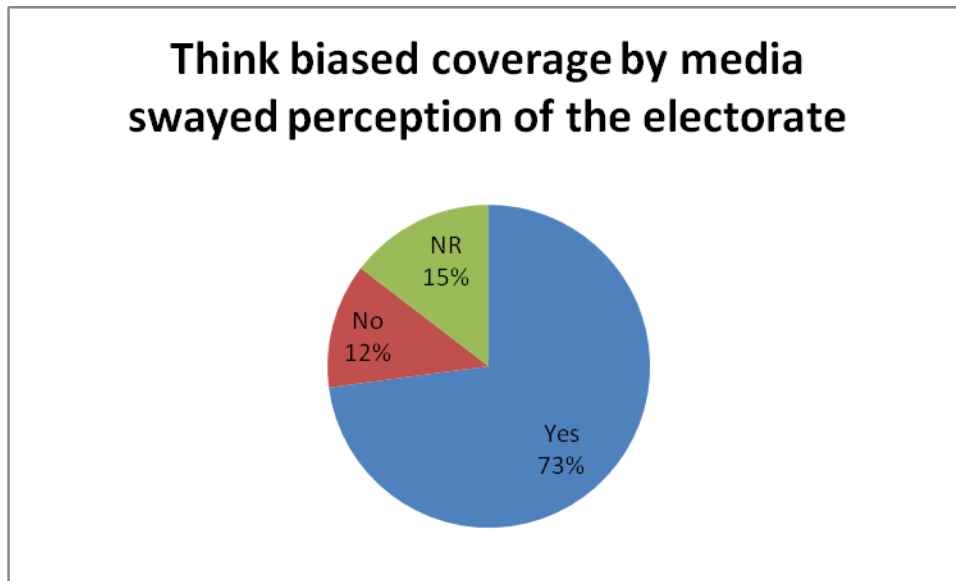
Informant 2 concurs when he contends that ‘...the media did not scratch beyond the surface to tell us the issues of procurement, to tell us the issues of skewed employment, to tell us the issues of favoritism in so many issues within the county...’ This he argues is the reason why many people ended interpreting county assembly conflicts as mere political games. In view of these observations, what remains a subject of debate and perhaps future studies; however, is the nature of influence media coverage of the county assembly conflicts could have had on voter patterns, had they articulated the underlying issues during the conflict in a country where, as earlier attested to, ethnicity remains one of the key factors not only driving politics but also informing voter behavior (Nyabuga, 2011; Jonyo 2002, 2003; Oyugi, 1997).

Then there was the question of bias in the coverage of county assembly conflicts by the media. Of the 80 respondents who participated in the study, 60% of the respondents accused the media of being biased in the coverage of the conflict compared to the 40% who considered the coverage fair. Yet, of all of the 60% who accuse the media of bias, 73% were of the opinion such coverage played a role in swaying public perception towards the antagonists compared to 12% who were of the contrary view. In other words, it had a role in radicalizing the position of the already decided voters from shifting their loyalty to other antagonists hence the minimal shift in voter loyalty, yet such perceptions were not grounded in the underlying issues that underpinned the conflict.

While 15% of the respondents did not indicate whether or not the conflict had changed their perceptions, there is likelihood it had and as a consequence, they were still considering which side to rally behind if elections were held today. There is also a possibility however that while they could be among the already decided voters whose beliefs the conflict only reinforced, they

were shy of indicating so at the time of the study. Figure 16 below indicates the number of respondents whose perceptions were swayed by the contest.

Figure 16: Do you think biased coverage by the media swayed the perception of the electorates towards Governor Wambora and the MCAs?



Source: Field Survey 2017

While on one hand, 60% of the respondents accused the media of biased coverage of county assembly conflicts with 73% indicating such coverage swayed their perceptions as indicated in Figure 16 above, their viewpoints were even more vindicated by the researcher during his analysis of *The Standard* and the *Daily Nation* newspapers that were published during the period between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2016. Of the 130 news articles that were reviewed during the study, for instance, 47 news stories were dedicated to Governors compared to 35 that were accorded to the MCAs. Of the 47 news stories that highlighted the Governors, 30 of them covered them positively compared to 17 that were negative. Of the 35 news stories in which the MCAs were covered, 17 reported positively about them compared to 18 news stories that highlighted them in negative light. Some of those news headlines are shown in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17: News Headlines of the county assembly conflicts as reported by the Daily Nation and *The Standard* newspapers for the period between January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2014.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Daily Nation Newspaper Headlines</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>The Standard Newspaper Headlines</i>
Jan 28, 2014	County leaders burn millions in joy travels	Feb 16, 2014	MCAs' newfound strategy: Threats of impeachment loans and trips
Feb 2, 2014	How Senators, County Reps have put breaks on governors 'party'	Feb 18, 2014	Governors spend Sh1bn on travel in three months
Oct 5, 2014	County chiefs woo MCAs with cash and trips abroad	Nov 4, 2015	Infighting tarnishes the image of Governor Mutua's county of 'firsts'
Oct 5, 2014	Silencing the bees: Governors coax MCAs with billions in illegal funds	Sep 7, 2016	County Reps' scorecard in House found wanting as elections near

Source: Field Survey 2017

With such headlines that were visibly biased, Informant 1 concurred with the 60% of the respondents who accused the media of bias in the coverage of the conflicts when he noted that '...the coverage was minimal, and sensational at best...' Such sensationalism involved the

tendency by the media to focus on trivialities, sideshows and drama as Informant 7 notes as opposed to articulating the key issues that the Governor and the MCAs were raising at the time of the conflict. In the case of the headlines cited in Figure 17 above, the key perceptions that a reader gets by merely glancing at them is that both Governors and the MCAs were extravagant, corrupt and mere noise makers as evidenced by headlines such as ‘County leaders burn millions in joy travels’ published in the *Daily Nation* newspaper on January 28, 2014 and ‘Silencing the bees: Governors coax MCAs with billions in illegal funds’ as published in *The Standard* newspaper on October 5, 2014.

Yet, a deeper interrogation of the news headlines indicated that there was no evidence to corroborate the said headlines. In most cases, not even detailed reports were from investigative agencies such as the Ethics and the Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), the Auditor General, the Controller of Budget or from the Senate’s Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and whose mandate include among others, to oversight the use of public funds at the county level were cited to corroborate the said headlines.

The coverage of the county assembly conflicts by the media and especially foreign trips leaves one with the assumption that it is wrong for an MCA to travel in a foreign country for benchmarking purposes where need arises, yet such travels are not in contravention of any law. It would equally be erroneous to claim that even if the Governors and the MCAs were embroiled in joy travels, there are no best practices they borrowed during such travels, yet the countries have some of the best governance structures in the world, and considering their success stories in the implementation of devolution, a concept that was barely new at the time. The trouble is failure by the media to articulate the real issues, and similarly their failure to critique the antagonists by looking at the two sides of the coin made the already decided voters stick to their earlier perceptions towards the antagonists. What however remains a subject of debate however is influence such media coverage could have had on voter behavior had it been devoid of bias.

4.3.3 Communication strategies used by antagonist during county assembly conflicts

The study also sought to find out the communication strategies that were used by antagonists in their pursuit for positive press during county assembly conflicts. The researcher as a consequence posed to the respondents the question: which communication strategies do you

think Governor Wambora and the MCAs used to ensure they get favourable media coverage? Figure 17 below shows the strategies that respondents believe were used by antagonists in their pursuit for positive press. Worth noting is that some of the strategies cited in Figure 18 below were channels of communication such as radio and television, their reference as communication strategies within this study must be seen in context as will be explained in the subsequent discussion.

Figure 18: Communication strategies used by antagonists during county assembly conflicts

		Responses	
		N	Percent
	Face book	4	3.2%
	Newspapers	10	8.0%
	Radio	35	28.0%
	Television	16	12.8%
	Media recording	3	2.4%
	Social media	24	19.2%
	Presidential rallies	1	.8%
	Press conferences	3	2.4%
	Propaganda	6	4.8%
	DK	1	.8%
	Posters	8	6.4%
	Internet	2	1.6%

	Grapevine	1	.8%
	Blackmail	1	.8%
	Bribery	1	.8%
	Political rallies	1	.8%
	Public barazas	2	1.6%
	Funerals	1	.8%
	No response	5	4.0%
Total		125	100.0%

Source: Field Survey 2017

While it is not contested that radio is a channel of communication, the findings in Figure 18 suggest that radio, as a communication strategy, was the most used by antagonists as attested to by 28% of the respondents. While the conflict in Embu was widely covered by other radio stations such as KBC Radio Taifa and Radio Citizen due to its unique nature, that is, it was the first ever to be witnessed since the inception of devolution in 2013, the use of radio as a strategy by antagonists must be located within the manner the antagonists privileged the use of vernacular radio stations. In this context, both the Governor and the MCAs in particular took their battles to vernacular radio stations such as Wimwaro FM which broadcasts in *Kiembu* and is popular among the county residents and whose support they desperately needed. Arguably, however, the Governor received more positive coverage in the said station due to the fact that, as some respondents pointed out, it was either owned by Wambora or one of his relatives.

The use of television as a communication strategy by antagonists came second, with 12.8% of the respondents pointing out that it was one of the most preferred communication strategies by the antagonists in their bid to marshal public support during the conflict. Just like was the case for the use of radio as a communication strategy, while other television stations such as KTN, NTV, Citizen and KBC covered the conflict, the antagonists also privileged television stations

that broadcasts in vernacular stations with Mbugi TV several cited by some of the respondents. This explains the high regard that the antagonists in the Embu county assembly conflict had for vernacular stations as a powerful tool of soliciting for the backing of the county residents during the conflict. They would either resort to appear for talk shows in the said stations in person or through proxies, or call tip journalists working for the said stations whenever they had a press conference or an event they believed would guarantee them more coverage.

Evidently, as indicated in Figure 18, the antagonists equally devised all manner of strategies in their bid to influence public opinion, both conventional and unconventional. For instance of the 80 respondents who took part in the study, 8% cited the use of propaganda, 8% bribery, 8% made reference to the use of grapevine, 8% blackmail, 8% political rallies while 19.2% singled out the use of social media as a strategy, especially Facebook and Twitter. According to the respondents, the use of propaganda as a strategy was more pronounced in radio and television especially in news broadcasts and paid up advertisements, in political rallies, in funerals, in press conferences and in public barazas. The use of propaganda was however more pronounced in social media.

According to Informant 5, the use of propaganda was equally more pronounced in media recordings which 2.4% of the respondents noted were used as a communication strategy by the antagonists in the conflict. Within this strategy, the use of propaganda involved cutting and pasting carefully selected clips touching on key issues regarding the conflict but which had been twisted and put out of context to distort the earlier intended meaning by a given antagonist. With that, he notes that:

‘...the comments of the opponents have been picked and have been put out of context, so that they look that indeed, our candidate is being destroyed. So the real media coverage is not what is being used in the campaigns now, it is selective clips, others generated by photo-shop and other things, and then fixed into the real formal clip, to the formal media. Now we have a concoction, a completely new message, a new animal created that was never part of the media setting the agenda of the day...’ – Key Informant 5

He also cites the use of music out of media coverage of the conflict to the effect of either ‘...castigating the opponent, either glorifying the opponent, or lionizing those guys who survived...’ In the case of Kericho Governor Paul Chepkwony, Mwangi wa Iria of Murang’a and Martin Wambora of Embu for instance, ‘...they were lionized as the only Governors who stood to fight for people when actually, they were fighting to survive because of their individual and selfish gains...’ Informant 2 concurs when he notes that the antagonists ‘...told outright lies as a strategy to win sympathy from either side or from the public...’

The use of bribery as a strategy worked for Governors because according to Informant 6, their ‘...access to a lot of budgetary resources that is at their disposal that they can use to hold public meetings, and so with that, he easily had an influence on the electorates by telling them things that were different from what the MCAs were saying...’ Informant 1 concurs and argues that this was the singular plausible reasons why Governors won the conflict against the MCAs. When asked of the strategies that the antagonists used, his response was more emphatic:

‘...just one, they pay journalists on the ground. You know they are two ways in which you can make news. That there is an event you are involved in; there is a programme you are undertaking or initiating that is newsworthy, therefore it attracts media attention. In the absence of that, you simply give them money...’ –
Key Informant 1

He cites the advertisers’ events that several Governors rolled out few days to the party primaries and to the August 8, 2017 general election terming it a classic example of how Governors paid journalists to sing their tune with the exception of the *Shilingi kwa Shilingi* programme that had all along attracted the media because of its newsworthiness. The novelty of the programme notwithstanding, the MCAs in Murang’a County still turned the programme into a perfect political fodder, accusing the Governor of using it to embezzle public funds. Informant 11 notes:

‘...the MCAs knew where to touch. Even if they had issues with the Governor, what they amplified so much in terms of the communication was *Shilingi kwa Shilingi* because they knew ultimately, it will actually elicit emotions in that particular county...’ - Key Informant 11

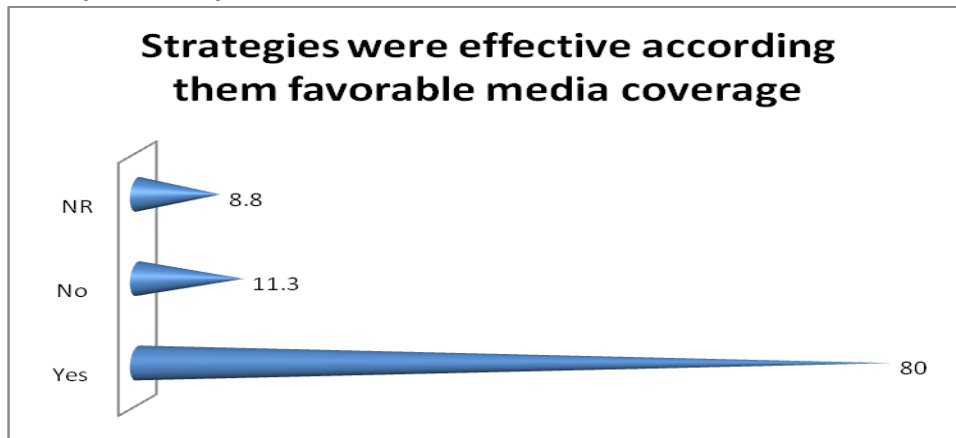
These findings validates the assertion by Wolfsfeld (1997) that in a political conflict, just like it has been argued by the author in his political contest theory, the authorities are powerful as was

the case for the Governors in the case of the Embu conflict compared to the challengers. However irrespective of the communication strategy that was deployed by the antagonists, the mere fact that they devised them in their pursuit to influence public opinion in their favor is testament of how they regard the media as a powerful tool in changing the perceptions and attitudes of the public.

4.3.4 Effectiveness of the communication strategies

With a cocktail of communication strategies been used by antagonists to influence public opinion during the Embu county assembly conflict, the study also sought to find out how effective they were in swaying their perceptions. The key question posed to the respondents by the researcher during the study was: How effective were the communication strategies used by antagonists during County Assembly conflicts to influence voter behaviour in Embu County? Of the 80 respondents who participated in the study, 80% of them termed the strategies effective while 11.3% termed them ineffective. 8.8% were non-committal in indicating whether or not the strategies were effective. Figure 19 shows their perceptions regarding the strategies used during the Embu county assembly antagonism.

Figure 19: The effectiveness of communication strategies used by antagonists during Embu county assembly conflict.



Source: Field Survey 2017

According to the findings in Figure 19, 80% of the respondents regarded the strategies effective because of the extensive coverage of the conflict by the media and which eventually culminated into the impeachment of Governor Wambora by the MCAs. 20.9% of the respondents attributed the effectiveness of the strategies to the fact that Wambora overcame the conflict. While Informant 1 had questioned the use of party primaries as a yardstick of measuring the effectiveness of the strategies because in his view, ‘...primaries are dependent on the preference of the party and that ‘...everyone the party wants to get the ticket gets the ticket...’ Wambora was later re-elected Embu County Governor during the August 8, 2017 general election, itself, perhaps a validation of the outcome of the party primaries that had preceded the election.

Informant 11 had way before dismissed the influence of the antagonism between the Governor and the MCAs citing the popularity of Wambora and his impeached peers when he argued that:

‘...most of these cases including Makeni, even after the impeachment of Governor Kivutha Kibwana, he’s still the most popular Governor...In terms of perception, nothing changed, and even if there was a shift, there was only a 2% shift...’ – Key Informant 11

The efficacy of the strategies used by antagonists during the Embu county assembly conflict largely depended on the resources at the disposal of the antagonist, and arguably, the gullibility of the targeted electorate, with the Governors ostensibly enjoying more news coverage because, as Informant 6 states:

‘...you know the capacity of an MCA to show up in the media is not something that can happen very easily. The capacity of a Governor to be featured in the media most of the time is more of a possibility one, because of the fact that person is a Governor, two, the resources they have access to, and three, even the staff capacity to advise them on what to say and how to say it. Most of them, it is not all of them have a communication department that actually helps in lining up messaging for the Governor...’ - Key Informant 6

While there is a general consensus that the MCAs equally control massive resources, while they do, their resources cannot be compared to those controlled by the Governors. This partly worked against the MCAs in the court of public opinion because as Informant 4 puts it, ‘...people saw that it is them who are problem...’

4.4.5 Media Coverage of County Assembly Conflicts and the Question of Gate Keeping

The study also sought to find out if there were any cases of gate keeping in the coverage of county assembly conflicts by the media, and if there were, to what extent did they influence voter behaviour? Gate keeping is a media function delegated to the news editors, hence the incorporation of communication experts and news editors in this study. To find out the extent to which the gate keeping of county assembly conflicts influenced voter behaviour, the researcher conducted structured interviews with the informants regarding the topic under study.

Of the 12 informants, 9 of them admitted that cases of gate keeping were palpable in the coverage of the county assembly conflicts by the media, while only three had a dissenting opinion. Admittedly, even from the researcher's own point of view, there were incidences of gate keeping, even from the analysis of the *The Standard* and the *Daily Nation* newspapers. Cases of media gate keeping were best exemplified by Informant 12, a journalist, when he argues '...that media has been penetrated by interest...' and that they were cases when '...you would be told don't include this, don't include this...' during the coverage of the county assembly conflicts. In other words, news editors only wanted certain aspects of the conflict covered as opposed to others, and such selection and de-selection painted a certain picture of the conflict to the electorate that could not necessarily depict the situation on the ground.

Asked whether this was the case, Informant 7, a news editor, concurred but argued the kind of gate keeping witnessed was that which is routinely professionally done on daily basis. He argued that '...while there was some degree of gate keeping in the case of county assembly conflicts, it was not that which aimed at masking some information to favor some antagonists at the expense of others...'

Of curiosity is when he avers that within the environment in which media operates in diverse ways, there is usually '...centralized location which commands the devolved structure which usually involves correspondents, and that the antagonists usually get a long or facilitate access...' Supposedly, 'facilitation' of the correspondents by antagonists, from the researcher's view, is the beginning and brewing point of media gate keeping which manifests itself in the diverse ways that he made reference to. Notably, it is unlikely that a cash strapped correspondent

(like is the situation with many correspondents in most cases) may be facilitated by a Governor or an MCA to the venue where an event is being held (be it by being offered transport or cash for ease of movement) and later write a negative story about the said antagonist responsible for the ‘facilitation.’ This perhaps explains why, when asked which communication strategies the antagonists used in their bid to get favorable coverage, 8% of them singled out bribery.

Asked the same question, Informant 1 was even more categorical: ‘...they pay journalists on the ground...’ Several reasons abound as to why this kind of ‘facilitation’ of correspondents worked for antagonists in having their preferred messages disseminated by the media. First, the correspondents themselves are voters, and as voters, most likely, they had taken sides in the conflict, not just as a consequence of the ‘facilitation,’ but also their ethnic affiliation. In such a case, there is bound to be a lot of gate keeping on the part of the correspondent who may not want to portray antagonists that are close to him in negative light. Informant 12 was among those who questioned over reliance by the media on correspondents in the coverage of county assembly conflicts when he argued that:

‘...some of these people you rely on in terms of correspondents are actually locals, the person reporting as regards the happenings in Murang’a is journalist from Murang’a County, the correspondents you are getting from Machakos is a journalist from within Machakos County, the other one is from Makueni County and reporting from Makueni, probability of bias is 60:40. This had an impact on voter behavior....’ - Key Informant 12

From the ensuing viewpoints, one can only conclude that the beginning point of the coverage of county assembly conflicts by the media were correspondents. A correspondent located miles away in Embu county and reporting for KTN News, for example, has all the liberty to decide the news story angle, the antagonists to be covered, those to be accorded positive coverage and negative coverage and the frequency of their coverage, thus, creating their own desired perceptions in the minds of the audience that were the end consumers of their skewed coverage contrary to the reality, in most cases.

Arguably, if a correspondent can be ‘facilitated’ by an antagonist to cover county assembly conflicts, it follows that there is nothing that stops a news editor, in whose hands the power to

publish, broadcast or spike a story is bestowed, from being ‘facilitated’ in order to allow its publication or broadcast. In fact, there is a likelihood that for a correspondent’s skewed coverage to see light of the day, there is a likelihood of some collaboration between him and the news editor from the word go.

Informant 1 best captured the diverse ways that media gate keeping was manifest during the coverage of county assembly conflict when he posited that:

‘...gate keeping has several layers. The reporter you send to cover the story gate keeps; the person the reporter interviews to give you information gate keeps; the photographer who is taking photographs gate keeps; when you take the story back to the newsroom, the editor who sub-edits the story gate keeps; the news editors, the chief, there’s a lot of gate keeping. So all a besieged person as far as this conflict is concerned needs to do is to talk to one of those people, and gate keeping will take place. Of course there’s always gate keeping... It will be unrealistic to expect that in a story like that one, there’s no gate keeping or there’s no attempt at gate keeping...’ – Key informant 1

Another form of gate keeping was also manifest in the manner in which the media covered the conflict. Of the 80 respondents who participated in the study, 71.3% of them were of the opinion that the media did not articulate the underlying issues during the county assembly conflict compared to the 28.8% who did. All the 12 informants were also in consensus that the media did not articulate the underlying issues, a view point corroborated by the researchers own analysis of the 50 printed copies of the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers. Arguably, the starting point of the failure by the media to delve into the key issues that informed the conflict was the caliber of the correspondents they had on the ground all the way from Embu, Makeni, Murang’a, Nyeri to Kericho counties. Informant 2 concurred when he argued that:

‘...the people who are more experienced who can investigate stories and follow facts are based in Nairobi and they depend on correspondents and some reporters who are at the bureaus and who are in the counties who do not have first of all training, they are not trained, two if they are trained, they are not trained properly, three they don’t have the capacity to question and even to mind data to be able to bring up a story which will be breathe taking, and you know, show us what is happening or wrong in the county...’ – Key Informant 2

His proposition is even amplified by Informant 10, a radio journalist based in Nairobi and whose station relies heavily on correspondents spread in parts of the country who submitted that in the case of Embu conflict ‘...since the correspondent is on the ground, then he has to look at the side of the MCAs...and their reasons for the impeachment, and also try get Wambora...’ According to him, the coverage of the conflict depended on the antagonists that the correspondent had scouted for, and the beginning point of this scouting is, as earlier argued, ‘facilitation’ and most likely unconscious ethnic bias towards certain antagonists. Informant 11 concurs when he admits that ‘...the correspondents we have from these regions can be compromised, and are being compromised either by the Governor or the County Assembly. So what you are likely to get...is a whapped story...’

This situation was compounded even further by their failure to interrogate underlying issues that underpinned the conflict so much that what the public ended up having are skewed perceptions based on the correspondents’ own feelings. To overcome such professional maladjustments on the part of the media, Informant 11 argues, and rightly so, that there is need for the media houses to establish full fledged bureaus in Murang’a, in Makeni, in Embu and in Machakos counties, among other areas, so that in his own words:

‘...you do not have correspondents covering these events as they happen, what you have are staff reporters, hands on, political reporters in Machakos County or a political reporter from Murang’a County is the one covering these events...’ –
Key Informant 11

Another layer of gate keeping was manifested through media ownership as singled out by several respondents who participated in the study. Concentrated private ownership of media enterprises, as noted by several communication scholars, is likely to be an affront to the much desired public discourse (McChesney, 2000; Herman & Chomsky, 2002). In the case of Embu county assembly conflict, several respondents singled out Wimwaro FM, a vernacular radio station based in Embu that broadcasts in *Kiembu*, claiming it is either owned by Governor Wambora or one of his relatives. It is this station that formed part of Wambora’s elaborate strategy to counter the claims advanced him by the MCAs.

Assuming this is was the case, it will be almost unrealistic to expect a correspondent, a journalist or a news editor working at the mercy of Governor Wambora or even his relative to accord him negative coverage even in cases where he deserved such coverage. The MCAs are also unlikely to be accorded positive coverage even in cases where they had rightfully interrogated the monies used in the implementation of the various development projects like the Embu stadium and by so doing, negating public debate. With such self censorship by the journalists working the owner of the radio station is part of the antagonism, it is unlikely, and neither is it surprising that there was a general consensus among the respondents, the informants and even the researcher himself that the media did not articulate the underlying issues during the conflict. It is critical to note, however, that this was not the singular reasons for such a shortcoming, but one of its contributing factors.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Overview

This chapter discusses a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study whose key intention was to find out the influence of political media contest on voter behavior with Embu County used as a case study.

5.1 Summary of the findings

The key aim of the study was to answer four key questions: i) What is the impact of media coverage of political antagonism during county assembly conflicts on voter behaviour in Embu County? ii) Which communication strategies were used by antagonists during county assembly conflicts to influence voter behaviour in Embu County? iii) How effective were the communication strategies used by antagonists during county assembly conflicts to influence voter behaviour in Embu County? and lastly, iv) To what extent did media gate keeping of county assembly conflicts influence voter behaviour in Embu County? In reaching at the findings of this study that are discussed below, the researcher did so cognizant of the observation made by Wolfsfeld (1997) that ‘it is impossible to assess the degree of media influence in a given political conflict’ (p.71).

Such complexities trace their origin to the fact that, ideally, as earlier stated, there are many factors that can influence an individual's voter behaviour. There is the question of gender, religion, age and one's social and economic status. In the case of Kenya, several scholars have singled out ethnicity to be a key factor that informs voter behaviour, with Nyabuga (2011) noting that it has now become synonymous with Kenyan politics, and that ‘in a country with more than 42 ethnic groups, ethnicity has often been considered critical to power, and distribution of resources’ (p.15). Then there is a multiplicity of other factors like propaganda, corruption, bribery, nepotism and in some cases sheer ignorance on the part of the voter. Such factors notwithstanding, the following emerged as the key findings of the study.

Over half of the respondents (53.8%) indicated that their voting decisions had been influenced by political media contest between Embu Governor and the MCAs. This was an indication of the

influence the contest usually has on voter behaviour, but because it is often underrated, it has partly contributed to the cocktail of challenges facing the country's electoral process after every five years circle. One of the reasons why such an influence is underrated is because of its minimal perception in influencing voter behaviour, because in a country where ethnicity plays a critical role at the ballot, it is of little consequence.

What should however be more worrying is the influence such a contest wields among decided voters, and whose 'decidedness' is usually a by-product of a multiplicity of factors, the leading one being, arguably, ethnicity. In other words, if the contest has far reaching influencing the belief systems of the decided voters, then what it does to reinforce their ethnic positions, or other factors such as corruption, bribery and nepotism which in most cases usually inform their decidedness. The effects of such an influence has been evidently catastrophic to Kenya's past elections, where more often than not, wrong or leaders who are unfit to hold office are usually elected to office by voters whose common mantra has now become, even if the leader is corrupt, 'he is our own.'

The study found out that the influence of political media contest in shifting voter loyalty is minimal as evidenced by the 1.3% of the respondents whose voter decisions were swayed by the contest. Yet, Kenya's electoral process will only become of age if political media contest succeeds in shifting voter loyalty, because majority who already decided usually do, in most cases, based on obnoxious grounds: ethnicity, nepotism, corruption, bribery and propaganda. The possible one way of shifting such loyalty is by the media articulating underlying issues during county assembly conflicts, to make it easy for a voter to discern who between the antagonists meet the requisite threshold of good governance and accountability. Only then can a Kenyan voter realize meaningful development. With a more empowered electorate, not even the unconventional communication strategies that antagonists use in influencing voters will have a pride of place in Kenya's electoral processes: from propaganda to bribery and then to the promotion of ethnic frames to suit their own selfish interests, *inter alia*.

One of the central arguments advanced by Wolfsfeld (1997) is that for one to win a conflict, he needs to be accorded favorable media coverage. This study however appeared to negate that finding in the case of Kenya, with the researcher finding out that it is not necessarily true that

one needs to be accorded positive coverage in order to win a conflict. Of the 130 news stories that were analyzed, for instance, Wambora was negatively covered in 17 news stories, yet 52.5% of the respondents indicated they could still elect him if elections were held today. To them, the decision to support Wambora is already a concluded issue, even if there could have been enough evidence to validate the accusations leveled against him by the MCAs, and the contest only serves to reinforce such a support prompting the need to devise ways of countering such pre-meditated predispositions that have been the stepping stone to bad leadership in Kenya.

5.2 Conclusion

After analyzing the data collected from the study, the researcher reached the conclusion that the authorities (the Governors) were accorded more media coverage than the challengers (the MCAs) in the coverage of Embu county assembly conflict by the media. Such coverage can be attributed to the virtue of the prominence attached to the powerful positions they hold. According to some scholars, advantages enjoyed by the political elites are institutionalized through the 'beat system' (Molotch & Lester, 1981; Fishman, 1980; Bennet, 1983). In such institutions like that of the county government and which is led by the Governor, Wolfsfeld (1997) argues that it is the norm for journalists to routinely be assigned to cover such institutional 'beats' because they are considered as news sources.

Authorities also control massive resources with which they can solicit for positive coverage. Informant 6 argues that in the case of Governors:

'...the capacity of a Governor to be featured in the media most of the time is more of a possibility one, because of the fact that person is a Governor, two, the resources they have access to, and three, even the staff capacity to advise them on what to say and how to say it...' – Key Informant 6

Some scholars such as (Bennet, 1983; Gans 1979) had long taken note of this fact when they argued that antagonists with a high level of organization and resources are in a better position to create news because the creation of major events such as demonstrations and protests, has huge cost implications that may not necessarily be at the disposal of the challengers. Mirrored within county assembly conflicts, one of the strategies that were employed by the Governors was the use of demonstrations by the locals to demonize the MCAs as people who were driven by malice

in impeaching them. In the case of Makueni County for example, Informant 6 notes that the Governor decided to traverse the vast county and engage the locals directly on why reasons that informed his impeachment were flimsy. Rarely if not none was such a level of organization witnessed among the MCAs.

While the authorities in a conflict are better placed to receive more news coverage than the challengers as argued by Wolfsfeld, the author posits that there are cases when the tide may turn in favour of the challengers who may receive more news coverage even without the trappings of power at the disposal of the authorities during a conflict.

5.2.1 Changes in tactics, strategy, and behaviour

From the onset, Wolfsfeld (1997) argues that authorities usually enter a conflict from an advantageous position. First, they can buy or intimidate the media into covering them or even use propaganda to subdue their adversaries, knowing too well that as credible sources of information, the media will most likely buy into their narrative. To the contrary, the challengers in such a conflict are usually forced to devise diverse tactics to access to the media, and such tactics Wolfsfeld argues may vary from time to time. According to the author, such tactics may include dramatic gimmicks such as carrying out mock funerals to terrorist attacks whose time and place are planned to ensure the maximum amount of publicity.

In the case of Embu county assembly conflict, one of the tactics used by the MCAs in accessing the media was by engaging in physical fights on the floor of the county assembly prior to the impeachment of the Governor. As Informant 9 notes, ‘...we had a lot of drama, a lot of stage managing MCAs locking the county assembly, for example, making it out of bounce for anyone that brings the media, and when the media comes, they now go ahead to say we want to impeach the Governor...’ The informant further cites one of the most dramatic incident that occurred at the peak of the conflict and which was widely publicized by the media when the Speaker of the county assembly Kariuki Mate disappeared and re-appeared, terming it one of the classic examples of stage management that the MCAs used to solicit for more news coverage, and the prominence that they enjoy today traces its origin from such tactics.

5.2.2 Internal changes within the organization, group, or country

Wolfsfeld argues that transactions adopted by challengers in accessing the news media can in most cases lead to changes in the legitimacy and status of leadership and the level of collective solidarity. That is, that challengers can decide to use some radical elements within its membership to be their link persons with the media, and depending on how fluent and radical they are in articulating the arguments of their counterparts, they may end up raising their status in society and more so in legitimizing their claims.

In the case of Embu county assembly conflict, the Speaker of the county assembly and the majority and minority leaders became the faces of the conflict, and their prowess in articulating issues gave them much leverage in the media. The effectiveness of their strategies were evidenced by the positive coverage that they were accorded by the media through news headlines such as ‘Why MCAs are the new sheriffs in town’ as covered by *The Standard* newspaper on February 16, 2014. According to the author, the fact that the spokespersons of the challengers frequently appear in the news media to put forward their case usually plays a central role in according them legitimacy. However, while this is by all means, there are cases where it may work to their disadvantage, for example if the spokespersons fail to be convincing in the advancement of their arguments when pinned down by the media.

5.3.3 When the press raises the political standing of the challenger

The author argues that challengers who obtain a significant amount of media coverage usually enjoy a significant rise in political status, and that those who are identified by the news media regarded as serious political players. In the case of Embu county assembly conflict, the MCAs may not have been taken as serious players prior to the impeachment of County Governors so much that their threats of impeaching the Governors were seldom taken seriously. Consequently, such news headlines such as ‘Nyeri MCAs: Our case against Gachagua is solid’ as reported by *The Standard* newspaper on September, 14, 2016 became the norm. It was not until the MCAs in Embu walked the talk and impeached Governor Wambora that Kenyans began appreciating the powerful position that they hold in society. It is least surprising, therefore, that during the August 8, 2017 general election, over 10, 000 aspirants expressed interest in the seat.

5.2.4 The news media can lower the political standing of the authorities

Wolfsfeld argues that one of the ways that challengers are likely to get more news coverage than authorities during a conflict is by lowering the political standing of the authorities leading to a change in the balance of power. During county assembly conflicts, for instance, one of the ways that the media lowered the political stature of County Governors was by running with the narrative that Governors were corrupt, and it is on that basis that they were impeached. An analysis of the 50 newspapers lays credence to this fact, with 17 of the news articles in which the Governors were covered linking them with possible graft. While this lowered the stature of the Governors who had until then been held in high esteem, it raised the political profile of the MCAs, who many did believe were so powerful that they could impeach the county bosses. Informant 6 contends that one of the communication strategies that the MCAs used in soliciting for media coverage was simply to paint Governors as corrupt.

When the media portrays the authority as incompetent, cruel and individuals who are misguided, it usually lowers their level of political status and power, with critics suddenly becoming more vocal, in this case the MCAs as his supporters start looking for cover and the gap between the two in terms of popularity begins to wane.

5.5.5 The media as semi-honest brokers

This occurs when the media offers challengers a significant amount of time and space to advance their arguments, because they regard them as underdogs in the conflict. During the county assembly conflicts, there were many cases where the media accorded the MCAs more news coverage, not because they were prominent, but because they considered them as marginalized voices when compared to the Governors. In such instances, none of the filters advanced by Herman & Chomsky (2002), be it government or media ownership can stand on the way of the media to accord the challengers more news coverage compared to the authorities.

5.3 Recommendations

The findings of the study indicate that the influence of political media contest on voter behavior is more pronounced among decided voters, while it is more minimal when it comes to shifting voter loyalty.

5.3.1 Media coverage of county assembly conflicts

There was general consensus among respondents and the informants as well as from analysis of the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers that the media did not articulate the underlying issues in their coverage of the Embu county assembly conflict. This, perhaps, partly contributed to the fact that the contest was more powerful in influencing the already decided voters. The reasons for such ‘decidedness,’ however, as earlier indicated are usually not sound in nature with ethnicity being visible. To change this kind of narrative where media coverage of county assembly conflicts only radicalizes the decided voters. In other words, such political conflicts only serve to reinforce the wrong factors that contribute to the ‘decidedness’ of the electorate.

There is therefore need for the media to re-dedicate their energy in objectively articulating the underlying issues that inform such conflicts. Only then can it be in a position to play a meaningful role in enabling the voter rally behind antagonists who are ardent supporters of good governance and accountability based on solid evidence.

5.3.2 Use of correspondents in the coverage of county assembly conflicts

Correspondents were the main news gatherers on the ground during the coverage of Embu county assembly conflict. Yet, there was a feeling among many informants that being residents of the respective counties, there were likely to be biased in the coverage of the conflict as a consequence of many factors including possible bribery and ethnicity. Most of the informants also noted that majority of the correspondents did not have the requisite capacity and skills to interrogate the underlying issues that underpinned the conflict. There is therefore need for media to first, remunerate them properly to ensure they do not fall prey to cheap handouts from the antagonists that could jeopardize their objectivity, and secondly, every media house should endeavor to organize refresher courses and trainings that can help equip them with requisite skills needed for the job as per the emerging market trends.

Additionally, Kenya is now operating under the devolved system of governance. As noted by informant 11, there is need to establish fully fledged bureaus in every county with qualified personnel to manage them to ensure media houses are not left at the mercy of the correspondents in the coverage of such conflicts. That way, even if the correspondents would have wished to be

biased in the coverage of such conflicts, they are likely to fear because they are closely monitored by people who also understand the geo-politics of the county in question.

5.3.3 Media gate keeping

Cases of gate keeping were reported in the coverage of county assembly conflicts, and most of them were driven by, as Informant 11 noted, interests. While gate keeping can arguably be termed as a necessary evil in the practice of journalism for it helps filter information that may be detrimental to the society's own survival, no information should be masked from the court of the public opinion because of 'interests,' especially if it does not threaten the survival of the society. There is therefore need for media stakeholders to devise ways of how to deal with the emerging challenge of media ownership, which some scholars have noted usually stifle public debate. To ensure the media equally executes its mandate devoid of bias that may ensue as a consequence of media ownership, various agencies set up to regulate the media such as the Media Council of Kenya (MCK) should endeavor to ensure all media houses, irrespective of who owns them, conform to all the established journalistic ethics and the canons that guide the practice such as balance and impartiality failure to which they should be sanctioned if found to be in their contravention.

5.3.4 Elections and ethnicity

The study revealed a worrying trend where voters are still beholden to supporting their leaders based on largely their ethnic affiliation. A case in point is the high influence the political media contest has on voter behavior in so far as reinforcing their ethnic beliefs towards the antagonists is concerned. There is therefore need for stakeholders including the electoral body IEBC and the civil society groups to work closely and rollout deliberate civic education among voters to avoid being fixated on backing antagonists not based on key issues that underpin good governance and servant leadership, but their ethnic origins.

5.4 Possible areas of further research

From the findings of the study, it is evident that the media has the potential to influence voter behavior, though such influence remains largely in reinforcing the already decided voters. Yet, such a contest can only have a positive impact if such contests help radically shift behavior, since

such a move will be shifting voters into issue based driven politics as opposed to ethnic, bribery and corruption driven electioneering processes where leaders are elected not because they exhibit any qualities of leadership, but because they can card invoke the ethnic frame in whipping up ethnic emotions among his supporters or the electorates back them during the conflict. The researcher holds the view that while the contest had much influence among decided voters, perhaps such contest could have had much influence had the media been objective and highlight real issues that were at play during the conflict. There is therefore need for scholars to further interrogate what can be done to shift the loyalty of voters from sideshows, drama and ethnic leaning kind of politics to issue based driven politics, one where meritocracy, good governance and servants leadership become the virtues that will triumph over vices in future electoral processes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Research Questionnaire

My name is Martin Mwanje, a student pursuing a Masters of Arts Degree in Development Communication studies at the University of Nairobi’s School of Journalism and Mass Communication. I am currently conducting a study on *The Influence of Political Media Contest on Voter Behavior in Embu County*. The researcher assures all respondents that the study is solely academic oriented and their responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Participation is voluntary to all respondents and should one feel to withdraw due to one reason or another, he has the liberty to do so. If you are however willing to be part of this study, kindly fill the questionnaire below.

SECTION A: BIO DATA (Tick (✓) appropriately)

- 1. What is your gender?
 - a) Male ()
 - b) Female ()
- 2. What is your age bracket?
 - a) 18-30 ()
 - b) 31-50 ()
 - c) Above 50 ()
- 3. What is your level of education?
 - a) University ()
 - b) Tertiary/College ()
 - c) Secondary School ()
 - d) Primary School ()
 - e) None of the above ()
- 4). What is your profession?
 - a) Teacher ()
 - b) Civil Servant ()
 - c) Farmer ()
 - d) Business person ()
 - e) Other (Specify).....

SECTION B: MEDIA PLATFORMS (You can tick more than one medium)

5. In which media platform do you get to know about county assembly conflicts?

- a) Radio () c) Newspapers () e) Other (Specify).....
- b) Television () b) Social media ()

SECTION C: MEDIA INFLUENCE (Tick (√) appropriately)

6) Do you remember of any impeachment that was carried out by MCAs against Governors?

- a) Yes ()
- b) No ()

7) If yes, in which county was the impeachment of the Governor done?

.....

.....

8) In the case of Embu County, what stood out for you when the MCAs impeached Governor Martin Nyagah Wambora?

.....

.....

9) Did you believe in the allegations that were leveled at the Governor by the MCAs?

- a) Yes ()
- b) No ()

10) Explain your response?

.....

.....

.....

11) Did you change your position once the Governor came out to refute the claims?

a) Yes ()

b) No ()

12) What informed your decision?

.....

.....

.....

13) Did you feel the media adequately covered all aspects of the county assembly conflict that led to the impeachment of Governor Wambora?

a) Yes ()

b) No ()

14) Why do you say so?

.....

.....

.....

15) If according to you all aspects of the county assembly conflict were not exhaustively covered by the media, which impact do you think this had on the electorate?

.....
.....

16) Would you say the media offered fair coverage to Governor Wambora and the MCAs in defending their positions?

a) Yes ()

b) No ()

17) If no, do you think biased coverage by the media swayed the perception of the electorates towards Governor Wambora and the MCAs?

.....
.....
.....

18) Which communication strategies do you think Governor Wambora and the MCAs used to ensure they get favorable media coverage?

.....
.....
.....

19) Would you say the strategies were effective in according them favorable media coverage?

a) Yes ()

b) No ()

20) Why do say so?

.....

.....

.....

21) Despite the impeachment, would you still elect Governor Wambora if elections were held today?

a) Yes ()

b) No ()

22) Why do you say so?

.....

.....

.....

23) Would you still elect the MCAs that impeached Governor Wambora if elections were held today?

a) Yes ()

b) No ()

24) Why do you say so?

.....

.....

.....

25) Generally speaking, did the use of the media by Governor Wambora and the MCAs in defending themselves influence your support for either side?

a) Yes ()

b) No ()

26) Explain your response above

.....

.....

.....

Thank you for finding time to participate in this research

Appendix 2: Qualitative and Quantitative Content Analysis

Unit of Analysis: The Standard and the Daily Nation Newspapers

Qualitative Content Analysis of the Daily Nation and ‘The Standard’ newspapers from January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2016

Date	Daily Nation Newspaper Headlines	Date	The Standard Newspaper Headlines
Jan 28, 2014	County leaders burn millions in joy travels	Feb 1, 2014	Governors and Senators defend ousted Wambora
Jan 29, 2014	Embu governor impeached over graft	Feb 5, 2014	Leaders challenge impeachment
Jan 30, 2014	Wambora to challenge ouster	Feb 9, 2014	Is Senate using Wambora woes to stamp its oversight authority?
Jan 31, 2014	Governors oppose bid to kick out Wambora	Feb 11, 2014	End corruption or face law, MCAs tell Wambora
Feb 2, 2014	How Senators, County Reps have put breaks on governors ‘party’	Feb 12, 2014	Wambora: I am white as snow
Feb 11, 2014	It wasn’t me, Wambora tells team	Feb 15, 2014	Senate kicks out Governor
Feb 15, 2014	History as first governor sacked	Feb 16, 2014	MCAs’ newfound strategy: Threats of impeachment loans and trips
Feb 16, 2014	Senate erred in sending Wambora home: LSK chair	Feb 17, 2014	Governors to meet over fresh threats by Senators

Feb 18, 2014	Governors' battle moves to top court	Feb 18, 2014	Governors spend Sh1bn on travel in three months
Feb 20, 2014	Embu Governor wins round one	Feb 20, 2014	Song, dance as three-judge Bench suspends Wambora impeachment
May 15, 2014	Kericho MCAs vote to impeach governor as Kidero gets relief	Nov 3, 2015	MCAs hired 60 ward staff irregularly
Sep 6, 2016	Gachagua moves to court after ouster in day of chaos	Nov 4, 2015	Infighting tarnishes the image of Governor Mutua's county of 'firsts'
Sep 28, 2016	Secretary: Speaker behind MCAs, executive wars	Nov 5, 2015	Wa Iria fights off ouster bid, claims mischief
Sep 29, 2016	Reps turn guns on Governor after jailing of county officers	Nov 7, 2015	Wa Iria off the hook as Senate dismisses his impeachment
Sep 30, 2016	Blows, kicks as bid to oust Kidero foiled	Nov 10, 2015	Day of woes for Murang'a county boss
Oct 1, 2014	Wambora cleared in tender case	Sep 7, 2016	County Reps' scorecard in House found wanting as elections near
Oct 2, 2014	Senate welcomes law giving ward reps privileges, powers	Sep 8, 2016	Executives threaten to resign if Gachagua impeachment is upheld
Oct 3, 2014	Why we want Kibwana out, MCAs say as motion tabled	Sep 13, 2016	Gachagua impeachment: Report shows why county chief is under siege

Oct 4, 2014	Makueni residents seek MCAs ouster	Sep 14, 2016	Nyeri MCAs: Our case against Gachagua is solid
Oct 5, 2014	County chiefs woo MCAs with cash and trips abroad	Sep 15, 2016	Gachagua survives impeachment as senators dismiss claims by MCAs
October 6, 2014	MCA slapped as Mutua, Muthama row escalates	Sep 16, 2016	Gachagua survives on weak evidence
Oct 7, 2014	MCAs accused of taking bribes to shield official	Sep 18, 2016	Gachagua, Maina trade barbs over botched impeachment attempt
Oct 9, 2014	Chaos in assembly as speaker ejects MCA	Sep 20, 2016	MCAs, county government agree to bury hatchet over budget row
Oct 12, 2014	Kidero back, Chepkwony out, Joho in trouble	Sep 22, 2016	MCAs pledge to back Wambora's re-election
Oct 10, 2014	Assembly votes to send Governor Kibwana home	Sep 27, 2016	Senators plan to block governors in 2017 elections

Appendix 2.1: Qualitative and Quantitative Content Analysis

Unit of Analysis: *The Standard* and the *Daily Nation* Newspapers

The Contest

The Publicity of Governors and MCAs in the Daily Nation newspaper (January 1, 2014 to December 31st, 2016)

Antagonists	Number of news stories
Governors	25
MCAs	19
Mixed news	18

Note: The number of news stories was physically done by the researcher who perused through the printed copies of the Daily Nation newspaper for the period stated above.

The Contest

The Publicity of Governors and MCAs in The Standard newspaper (January 1st, 2014 to December 31st, 2016)

<i>Antagonists</i>	<i>Number of news stories</i>
Governors	22
MCAs	16
Mixed news	30

Note: The number of news stories was physically done by the researcher who perused through the printed copies of the Daily Nation newspaper for the period stated above.

Nature of news stories covered by both the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers for the period between January 1, 2014b and December 2016

Nature of Coverage	Daily Nation Newspaper		The Standard Newspaper	
	Governor	MCAs	Governor	MCAs
Positive Press	14	11	16	6
Negative Press	11	8	6	10
Mixed News	18		30	

Appendix 3: Key Informant Interviews

Questions for Political Analysts

1. Was the media fair in according antagonists coverage during county assembly conflicts?
2. Would you say the manner in which the media covered county assembly conflicts had any influence on voter behavior?
3. Which communication strategies did antagonists use during county assembly conflicts in their bid to get favorable media coverage?
4. How effective were these communication strategies?
5. A number of Governors were impeached by MCAs only to be absolved from blame by the Senate later. Do you think this has had any influence on voter behavior ahead of the next general election?
6. Do you think the media played any role in fanning county assembly conflicts?
7. If so, what was its influence on voter behavior?

Appendix 3.1 Key Informant Interviews

Questions for Communication Experts

1. Would you say the media accorded fair coverage to antagonists during county assembly conflicts?
2. Would you say the manner in which the media covered county assembly conflicts had any influence on voter behavior?
3. Do you think the media articulated the underlying issues raised by antagonists during county assembly conflicts?
4. Whether yes or no, to what extent did this influence voter behavior?
5. What are some of the communication strategies that antagonists used in ensuring they get favorable media coverage?
6. Would you say the strategies were effective in enabling get favorable media coverage and by so doing influence voter behavior?
7. Did you at any point there was some degree of gate keeping on the part of the media in its coverage of county assembly conflicts?
- 8) If yes, to what extent did this influence voter behavior?

Appendix 3.2 Key Informant Interviews

Questions for Editors

1. Do you think the media accorded antagonists fair coverage during county assembly conflicts?
2. Was there an attempt by the antagonists to employ some communication strategies to ensure they get more media coverage during the conflict?
- 3). Would you say such strategies were effective in ensuring the antagonists get more media coverage during the conflict?
4. Would you say the media coverage of the county assembly conflicts had any influence on voter behavior?
- 5) Do you think the media articulated underlying issues during county assembly conflicts?
- 6). What was the extent of gate keeping in the coverage of county assembly conflicts?
- 7). Do you think such gate keeping by the media, if any, of county assembly conflicts had any influence on voter behavior?

Appendix 3.3 Key Informant Interviews

Questions for Journalists

1. How balanced were you in covering antagonists during county assembly conflicts?
2. Would you say media coverage of county assembly conflicts had any influence on voter behavior?
3. Would you say there were cases of gate keeping in the coverage of county assembly conflicts?
4. Do you think such cases, if any, had any influence on voter behavior?
5. Having witnessed the county assembly conflicts first hand, do you think there were any deliberate communication strategies that antagonists used to ensure they get favorable media coverage during the conflict?
6. Would you say the said strategies were effective in their bid to have the electorate support them during the conflict?
7. Would you say the media managed to articulate the underlying issues during the conflict?
- 8) If not, to what extent do you think failure to articulate the real issues influenced voter behavior?

Appendix 4: Certificate of Fieldwork



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REF: CERTIFICATE OF FIELDWORK

This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Board of Examiners meeting held on 26/05/2017 in respect of M.A/PhD. Project/Thesis Proposal defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the project can be allowed to proceed for fieldwork.

Reg. No: K50/82146/2015

Name: MARTIN MWANJE

Title: The Influence of Political Media Content on
Voter Behaviour in Embu County.

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SUPERVISOR

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26/5/2017
DATE

Dr Samuel Siringi
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

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SIGNATURE

10.10.2017
DATE

Dr. Nlet-Nlet
DIRECTOR

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Appendix 5: Certificate of Corrections



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Reg. No: K50/K2146/2015

Name: MARTIN MWANJE

Title: POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: THE INFLUENCE OF

POLITICAL MEDIA CONTENT ON VOTER BEHAVIOUR IN EMBU COUNTY

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Appendix 6: Originality Report

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